

CONSTELLATION CORVUS, the Raven

The Corvus constellation is located in the southern sky. Its name means “crow” or “raven” in Latin. It was originally catalogued by the Greek astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century and represents Apollo’s sacred bird in Greek mythology.

Corvus is the 70th constellation in size, occupying an area of 184 square degrees. It is located in the third quadrant of the southern hemisphere (SQ3) and can be seen from latitudes between +60° and -90°.

The neighbouring constellations are Crater, Hydra, and Virgo.

Corvus has one star with known planets and contains no Messier objects.

Corvus does not contain many bright stars and deep sky objects, but it is home to a very famous pair of interacting galaxies, the Antennae Galaxies. **The Antennae Galaxies show a likely event of the Milky Way and Andromeda Galaxy (M31) when the two are expected to collide in 4 billion years.**

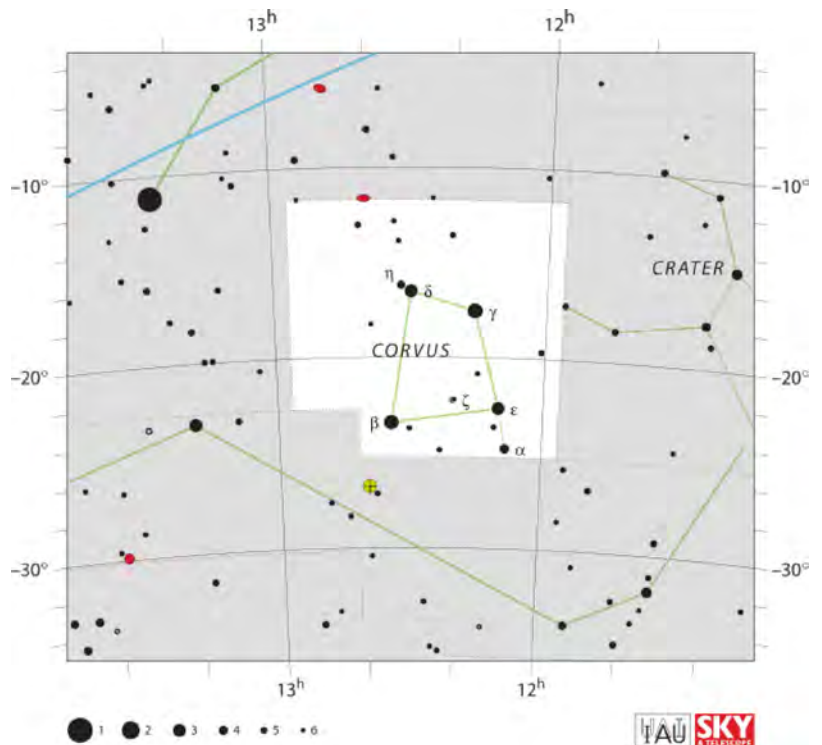
Gamma Corvi also known as Gienah, is the brightest star in the constellation with an apparent visual magnitude of 2.59. **It is one of the four brightest stars in Corvus – Delta, Gamma, Epsilon and Beta Corvi – that form an asterism known as the Sail, or the Spica’s Spanker**, because the stars Gamma and *Delta Corvi* point the way to Spica (Alpha Virginis), the brightest star in the constellation Virgo and the 15th brightest star in the night sky. The galaxies are 45 million light-years from Earth and each has multiple ultraluminous X-ray sources of unknown origin. Astronomers theorize that they may be a rare type of x-ray emitting binary stars or intermediate-mass black holes

Delta Corvi, also known as Algorab, is a class A0 star in Corvus, approximately 87 light years distant from the solar system. It has an apparent visual magnitude of 3.1. The star’s traditional name comes from the Arabic word al-ghuraab, which means “the crow.”

There is one meteor shower associated with the constellation; the Corvids.

Corvus belongs to the Hercules family of constellations, along with *Aquila*, *Ara*, *Centaurus*, *Corona Australis*, *Crater*, *Crux*, *Cygnus*, *Hercules*, *Hydra*, *Lupus*, *Lyra*, *Ophiuchus*, *Sagitta*, *Scutum*, *Sextans*, *Serpens*, *Triangulum Australe*, and *Vulpecula*.

The center of Corvus is home to a planetary nebula NGC 4361. The nebula itself resembles a



The Antennae Galaxies, also known as NGC 4038/NGC 4039, are a pair of interacting galaxies in the constellation Corvus. They are currently going through a starburst phase, in which the collision of clouds of gas and dust, with entangled magnetic fields, causes rapid star formation. They were discovered by William Herschel in 1785, (picture on the right) at telescopic apparent magnitude 10. The Antennae are sometimes also known as the Ring Tail.



The Andromeda Galaxy is approaching the Milky Way at approximately 120 kilometres per second. They are destined to collide in 4 billion years.

small elliptical galaxy, but the magnitude 13 star at its centre gives away its true nature.



NGC 4361.

MYTHS

The constellation Corvus represents the raven (or crow), Apollo's sacred bird in Greek mythology. **According to the myth, the raven originally had white feathers.** In one story, Apollo told the bird to watch over Coronis, one of his lovers, who was pregnant at the time. Coronis gradually lost interest in Apollo and fell in love with a mortal man, Ischys. When the raven reported the affair to Apollo, the god was so enraged that the bird did nothing to stop it that he flung a curse on it, scorching the raven's feathers. **That, the legend goes, is why all ravens are black.** Apollo then sent his sister Artemis to kill Coronis. Before Coronis' body was burned, the unborn child, Asclepius, was cut out of her womb and given to the centaur Chiron to raise. **Asclepius grew up to be a famous healer and is represented by the constellation Ophiuchus, the serpent bearer.**

And another version tells the story that Apollo gave a feast to Jupiter and requiring water sent the raven with a cup (the Crater) to fetch some. On his way the raven noticed a fig tree, and, resting there until the figs became ripe, feasted himself upon them until, remembering his errand and fearing the anger of Apollo, he picked up a snake (Hydra) and on his return gave as an excuse that the hydra had prevented him from filling the cup by having kept the spring from flowing, this being the cause of the delay. The god was not deceived by the lie and ordained in punishment that the raven should never drink so long as figs were not ripe. **Apollo placed the raven (Corvus), cup (Crater) and snake (Hydra) in the heavens as a warning, where the Water-snake guards the water from the everlastingly thirsty Raven. Corvus now sits within sight of the Cup of water, but he can never drink.**



The **Roman poet Ovid** in his 'METAMORPHOSES' published in 8AD, a Latin narrative poem comprising fifteen books and over 250 myths, also narrated the story of Coronis, and her unfaithfulness to Apollo, and said that when the bird reported to his master this unwelcome news, Apollo in his anger changed the Raven from his former silver hue to the present black and shouted:

"Wanton babbler! see thy fate! Messenger of mine no longer,
Go to Hades with thy prate! Weary Pluto with thy tattle!
Hither, monster, come not back; And — to match thy disposition
Henceforth be thy plumage black!"

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