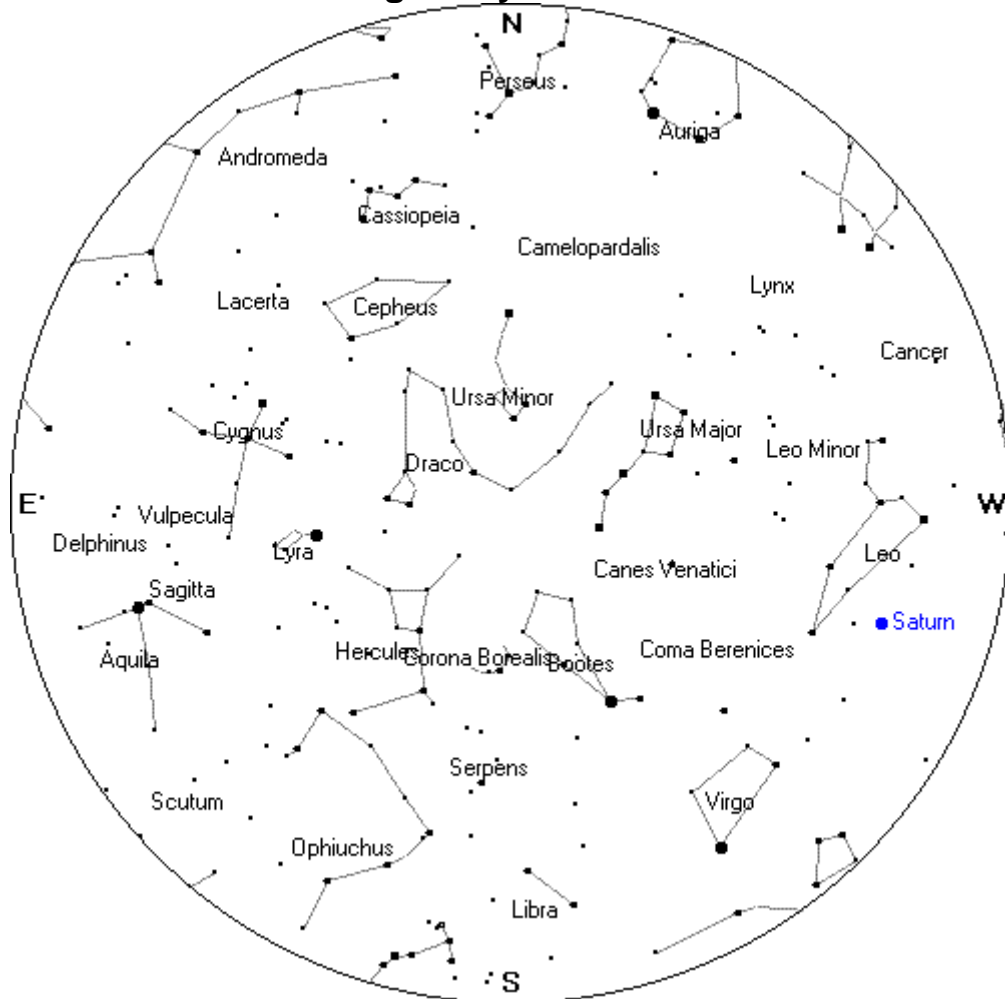


Dundee Astronomical Society The Night Sky in June 2009

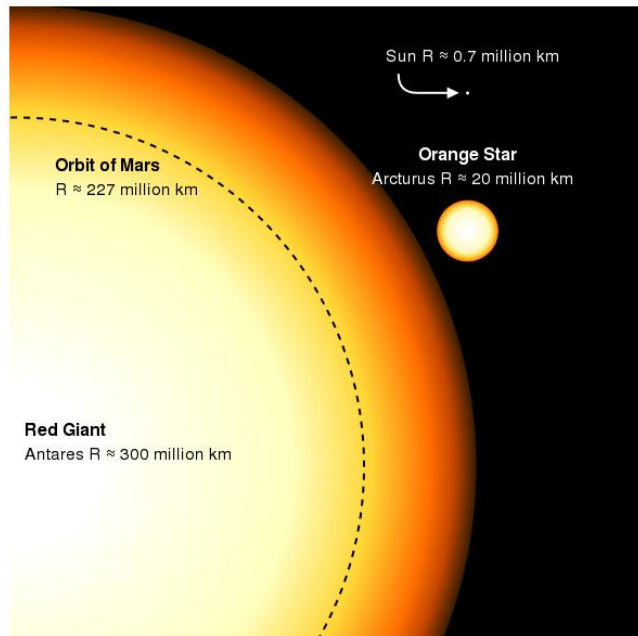
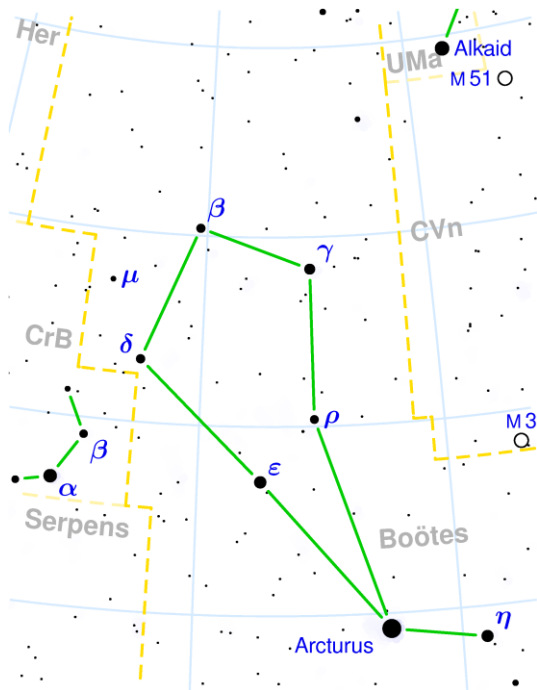


The Sky at 10pm on 15th June 2009

[chart courtesy of www.heavens-above.com]

Arcturus, the brightest star of the constellation Boötes, can be seen in the south even in the long bright evenings of June. Arcturus is the fourth brightest star in the entire sky and is a red giant which is about 110 times more luminous than our Sun. It is an old star and is now very like what our Sun will become in a few billion years. Its rapid motion of 500,000 km per hour led Edmund Halley to realise that the stars are not fixed relative to each other in the sky. Being closest to the Sun at the present time, Arcturus will disappear from view in about half a million years time.

In mythology, the constellation Boötes represents a herdsman who was said to have invented the plough. He is also seen as the Bear Driver following Callisto and her son Arcas who were turned into bears by Zeus as Ursa Major and Ursa Minor.



If you have a low enough horizon to the south you may just see the tail of the scorpion, represented by the constellation Scorpius. Scorpius is always linked to Orion and various tales tell versions of how Apollo sent the scorpion to sting and kill Orion. Having succeeded in its task, the scorpion was placed opposite Orion in the sky to pursue him to eternity. The main star of Scorpius is another red giant, Antares, which will be very low in the south during June. Antares is an amazing 10,000 times brighter than the Sun and would engulf Mars if placed where our Sun is.

