



What's Up?

BY BARRY DECRISTOFANO

Hi. Welcome back.

If you read last week's column, you know that in these articles, I'm hoping to take you around our night sky and tell you a bit about what's there to see. If you tried finding the Big Dipper, Arcturus, Jupiter, and Saturn this past week – how did you make out? I hope my directions were easy to follow. This time around, let's start with finding the Summer Triangle. Three bright stars are located its points.

The Summer Triangle is an asterism formed by the stars Vega, Deneb, and Altair. Once it's dark, look for the brightest star almost directly overhead on these Summer evenings. That's Vega. The brightest star to its northeast (to the left and down) is Deneb and the brightest star to Vega's southeast (to the right and down) is Altair. Vega, Deneb and Altair are stars in the constellations Lyra (the Lyre), Cygnus (the Swan) and Aquila (the Eagle), respectively. Together, they form an elongated triangle pointing towards south. It's known as the "Summer" Triangle because that's when it's prominently overhead (by Thanksgiving, we'll see this triangle of stars setting in the West as evening starts).

Which brings me to a point about the night sky – the stars' positions repeat yearly. That's important. In the days before clocks, we used the stars to keep track of time. Knowing when certain stars and constellations first could be seen before sunrise or when they rise just after sunset, were cues for deciding when to do things – like plant, harvest, begin long journeys, etc.

Let's look at some more stars. Hanging low in the south is a crawly creature – Scorpius (the Scorpion). It looks like this:

You'll need to have a very clear southern horizon to see all of the Scorpion's tail, but the claws and head should be visible in most areas. Find it? There's a star in it named Antares. It marks the heart of the Scorpion. Like Arcturus, it too is classified as a red giant star. Can you see any color in it? If so, how does it compare to Arcturus? Antares means something like "against Mars" in Greek. Since Mars appears reddish, it was named as a comparison to Mars' color. By the way, when we're looking towards the constellation Scorpius (and towards the constellation Sagittarius, just to the left) we're looking into the center of our galaxy!

You may have noticed I've named two different types of star groupings, an *asterism* and a *constellation*. We (humans) have grouped stars into patterns and woven stories from our cultures' traditions around them. Those groupings are the constellations. There are also patterns and groups of stars that are either pieces of constellations or that cross constellation boundaries. These are called asterisms. In fact, last time we started with what's probably the most well-known asterism – the Big Dipper. The stars that make up the Dipper are all part of a bigger grouping of stars – the constellation called Ursa Major (the Larger Bear).

One other regular feature in the mid-August sky is the Perseid meteor shower (the shower's peak occurs on August 12th). Unfortunately, the Moon will be getting close to full by then and its light will wash out all but the very brightest meteors. You can still see a few though. Don't despair – there will be other meteor showers in the months to come. I'll talk about them later (and explain why they happen).

Keep looking up!
Barry

You can contact me at: astroblog@comcast.net. I'd love to hear what you think and how you make out finding the objects we've talked about!



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At Eversource, we're pleased to serve the neighborhoods where we work and live. You are invited to join us at our local open houses, in Carver and Kingston, Mass., to learn more about planned improvements to the transmission system in southeastern Massachusetts that will increase reliability for our customers.

The **Carver to Kingston Reliability Project** is a new, 8-mile transmission line that would pass through portions of Carver, Plympton and Kingston.

Keeping the lines of communication open is an important part of our work in the community. The open houses are designed to give residents and businesses an opportunity to find out more about the project, ask questions, and provide comments and feedback.

Open Houses:
Tuesday, August 13, 2019
Drop in between 5:30–7:30 p.m.
Carver Town Hall
108 Main Street, Carver, MA 02330

Wednesday, August 14, 2019
Drop in between 5:30–7:30 p.m.
Kingston Town Hall
26 Evergreen Street, Kingston, MA 02364

For more information about the planned construction, please send an email to ProjectInfo@eversource.com, call 800-793-2202 or visit Eversource.com.

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