

# Stars over Sisters

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Correspondents

As the month of April comes around, there are new things you can see in the night sky. Two of the more prominent constellations you can see this month are Leo and Hydra. The head of Hydra is visible between January and May while Leo is best viewed during the evening hours of spring.

The one we will focus on in this article is Hydra, also known as the sea serpent. It's the largest constellation of the 88 and covers 1,303 square degrees in the sky. Of the constellations that border Hydra, the northernmost is Cancer, Centaurus to the south, Libra to the east, and Canis Minor and Monoceros to the west. Look for the celestial serpent around 9 p.m. during the month of April.

One curious deep-sky object in Hydra is a spiral galaxy called NGC 4980. NGC 4980 has a slightly deformed shape, which usually means it's interacting with another galaxy nearby. But there seem to be no galaxies near this spiral, which is fairly odd.

Another interesting object in Hydra is a star called TW Hydrae. This star is waterlogged, meaning there is a frigid water-vapor disk forming around it. The

researchers at NASA believe it could potentially form into a solar system. The star, having water vapor, suggests that planets covered in water like Earth could be more common in the universe than astronomers first thought.

The constellation Hydra, in Greek mythology, is related to Hercules and his second labor. Hydra was a giant creature with nine heads, one of which was immortal. The constellation is depicted as having only one head, supposedly the immortal one.

During the battle, every time Hercules would destroy one of Hydra's heads, two more would appear. As they were fighting, Hercules was distracted by a crab that attacked his foot. Once he killed it, Hera (wife of Zeus) put it among the stars, creating the constellation Cancer.

Hercules was finally able to gain the upper hand in his struggle with Hydra by burning the stump of a severed head so they couldn't keep growing back. Eventually, he cut off the immortal head and trapped it under a rock, defeating the monster.

On April 1, Mercury reached its greatest eastern elongation from the sun. You can see it in the western sky right after sunset.

When April 7 comes



PHOTO COURTESY ESA/NASA/JPL

An artist's impression of a waterlogged accretion disk about the star TW Hydrae, suggesting that water-rich worlds may be forming there. The star is 175 light-years away in the constellation of Hydra.

around, Jupiter will be at opposition. This means that the giant planet will be seen throughout the entire night. It will also be closest to the earth on that date — an ideal time to make observations. With some simple equipment like binoculars, four of Jupiter's largest moons (Europa, Io, Ganymede and Callisto) can be seen.

On April 10, the sun and the moon will be located on opposite sides of the earth, resulting in the Full Pink Moon.

Finally, mark your calendars for Saturday, April 29. It's International Astronomy Day. Celebrate by stargazing with the Sisters Astronomy Club as it holds its first Stars over Sisters

starwatch of the 2017 season. After a brief presentation in the Sisters Park & Recreation District building, local amateur astronomers will guide observers through the wonders of the night sky. The event will take place in the southwest parking lot at Sisters High School and will begin at 8:30 p.m.

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