



Evening sky in AUGUST 2012

When you look directly overhead towards Scorpius and Sagittarius, the Milky Way appears brighter and broader. This is the central bulge of our Milky Way Galaxy, the combined light of millions of distant stars. All the individual stars we see at night as well as our Sun lie within our own galaxy, which consists of about 400 thousand million stars. Observations made during the 1920's by astronomer Edwin Hubble established our galaxy as only one of an estimated 200 thousand million galaxies in the observable universe.

Look southwards to find the Southern Cross (Crux) and Pointers (Alpha and Beta Centauri). To the south-east are Achernar in Eridanus (River) and Fomalhaut in Pisces Austrinus (Southern Fish). To the south-east are Arcturus in Boötes (Herdsman), Altair in Aquila (Eagle) and Vega in Lyra (Lyre) to the north.

Planets Mars and Saturn and the star Spica make a bright trio in Virgo. Watch Mars as it passes Spica and overtakes Saturn.

The Moon is in the evening sky until 4 August and again after 19 August. Two full moons in this calendar month make the second a "blue moon" according to some interpretations of this term.