SKY CALENDAR APRIL 2022

An aid to enjoying the changing sky

Planetarium business office:
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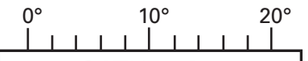
Use this scale to measure angular distances between objects on diagrams below.



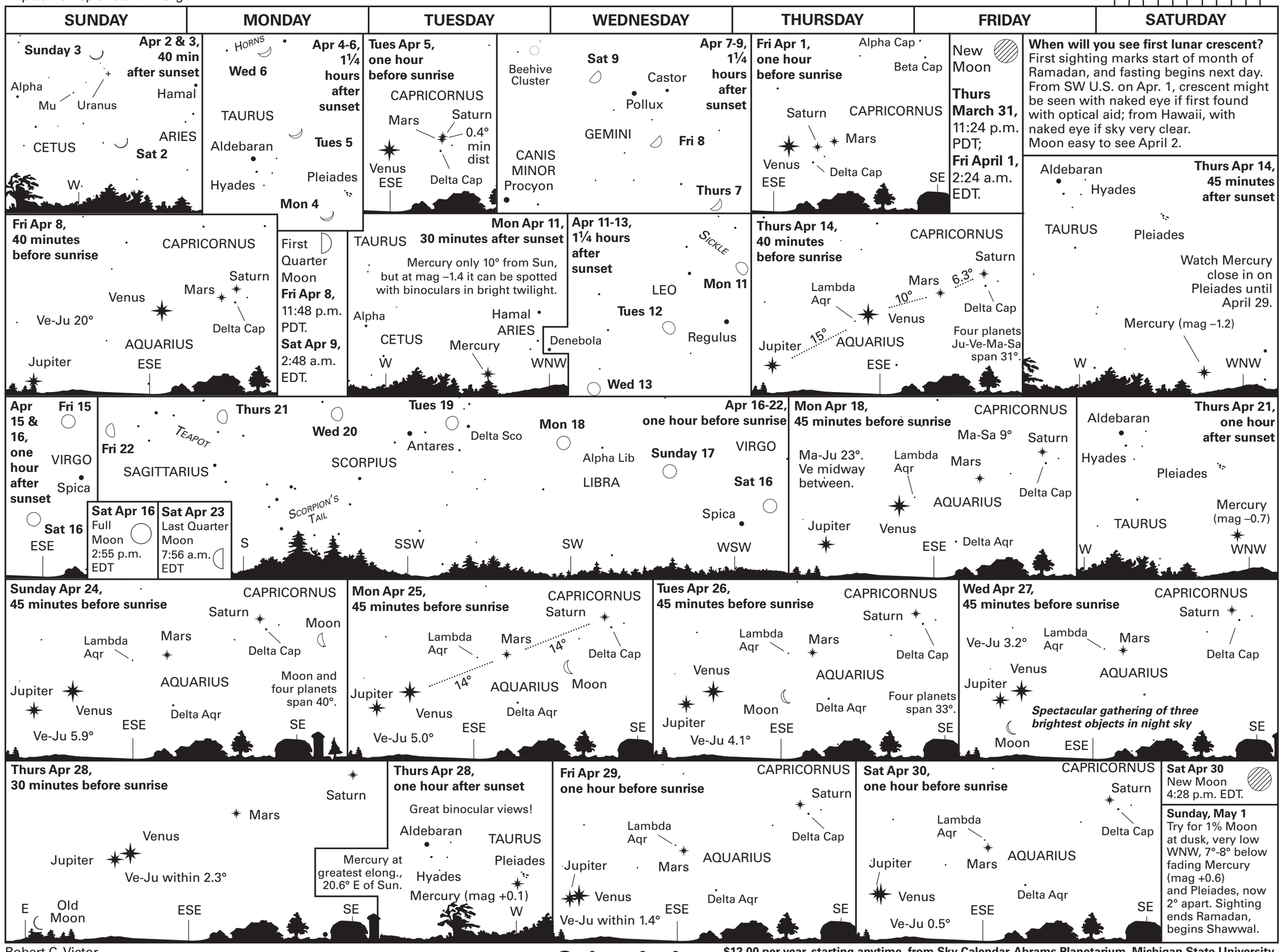
The predawn planet shuffle continues! Three planets fit within a 10° span March 21-April 7, with changes in their order on March 29 and April 5. Least size of 3-planet gathering **Venus-Saturn-Mars** was 5.3° on March 28. They still fit within 6.2° on April 1. **Jupiter** emerges in first days of April, bringing morning total to four. Jupiter-Venus-Mars-Saturn reach minimum span of 30° on April 5 as Mars passes 0.4° S of Saturn. **The waning Moon** passes by two first-mag. stars and four bright planets in morning twilight April 16-27, ending with **spectacular gathering of Moon, Venus, and Jupiter on April 27.** (See waning crescent Moon on one additional morning.) **April 30 has close pairing of two brightest planets!**

While you're up early to enjoy the show, listen to the springtime chorus of birds! In spring of 1971, I had the pleasure of taking a class in field ornithology taught by MSU Professor George J. Wallace. We visited many natural areas and learned to identify birds by sight and sound. I am grateful for being introduced to another aspect of nature to improve the quality of my life, and dedicate this month's calendar to him. *https://youtu.be/53r67pXxsGE*

Magnitudes: Venus –4.4 to –4.1; Jupiter –2.0 to –2.1; Saturn +0.9 to +0.8; Mars +1.1 to +0.9.
Telescopic views: Venus 56% to 67% illuminated, and 22″ (arcseconds) to 17″ across. Compare to Jupiter's disk, 33″ to 35″ wide, and extent of Saturn's rings, 36″ to 37″ across, tipped 13° from edge-on.

Evenings: Mercury passes superior conjunction on April 2, and proceeds to its best apparition of the year. Passing ascending node on Apr. 9 and perihelion on Apr. 13, it quickly and brightly emerges at dusk. By Apr. 11, Mercury sets after mid-twilight, and by Apr. 14, after end of nautical twilight. Apr. 22-May 3, Mercury sets in dark sky after twilight's end.

Lyrid meteors in 2022 are best on nights of Apr. 21-22 and 22-23. Meteors normally increase during night as radiant to upper right of Vega ascends from near horizon to nearly overhead. But waning gibbous/Last Quarter Moon rises into view and reduces count. Start watching by 6 hours before sunup on Apr. 22 and 5 hours before sunup on Apr. 23, and you'll have at least an hour of dark moonless skies.



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