



SHENANDOAH ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

October 2009

Summer Triangle Lingers

Most amateur astronomers have noticed that the summer stars linger as the fall season comes on. So why is this? Well, it is simply that as the Sun goes down earlier, we can see the stars earlier so it seems that the summer asterisms want to stay with us.

For example, two months ago we could go outside and look up about 10:00 PM and find the Summer Triangle almost overhead. There is my favorite star Vega very near the Ring Nebula and the pretty double star Epsilon Lyra. Now we can go out about 8:00 PM and find about the same sight.

Vega is a zero magnitude white hot star about 25 light years distance, the fifth brightest star in the sky. It is much more powerful than our Sun and will be the pole star in about 14,000 years from now.

Near Vega is the double star Epsilon Lyrae. With only binoculars, one can see the two stars but it takes a telescope and near to one hundred power to separate these two stars so that four can be seen. Nearby is the Ring Nebula that we often call the "smoke ring in the sky."

Near to the east is the giant star Deneb, hundreds of light years away. Down to the south is Altair which forms the southern tip of the Summer Triangle. In the triangle there are many objects to be seen including double stars, open clusters, and planetary nebulas.

The prettiest double star is Albireo, the eye of the swan and Deneb is the at the tail of the swan. Anyway Albireo shows up at even low power as two pretty stars, one appearing as golden and the other blue.

So there is plenty of time to see some of the sights in the Summer Triangle as it lingers overhead in the autumn.

**Meeting on October 14 at LFCC
7:00 PM**

From President Alan Moeck:

Betty is bringing in the Documentary "400 Years of the Telescope". That will be our program for October. I will also bring in my repository of teleconference programs and see which program the group would like to see next for November.

Also from Alan:

Since we have a standing invitation for each session to the Shenandoah County Park, I figured that if we could get Long Branch for the 10th that would be ok. The Oct 10th Shenandoah County Park session will be at the Strasburg Town Park. Alan has put a map on the web site.

So note there are two choices for October 10 observing, Long Branch or the Strasburg Town Park. So take your choice or go to the nearest one. – Jim Adkins