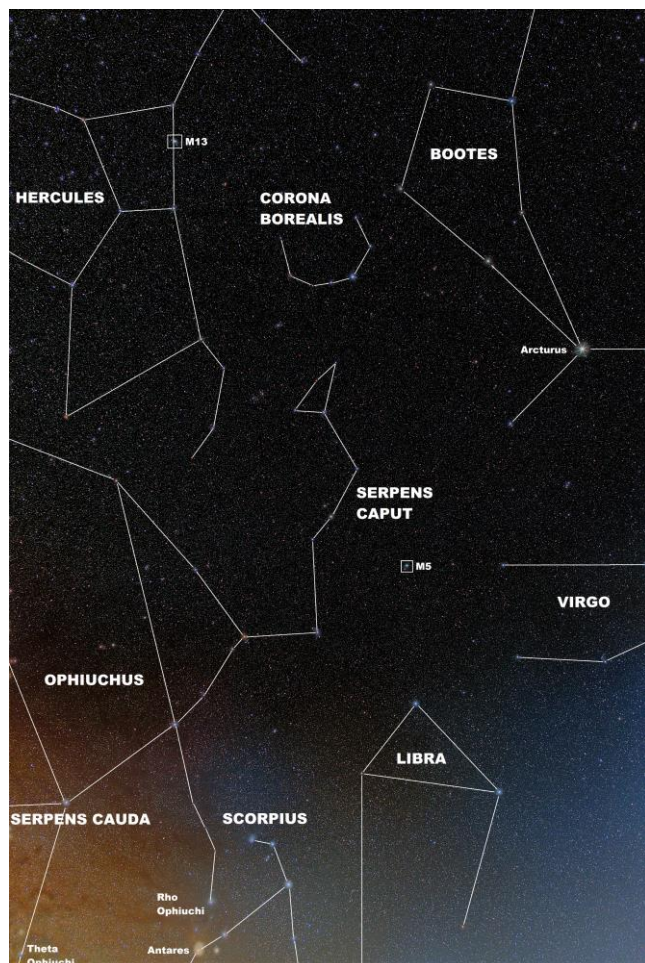


# Ophiuchus and the Rod of Asclepius

By Dick Beam



*This image is centered on the alpha star in Serpens Caput. Imaging was done with a 24mm, f/1.4 Rokoniin Lens @ f/4, ISO 800, with 6 minute exposure sampling. North is up.*



*M13 (left) and M5 are two Globular Clusters that can be viewed in the part of the sky shown above. M13 is the brightest. Both images were shot with a 10" f/3.9 Astrograph using 6,3,1 minute and 30 second exposures for samples at ISO 800.*

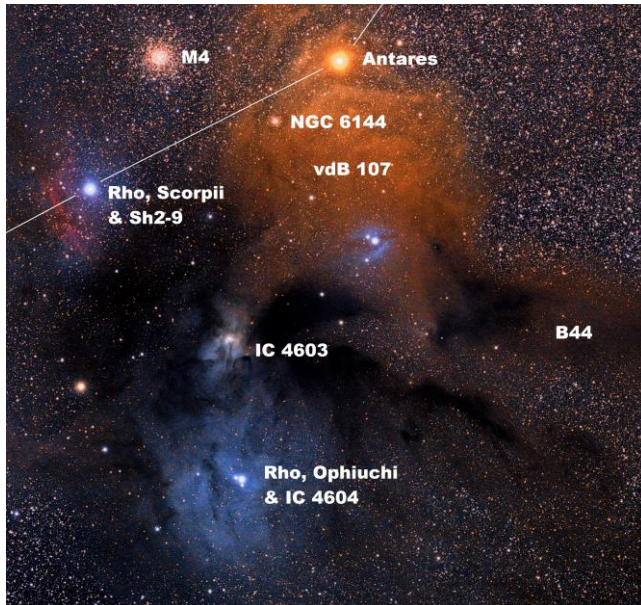
I've tried several times to piece together the sprawling constellation of Ophiuchus in the night sky. Ophiuchus, in Greek Mythology, is also Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing. Ophiuchus is holding a snake in his hands. Serpens Caput is the snake's head, and Serpens Cauda is the tail. Somehow a snake entwined around a rod has, to this day, been associated with medicine and named the Rod of Asclepius.

To find such a view as is to the left, you'll need to have some summer skies and be in the northern hemisphere. This view is pretty similar to what a person would see when they looked at the night sky to the south - my view for the beginning of June here on the Central Coast of California around astronomical twilight.

As you can see in this view, the Milky Way is just starting to become visible to the night sky as it precesses through the summer season.

The bottom left corner of the constellation image is near the center of the Milky Way, what is known as the Galactic Center. The blue cast to the right of the constellation image is sky glow caused by light pollution.

There are a couple of objects in the constellation view that are known as Globular Clusters. These objects, shown as M13 and M5 to the left, are made up of stars



*Rho Ophiuchi Region. Imaged with a 250mm, f/4.9 Redcat51, using 7 min. exposure samples @ ISO 800. North is down. The dark nebula, B44, extends east to about where the Pipe Nebula starts and is about 500 lightyears distant.*

that are almost twice as old as our sun and contain fundamental fusion elements only, such as Hydrogen and Helium.

A curious thing to me about Ophiuchus is his best qualities are in his feet. His left foot is dominated by a most beautiful region known as the Rho Ophiuchi Region and it has just about every color one can find in the heavens. His right foot has Theta Ophiuchi and the beautiful Pipe Nebula, a dark nebula spanning a huge area of sky and a mere 450 lightyears distant from earth.

Rho Ophiuchi is the brightest star of the 3 stars that look like a Mickey Mouse head. My favor of the lot is IC 4603, with it's beautiful mixture of color between the various, nearby nebulae, and the structure of its swirling nebula, like a washing machine.

The images that follow are mosaics: images that use a set of images with overlapping fields of view, and each image is called a panel.

The first mosaic is of the Rho Ophiuchi Region, Ophiuchus' left foot, imaged with a Tele Vue NP127is, focal length = 660mm @ f/5.2, using 4 panels. The panels were imaged using 7 minute samples @ ISO 800. North is up. (1 page down)

The second mosaic is centered on Theta Ophiuchi and the Pipe Nebula Region, Ophiuchus' right foot, was imaged with a 250mm, f/4.9, Redcat51 with 3 panels. The panels were imaged using 7 minute samples @ ISO 800. North is left. (2 pages down)

My favorite of the mosaics is the Pipe Nebula: on my image I can zoom in and see seas of darkness, with subtle shades of grey, diffuse-lit from underneath by stars tens of thousands of lightyears away.



*The Tele Vue NP127is setup for the mosaic.*



*The Redcat51 mosaic setup.*







