TONIGHT'S SKY

April 2018

1
00:00:07,440 --> 00:00:11,460
Your guide to constellations, deep-sky objects,

2
00:00:11,460 --> 00:00:14,400
planets, and events.

3
00:00:14,400 --> 00:00:24,180
Tonight’s Sky – highlights of the April sky:

4
00:00:37,900 --> 00:00:40,160
Venus blazes brightly,

5
00:00:40,160 --> 00:00:48,620
low in the western sky at nightfall.

6
00:00:52,660 --> 00:00:54,720
With a backyard telescope,

7
00:00:54,720 --> 00:00:58,660
we can clearly see the sunlight reflecting off the thick

8
00:00:58,660 --> 00:01:05,020
clouds that shroud its surface.

9
00:01:14,680 --> 00:01:22,600
Bright Jupiter rises in the east before midnight.

10
00:01:26,800 --> 00:01:28,780
Even a small telescope

11
00:01:28,780 --> 00:01:36,940
can reveal its two most prominent cloud bands.

12
00:01:55,720 --> 00:01:58,940
Late in the evening, high in the northern sky,

13
00:01:58,940 --> 00:02:05,960

lies the Great Bear, Ursa Major.

14
00:02:05,960 --> 00:02:09,060
The constellation of Ursa Major contains

15
00:02:09,060 --> 00:02:13,280
the well-known star pattern called the Big Dipper.

16
00:02:13,280 --> 00:02:17,920
It resembles a large drinking cup with a handle.

17
00:02:17,920 --> 00:02:21,120
The two stars that make up the front side of the cup

18
00:02:21,120 --> 00:02:24,480
are called “pointer stars” because they point

19
00:02:24,480 --> 00:02:34,500
toward the star Polaris, also known as the North Star.

20
00:02:44,500 --> 00:02:54,700
The Big Dipper overflows with interesting
stars and deep-sky objects.

21
00:02:54,700 --> 00:02:58,540
The stars Mizar and Alcor make up a double-

22
00:02:58,540 --> 00:03:03,100
star system that can be seen without a telescope.

23
00:03:03,100 --> 00:03:06,780
In ancient times, when Mizar and Alcor were even

24
00:03:06,780 --> 00:03:09,740
closer together, they were used as a test of

25
00:03:09,740 --> 00:03:14,200
keen eyesight.

26
00:03:14,200 --> 00:03:20,060
M81 and M82 are a magnificent pair of galaxies,

27
00:03:20,060 --> 00:03:23,760
showpieces of the northern night sky.

28
00:03:23,760 --> 00:03:28,400
M82 has an irregular shape, bestowed by a collision

29
00:03:28,400 --> 00:03:36,220
with its larger neighbor, M81.

30
00:03:47,240 --> 00:03:50,940
Turning to the south, we see Leo, the Lion,

31
00:03:50,940 --> 00:03:55,580
heralding the coming of spring.

32
00:03:55,580 --> 00:03:59,280
In Greek mythology, Leo is the great beast

33
00:03:59,280 --> 00:04:01,660
slain by Hercules.

34
00:04:01,660 --> 00:04:05,520
The star Denebola, which in Arabic means “tail,”

35
00:04:05,520 --> 00:04:08,560
represents exactly that.

36
00:04:08,560 --> 00:04:14,020
The bright star Regulus is the heart of the Lion.

37
00:04:14,020 --> 00:04:18,480
Leo has several galaxies in his belly.

38

00:04:18,480 --> 00:04:26,420
M65, M66, and NGC 3628 make up the “Leo Triplet,”

39
00:04:26,420 --> 00:04:28,960
a lovely grouping of galaxies

40
00:04:28,960 --> 00:04:32,280
easily seen with a telescope.

41
00:04:32,280 --> 00:04:39,160
Close by is another group.

42
00:04:39,160 --> 00:04:48,260
M95 and M96 are large spiral galaxies.

43
00:04:48,260 --> 00:04:51,520
Between the Big Dipper and the head of Leo

44
00:04:51,520 --> 00:04:55,120
are three pairs of bright stars known to ancient

45
00:04:55,120 --> 00:05:03,460
Arab astronomers as “The Three Leaps of the Gazelle.”

46
00:05:22,100 --> 00:05:25,340
In the hours before dawn, Saturn and Mars

47
00:05:25,340 --> 00:05:28,840
rise in the summer constellation of Sagittarius,

48
00:05:28,840 --> 00:05:32,400
joining Jupiter in the sky.

49
00:05:32,400 --> 00:05:40,920
The 3 planets differ in apparent brightness and size.

50
00:05:40,920 --> 00:05:44,700
The distinctive color of Mars, rings of Saturn,

51
00:05:44,700 --> 00:05:48,080
and cloud bands of Jupiter make these planets

52
00:05:48,080 --> 00:05:55,580
easy to distinguish with a backyard telescope.

53
00:06:01,920 --> 00:06:05,260
The Lyrid meteor shower will peak in the early morning

54
00:06:05,260 --> 00:06:09,180
hours of April 22.

55
00:06:09,180 --> 00:06:13,320
Expect to see up to 20 bright meteors per hour

56
00:06:13,320 --> 00:06:17,960
after midnight.