



Evening sky in DECEMBER 2014

High above the eastern horizon and almost overhead we find the constellation of the River, Eridanus, with the bright star Achernar at its southernmost point. A line of fainter stars, the meandering body of the River, leads to Rigel, the brightest star in Orion, the Hunter. Rigel marks Orion's left ankle and is a triple star system. Its primary star is a blue-white supergiant, 120 000 times the luminosity of the Sun. At the end of its lifetime this star will explode as a supernova, scattering its material into space and providing material for other stars to form. The brightest star in the night sky, Sirius, also known as the Dog Star, can be seen high above the eastern horizon in the constellation of Canis Major (Big Dog). It is almost twice as bright as the second brightest star, Canopus in Carina (Keel) visible in the south-east. Sirius is known as *iQhawe* (the Champion) in isiXhosa.

Early in the month Planet Venus moves from Ophiuchus (Serpent Bearer) into Sagittarius (Archer) and planet Mars from Sagittarius into Capricornus (Sea Goat).

The Moon is in the evening sky until 7 December and again from 23 December.

The summer solstice is on 22 December.