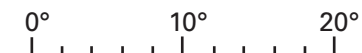


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SKY CALENDAR MAY 2018
 An aid to enjoying the changing sky

Use this scale to measure angular distances between objects on diagrams below.

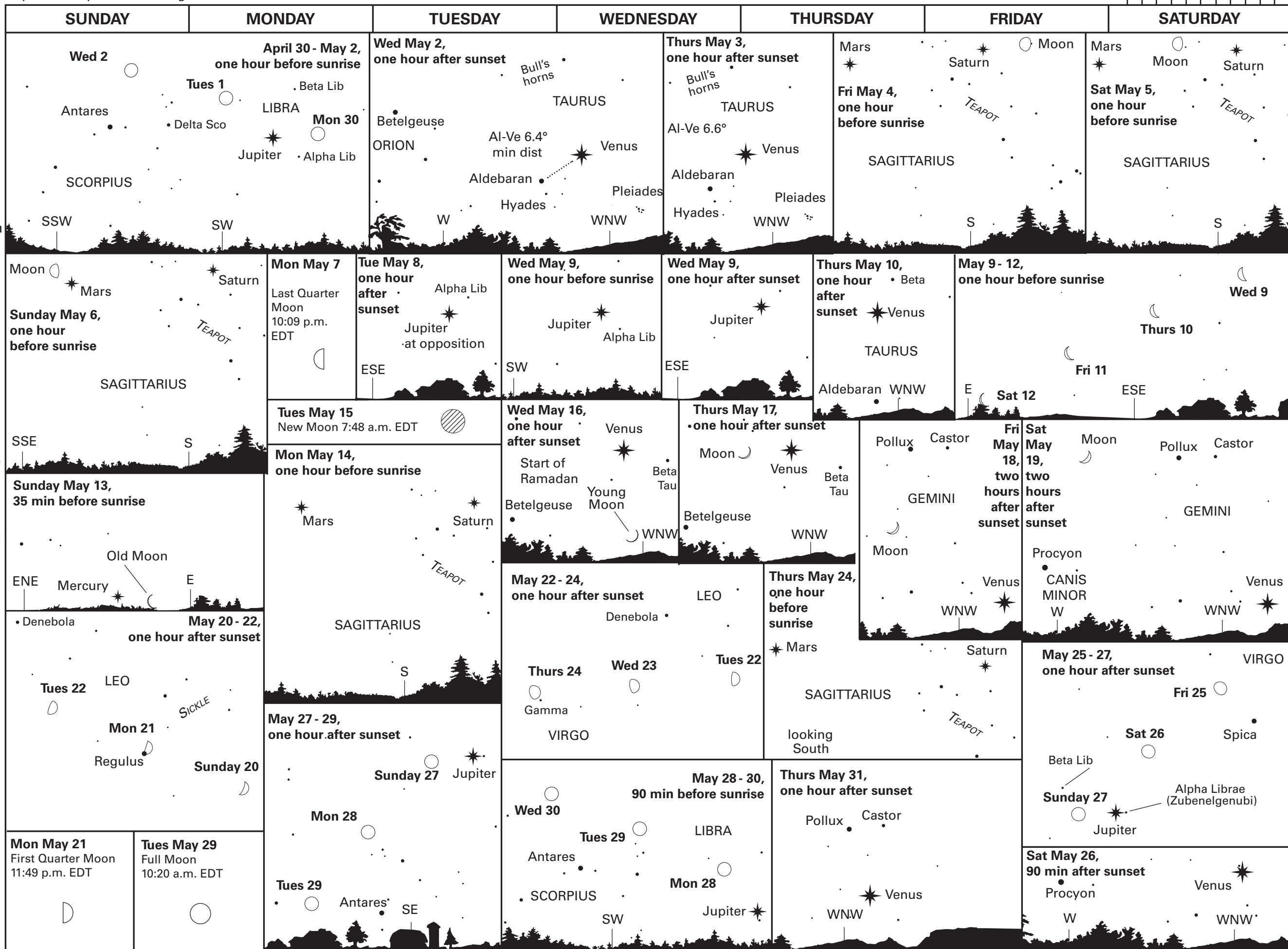


Evening Planets: Venus and Jupiter are on nearly opposite sides of the sky at the start of May. At mid-twilight, look for Venus above the WNW horizon when Jupiter is above the ESE horizon. Watch as these two brightest planets move closer to each other until late September, shortly before Venus drops out of the evening sky in October. Venus sets two and a half hours after sunset at mid-May. **Jupiter** reaches opposition on May 8. Follow Jupiter retrograding past the star Zubenelgenubi (Alpha Librae) on June 3.

Saturn will reach opposition in late June, and **Mars** in late July. **A span of just 79 days includes oppositions of all three bright outer planets.** This is the shortest span including oppositions of all three planets since 1984, when the span was just 57 days. The next time Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn all have oppositions within a shorter interval than in 2018 will be in 2078, when the events will span 75 days.

Morning Planets: Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars all part of the dawn sky. May 1, the three planets span 64°. By May 31, the span has increased to 80° as Mars moves eastward while Jupiter and Saturn move westward against the background stars. As we move towards the best opposition of Mars since 2003, watch as Mars brightens. Mars is -0.4 mag at the start of May and mag -1.2 at the month's end. The distance to Mars shrinks from 78.2 million miles to 57.3 million miles during May. Start looking with a telescope for signs of Mars' south polar cap. Mercury makes its least favorable morning apparition of the year this month. Look low in the east at dawn during the first two weeks of May.

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