



SUN Moving through *Leo* the Lion into *Virgo* the Maiden. Equinox at 21:18 on the 22nd.

MOON New Moon on the 18th, Full Moon on the 4th.

PLANETS **Mercury** is only visible towards the end of the month as a morning object.
Venus is approaching conjunction and out of sight this month after the 15th.
Mars is a 1.1^M morning object in *Gemini*.
Jupiter is visible all evening in *Capricornus* and shining at -2.8^M.
Saturn is in conjunction with the Sun this month so out of sight.

COMETS No bright periodic comets expected.

METEORS No meteor showers expected this month.

STARS Al Giedi (α *capricornus*) is a naked eye double, whereas Dabih (β *capricornus*) is a binocular double with contrasting colours.
W sagittarii is a cepheid variable with a period of 7.6 days. It oscillates in brightness from 4.3^M to 5.1^M
RY sagittarii is another "sooty" star, similar to *R corona borealis*. It can suddenly dim down from 5.8^M to 14^M as dark clouds of carbon are blown off its surface.

NEBULÆ There are four superb emission nebulae visible this month, all in the constellation of *Sagittarius*. All of these objects are regions of active star formation that look fascinating through a telescope.
M20 - the Trifid Nebula is a naked eye object, but looks very good through binoculars. You may be able to resolve the three dark dust lanes that give it its name.
M8 - the Lagoon Nebula is much larger object, but it is fainter. A naked eye fuzz becomes a glowing halo in binoculars.
M17 (the Swan Nebula) and M16 (the Eagle Nebula) are fainter than the other two, although higher up in the sky and requires binoculars to see them.

CLUSTERS There are some fine clusters in this area of the sky.
The best open cluster is M11, the Wild Duck cluster in *Scutum*. It is a naked eye object, but looks superb through binoculars or a small telescope. It is fan shaped and contains over 300 stars.
Sagittarius plays host to the following bright clusters: M18, M21, M54 and M55. Many of these are naked eye objects.
There are two good globulars: M22 in *Sagittarius*, and M30 in *Capricornus*.

GALAXIES There are no galaxies easily visible apart from our own Milky Way stretching down through *Sagittarius*. A binocular sweep through this region will give you more stars than you can count!
As you look through *Sagittarius* to the star clouds beyond, you are looking toward the centre of our galaxy. This is the reason for the abundance of nebulae and galactic clusters in this part of the sky. Sadly, the great amount of dust prevents us from seeing the bright galactic core, where stars are packed just a few light years apart and strange objects like supermassive black holes may be lurking!