



Evening sky in JUNE 2015

The largest constellation, Hydra (Water Snake), stretches from Libra (Scales), found overhead, all the way down to Cancer (Crab) on the western horizon. Its brightest star is Alpheratz, an orange giant, 177 light years away from Earth. Alpheratz means "the solitary one" and despite the size of the constellation, it is the only reasonably bright star in Hydra. The smallest constellation is Crux, high above the southern horizon. The ancient Greeks saw it as part of Centaurus and only in 1679 did Crux become a constellation in its own right. Its brightest star, Acrux, at the "foot" of the Cross, is 320 light years from Earth. The stars of Crux were known to some Bushmen as "the giraffe". The !Xam Bushmen saw the three brightest stars in Crux as female lions while the two bright stars close by in Centaurus (the Pointers), were seen as male lions.

Planets Venus and Jupiter appear as two brilliant "Evening Stars" in Cancer. On 20 June they form a beautiful grouping with the crescent Moon. Planet Saturn is in Libra.

The Moon is in the evening sky until 5 June and again after 19 June.

Winter solstice is on 21 June.