

# From your own backyard

CATHARINE E. BARRY

Associate Astronomer American Museum-Hayden Planetarium, N. Y.

FOR months, or so it seems, we have been discussing nothing but space: how to get there; by what means; what would be the design of our "ship of space"; what fuels would be used; what speed would be necessary to break free of the pull from earth; how would we get back to earth, or would it be only a one-way trip; and the physical effect of the trip upon us.

Actually we need not be so concerned with such a trip into space for we can take our journey anytime right from our own backyard without leaving it at all.

First we must find the main points of the compass in the sky—north, south, east and west.

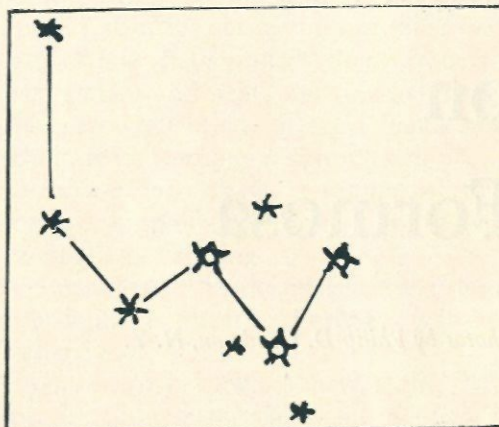
We will use the Big Dipper as our direction finder. Just after dark, this month, you will note that it gets lower and lower in the southwestern part of the sky.

To find the north star, *Polaris*, locate the Dipper's "pointers" *Mirak* and *Dubhe*. *Polaris* is the point in our northern sky about which all stars appear to move counter clockwise.

Facing this star, you will be looking at the northern heavens. South, of course, is in back of you. East will then be on your right and west to your left.

Now, face south. Let's see how many of the less familiar constellations we can identify along with the familiar ones.

The easiest constellation to identify is the Scorpion (*Scorpius*) which is a kite-shaped group—a kite with a long swinging tail. The beautiful red star *Antares* is often mistaken for *Mars*, the red planet.



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In China *Antares* is often called the "Fire Star." It marks the heart of *Scorpius*.

If you have a telescope you can see the companion of *Antares*, a vivid green star which is very hot. Its real luminosity is about fifty times that of the sun. Good binoculars will pick out many interesting objects in this part of the sky—double stars, nebulae, and a "Coal Sack." Many novae (a star that shines suddenly and temporarily with much more than its ordinary strength) have been discovered in this part of the sky.

One of the old myths told about *Scorpius* is that it was connected with *Orion* the Giant. Because of *Orion's* great conceit the Scorpion stung *Orion* in the heel causing his death. However, one can not

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