

WEEKLY SKY REPORT

April 21 – April 27, 2024

ASTERISMS

While you're looking for meteors this week (see below), check out the sweet asterism right overhead. An asterism is an unofficial constellation that resembles some fanciful shape or other. The Big Dipper (perhaps the most famous asterism) in Ursa Major (the Big Bear, an official constellation) will be at the zenith before midnight with the constellation Leo the lion strolling right beneath it. Halfway between these two carnivorous creatures is the fleet footprints of their would-be prey, the Three Leaps of the Gazelle. Look for three sets of pairs of stars with the middle pair right above Leo's unsuspecting head.

SPACE STATIONS

The Chinese space station Tiangong has some great passes visible from Berkeley this week:

April 21 8:37pm West, Altitude 20°; 8:39pm North, Altitude 45°; Magnitude -1.3

April 22 9:11pm North West, Altitude 20°; 9:13pm North, Altitude 40°; Magnitude -1.1

April 23 9:45pm North West, Altitude 20°; 9:47pm North West, Altitude 53°; Mag. -1.5

April 24 8:42pm North West, Altitude 20°; 8:44pm North, Altitude 43°; Magnitude -1.3

April 25 9:15pm North West, Altitude 20°; 9:18pm North East, Altitude 78°; Mag. -2.2

April 27 2:46pm North West, Altitude 20°; 8:48pm South West, Altitude 72°; Mag. -2.2

METEOR SHOWERS

The Lyrids will have to fight with the nearly full moon this year. But if you can block out the moon with a building or tree, then you might have a chance of seeing some of these remnants of Comet Thatcher (G1861 G1). Look in the direction of the bright star Vega in the constellation Lyra, which rises over the Berkeley Hills after 11pm. Dress warmly and have a cup of cocoa with you and you may catch sight of one of the fireballs this shower often produces.

Telescopes @ Berkeley Public Library!

We have 5 Orion StarBlast Astro Reflector Telescopes that you can borrow! Each BPL Branch has a telescope, which may be borrowed for 1 week. Place a hold on it and then pick it up from your branch when it is ready. It is fairly easy to carry at 13 lbs., and stands about 2 feet tall.

Here's what you get:

"A great compact grab-and-go telescope designed for entry-level and intermediate astronomy enthusiasts. Substantial 4.5" aperture and fast f/4 focal ratio provides bright, detailed views of solar system targets like the Moon and planets, as well as wide-field celestial objects like nebulas and star clusters."



Much of the information for this report comes from the wonderful web site, Heavens Above. You can enter your home city location and bookmark it for easy access: <http://www.heavens-above.com>. Other stellar sources include: <http://www.space.com> and <http://www.nasa.gov>. And check [spacex.com](http://www.spacex.com) for launches.

Binoculars @ Berkeley Public Library!

Thanks to a generous donation from the Cal Falcons program, we have 9 Vortex-Raptor binocular kits that you can put on hold and pick up at the location of your choice.

Here's what you get:

Porro prism performance in a mid-size, wide-angle design, the Raptors deliver a bright, crisp image with excellent color fidelity - even in low light conditions. With a wide range of interpupillary distance, they can easily be adjusted to fit anyone in the family, making them ideal for serious, hard-core youth hunters. The kit comes with a copy of The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western America and a pocket guide to local birds of the SF Bay Area. But it is also great for looking at planets, the moon and the stars!

