

Stars over Sisters

By Alex Burroughs
Correspondent

The constellation Camelopardalis can be found in the northern sky this month all night, lying just above Cassiopeia. The Greek name means giraffe, which it got because of its long neck. It was named by the Dutch astronomer Petrus Plancius in 1642.

The easiest way to find Camelopardalis is to find the Little Dipper, and from the cup along the handle to the North Star and continue that arc right into the giraffe.

CS Camelopardalis is the second-brightest star within the constellation. It's a binary star, a blue-white supergiant with another star 2.9 arcseconds away. Component A is also a variable star that has non-radial pulsations, meaning part of its surface expands while others contract, causing the magnitude to change back and forth from 4.19 to 4.23.

Also within this constellation many deep-sky objects can be seen, including NGC 2403, a spiral galaxy approximately 8 million light-years away, which is part of the M81 group found in Ursa Major. Another deep-sky object located in

Camelopardalis is NGC 1502, an open star cluster with 45 stars in it.

The spring equinox will be at 9:30 p.m. PDT on March 19. The equinox is one of two days in the year when there are 12 hours of light and 12 hours of dark. Since the earth's axis is on a tilt of 23.4 degrees, as it revolves around the sun, the North Pole will be pointing away or toward it. The winter solstice occurs when the North Pole is pointed away from the sun and the summer solstice is just the opposite. The equinoxes, however, are when the earth is right in-between and both the south and north poles are equal distances from the sun, creating a 12-hour day.

The equinoxes are also the days when the earth arrives at the points in its orbit where the celestial equator intersects the ecliptic. The ecliptic is the plane of the solar system, the path that all the planets, zodiac constellations, the moon and the sun follow. The celestial equator is an imaginary plane that extends from the equator on earth into the celestial sphere. The ascending node is where the earth crosses the celestial equator on its journey northward.



PHOTO COURTESY NASA, TAKEN BY HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE
NGC 2403 is a spiral galaxy located about 8 million light-years away in the constellation of Camelopardalis.

This point is also known as the First Point of Aries, so named because it used to lie in the constellation of Aries. However, because of the earth's precession, the earth's wobble over time has caused the North Star to change, and now the First Point of Aries is in the constellation of Pisces. This is where the sun will rise on the spring equinox.

Throughout the month of March, four planets will be visible. Jupiter can be found all night and all month high in the southwestern sky in the constellation Leo. Early in the month, Saturn will be

rising in the constellation of Scorpius in the east a few hours before sunrise. Venus will rise just moments before the sun all month and will be slightly more difficult to spot. As the month progresses, look for Mars to join Saturn in Scorpius, both planets rising about 2 a.m. in the southeast.

March will start off with dark skies as the moon is waning into the new moon phase on March 9. The first quarter will be March 15 and progressively get bigger and brighter until the full moon on March 23.

Government prosecutors seek to push back trial

PORTLAND (AP) — Government prosecutors have filed a motion to push back the trial dates for those arrested following a 41-day standoff at an Oregon wildlife refuge.

The prosecutors want a federal judge to deem the case complex, which would delay the defendants' right to a speedy trial and likely send the case into 2017.

They cite the unique crime scene, the large number of defendants and complicated pre-trial discovery issues.

Defense attorney Lisa Hay filed a document opposing efforts to designate the case as complex.

Standoff leader Ammon Bundy and 15 others were scheduled to each be arraigned on a conspiracy charge. Prosecutors say a superseding indictment with additional charges could be filed early next month, after investigators finish processing the crime scene near Burns.

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