

Corvus

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in astronomy, a constellation of both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Corvus, Latin for “crow,” is a small constellation said to represent Apollo's crow. In Greek mythology, the crow is said to be sacred to the god Apollo, who transformed himself into the bird to escape the fearsome monster Typhon. The crow is usually pictured perched along with Crater (the Cup) on the back of Hydra (the Water Snake).

Corvus is made up of four chief stars arrayed in a trapezoid designating the crow's body, with two stars at opposite corners representing the beak and tail. The constellation lies in the southern sky, southwest of the bright star Spica in Virgo. Around April 30, Corvus reaches its highest point in the sky in the mid-northern latitudes at 10:00 PM.

Early Arab astronomers perceived the constellation as a camel and a tent. The Greek poet Aratus mentions Corvus in his work ‘Phaenomena’ from the 3rd century BC. Ptolemy, the great astronomer who lived and worked in Egypt during the 2nd century AD, was the first person to catalog Corvus. The Romans gave the constellation its present name.

Corvus contains little of particular interest to amateur astronomers. At magnitude 2.6, the blue-white giant Gienah, or Gamma Corvi, is the constellation's brightest star. It comes from the Arabic for “right wing of the raven,” though in modern star charts it represents the bird's left wing. The double star Algorab, or Delta Corvi, is a blue-white star visible to the unaided eye. Its purplish companion is resolvable with a small telescope. NGC 4038 and NGC 4039 are a pair of unusual adjacent galaxies. Photographs show them as two joined oval patches with a long tail extending from each. Together they have been nicknamed the Ring-Tail galaxy or the Antennae, possibly because they resemble a winged insect. A planetary nebula, NGC 4361, is visible in amateur telescopes inside the crow's body, ,

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