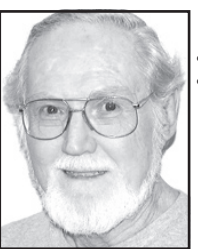


Constellations carry multiple names

To readers of the Colby Free Press: Welcome to Stargazer, a twice-monthly column for all who find beauty and wonder in the night sky. Hoping you'll find Stargazer informative and entertaining. I welcome your comments, questions and ideas for column topics, and look forward to hearing from you. - Paul Derrick



Paul Derrick
● Stargazer

When we peer into the night sky we see stars, planets, the Moon, meteors and other beautiful heavenly bodies. And with a little imagination, we can also "see" a variety of animate and inanimate objects as constellations formed by imaginary lines between some of the brighter stars.

The practice of creating imaginary figures from the stars goes back unknown thousands of years, and has likely been done by many, if not most, peoples of the world. What was seen, of course, reflected the life and experiences of those whose imaginations made them up. Where the Greeks saw a hunter, the Maya saw a Maize God-bearing turtle and the hearthstones of creation. And for all we know, Africans might have seen a zebra, South Americans a snake, Asians a temple, or Australians a kangaroo.

Since 1930, the International Astronomical Union has recognized 88 official constellations, 48 of which come from antiquity. Some likely came from the Sumerians who might have handed them

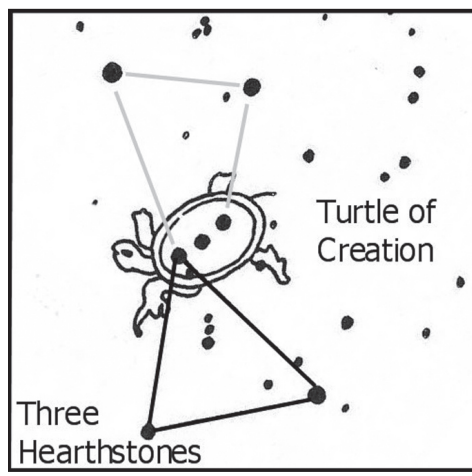
down to the Babylonians, who, in turn, bequeathed them to the Greeks and eventually to us. And who knows what sky lore and knowledge the Sumerians might have inherited from their ancestors. Since these civilizations lived in the Northern Hemisphere, the constellations they invented were only in the parts of the night sky they could see.

The remainder of today's constellations, mostly those seen from deep within the Southern Hemisphere, were created by Europeans when they began exploring previously unknown (to them) parts of the world. When they saw new stars, they invented European-oriented constellations, like a telescope, microscope, compass, and clock.

How I wish they had been less ethnocentric and inquired of the indigenous populations they encountered what they saw in the sky. Our knowledge of this aspect of other ancient cultures, including Native Americans, is quite limited. Imagine how much richer our night sky lore and imagery would be if we also knew how others from around the world had



Orion the Hunter as seen by the Greeks (left, illustration: Urania's Mirror, London, c. 1825). In the same star field (above), the Maya saw the Three Hearthstones and Turtle of Creation (illustration: Maya Cosmos, David Freidel, Linda Schele & Joy Parker, 1993)]



Orion the Hunter, Perseus the Hero, and Virgo the Virgin.

seen the night sky. Even so, no one with any imagination should find the night sky boring as it is filled with people, animals, mythical creatures, and inanimate objects. Among the people are Andromeda the Princess, Aquarius the Water Carrier, Auriga the Charioteer, Bootes the Herdsman, Cassiopeia the Queen, Cepheus the King, Gemini the Twins (Pollux and Castor), Hercules the Strongman, Indus the American Indian, Ophiuchus the Serpent Bearer,

Orion the Hunter, Perseus the Hero, and Virgo the Virgin. Non-human animals include many kinds of birds, several dogs and fish, three snakes, two lions, two bears, a ram, giraffe, crab, chameleon, dolphin, lizard, rabbit, wolf, lynx, scorpion, bull, colt, fox, and even a fly. Mythical critters include two centaurs, a dragon, seagoat, unicorn, sea monster, and a flying horse. The plethora of inanimate objects could make for the mother of all garage sales.

They include an air pump, alter, engraving tool, drawing compasses, two crowns, cup, cross, furnace, clock, scales, musical lyre, microscope, carpenter's square, octant, painter's easel, mariner's compass, reticle, arrow, sculptor's tool, shield, sextant, telescope, and two triangles. And if that's not enough, there's the long beautiful hair of Queen Berenices, several parts of the great ship Argo on which Jason and the Argonauts had their adventures, and a river and a mountain.

With that much company, how could anyone ever be lonesome or bored under the night sky. But that's not enough, I encourage you to create your own constellations. Surely you can be just as creative as the Greeks, Babylonians, Sumerians, and others of yesteryear.

Paul Derrick is an amateur astronomer who lives in Waco, Texas. Stargazer appears twice monthly. Paul's website (www.stargazerpaul.com) contains an archive of past Stargazer columns, a schedule of his upcoming programs, star parties and classes, and other basic stargazing information. Contact him at paulderrickwaco@aol.com or (254) 723-6346 or 918 N. 30th St., Waco, Texas, 76707.w

Squirrel behavior can damage trees

Some people find squirrels endlessly entertaining. Others think squirrels are tree rats. Either way, some squirrel behaviors are a scientific mystery, said Ward Upham, K-State Research and Extension horticulturist.

