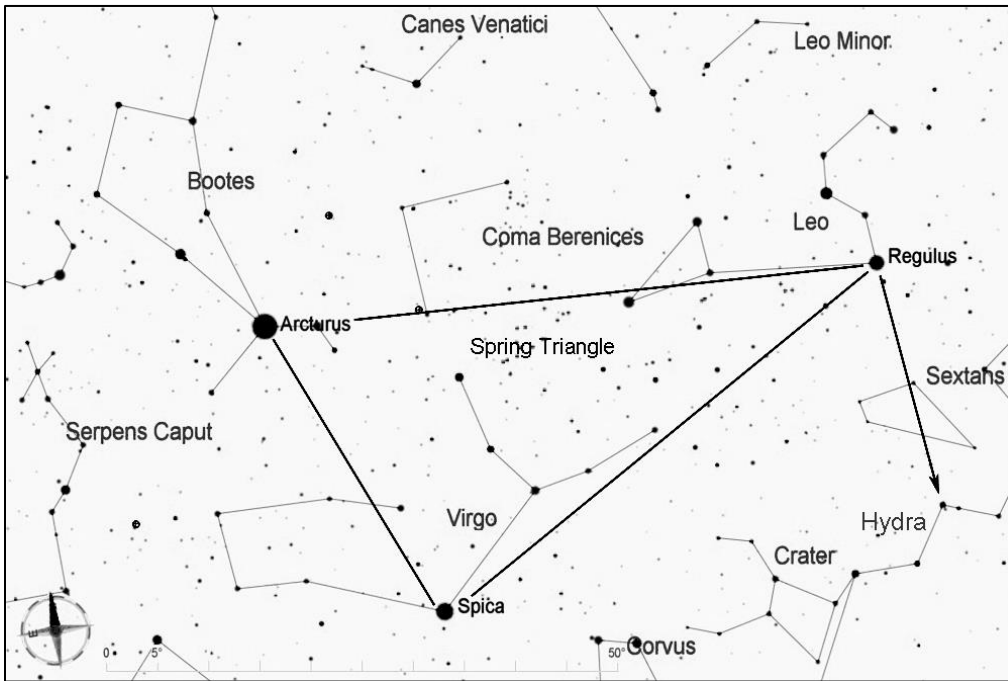


NGC 3115 (Caldwell 53), the Southern Spindle Galaxy in Sextans

This galaxy is sometimes called the Spindle Galaxy, but I call it the Southern Spindle to distinguish it from the more famous Messier 102 (NGC 5866), which is also nicknamed the Spindle Galaxy. NGC 3115 is a lenticular (lens-shaped) galaxy seen edge-on. The bright central sections of this galaxy include a central bulge and very pointy arms, and these are surrounded by a fainter elliptical glow.



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, begin at Regulus in the constellation Leo. Look about 30 degrees south of Regulus for the zig-zag constellation of Hydra.

The brightest star in Hydra, the water snake, is 2nd magnitude Alphard, easily visible to the naked eye. From Alphard, look 6 degrees east (and slightly north) for 5th magnitude gamma (γ) Sextans (which may require binoculars or a finderscope to see unless the sky is very dark). Another 3 degrees in the same direction will bring you to NGC 3115.

