

Our Night Sky for July 8th, 2024

This time of year, you may be asking yourself as you glance out at the evening sky, is it ever going to get dark enough to see anything worth staying up late for? Perhaps a nap for a couple of hours and then step out after midnight or even one o'clock in the morning. The first thing you will notice is how much better the sky conditions are later in the night. As the night temperatures drop, the moisture and dust in the air settle and by one or two in the morning you will see usually the best conditions of the day.

Tonight, first face south east and look up almost overhead. The bright star about eighty degrees above the south east horizon is Vega in the constellation Lyra. Vega is the fifth brightest star in our skies but only by decimal points. Vega is also a part of an asterism. Three bright stars Deneb, Altair and Vega form the prominent summer triangle. See if you can spot it.

If you have made the effort to be up at two in the morning, let's show you a sight that will make it very worth the extra cup of coffee you will need in the morning.

Look closely at Vega, seemingly hanging by a short tail below Vega is a parallelogram, the lower two stars are easy to spot. If you have binoculars look just left of the lower right star. If you're steady you will see The Ring Nebula, truly worth staying up late for. This is a planetary nebula, the still expanding remnant of a star that exploded approximately 1600 years ago in our Night Sky.