



Evening sky in APRIL 2012

In the North the constellation of Leo, the Lion, dominates the autumn night sky. Like most constellations it was named by northern hemisphere stargazers and therefore appears upside down to southern hemisphere observers. The brightest star in Leo is Regulus, representing the heart of the Lion. Although seen as a single star, Regulus is a system of four stars, 77.5 light years away. The primary star is young, only a few million years old, with a mass 3.5 times that of the Sun.

Taurus, the Bull is setting in the West, followed by Orion, the Hunter, and his dogs, Canis Major and Canis Minor. Scorpius has risen in the southwest, indicating that winter is on its way. Look for the bright star Canopus high in the southeast in Carina (the Keel). In isiXhosa it is called uCanzibe, the harbinger of winter. Close by is the Southern Cross (Crux) and Pointers (Alpha and Beta Centauri).

Two bright planets, Venus and Jupiter grace the early evening sky to the West. Mars is close to Regulus in Leo and Saturn is close to Spica in Virgo.

The Moon is in the evening sky until 9 April and again from 25 April.