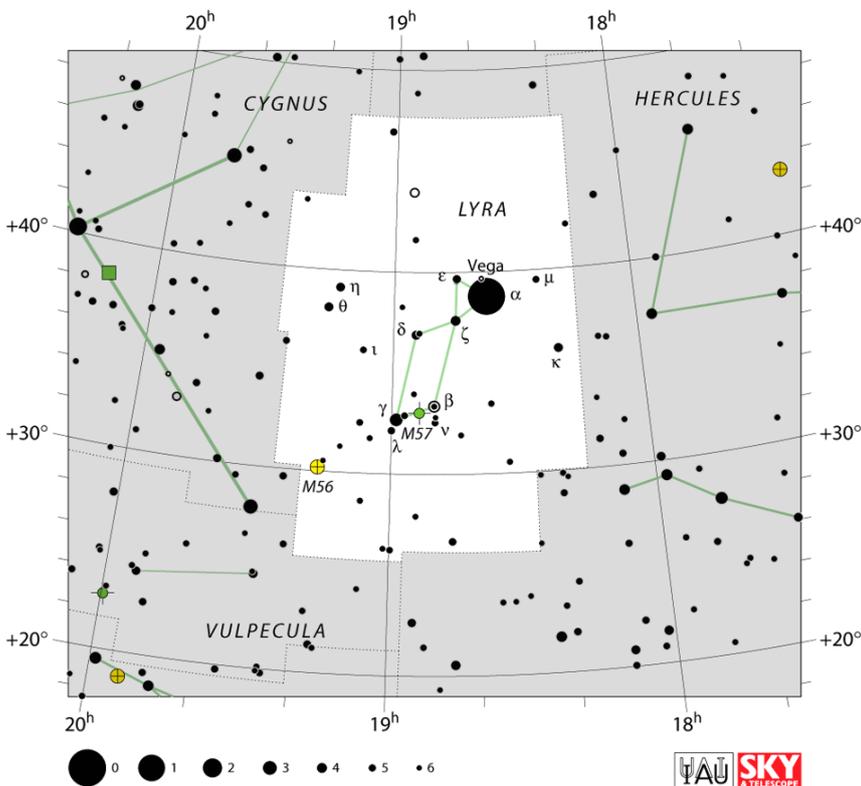


SPAXTON NIGHTS

Hello astro friends. This month let's have a look at Lyra. It's a lovely constellation, quite small,



but has one of the brightest stars in it, called Vega. Vega is the second brightest star we can see in our night sky. By mid month at about 10pm it lies quite high in the west. Now to the left of Vega is a star called Epsilon Lyra (marked in the diagram with a little E). The brightness of stars on star charts is usually indicated by a Greek letter; so Vega (the brightest) would be Alpha Lyra, the next Beta Lyra etc. Also on charts the full constellation name is shortened so in this case Vega would be Alpha Lyr. I suppose typing that pesky 'A' is just too much trouble for a busy astronomer!

Now where was I before my digression Epsilon Lyr...through a pair of binoculars is a lovely double star - but with a smallish telescope you can see these two stars also have companions, so it's

called the double double.

I mention the next one just in case anybody finds themselves in the near vicinity of a large telescope. Between the lower stars marked with Y and a B on the diagram is a wonderful Nebula called the ring nebula (m57 in the diagram). It was formed when a star exploded, blowing gas and dust out into space. It will look like a smoke ring.

On the top left is a fine double star marked with an 'o' with a little squiggle on top. This is delta Lyr. Look for the colour difference between the two: one is white and one is orange.

Now I know you're thinking 'what else is going on in October Steve?' Well, if you're mad enough to be up at about 4am on the 26th and find yourself looking east (where the sun rises); just above the horizon you'll see three planets close together. The brightest one is our old friend Venus, the next brightest is Jupiter and the reddy-orange one is Mars. I think that will do for now, don't you?

Ta ta:

Steve

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