



Evening sky in OCTOBER 2013

Since ancient times people have grouped stars together into patterns. Modern astronomy divides the entire sky into 88 patterns or constellations, of which only six are not visible from Cape Town. The smallest of all the constellations graces our night sky as the Southern Cross (Crux). At present it can be seen low above the south-western horizon with two bright stars, the Pointers, a little higher up. Look westward to see Scorpius (Scorpion) diving headlong towards the horizon with a curve of stars forming its tail and two stars as its sting. Towards the east a number of "watery" constellations can be seen. Overhead is Piscis Austrinus (Southern Fish) with its brightest star, Fomalhaut. Three big constellations fill the sky to the south: Eridanus (River) meanders down to the horizon with Cetus (Whale) and Pisces (Fishes) alongside.

Planets Mercury, Venus and Saturn are well placed for viewing in the west after sunset. Mercury and Saturn set before Venus. Venus starts the month below Antares, the reddish star at the "heart" of Scorpius but by month-end they have "swopped" places.

The Moon is in the evening sky from 6 October until 20 October.