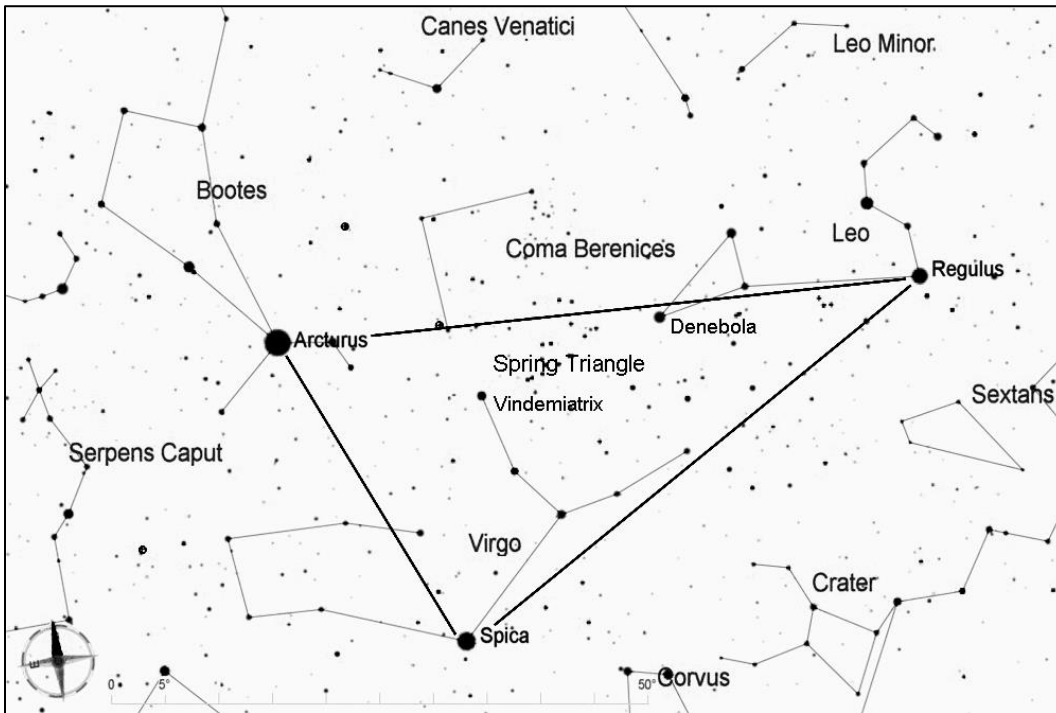


Messier 85 and NGC 4394, Galaxies in Coma Berenices

Messier 85 has been classified either as an elliptical galaxy or a lenticular (lens-shaped) galaxy. At magnitude 9, its oblong shape can be seen in even small telescopes. It is about 58 million light years away, and is a member of the Coma-Virgo Cluster of galaxies. Just to the east of M85 is the barred spiral galaxy NGC 4394, magnitude 10.8.



Start by finding the Spring Triangle, which consists of three widely-separated first magnitude stars-- Arcturus, Spica, and Regulus. The Spring Triangle is high in the southeast sky in early spring, and in the southwest sky by mid-Summer. (To get oriented, you can use the handle of the Big Dipper and "follow the arc to Arcturus").

For this star hop, look inside the Spring Triangle for Denebola, the star representing the back end of Leo, the lion.

From Denebola, look 7 degrees east with a finderscope or binoculars to find a T-shaped asterism of five stars that includes 6 Virginis. There are several galaxies around this T-shape, but for this star hop, look about 2 degrees above the top of the T-shape to find 11 Coma Berenices, a star of magnitude 4.7. Then look about 1 degree to the east-northeast to reach M85. With medium to large scopes, NGC 4394 should be visible in the same telescopic field, just 7 arcminutes to the east.

