

# It's called the Grass or Egg Moon in April

Full moon is at 12:42 a.m. on April 17. The moon is fully lighted by the sun and is visible all night. Some native American Indians called the full moon in April the Grass Moon or the Egg Moon. The latter name is especially appropriate this year since Easter Sunday follows this moon by only two days.

Easter Sunday is one of the most variable dates on the calendar. It can come as early as March 22 or be as late as April 25. Determining the date of this very erratic holiday is not as difficult as you may think. All you need to know is the phase of the moon and a few rules.

The ground rules for determining Easter were set up in the year 325 A.D. when the Emperor Constantine called for a Council at Nicea for the purpose of calendar reform. Based on the advice of his Christian council, he decreed that Easter would be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon that occurs after the vernal equinox (the start of spring).

The reason for choosing the full moon, rather than the new moon, was so people making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land could travel at night by moonlight. Since the start of spring occurs on March 20 or 21, the earliest date that can be Easter is March 22.

BUT NOW we have to consider the inevitable exceptions to the rule. If the first full moon to occur after the start of spring falls on a Sunday, then the next Sunday is Easter. If the full moon happens to be on the same day as the vernal equinox, then the April full moon is used. If the April full moon falls on a Sunday, the next Sunday is Easter UNLESS that date is later than April 25, which is the latest date Easter is permitted to occur. If that Sunday does fall after the 25th, then the previous Sunday, the one with the full moon, must be used.

So all things considered, Easter can come as early as March 22, which it last did in the year 1818 and again in 2285, or it may come as



skywatch  
**Raymond E. Bullock**

late as April 25, which it did in 1943 and will again in 2038. This year Easter Sunday is April 19.

Now, wasn't that simple? If you are up before sunrise on Easter, look for the moon in the southwest. The orange-red star 12 degrees to the left of the moon is Antares (an TAI ce), the "heart" of Scorpio. On the next morning the moon is one degree above that star.

There will be a meteor shower on the evening of the 21st and morning of the 22nd, albeit a weak one. This constellation of Lyra, from which the meteors appear to radiate. Expect to see an average of only 15 meteors each hour. Unfortunately, the moon is in the morning sky, and with seeing the fainter meteors. Lyra rises in the northeast around 8 p.m. and is nearly overhead at 5 a.m.

Look for the bright blue-white star Vega (VEE ga), the brightest star in Lyra. It is also the 5th brightest star in the sky and fairly close to us; only 27 light-years away.

THE MOON is atop the "top" of the "leap" that marks the constellation of Sagittarius the archer. Both Uranus and Neptune are within the same constellation, about 14 degrees to the left of the moon. These two distant planets are within 1.5 degrees of each other, which is the closest they've been since Neptune's discovery in 1846. Uranus is within the range of a pair of binoculars, if you know where to look.

A good star chart, such as the one which it last did in the monthly magazine Sky & Telescope or Abrams Plan-

etarium Sky Calendar, will help guide you. Although you would think the moon would be an excellent guide to these two planets, the scattered moonlight will make seeing them even more difficult. It's better to wait for the moon to move.

Last quarter moon is at 5:40 p.m. on the 24th. The moon is beginning the last quarter of its orbit around the earth. It will be visible in the southeast, rising before the sun. The "star" below and to the left of the moon on the morning of the 25th is Mercury. Don't expect to see Mercury, however. It is "officially" a morning object, but it's right on the horizon and won't be visible. Venus, which was "officially" in the morning sky earlier this month, is now long gone.

An excellent aid for learning constellations and keeping up to date with the sky is the monthly Sky Calendar. A one-year subscription is \$6 and is available from the Abrams Planetarium, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 48824.

Raymond Bullock is former coordinator of the observatory planetarium at the Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills. He is now associated with a Troy firm which specializes in laser displays and effects.

## Cancer group hosts toxic waste program

An FBI agent and a teenager who is a former cancer patient headline a program set for 7:15 p.m. Tuesday at the Troy Community Center.

The program, "The FBI and Toxic Waste in Oakland County" is sponsored by Parents Against Cancer Plus, a charitable non-profit organization seeking the prevention of cancers, birth defects and other environ-

mentally caused diseases as well as prevention of cancer relapse. Speakers are Diane Bullock, an FBI agent assigned to Troy, and Jim Sprague, a University of Michigan student from Clarkston, who is a former cancer patient concerned about the environment.

## Audition for summer show

Auditions for the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission's summer "Traveling Music Show" will be held Wednesday at Novi High School.

Performers should bring along a photo, resume and tap or hard-soled shoes.

Individuals of high school or college age are eligible. They must perform a ballad as well as a fast song.

The show is presented twice a day from June until August.

To schedule an audition time, call Jim Dunleavy at 858-0916.

## Students who are interested in an environmental career...

Businesses wanting better environmental policies. Workers in the community who know of companies polluting and want to know what to do about it. Those interested in finding out more about Parents Against Cancer Plus. Teenagers who have or had cancer.

The Troy Community Center is located at 520 W. Big Beaver Road, just east of I-75, in the Troy Civic Center. For more information, call Phyllis Guralik, 649-5124.

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