

## Our Night Sky for May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024

By the end of May, we're about three weeks from the summer solstice and you need to stay up well into the late night to have dark skies. But that's ok, as I mentioned before, constellations are usually fairly bright stars and even with a washed-out sky, you should be able to spot constellations probably even easier than a dark sky with thousands of more stars to confuse you.

Let's turn north west and as you look higher the big dipper will come into view. Here's a new fact for you, the big dipper is not a constellation, it is an asterism. An asterism is a recognizable pattern of stars in the sky. This constellation is Ursa Major and has several more stars located in the constellation.

Look closely at the middle star in the handle, the brightest star. If you look very carefully you may be able to spot what is unusual, it's really two stars. Now if you have binoculars, you may be able to see that one of these is itself a double star. And although you need more equipment to see it, the other star is also a double star. You are looking at four stars. There are several types of double stars, some just appear close but are simply in line when we view them. But some orbit much closer, some even touch as they orbit closely together.

Double stars are a useful tool to help us learn about Our Night Sky.