

WEEK 3

SPASH ASTRONOMY

Bootes, Hercules, Lyra, Cygnus, Aquila

Mythology of the constellation Boötes-Herdsman (herding the Bear) *week #3*

BOOTES, The Hunter has since early times been associated with country pursuits - as hunter, ploughman or herdsman. In Homer's Odyssey he is referred to as Wagoner or Driver of the Wain. However, since the seventeenth century the figure has been associated with the hunting dogs (Canes Venatici) charted by Helvelius. In Greek legend, Boötes is seen as representing Icarus, an Athenian who was taught the secret of winemaking by the god Dionysius. Icarus then allowed some peasants to sample his produce, but his kindness backfired. The men became extremely drunk and were convinced that they had been poisoned, so they killed Icarus and buried him. His daughter Erigone was so overcome with grief when she found his body that she hanged herself. Zeus transferred her to the heavens as Virgo, Icarus became Boötes, and Maera, the dog who had led Erigone to her father's grave, became one of the dogs of Canes Venatici.

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| 1. Arcturus (alpha) | 0.3 | golden yellow | To find it follow the arc of the Big Dipper. The saying is (AR to Arcturus and speed onto Spica) |
| Most commonly thought of as a weapon (sword, lance, dagger, or javelin) in the Hunter's hand or in one nationality it was the 2 nd calf of Leo the Lion where Spica was the 1 st calf. | | | |
| 2. Nekkar (beta) | 3.6 | golden yellow | Arabic name for the whole constellation (marks the head of today's figure.) |
| 3. Segin (gamma) | 3.1 | ? color | the star that marks the left shoulder of the figure |
| 4. Izar (epsilon) | 3.0 | pale orange | the girdle (where Mizar means the waistcloth) |
| 5. Alkalurops (mu) | 4.2 | flushed white | the Herdsman's club, crook, or staff |

Mythology of the constellation Hercules (the kneeling one)

Hercules is probably the best-known and greatest of all Greek heroes. His mother Alcmena, granddaughter of Perseus and Andromeda, was married to Amphitryon, but her beauty attracted the god Zeus and the two became lovers. She eventually gave birth to twin boys - Hercules, the son of Zeus, and Iphicles, his mortal half-brother, fathered by Amphitryon. Whilst still a baby, Hercules had to contend with the wrath of Hera, Zeus's wife. Angered at her husband's unfaithfulness, she decided that Hercules must be killed since he was visible proof of her humiliation. She sent two snakes to murder him as he lay in his crib, but such was Hercules' strength that he was able to strangle them both with his bare hands. Hercules grew to manhood and, as a reward for liberating Thebes, was married to Princess Megara, daughter of the king. But Hera, annoyed at his good fortune, succeeded in driving him temporarily insane and he killed his wife and children. Hercules was then placed in charge of his cousin, Eurystheus, and it was during this period that he performed the twelve labours, all connected with ferocious beasts and monsters, for which he is most famed. A further fit of madness resulted in him killing his friend Iphitus and, as an atonement, he was forced to live as a slave to Queen Omphale for three years. Finally freed from this servitude, he married Deianeira and went into exile with her. Unfortunately, some time later she accidentally poisoned him. He was carried home and arranged his own funeral pyre, ordering the fire to be lit to put an end to his terrible suffering. Zeus saw all and, although Hercules was half mortal, transported him up to Olympus.

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| 1. Ras Algothi (alpha) | 3.1 to 3.9 | orange red | means the kneelers head. |
| 2. Komophorus (beta) | 2.8 | pale yellow | named applied to the whole figure which means bending on his knees |

Mythology of the constellation Lyra

In Greek mythology LYRA represents the instrument which was a gift from Apollo to his son Orpheus. The latter's bride, the beautiful Eurydice, had been killed by a viper and was lost in the underworld. Orpheus set out to try to save her and played such sweet music on his lyre that Hades, King of the Underworld, was charmed into giving permission for Eurydice to follow her husband home. He made one proviso, however, that Orpheus should not turn back to look at Eurydice until they were safely out of Hell. The pair set off but, at the very last moment, Orpheus could not resist turning round to see if Eurydice was following him and she was lost forever.

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| 1. Vega (more correctly known as Wega by the ancients) (alpha) | (0.04) | pale sapphire |
| was the pole-star 14,000 years ago in 12,000 BC. The "Harp Star" is the 5 th brightest star in the sky. | | |
| 2. Shelyak | 3.4 to 4.5 | (very white) from another of the titles of the whole constellation (meaning harp) |

Mythology of the constellation Aquila

Aquila, the pet eagle of Zeus, showed the gentler side of his nature when he carefully carried up Ganymede to Mount Olympus to be cup-bearer to his master. However, when considering the myth surrounding Prometheus, the ferocious, darker side of Aquila is very evident. Prometheus was one of the last Titan gods who became an advisor to Zeus. He was protective of humankind and, seeing how they suffered because they had no fire, he stole a ray from the Sun which he smuggled down to earth in a hollow stem. Zeus did not believe that man was worthy of such a gift, and was furious that Prometheus had acted without his permission. The well-meaning Titan was chained to the side of a mountain, stripped of his garments, and was continually attacked by Aquila. Since he was immortal, his dreadful wounds healed themselves every evening, only to be opened up again the next day by Aquila. After many years Prometheus was saved by Hercules, who agreed with his kind deed to mankind. Using his bow and arrow, he killed Aquila, who was then placed by Zeus to soar in the heavens.

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| 1. Altair (alpha) | 1.3 | pale yellow | is from a part of the Arabic name for the constellation (meaning eagle) |
| 2. Deneb Okab | 3.3 | green | means Eagle's tail |

Mythology of the constellation Cygnus

the most well known of myths surrounding this constellation is that it represents Zeus in the story of Leda and the swan, Leda being the very beautiful wife of King Tyndareus of Sparta. Zeus, noted for his affairs with mortal women, fell in love with Leda and changed himself into a swan in order to seduce her. She produced an egg from which emerged Castor, the mortal son of her husband, and Polydeuces (Pollux), immortal son of Zeus.

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| 1. Deneb (alpha) | 1.4 | brilliant white | means Hen's tail |
| 2. Albireo (beta) | 3.5 | topaz yellow | under a different name it meant the Hen's Beak |
| 3. Sador (gamma) | 2.7 | | means Hen's breast |
| 4. Gienan | 2.6 | yellow | means the wing |

