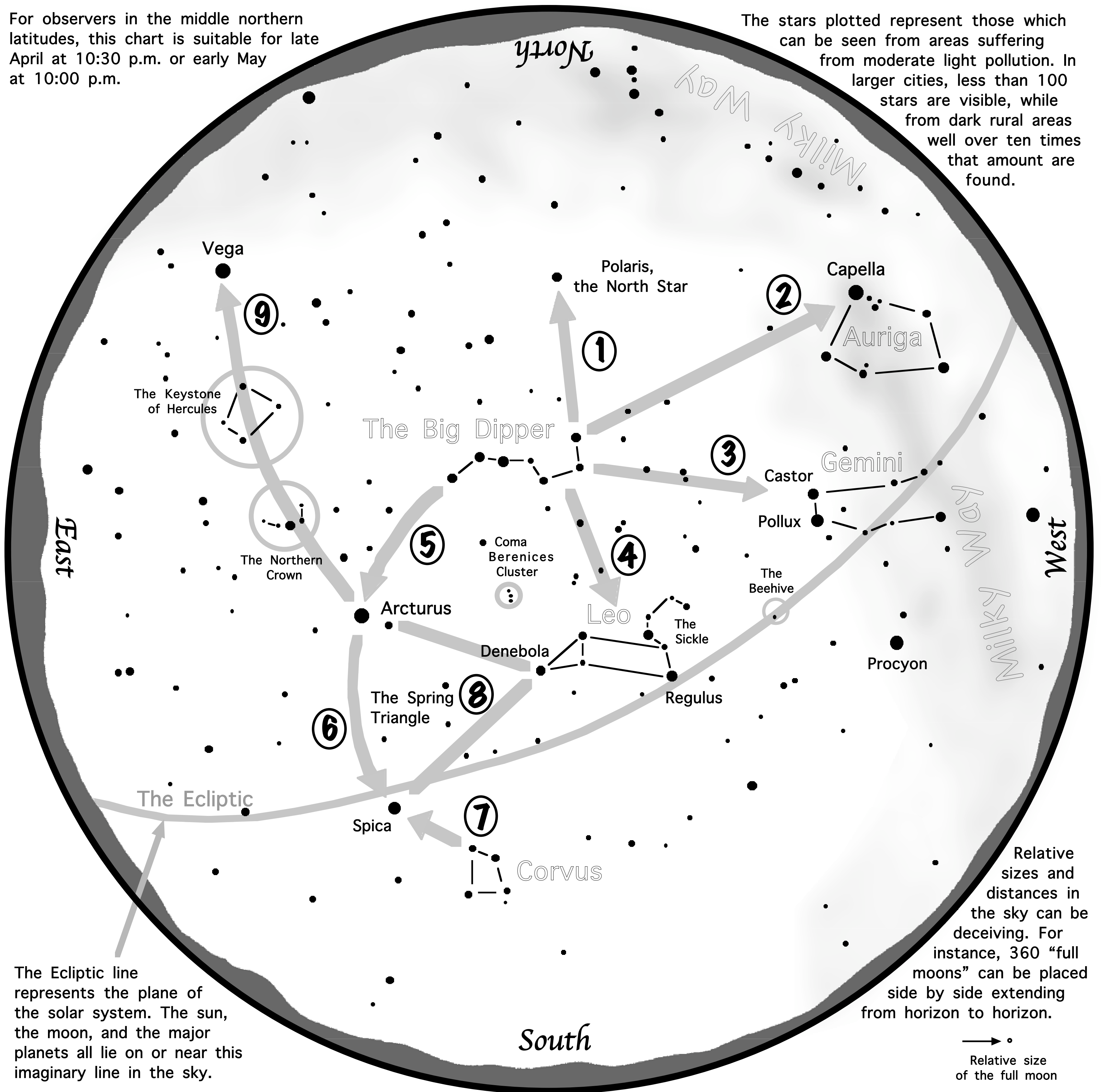


Navigating the Spring Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for late April at 10:30 p.m. or early May at 10:00 p.m.

The stars plotted represent those which can be seen from areas suffering from moderate light pollution. In larger cities, less than 100 stars are visible, while from dark rural areas well over ten times that amount are found.



The Ecliptic line represents the plane of the solar system. The sun, the moon, and the major planets all lie on or near this imaginary line in the sky.

Relative sizes and distances in the sky can be deceiving. For instance, 360 "full moons" can be placed side by side extending from horizon to horizon.

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Relative size of the full moon

Navigating the spring night sky isn't difficult.
Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

At this time of year in the early evening, the Big Dipper lies nearly overhead.

- 1** Extend an imaginary line directly north from the two stars at the tip of the Dipper's bowl. It passes by Polaris, the North Star.
- 2** Draw another imaginary line across the top two stars of the Dipper's bowl. It strikes Capella low in the northwest.
- 3** Through the two diagonal stars of the Dipper's bowl, draw a line pointing to the twin stars of Castor and Pollux in Gemini.
- 4** Directly below the Dipper's bowl reclines Leo with its primary star Regulus. The western portion of this zodiacal constellation forms a sickle or a "backwards question mark."
- 5** Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It first intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the spring night sky.
- 6** Then, the arc continues until it meets Spica, the brightest star in Virgo.
- 7** Confirm Spica by noting that two moderately bright stars just to its southwest form a straight line with it.
- 8** Arcturus, Spica, and another star, Denebola in Leo form the Spring Triangle, a large equilateral triangle.
- 9** From Arcturus, draw a line to Vega, a similarly bright star shining above the northeastern horizon. One third of the way sits "The Northern Crown." Two thirds of the way to Vega hides the "Keystone of Hercules." A dark sky is needed to see these two interesting but dim stellar configurations.



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Design by John Jardine Goss