

# THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



With Glenn Dawes

A fabulous month for spotting planetary conjunctions and all the iconic constellations of the seasons

## When to use this chart

**1 Apr at 00:00 AEDT (31 Mar, 13:00 UT)**  
**15 Apr at 23:00 AEST (13:00 UT)**  
**30 Apr at 22:00 AEST (12:00 UT)**

The chart accurately matches the sky on the dates and times shown for Sydney, Australia. The sky is different at other times as the stars crossing it set four minutes earlier each night.

## APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

Morning skies in April deliver some impressive conjunctions. Mars has two interesting meetings. From 9 to 13 April, it sits within 1.5° of Saturn, being side by side on the 11th, only 0.4° apart. It then encounters Neptune from 28 April to 1 May, the planets fitting in a 1° circle, closing to just 0.3° on the 29th! The next two meetings involve Venus and are low in the dawn sky. The most challenging finds Venus 0.5° from faint Neptune on 4 April. Then on 20 April, Venus sits 1.8° from Mercury.

## STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS

What a great time to spot bright constellations that are iconic to the seasons. There's no better symbol for autumn than the Southern Cross and pointers rising in the southern evening sky. Before Crux crosses the meridian, catch the summer signpost of Orion, now on its side, setting in the west. Winter's representatives must be Scorpius rising in the east, followed by Sagittarius's Teapot. All are visible under light-polluted skies and ideal for beginners learning the heavens.

## THE PLANETS

As Jupiter and Neptune drop into the western twilight sky in early April, planet observing switches to the morning. Mars and Saturn are rising around 03:30 (mid-month) and travel together for most of April, less than 10° apart. Venus remains

the brilliant 'Morning Star' rising around dawn. April begins with Neptune close to Venus. This ice giant then rises quickly in the predawn, passing Mars as April closes. Mercury returns to the morning mid-month and is best visible at month's end.

## DEEP-SKY OBJECTS

This month, a sip from Crater the Cup. Found west of Corvus, this faint constellation's main stars are around fourth magnitude, one being Gamma (γ) Crateris (RA 11h 24.9m, dec. -17° 41'). This double star consists of a white mag. +4.1 primary and a fainter mag. +9.5 blue companion, a snug 5.2 arcseconds apart.

Find mag. +4.4 Beta (β) Crateris. Only 2' westward lies the galaxy NGC 3511

(RA 11h 03.4m, dec. -23° 05'). This 11th-magnitude spiral has a faint, elongated halo (4 x 1 arcminutes) that brightens slightly towards its centre, showing a hint of a small, oval core. Only 0.2° south is another spiral galaxy, NGC 3513. In contrast, this appears almost circular (approx. 1.5 arcminutes across). It brightens towards its centre, but with no obvious core. The pair make an attractive sight through widefield eyepieces.

## Chart key

GALAXY	DIFFUSE NEBULOSITY	ASTEROID TRACK	STAR BRIGHTNESS: MAG. 0 & BRIGHTER
OPEN CLUSTER	DOUBLE STAR	METEOR RADIANT	MAG. +1
GLOBULAR CLUSTER	VARIABLE STAR	QUASAR	MAG. +2
PLANETARY NEBULA	COMET TRACK	PLANET	MAG. +3
			MAG. +4 & FAINTER

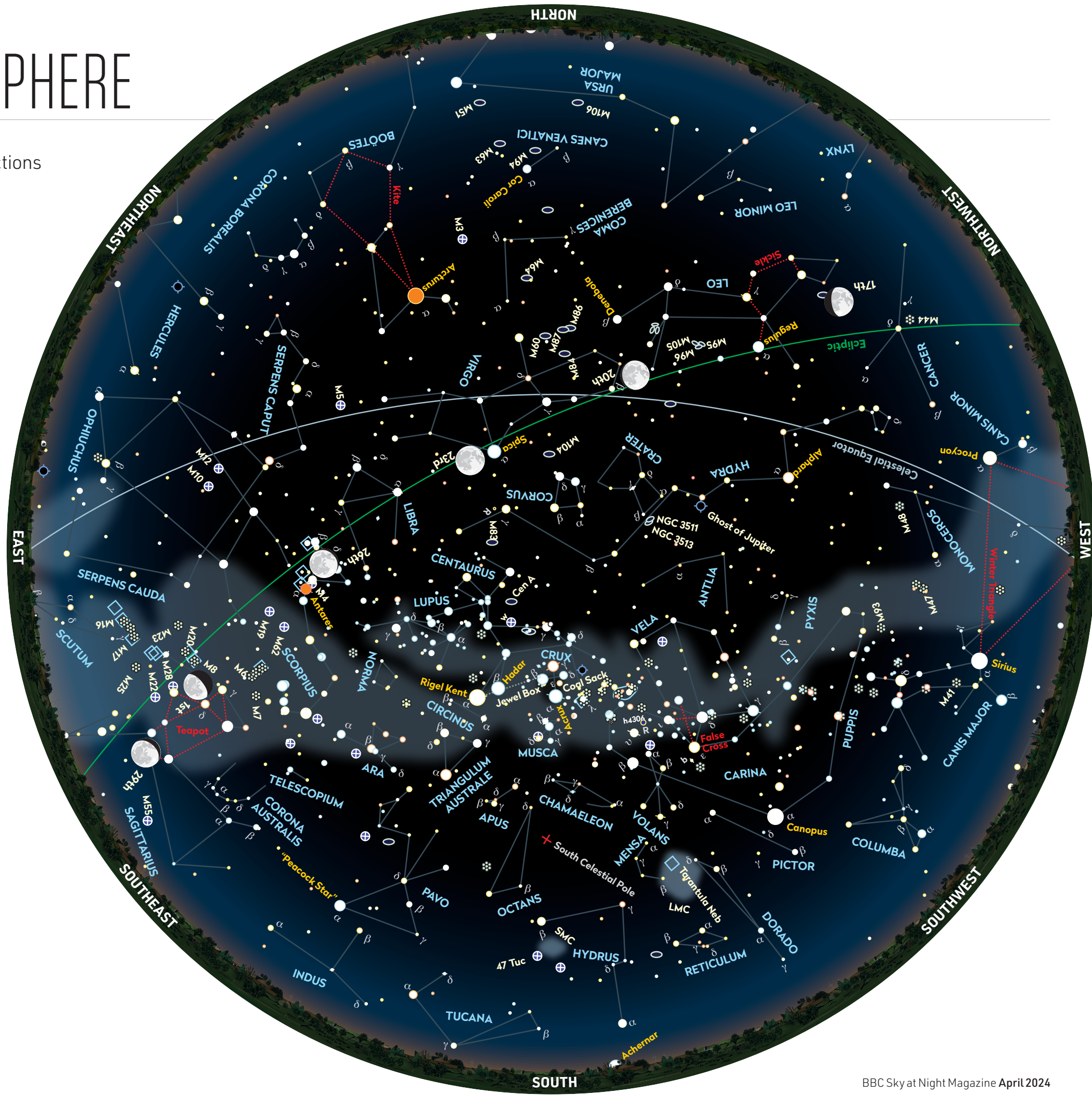


CHART: PETE LAWRENCE