The April Night sky

Takurua/Sirius, the brightest true star, appears midway down the northwest sky at dusk. It is soon followed by Atutahi/Canopus, southwest of the zenith. Below Sirius are bluish Puanga/Rigel and orange Pūtara/Betelgeuse, the brightest stars in Orion. Between them is a line of three stars, Tautoru/Orion's belt, making the bottom of 'The Pot', now tipped on its side.

Two dogs follow Orion the hunter across the sky. Below and right of Sirius is Puangahori/Procyon marking the head of Canis Minor. Takurua/Sirius marks the head of Canis Major, the big dog, its hindquarters made by the bright stars above.

In the constellation ofGemini**,** the twins, their heads are marked by the starsWhakaahu kere/Pollux and Whakaahu rangi/Castor. Both stars are brighter than our sun & about 50 light years (ly) away, Pollux orange and Castor a hot white.

The Praesepestar cluster looks like a hazy spot to the eye. It marks the shell of Cancer the Crab. Praesepe is also called the Beehive cluster, from its appearance when viewed in binoculars. It is around 600 million years old so its biggest and brightest stars have long ago burnt out.

Right of Praesepe is the medium-bright star Regulus, the brightest star in Leo the Lion. The curve of stars below Regulus outlines Leo's mane, upside down in our southern hemisphere view. A crooked vertical line of stars right of Regulus makes Leo's hind quarters with the brighter star further right marking his tail.

The lone bright star due east is Whiti-kaupeka/Spica, the brightest star in Virgo. Above Spica is the roughly kite-shaped constellation of Corvus the Crow. Some navigators called it Spica's spinnaker, the sail that tows Spica across the sky (they used Corvus as a handy cross-check that they were sighting on the right star).

Māhutonga/Crux, the Southern Cross, is high in the southeast. Below it, and brighter, are Beta and Alpha Centauri, often called Whetū Matarau/The Pointers'. Alpha Centauri is the closest naked-eye star, about 4 ly away. Beta Centauri, like most of the stars in Crux, is a blue-giant star hundreds of ly away. Canopus is also a very luminous distant star; much brighter than the sun.

Te Māngōroa/The Milky Way is brightest in the southeast above Crux. It can be traced to nearly overhead where it fades and becomes very faint in the northwest, right of Orion. The Milky Way is our edgewise view of the galaxy, the pancake of billions of stars of which the sun is just one.

Ngā Pātari/The Clouds of Magellan are midway down the southwest sky, easily seen by eye on a dark moonless night. They are two small distant galaxies.

The visible planets rise in the east and set in the west

Whiro/Mercury: Visible in the east below Saturn before sunrise. The Moon will be beside Mercury on the 26th.

Kōpū/Venus: The ‘morning star’ rises due east an hour before the Sun this week (2.5h mid-month). The Moon will be above Venus on the morning of the 25th.

Matawhero/Mars: Visible low in the north at dusk, looking like a medium bright orange star. The Moon will be near Mars on the 5th and 6th.

Kōpūnui/Jupiter: The ‘evening star’, appears low in the northwest soon after sunset and sets around 9 pm mid-month. The Moon will be to the right of Jupiter on the 3rd.

Rongo/Saturn: In the east to the right of Venus but hard to see in the pre-dawn sky

Star groups and single stars are coloured at 1st mention

<https://www.rasnz.org.nz/in-the-sky/the-evening-sky/april-evening-sky> <http://www.pixieplots.co.nz/Maori-Star-Names>