

Our Night Sky for the week of July 9

This week as we continue a close look at the high northern sky, later in the evening the moon will rise and begin to assert its dominance over the night sky. It is still late and almost the whole sky away but as the days progress the moon will wash out the faint objects that are a bit harder to find in any but the darkest skies.

There are two deep sky objects that may take a bit of trying but are well worth the effort. Depending on the sky conditions and the optics you have available, whether you see a faint wispy ball or a full spiral galaxy it is worth the effort.

Note the distance between the second and third star in the handle of the Big Dipper, keeping that spacing in mind, imagine a line that length at a right angle down from the last star of the handle. Hopefully you will at least see an indistinct smudge or even a ball of glowing dim stars. That is the Whirlpool Galaxy, a spiral galaxy very similar to our own, made up of billions of stars. If you are lucky enough to see even a small smudge of light, that light has traveled 35 million years to touch your eye.