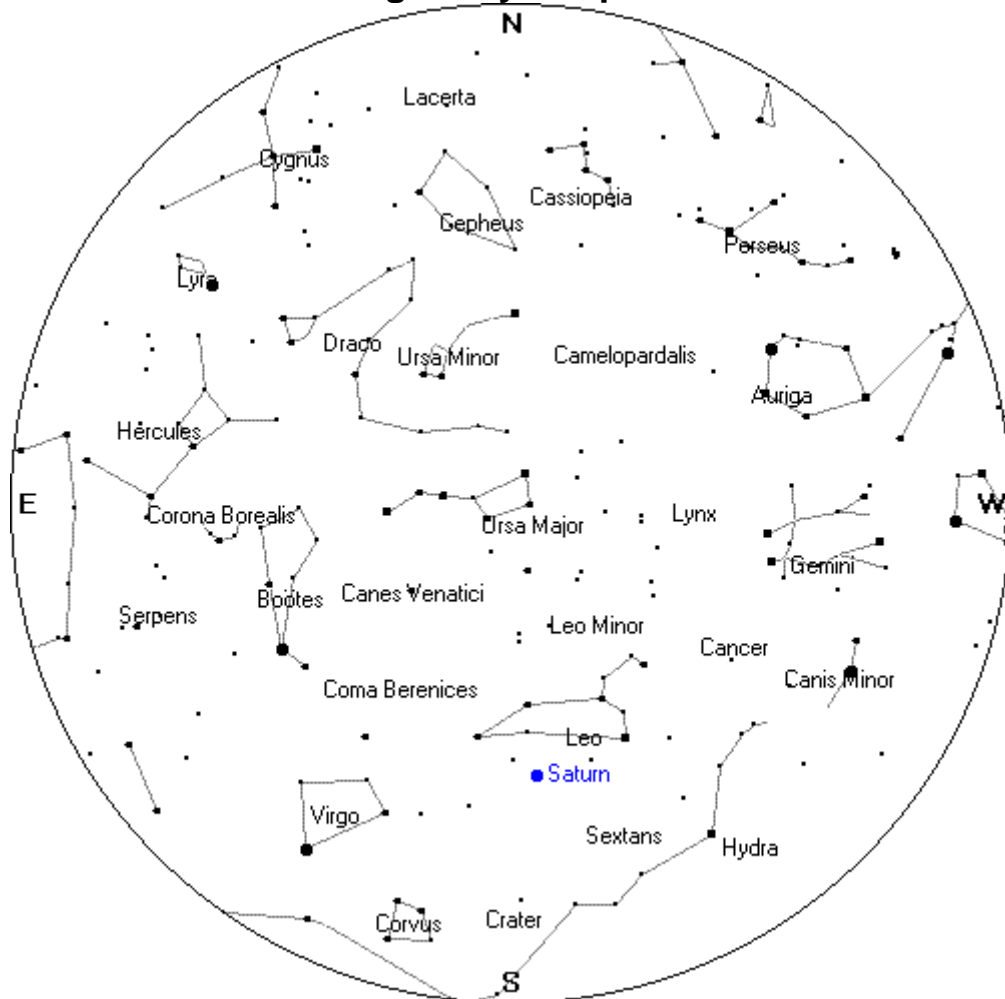


## Dundee Astronomical Society The Night Sky in April 2009



### The Sky at 10pm on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2009

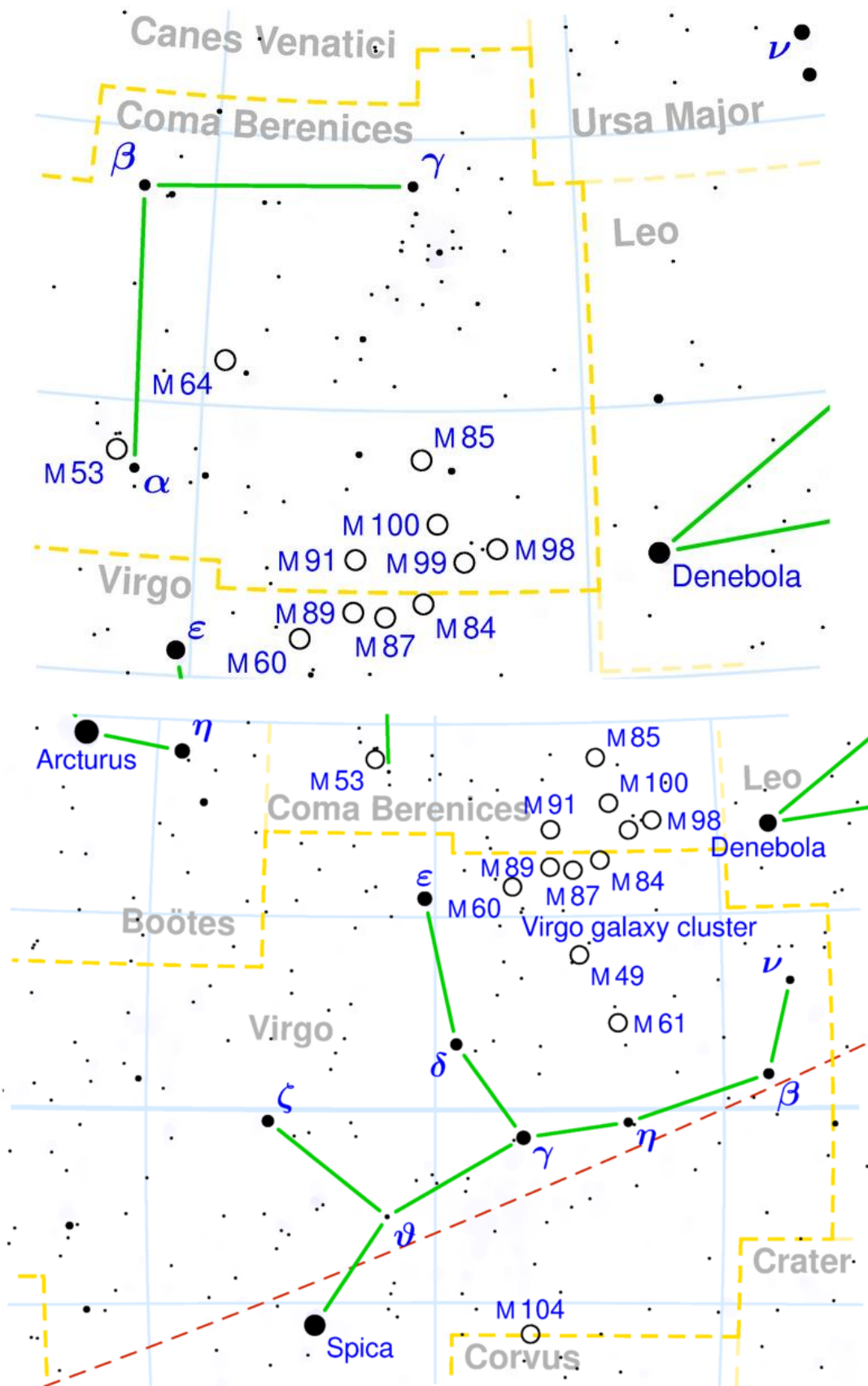
[chart courtesy of [www.heavens-above.com](http://www.heavens-above.com)]

With summer time having started on the last weekend in March, the sky is brighter later in the evening and April is probably the last month until August when we can have a look at a few deep sky objects. Also remember that if you are recording observations or sending in reports, you should subtract one hour from the clock time to give UT (or GMT).

