

THE STARRY SIDE

Two beauties bright and bold

BY GREELEY WELLS

Winter is upon us. The last treat of fall for me was the eclipse of the moon, seen through the window of the hospital after my hernia operation. Earlier in October there was a solar eclipse and a meteor shower, though we missed that for the rain. Luck of the draw.

Looking north in the winter brings celestial treats, like three pairs of stars, equally distant from each other. I used to think of them as feet of the great bear, Ursa Major. But in Africa, those three double stars represent the gazelle's high-leaping footprints. Whatever you think they are, they go straight up, from close to the horizon parallel to the Big Dipper (great bear). The Dipper is standing on its handle tip (or the bear is standing on his tail). Further west, to your left, is the Little



Illustration: Guy Ottewell's Astronomical Calendar 2014.

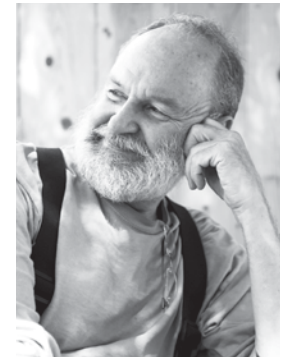
Dipper, which is also vertically oriented and upside down, hanging from the North Star (Polaris) by its handle. I love this interesting trio, which, seen in the early mornings in October, is a harbinger of winter. I say all the time, and it's always worth repeating: the dawn you see this season displays the evening constellations of the next season.

Meanwhile, Orion floats overhead, first on his back in the east; then rising almost upright to the zenith and descending into the west; and later in winter landing perfectly upright on his feet on the western horizon line. Roughly lining up with his belt is his entourage of forerunners: the "V" of Taurus the bull and the "tiny dipper" of the Pleiades (also known as

Subaru). After Orion—also roughly lined up with his belt, but in the other direction—is the most impressive and brightest star in the sky after our sun: Sirius, the dog star.

This is a big part of the cold, clear and amazing winter night sky—two bright and bold sets of beauties.

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Greeley's Sky Calendar

The planets

Venus slips slowly into the evening sky in the December sunset and becomes our evening star for eight months. She keeps rising and gathering speed all season.

Mars in December is in the west and falling toward the sunset for the winter.

Jupiter rises before midnight and is still close to Regulus, Leo's heart, for the season. In February, Jupiter is at its closest to earth and is its biggest size—perfect for astrophotography!

Saturn emerges from the dawn glare in December and rises there all season.

Other events of note

March 20th equinox: the sun is over the equator, equal day and night, and first day of spring.

Earthquake preparedness—It's all about reducing panic

BY CYNTHIA CHENEY

Earthquakes—when terra firma suddenly rolls and jerks underfoot—are scary events, and southern Oregon is overdue for a really big one. But the purpose of the November 1 "Earthquake and the Applegate" event held at the Applegate Valley Community Grange was to help residents avoid panic with three measures: know what to expect, prepare for it, and practice what to do. Over 80 folks attended to find out how they could face such a disaster with more readiness and less panic.

A big thank you to all the presenters: Mark Prchal; Sandy Shaffer; Chief Brett Fillis and Carey Chaput from Applegate Valley Fire District; Jenny Hall from Jackson County Emergency Management; and Michelle Taylor, disaster program manager for the regional American Red Cross. Thanks also to the Friends of Ruch Library for organizing the event and to the Applegate Valley Community Grange for hosting.

Geologist Mark Prchal set the stage by describing how scientists found evidence showing that southern Oregon has suffered more frequent major quakes than Oregon as a whole, since, in addition to the Cascadia subduction zone paralleling the coast, we have a "branch" pointed right at

us. Our area can expect a major shake-up (about eight on the Richter scale) every 240 years. The last one was in 1700; the clock is ticking...

What should we expect from a big quake? Immediately, you'll likely be unable to stand and things may be falling on you. Get under something sturdy, protect your neck and head, and hang on so you aren't bounced around. If outdoors, get in the open away from trees, poles, rocks, etc., that can fall or roll. There may be less powerful aftershocks that can still be damaging. If you live where a breach of Applegate Dam may flood you, get to high ground *as soon as possible*. Water travels fast!

Experts predict severe damage to our roads and bridges, downed power lines, landslides, collapsed buildings, and trees and poles blocking roads and driveways. Downed power lines may cause fires. Phones will be out and cell phone circuits overloaded.

There seems to be general agreement that repairs will be slow. The I-5 freeway may be unusable at many points between here and Eugene, with traffic detours at Weed over to Bend, then back to Eugene or Corvallis that will last for months or possibly years. Restoring power to our region could take three to six months

depending on what larger elements of the grid have been damaged (such as high-voltage electric substations and transmission lines).

Given all this, we'll be on our own for a while. Local agencies including the Red Cross have detailed plans, but roads may be blocked every couple of miles by downed power lines, landslides, and fallen trees. Bridges may be wrenched apart from here to Brookings and north beyond Roseburg. Help won't arrive soon.

Your "community" will suddenly become your neighbors within walking distance. Get together and discuss how you can help each other—who has medical or firefighting experience, generators, tractors, people with special needs, babies, etc.

Be responsible now for yourself and your family. Stockpile supplies to last for three to seven days. Imagine that everything you own is destroyed—what do you really need? Water, food, medications, pet food, a camp stove and fuel, cooking pots, clothing, a battery or crank-powered

radio, copies of important documents, bedding, tarps or a tent, tools, bleach to disinfect water.

Have communication and meeting plans for your family in case some are at work or at school when a disaster occurs. Practice your plan to make sure everyone knows what to do. Make sure your dried food is edible and that your children are comfortable with a night of no phones or electricity. Know how to check your house and other buildings for safety and how to shut off utilities. Plan for your pets and livestock with food, gear, and transport (cat carrier, dog crate, horse trailer).

It sounds like a lot to do, but many of us put more effort into other things important to us, like Christmas decorations or throwing a party. Take a few hours and get this done for yourself and your household. Plan, prepare, practice—and you won't have to panic, whether faced with an earthquake, wildfire, or other natural disaster.

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More information on the APWC Lecture Series will be presented on our website at the following address and on our Facebook page. Please contact us if you have any questions.
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