"A big question is why squirrels damage trees," he said. "One theory holds that certain squirrels are high-strung, so they work off nervous energy by chewing or stripping wood. Others theories say damage-causing squirrels may be sharpening their teeth or looking for nesting material or water."

Whatever their reason, squirrels can cause several types of tree injury.

"They commonly clip off branch tips at a rather tattered 45-degree angle. The severed branches can be long or short. As often as not, though, they're the outer 2 to 3 feet," Upham said. "Their removal isn't likely to harm tree health. So, you can just ignore the behavior."

More serious damage results when squirrels strip bark from limbs or (rarely) trunk, he

warned. "The wounds can be quite large. Even worse, if a big wound or a series of connected wounds extends all the way around a branch - girdles it - the branch will die," Upham said.

Losing a major branch can ruin a tree, he said, by adversely affecting its looks and/or structural strength.

"When bark removal is going on, you might try feeding and watering the squirrels," Upham said. "If that doesn't work, though, other control methods may be necessary."

He recommends the information and links posted by Charlie Lee at www.wildlife.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=20. Lee is K-State Research and Extension's wildlife damage control specialist.

"In Kansas, for example, you can legally live-trap and move squirrels from an area where they're causing damage," Upham said. "Fox and gray squirrels are game animals with a regular Kansas season, but you can't violate city gun laws to hunt them."

On the Beat

COLBY POLICE Monday

5:40 a.m. - Unlocked building at Fike Park.
10:41 a.m. - Caller reported dog possibly trapped in back yard of house that no one lives in. All OK; subject had moved in over weekend; dog was inside.

2:04 p.m. - Caller reported a child selling candy for UNICEF. Provided information.

3:14 p.m. - Stalled vehicle in the 600 block of E. Fourth. Took some fuel to subject.

3:39 p.m. - Subject came to station with fix it ticket from Nebraska. Provided service; all OK.

3:46 p.m. - Warrant arrest made for Neosho County Sheriff's Office.

4:03 p.m. - Caller reported dog chained up without food or water. All OK.

5:05 p.m. - All OK with subject who fell at check out line at 115 W. Willow.

6:48 p.m. - Tree down at Third and Mission Ridge.

6:48 p.m. - Caller reported large tree limb down at Seventh and Mission Ridge.

7:27 p.m. - Removed a large city dumpster from Third and Lake.

8:22 p.m. - Caller reported a door lock tampered with.

8:28 p.m. - Received several calls of traffic lights out at Fourth and Franklin.

9:11 p.m. - Dog at large taken to Colby Animal Clinic.

10:53 p.m. - Received numerous calls of domestic situation.

Tuesday

2:55 a.m. - Locked building at Fike Park.

4:09 a.m. - Caller reported screaming and glass breaking. Unable to locate anything.

4:47 a.m. - Removed tipper can from Third and School.

5:32 a.m. - Security check at Walmart.

6 a.m. - Caller requested an ambulance. Turned over to emergency medical services.

6:03 a.m. - Unlocked building at Fike Park

7:35 a.m. - Narcotics violation report filed.

9:17 a.m. - Four officers executed search warrant.

10:59 a.m. - Helped motorist at Oasis.

12:30 p.m. - Caller reported two dogs at large. Dog taken to animal clinic.

2:37 p.m. - Subj brought keys to station found on E. Hill St. Contacted the owner, no report.

2:55 p.m. - Caller reported two dogs in vehicle. Dogs OK; owner was inside but about to leave.

5:28 p.m. - Removed item from roadway 300 block W. Cherry.

5:52 p.m. - Vehicle southbound on Range by Oasis out of gas, had assistance coming.

7:51 p.m. - Subject reported his vehicle getting hit at Holiday Inn. No report.

8:14 p.m. - Provided directions to motorist at I-70 mile 53 westbound off ramp.

8:18 p.m. - Suspicious incident: caller reported subjects taking items out of residence.

9:03 p.m. - Dispute: received several 911 calls. Subject left.

THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF Tuesday

12:51 a.m. - Picked up juvenile for court from Junction City.

1145 a.m. - Child in need of care reported filed for incident Saturday.

12:39 p.m. - Three deputies assisted Social and Rehabilitation Services picking up juveniles.

1:11 p.m. - Report filed for incident involving criminal possession of a firearm.

1:12 p.m. - Took two inmates to Norton County Sheriff's Office via Rawlins County Sheriff's Office.

2:22 p.m. - Union Pacific Railroad advised of a train derailment at County Rds. 24 and K. Was not

on roadway, no damage to anything, no hazards.

2:38 p.m. - Civil standby.

3:14 p.m. - Traffic control for stalled vehicle in the 600 block of E. Fourth while fuel was brought.

6:48 p.m. - Helped Colby Police on tree down in roadway at Seventh and Mission Ridge.

9:43 p.m. - Helped motorist at mile 39 eastbound I-70. Tire changed.

11:04 p.m. - Caller wanted to speak to deputy. Spoke with both parties involved to let each other alone.

11:04 p.m. - Assisted Colby Police units.

Tuesday

2:18 a.m. - Caller reported her vehicle broke down somewhere around I-70. Sherman County contacted, unable to locate.

7:40 a.m. - Helped Colby Police Department.

9:17 a.m. - Helped Colby Police with search warrant.

9:32 a.m. - Brought two prisoners from Rawlins County to the Law Enforcement Center.

4:43 p.m. - Driving under the influence report filed on traffic stop.

9:05 p.m. - Received 911 hangup. City units busy; everything OK, accidental.

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