**The May Night Sky**

The brightest star, Takurua Sirius appears midway down the western sky and sets in the southwest around midnight. Sirius,'the Dog Star', marks the head of Pakawanui Canis Major the big dog, now head down, tail up. Atutahi Canopus, second brightest star**,** is southwest of overhead.

Below Takurua are bluish Puanga Rigel and reddish Pūtara Betelgeuse, the brightest stars in Orion. Between them is a line of three stars, Tautoru Orion's belt. To southern hemisphere star watchers, the line of three makes the bottom of 'The Pot', now tipped on its side.

Comet 12P/Pons–Brooks will be visible close to the western horizon early in May as twilight ends. It is found below Rigel, and its tail points towards Rigel

In May, our line of sight is broken by the Sun and the glimmering stars of Matariki Pleiades are lost from our view until June.

Orange Ruawāhia Arcturus is the brightest star in the northern sky, rising in the NE at dusk. It often twinkles red and green when low.

Māhutonga Crux, the Southern Cross, is southeast of the zenith, to the right of 'The Pointers'. Hakihea Alpha Centauri, the brighter Pointer, is the closest naked-eye star, 4.3 light years away. Ranginui Beta Centauri, like most of the stars in Māhutonga, is a blue-giant star hundreds of light years away.

Te Māngōroa the Milky Way is brightest in the southeast. In a dark sky it can be traced up past the Pointers and Crux and fading toward Sirius. Te Māngōroa is our edgewise view of the galaxy, The thick hub of the galaxy, is in Sagittarius & the nearby outer edge is by Orion where the te Māngōroa is faintest.

Following Te Māngōroa down into the southeast finds Manaia ki te Rangi Scorpius. Orange Rehua Antares marks the scorpion's body, with the scorpion's upside-down tail curving to its right. Rehua is a red-giant star like Pūtara, around 12 times the mass of the sun but wider than Earth's orbit.

Ngā Pātari the Clouds of Magellan, Larger and Smaller, are small galaxies midway down the southern sky and easily seen by eye on a dark moonless night.

Many meteors might be seen in the pre-dawn sky around May 7 as the Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks. Caused by debris from the orbit of Halley’s Comet, the show is best seen from a dark location after midnight.

Track the ISS <https://www.space.com/how-to-track-the-international-space-station>

The visible planets always rise in the east, after midnight this month. The eastern pre-dawn sky finds Saturn, Mars and Mercury in a line, with the waning crescent Moon nearby on the 4th to the 6th.

**Whio Mercury**: Early May sees the best morning return for Whio this year, rising one hour before dawn.

**Kōpū Venus**: From places with a low eastern skyline, brilliant Kōpū might be seen rising around 6:30 a.m. At the beginning of the month. It disappears in the twilight soon after.

**Matawhero Mars**: Reddish Matawhero is below the similarly bright Saturn in the pre-dawn east, getting higher as the weeks pass. The Moon is near Matawhero on the 5th.

**Kōpūnui Jupiter**: At the beginning of the month Kōpūnui sets after sunset and soon after disappears from the evening sky.

**Rongo Saturn**: Yellowish Rongo is rising higher in the pre-dawn east as the month goes on. The Moon is near Rongo on the 4th & 31st.

**Rangipō Uranus**: This planet will sit close to Kōpūnui above the western horizon but will be too faint to see in the bright twilight. Will appear as a faint dot to the upper left of Whio on the 31st.

**Tangaroa Neptune**: This distant and faint planet will rise several hours before sunrise, and will be just visible to the upper right of Matawhero early in the month. It will be close to Rongo on the 31st. The moon will occult or pass in front of Tangaroa on the 5th.

Notes:

* Māori have a few names for Scorpius: in April, May and June it’s called Manaia ki te Rangi
* Star groupings, individual stars at 1st mention

Sources

Notes by Alan Gilmore, University of Canterbury's Mt John Observatory

<https://www.planetary.org/night-sky/night-sky-what-to-see-this-month>

<https://www.skyatnightmagazine.com/advice/southern-hemisphere-night-sky-tonight>