



SHENANDOAH ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

May 2010

RETROREFLECTOR FOUND

Forty years ago, the Soviet Union sent a laser reflector aboard the unmanned Luna 17 mission, which landed on the moon November 17, 1970. Their intent was to shine laser beams off of the reflector to take accurate measurements of the distance from the Earth to the Moon. Everything was working just fine until they had one slight problem -- they lost it. Found recently, you can get more information on astromart.com by looking at the news section.

Program at LFCC May 10

7:00 PM Room 336 in modular building

Alan will be bringing a professional presentation by one of the experts in the field. Others we have watched were very good, actually excellent. So there is much to learn about the planets, stars, and galaxies. The meeting will be in the modular building behind the main building. It is best to park in the back parking lot closest to the modular building. Come to the end entrance facing the parking lot and go down the hall to Room 336.

The Lion and the Little King

Look to the east after dark and there is Leo, the Lion, one of the twelve zodiacal constellations that contain the path of the Sun in the sky. Leo is not as bright as some constellations such as Orion but it is one whose shape suggests its name. The head of Leo is connected with a neck of six stars that is shaped like a sickle. Below is the brightest star, Regulus, whose name means the little king. The second brightest star in Leo, Denebola, brings up the rear nearly thirty degrees to the east. Denebola means the tail of the lion.

Regulus is a first magnitude, blue-white star that astronomers place at 77 light-years away. It is over one hundred times as luminous as the Sun, not a super-giant, but a star fit to be called a king. Another name for Regulus is Alpha Leonis, a designation made popular by the 17th century German amateur astronomer Johannes Bayer. His system of naming stars consists of using the Greek alphabet along with the genitive (possessive) form of the constellation name. Thus the brightest star is designated Alpha, the next brightest, Beta, and so on.

(Excerpt from the Astronomy Corner April 2002)

Strasburg Park Telescope Session

The Shenandoah County group will hold an observing session on May 14 at the park on the eastern side of Strasburg. Note that this is on a Friday evening. Alan has maps of the area on the web site that will clarify the location. The park entrance is on the east end of Strasburg on Route 55 as you head out of town. Turn in on Park Street and the telescope area is down near the river.

Mars can be seen west of Leo, the Lion.

