

# SCOPE On the skies

A lion's share of lore; disparate images from various cultures.

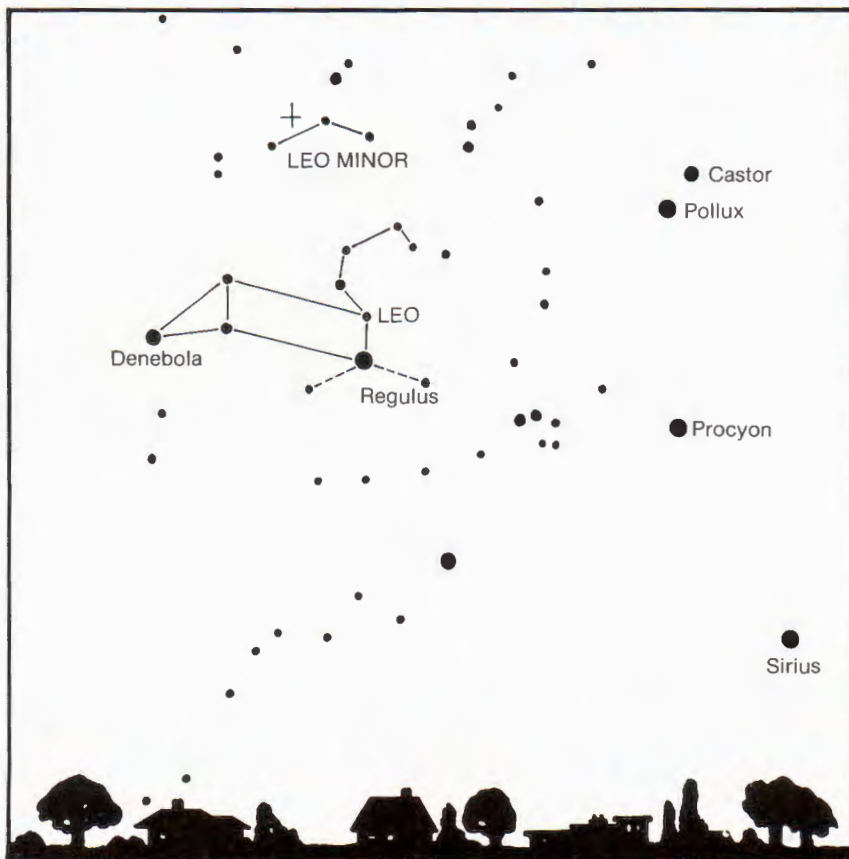
## A regal mane



"In like a lion and out like a lamb" is an apt description for the month in which spring begins. (This year, spring starts on Wednesday, March 20). While Leo the Lion rises over the south-southeastern horizon, the constellation Aries the Lamb sets over the western horizon. And so the muted stars of spring appear lamblike in comparison to the bright stars of winter.

### Told tales

Throughout the ages, cultures from around the world have viewed Leo, the feline constellation, quite differently. During the time of Ptolemy (150 A.D.), Leo was drawn to include the stars west of Cancer the Crab and the stars east of the faint constellation known as Coma Berenices. Some of the various Indian tribes of northern Brazil see a crayfish within the stars of Leo, while others see a figure named Tauna, the God of Thunder and Lightning. These Indians believe that heavy thunderstorms are caused by Tauna bashing clouds with his large club. To those in the arctic regions of Siberia, the backwards-question-mark-shaped stars form a curled-up sleeping woman. Our modern depiction of Leo has the backwards-question-mark shape as the



LOOKING SOUTH ABOUT 9 P.M.

head and mane of the lion. The body ends at a small triangle of stars to the east.

The star name "Regulus" refers to the heart of the lion, while "Denebola" is derived from an Arabic word meaning tail of the lion. While Leo the Lion is a prominent constellation, its counterpart, Leo Minor is difficult, if not impossible, to see. This constellation is not from the classical mythologies as it was created during the 16th century by the Polish astronomer Hevelius (1611-87). According to ancient Chinese astrologers, the clarity of Leo Minor before an election foretold that meritorious men were to be elected. (Interestingly, these stars are rarely seen in this country.)

### Planet bright

The four brightest planets are all visible in the evening skies this month, and by using our moon, each of these planets can easily be located. On March 17, very low over the western horizon, the Moon appears above the planet Mercury. The next evening the waxing crescent Moon appears north of Venus. Several days later, on March 21, the Moon will appear just north of Mars. Finally, on the evening of March 25, the Moon is slightly south of Jupiter.

Mercury, as usual, is an elusive object but may be seen at the end of the month. Look toward the western horizon, just after sunset, starting around March 27.

Art by Max-Karl Winkler



Mars lies east of Venus, still within the boundaries of Taurus the Bull, and is visible throughout the night. It sets about two hours before sunrise. Having completed its retrograde loop during February, Mars will continue its regular motion eastward this month.

### Evening Planets

- Mercury: Visible, but very low over the western horizon, setting about one hour after the Sun.
- Venus: Very bright over the western horizon, setting at about midnight.
- Mars: High over the southern horizon, setting about midnight.
- Jupiter: Over the eastern horizon at sunset and visible all night.

### Moon Phases

- Third Quarter - March 8  
 New Moon - March 16  
 First Quarter - March 23  
 Full Moon - March 30

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