

Our Night Sky for August 26, 2024

I mentioned last week that the night sky can be a bit confusing. As I suggested last week, find a comfortable spot away from direct light as much as possible and every few days check out the same area of the sky. Watching our Northern sky is a good place to start. The circumpolar constellations you see here will be in our sky all year long. With Polaris the North star at the center, the constellations slowly rotate in great circles. The big dipper for example is high in the north western sky, its summer position is right side up moving toward north and on to high in the eastern sky next spring.

Of course the southern sky is very interesting. Here as the weeks go by you will see constellations rise in the east a little earlier each night as they progress across the sky. You might notice they follow an arc across the sky and after a few weeks they reach their highest point until months from now they set before the sun goes down. If you have managed to check out the night sky fairly regularly throughout the whole year you will probably have a good picture in your head of the mechanism of our sky. You may have found some sky maps or maybe software for your phone. A good resource is Nightwatch, a really good starter book written by Canadian Terence Dickenson. It has maps that break up the sky seasonally. The book is available at the observatory for Centre members to borrow. There is a lot of material available to help you understand Our Night Sky.