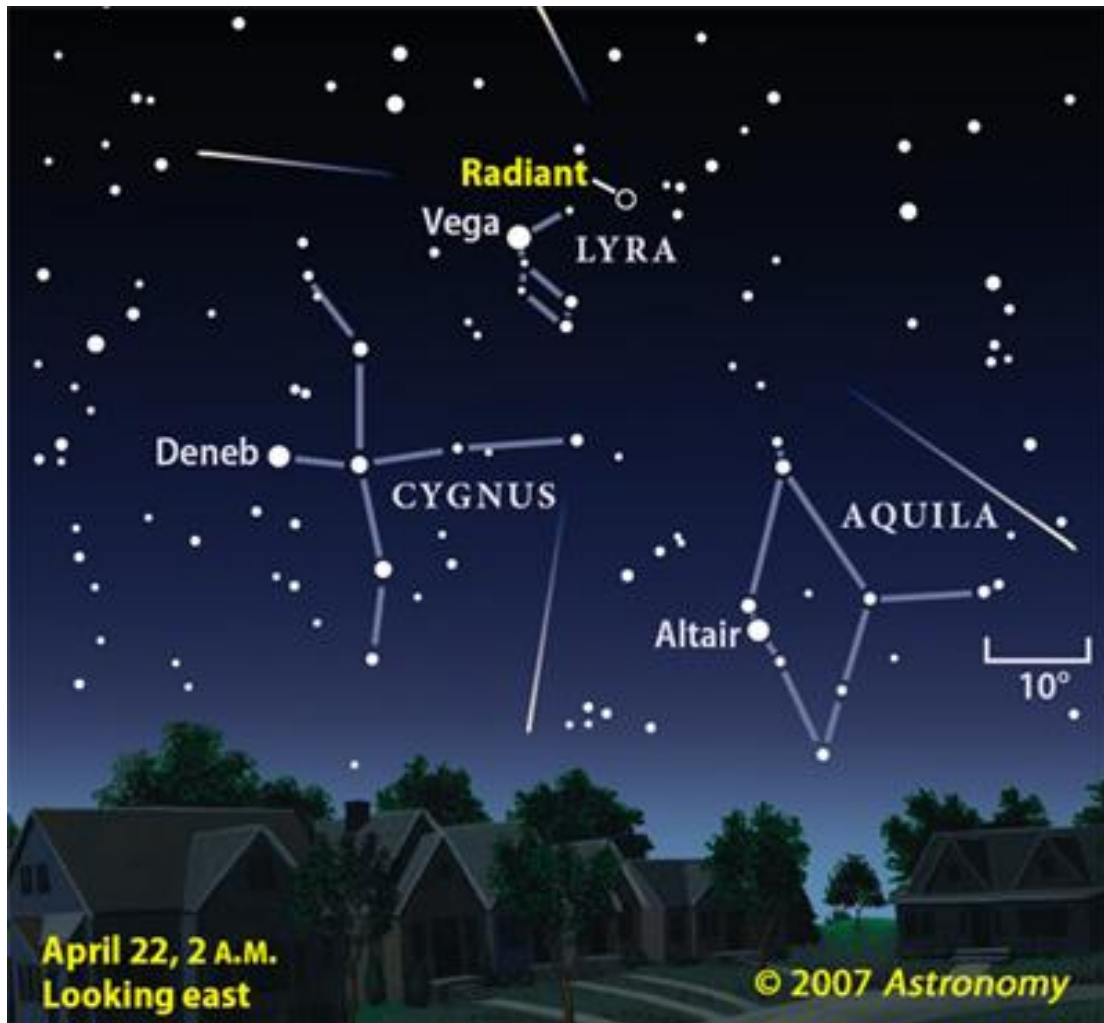
Leo is high in the southern sky throughout April with Saturn, well placed for observation, just below. The faint, straggling, Hydra reaches down to the southern horizon and the only bright star of note in the area is Spica, the brightest star of Virgo, at magnitude 0.98.

Between Leo and Boötes is an area devoid of brighter stars. The constellations of Coma Berenices and Canes Venatici reside in this region. Although these two constellations lack bright stars or an easily identifiable outline, they are rich in deep sky objects, especially galaxies which extend southwards into Virgo. This Virgo – Coma supercluster is situated about 65 million light years distant. All sorts of galaxies, spiral, elliptical and lenticular are present and it is worth searching the area

with a moderate sized telescope, especially one of small focal ratio, to try to identify the many different shapes and brightness.



The meteor shower, the April Lyrids, may be seen from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> April with a peak on 22<sup>d</sup> 10h. This is not usually a very active shower with a maximum ZHR of only 10. Fine displays were reported in 1803, 1922 and 1982 but there is no reason to suspect that 2009 will be especially active. The Moon, however, at 28 days on the 22<sup>nd</sup> make this a favourable year as it will be out of the way during the entire evening.



This month, Mercury is well placed to be seen in the evening sky from about the 15<sup>th</sup> and will be more than 10° above the horizon on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Check the sky just north of west about 30 minutes after sunset. Look out for Aldebaran in the darkening sky then move lower and to the right where you should find Mercury.

Venus was in inferior conjunction on March 28<sup>th</sup> and will now emerge in the morning sky. It will still be low during April and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Venus and the crescent Moon will be 0.5° apart.

Mars remains a poor object during April being only 34° from the Sun by late April.

Jupiter is rather better placed further west at 77° from the Sun but will still be low in the early morning sky and will remain at about -14° declination throughout the year.

Saturn is well placed in Leo and can be seen during most of the night. This month the rings are tilted at only  $-3.8^\circ$ .

Uranus is too close to the Sun to be seen in April.

Neptune, following Jupiter, is improving as a morning object but is likely to be too low in the sky for useful observation.

The Moon is at first quarter on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, full on April 9<sup>th</sup>, last quarter on April 17<sup>th</sup> and new on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Ken Kennedy**  
**Director of Observations**