



Evening sky in August 2011

During the first half of August a keen-eyed observer can look for comet P45/Honda-Mrkos-Pajdusakova near the bright star Achernar. To find Achernar, follow the line of the long axis of the Southern Cross down towards the south-eastern horizon.

The Southern Cross, or Crux, is still high in the southern sky. Crux is surrounded in part by Centaurus, a legendary half-man, half-horse from Greek mythology. Higher up is Antares, a red super-giant star in Scorpius. A pair of stars at the end of the tail indicates the sting of the scorpion. In Greek mythology the scorpion saved the animals of Earth by poisoning Orion, the Hunter (visible in summer). Sagittarius, the archer who is aiming his bow and arrow at the sting, is ready to avenge Orion. The doctor of the gods, Ophiuchus, is close by with a magic potion to heal Orion. Below him is another legendary figure, Hercules, the strong man.

The northern sky is dotted with the bright stars Arcturus in Boötes (the herdsman), Altair in the Eagle, and Vega in Lyra (the lyre).

Planet Saturn is in the constellation of Virgo.

The Moon is in the evening sky from 2 August until 16 August.

