Our Night Sky for November 23rd, 2026

During these fall evenings you might be surprised to see an object that was highlighted in late spring and summer. For most of the summer the constellation Lyra and the bright star Vega have been prominent overhead. Vega the bright star attached to the corner of the flattened rectangle that is Lyra, is circumpolar, it never sets. These days it's very easy to spot about halfway up to the zenith a little right of due west. Vega is almost exactly magnitude 0. You might remember that the magnitude scale is upside down and the brighter the star the lower the number. Also, the scale is logarithmic so even a single number represents many times brighter or dimmer. The dimmest star you can see with your unaided eye is about magnitude 6, and the magnitude almost full moon sharing the sky in the east is about negative 12.

Precision brightness measurements is one of the ways they have discovered planets orbiting distant suns. Even a distant sun's light washes out any chance of directly imaging distant planets, but that may change soon with the new space telescopes and the improved technology aboard. But one of the most common methods until now is to measure a star's brightness very precisely. When a far away orbiting planet passes across the surface of the distant sun, scientists can measure the slight dip in the star's brightness. Once they have established the time it takes to pass across the star's surface, it allows many more measurements. Estimates of the planet's atmosphere can be made when it passes the limb of the star and the amount it wobbles can help define it's size. Another one of the amazing things in Our Night Sky.