

To use your star chart, hold it over your head. To avoid ruining your night vision with a bright flashlight, use a red light, or put a red balloon or brown paper bag over your flashlight for a muted glow.

Align north on the chart with north in the night sky by finding Polaris, the North Star. Begin by locating the **Big Dipper**. Draw a line “upward” between the Dipper’s “pointer stars” to guide you to **Polaris**, going about four and a half times the distance between the two pointer stars. The Dipper’s handle “arcs” toward the orange star **Arcturus**, where you can “speed on to Spica” and then “curve on to Corvus.”

The winter constellations Orion, Taurus, and Gemini are still visible in early spring in the west. Tracing a line through **Orion’s Belt** will lead you westward to **Aldebaran** (the red “eye” of Taurus) or eastward to **Sirius** (the “Dog Star” in Canis Major). Sirius is the brightest star in our nighttime sky. These winter stars and constellations are followed across the sky by the spring patterns Leo, Ursa Major (which includes the Big Dipper), and Virgo. Find **Leo the Lion** just south of the Big Dipper by locating the backward question mark that outlines his head and mane.

This April, bright **Jupiter** hangs in the west after sunset near Aldebaran, in the constellation of Taurus. **Saturn** rises in the east-southeast just before 10 p.m. in early April, but before 8 p.m. by late April. Look for Saturn near Spica, the bright star in the constellation Virgo. (*Saturn’s rise time varies by location as well as date – a bit earlier in eastern NC, later in western NC.)

In April 2013, both **Mars** and **Venus** are in the same part of our sky as the Sun, and therefore not visible in the night sky. Speedy little **Mercury** never ventures far from the Sun, but ambitious observers might catch Mercury in the east just before sunrise.

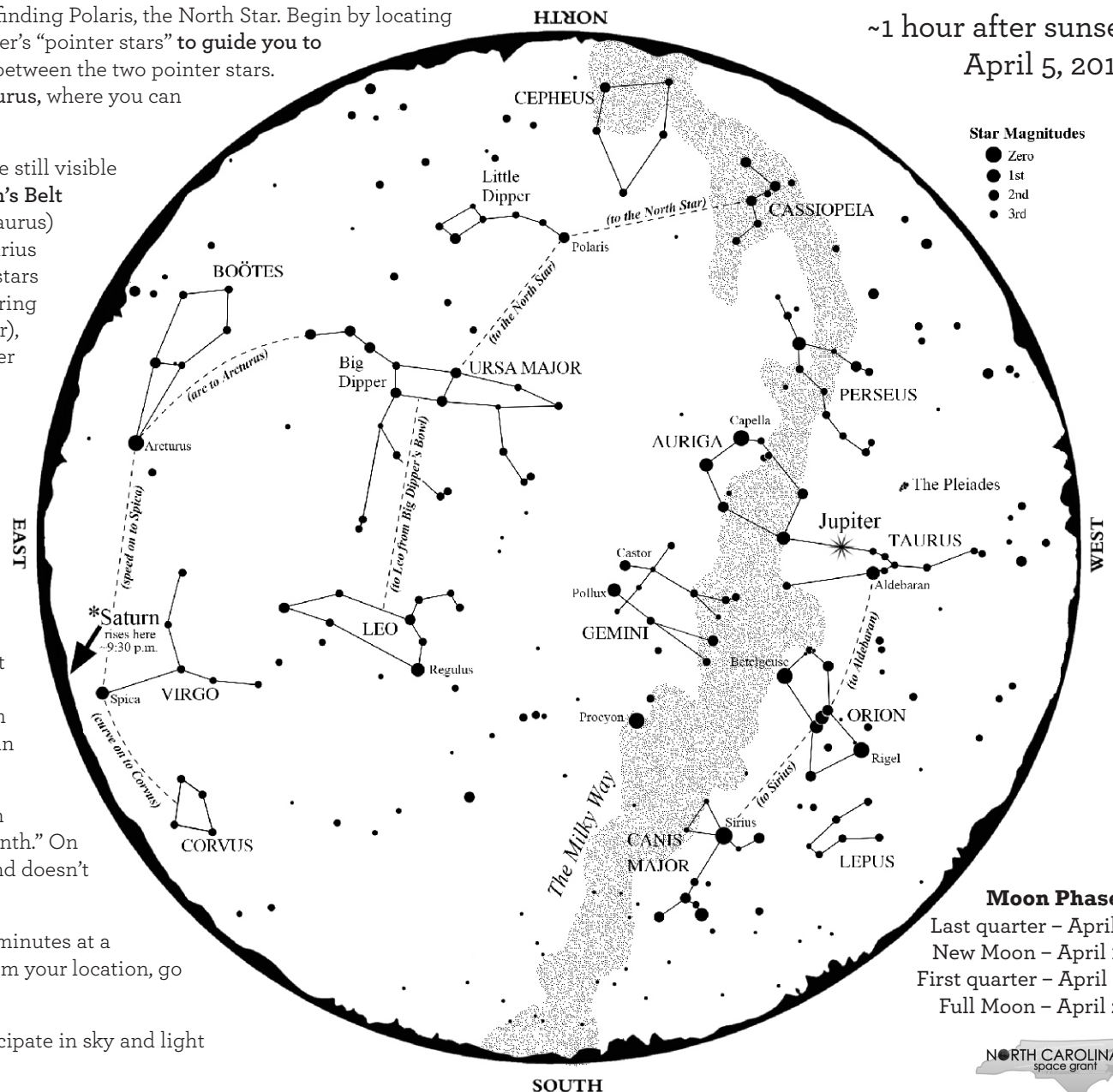
Where is the **Moon** tonight? Earth’s Moon goes through phases from new to full and back again in about a “moonth.” On April 5, the waning crescent Moon sets around 3 p.m. and doesn’t rise again till after 4 a.m. the following morning.

The **International Space Station** orbits Earth every 90 minutes at a speed of 17,500 mph. To find out when it can be seen from your location, go to <http://spotthestation.nasa.gov/>

Visit **GLOBE at Night** (www.globeatnight.org/) to participate in sky and light pollution education as a Citizen Scientist.

www.ncsciencefestival.org/special-opportunities/starparty/

~1 hour after sunset
April 5, 2013



Star Magnitudes
● Zero
● 1st
● 2nd
● 3rd

Moon Phases

Last quarter – April 3
New Moon – April 10
First quarter – April 18
Full Moon – April 25



Supported by the NC Space Grant.