June is the month of the Summer Solstice which occurs on June 21st at 5.45am. The Sun will reach its highest point in the northern hemisphere at this time. In Dundee, the sun will rise at 4.17am and set at 10.09pm.

Remember to keep a lookout for noctilucent clouds. With the Sun's continuing lack of activity, they should be seen quite frequently throughout June. Around the time of the Summer Solstice they will only be seen well at the darkest part of the night, probably for two or three hours around 0100 UT. I will welcome all reports of sightings, and remember, please let me know of dates and times when it is clear but NLC are not seen.

Mercury will not be well placed for observation during June.

Venus will be a brilliant object in the pre-dawn sky throughout the month.

Mars will also be seen in the early morning sky. It is much fainter than Venus but the two planets will be quite close during June. They will be at their closest on June 21st when they will be 2° apart.

Jupiter will be obvious but low in the south eastern sky before midnight.

Saturn will become lower in the south west and will fade from view in the evening sky later in the month.

The Moon is full on the 7th, at last quarter on the 15th, new on the 22nd and at first quarter on the 29th.

The Dundee Astronomical Society is presenting two talks in June at Mills Observatory. The first, on Sunday 7th June at 1.30pm, is about Variable Stars and will be given by Ken Kennedy. The second will be given on Sunday 28th June at 1.30pm by David Paterson and is entitled 'Finding Your Way Round the Sky'.

Ken Kennedy
Director of Observations
Dundee Astronomical Society