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The promise of warmer weather in the spring and summer months brings out the astronomer in everyone. The night sky for April, May and June contains many interesting objects that can be viewed with a pair of binoculars or a small telescope.

Venus is the most prominent planet in the evening sky. As an evening planet, Venus moves progressively closer to the Sun in April, May and the first part of June. On April 19, Venus will be visible near the Moon. It may be seen high in the west shortly before sunset. One can easily observe the Moon's motion relative to Venus by sketching or photographing the Moon and Venus every half hour or so until they set. By the end of June, Venus will be low in the east at dawn. This planet reaches its greatest brilliancy on May 6. When viewed through a small telescope, Venus shows its continually changing phases.

Jupiter is located north of Pisces, between Aries and Taurus. Jupiter is moving rapidly toward the Sun, and by mid April it will be lost in the evening twilight.

Saturn is in Sagittarius. In early April, Saturn rises around midnight. By mid June, it is in line with the Earth and Sun (at opposition), and is visible all night.

Mercury is visible for most of May. It can be viewed very low in the west at sunset. Mercury is at its greatest angular (22°) distance from the Sun (elongation) on May 19.

In early April, Mars is visible about three hours before sunrise. By mid June, it rises about four hours before the Sun.

The star charts (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) of the equatorial region of the sky show the positions of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn for April, May and June. The charts also indicate three meteor showers. Meteor showers are usually named for the place in the sky from which the meteors appear to originate. For example, the famous Perseid meteor shower is named from the fact that the meteors appear to originate from the constellation Perseus. Sometimes a more specific name for a meteor shower is given by indicating from which star in a given constellation the meteors appear to come. Different stars in a constellation are named with Greek letters. The point from which the meteors appear to originate is called the radiant. M_1 (Fig. 2) indicates the location of the radiant of the Lyrids. This shower usually produces approximately 15 meteors per hours. These meteors usually intercept the earth at approximately 48 km/s. The duration of this shower is about two days. M_2 indicates the location of the radiant of the η Aquarids. This meteor shower typically produces around 20 meteors per hour. The η Aquarids last about three days. The average speed of these meteors is around 65 kd/s. M_3 indicates the radiant of the τ Herculids. This

