



SUN Moving through *Aries* into *Taurus*.

MOON New Moon on the 24th, Full Moon on the 9th.

PLANETS **Mercury** is only visible during the first week of May as an evening object close to the Sun.
Venus is a dazzling object in the dawn sky for any early risers shining at -4.5^m .
Mars can be seen in the early morning skies (1.1^m) as it passes through *Pisces*. It is easy to find since there are no bright stars in this region and it has a noticeable ruddy hue.
Jupiter is drawing out from the Sun in the morning sky as it moves slowly through *Capricornus*. The large size of its disk and constantly changing cloud belts and moons make it a rewarding subject for binoculars or telescopes.
Saturn is an evening object in *Leo* shining at 0.8^m . Telescopes will reveal its largest moon Titan but the rings are at a small inclination and do not yield much by way of detail.

COMETS No bright periodic comets expected this month.

METEORS As the Earth passes through the trail of gas and dust left behind by comet P/Halley we get a fairly active meteor shower, the Eta Aquarids. Between the 1st and the 8th you should be able to see swift brilliant meteors with persistent trains all radiating from the constellation *Aquarius*. The peak rate of 35 per hour occurs on the 5th but there will be moonlight to interfere.

STARS Look for the easy visual double of Alcor and Mizar in the Plough. Mizar is also revealed to be a double in a small telescope.
 ϵ *boötis* (Izar) is a close telescopic double with yellow/blue components.
 α *canum venaticorum* (Cor Caroli) is an easy telescopic double, as are γ *virginis*, δ *corvi* and γ *crateri*.

NEBULÆ The Owl Nebula (M97) is a faint planetary nebula in *Ursa Major*. Its ghostly disk can just be made out in binoculars, a larger telescope reveals two darker patches or “eyes” within it.
NGC 4631 is a small planetary nebula in *Corvus* best seen with large binoculars or a telescope.

CLUSTERS M3 and M53 are small globular clusters in the constellation of *Canes Venatici*.
The “A” shape in *Coma Berenices* can be considered a large loose cluster (technically Mel 111), easily picked out with the naked eye.

GALAXIES *Virgo* and *Coma Berenices* are fertile hunting grounds for galaxy observers, mainly because we are looking in a direction at right angles to the dusty, obscuring plane of our galaxy. All the following are capable of being picked up in binoculars on clear nights (away from the Moon or any light pollution):
In *Coma Berenices* we have M64 (the Black-eye Galaxy), M88, M98, M99, M100 and NGC 4565 (the Needle Galaxy).
In *Virgo* we have M49, M60, M86, M87, M90 and M104 (the Sombrero Galaxy).
In *Ursa Major* there is the interesting pair M81, M82 and also M101.
In *Canes Venatici* we have M51 (the Whirlpool Galaxy), M106, M64 and M94.
The Antennae galaxies are a fascinating interacting pair in *Corvus*, but low down and faint from the UK.