

Stars over Sisters

By Delsie McCrystal
Correspondent

The transition from summer to autumn took place on September 22, an event that is also told in the night sky as a different cast of evening constellations gradually replaces those of summer. Five of these constellations are visible in October and are linked in Greek mythology. Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Cepheus and Perseus are found in the north and north-eastern sky by nightfall, while Cetus is positioned lower to the southeast, in the shape of two squares connected by a line.

As the story goes, queen Cassiopeia and king Cepheus were rulers of ancient Aethiopia. They had a daughter, Andromeda, whom Cassiopeia bragged was the most beautiful of all the sea nymphs. This angered the other sea nymphs so they complained to the god of the sea, Poseidon. To punish Cassiopeia, he let the sea monster Cetus loose to raid the land. The only way the king and queen could break this curse was by sacrificing their daughter to Cetus. They tied Andromeda down to await her fate. But the tale has a happy ending. The hero Perseus happened by and saved her from her doom. He killed the sea monster and married Andromeda.

Late in October, Orion the Hunter can be seen rising above the southeastern horizon, and it's in this spooky part of the sky where the Witch Head Nebula is found. It actually resides in Eridanus, the neighboring constellation to the west of Orion. Officially designated New General Catalog (NGC) 1909, this cloud of gas is thought to be a supernova remnant that's being illuminated by the nearby blue supergiant star Rigel in Orion. It gives off a bright blue color, partly because Rigel is a blue star, but also because the dust particles in the cloud scatter much more of the blue wavelength of

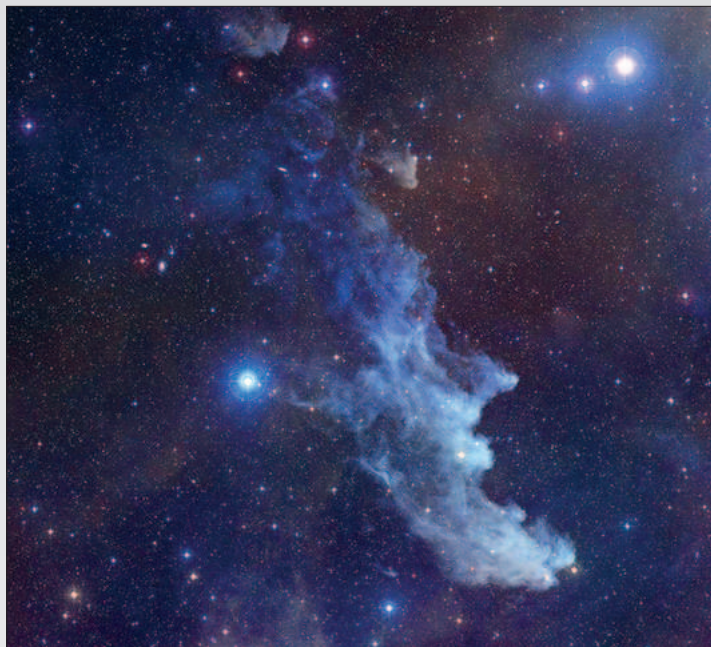


PHOTO COURTESY NASA/STSCI DIGITIZED SKY SURVEY/NOEL CARBONI

The Witch Head Nebula is a supernova remnant in the constellation of Eridanus, located at a distance of about 1,000 light-years.

light than red. This is much like why our sky on Earth appears blue.

The Witch Head Nebula is approximately 1,000 light-years distant, and was discovered photographically by the German astronomer Max Wolf in 1909.

As the name implies, the nebula does, in fact, look strikingly like the profile of the stereotypical wicked witch — a fitting tribute to Halloween. Unfortunately, it is far too dim to be seen with the unaided-eye, or even a pair of binoculars.

Two meteor showers occur this month. The first is the normally weak Draconid shower that peaks on October 9 this year. According to NASA meteor expert Bill Cooke, no more than 5-8 meteors per hour are expected. These meteors result from debris shed from comet Giacobini-Zinner and burn up in the earth's atmosphere. In 1946 observers in the western U.S. witnessed a meteor storm when thousands per hour filled the sky as the earth passed just inside the parent comet's orbit shortly after the comet itself had gone by. The streaks of light from this shower seem to emanate from the head of the dragon, hence the name.

The Orionid shower will peak the nights of October

21 and 22. During this time there should be about 15 to 20 meteors visible per hour. Light from a waxing gibbous moon, however, will likely mask most of them. These meteors are caused by debris from Halley's Comet.

After putting on spectacular shows throughout most of the summer, the five visible planets are beginning to exit the evening stage. Venus continues to draw closer to the sun and will be difficult if not impossible to see by the second half of the month. By the end of October Mercury and Jupiter will appear briefly low on the western horizon in the twilight of dusk shortly after sunset. Mars and Saturn will rule the evening sky for the remainder of the month.

The month opens with the moon on the wane. New moon (the dark phase) occurs on October 8, making it the perfect time to go stargazing. First quarter rolls around on October 16 when the right half of the moon is lit; the full Hunter's Moon follows on October 24. There are two last quarter moons this month — on October 2 and October 31.

GRANT: Funds will enhance volunteer recruitment

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contributed by the District. Funds will be used by the District to:

- Hire a Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Coordinator.
- Provide protective clothing for all new volunteer firefighters.
- Provide medical physicals for new volunteer firefighters.
- Provide uniforms for new volunteer firefighters.
- Provide volunteer firefighter retention incentives.
- Provide enhanced training for existing volunteer firefighters.
- Provide emergency medical training for new volunteer firefighters.
- Create a marketing plan for recruitment.

The overall goal of the program is to recruit and train at least 10 new volunteer firefighters each year of the grant period.

Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District Chief Roger Johnson said, "This is a tremendous opportunity to enhance our volunteer program in coordination with our neighboring fire districts. Volunteer recruitment and retention will be standardized between the three agencies including initial training and certification."

Damon Frutos, a firefighter paramedic with the District, wrote the grant and was successful in his first attempt

applying for the SAFER grant. The grant award was a culmination of more than a year of planning and coordination between the three fire districts. The three districts formed an Interagency Coordination Committee last year in an effort to standardize operations and improve efficiency. A combined training sub-committee identified the need for standardized training and recruitment of volunteer firefighters.

Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District Deputy Chief Tim Craig said, "I would like to recognize the accomplishment of Firefighter Frutos and the rest of the Interagency Training Committee in securing this grant. The grant will provide a great opportunity for all three fire districts to work even more closely together."

The District will now begin the process of hiring an employee to perform the functions of volunteer recruitment and retention. The hiring process should be complete by December 1 and recruitment activity should begin shortly after. For more information about becoming a volunteer firefighter or resident volunteer firefighter contact one of the agencies below.

Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District: 541-549-0771 or www.sistersfire.com.

Cloverdale Rural Fire Protection District: 541-389-2345 or www.cloverdalefire.com.

Black Butte Ranch Fire District 541-595-2288 or www.blackbutteranchfire.com.

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