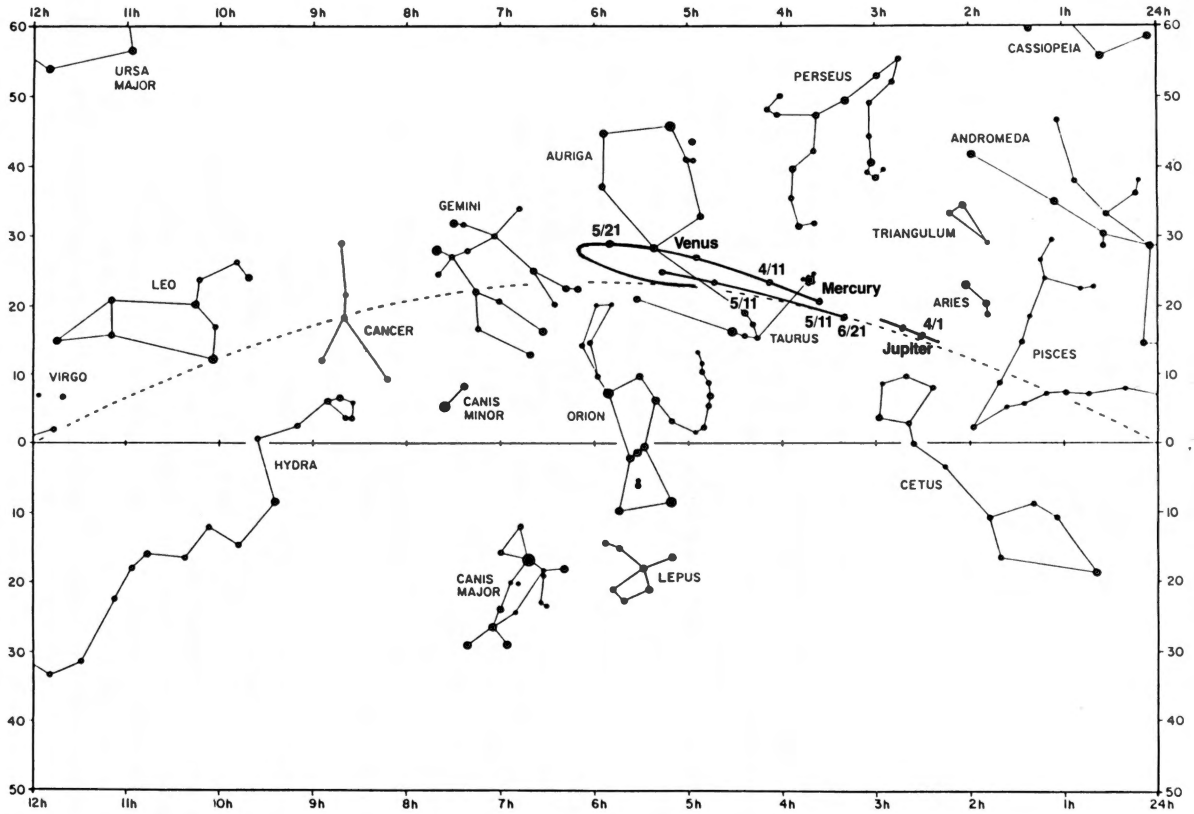
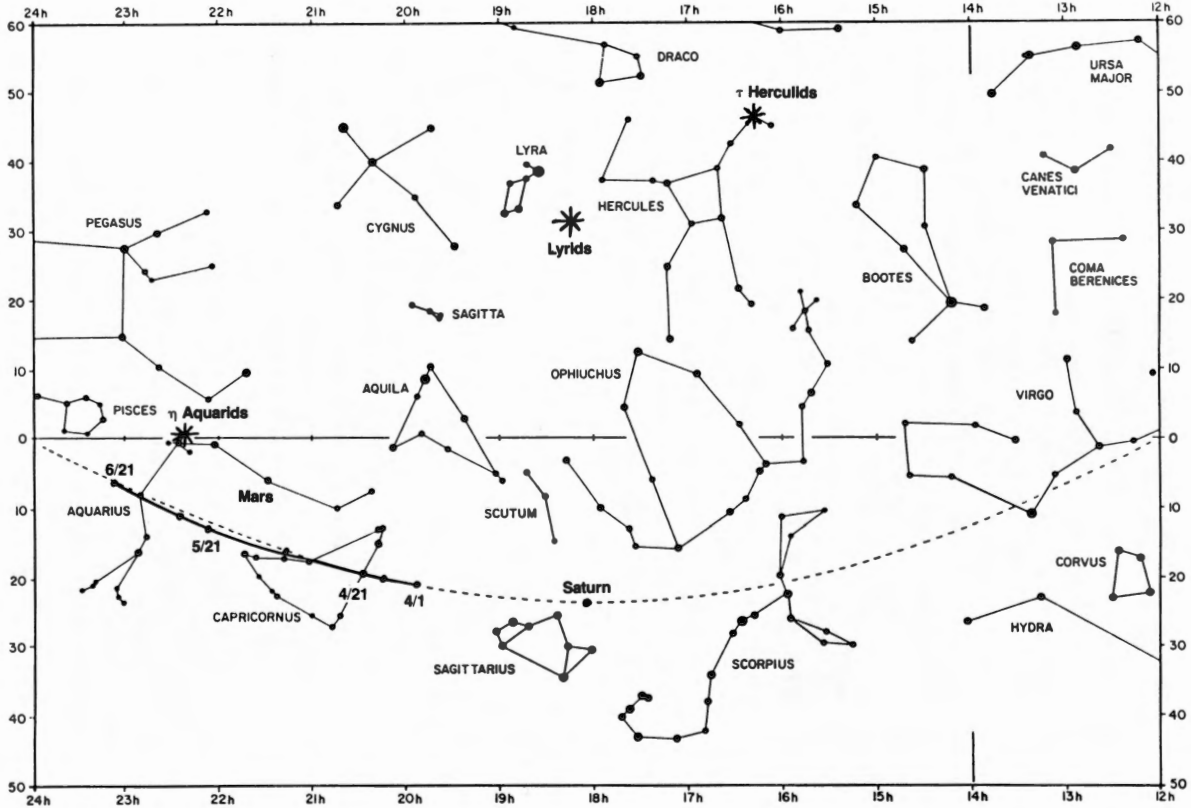

12h
11h
10h
9h
8h
7h
6h
5h
4h
3h
2h
1h
24h
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
URSA MAJOR
CASSIOPEIA
PERSEUS
ANDROMEDA
AURIGA
GEMINI
5/21
Venus
4/11
Mercury
5/11
5/11
6/21
4/1
Jupiter
TRIANGULUM
ARIES
PISCES
LEO
CANCER
VIRGO
CANIS MINOR
ORION
TAURUS
HYDRA
CETUS
CANIS MAJOR
LEPUS

Figure 1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50
DRACO
URSA MAJOR
τ Herculids
LYRA
Lyrids
HERCULES
CANES VENATICI
CYGNUS
PEGASUS
BOOTES
COMA BERENICES
SAGITTA
AQUILA
OPHIUCHUS
VIRGO
PISCES
η Aquarids
6/21
Mars
AQUARIUS
SCUTUM
5/21
4/21
4/1
Saturn
CORVUS
CAPRICORNUS
HYDRA
SAGITTARIUS
SCORPIUS

Figure 2

meteor shower is considered to be a minor shower. The dates range from May 19 to June 14 with a maximum about June 3. The speed at which the meteors intercept the Earth is slow, approximately 15 km/s. As with any meteor shower, these three are best viewed after midnight on a dark moonless night. Meteor showers are excellent reasons for sky parties!

The information in this bulletin was obtained from the *Observers Handbook,* and the April issue of the *Sky Calendar.*

For more information on current astronomical events, the following are recommended:

Bishop, R.L. 1988. *Observers Handbook.* The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. 136 Dupont St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1V2.

Astronomy. AstroMedia, a division of Kalmbach Publishing Company, 1027 N. Seventh St., Milwaukee, WI 53233.

Sky Calendar. Abrams Planetarium, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.

Sky & Telescope. Sky Publishing Corporation, 49 Bay State Road, Cambridge, MA 02238-9102.