

## Our Night Sky for the week of July 16

This week we still have a good chance at good viewing, but only late at night when the sun is as far below the northern horizon as it can go. The moon is sharing the daytime sky with the sun. This week all of the extremely distant outer planets are above the horizon. But that would require a skilled observer and a good telescope.

Let's turn our attention to the sky directly overhead. For most of the summer there is one very easy to find notable star.

Almost directly overhead is Vega, one of the brightest stars in the sky. If you look just below Vega there is slightly flattened box, a parallelogram, a square with no right angles. Look carefully below Vega and find the two stars at the end of the box furthest away from Vega. About a third to the left of the lower right corner star you will see a slightly fuzzy spot or with good binoculars a glowing ring of gas known as The Ring Nebula. My daughter called it the exploding Cheerio. This is the still expanding ball of fire after a stellar explosion six to eight thousand years ago. A friend's P.H.D. thesis was to measure the continued expansion of this ball of gas and yes, it's still expanding, but at 2000 ly away poses no threat to us.