

# Astronomy Times. Newsletter for 12<sup>th</sup> October 2004.



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## Meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> October.

The venue for this evenings talk will be the WWT, Caerlaverock.

1. Neil Booker will describe, in some depth, the mythology and details of the constellation **Ursa Major**.
2. Klaus Schiller will then explore our current knowledge of **Asteroids**.

## Meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> November.

The venue will probably be the North West Resource Centre. Further information later.

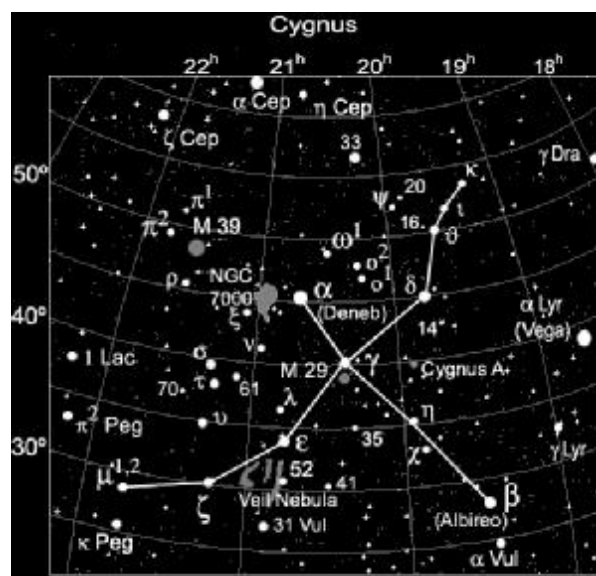
Dr Bonnie Steves will give a talk entitled “**Restless Stars.**” It will incorporate information about the life and violent dynamics associated with star clusters.

## The Constellation of Cygnus.

I find Cygnus to be one of the most interesting of the constellations. It is situated in a great swathe of the Milky Way which, admittedly, branches at one point forming part of the Cygnus Rift. Even a small telescope will show a vast amount of detail making up the backdrop to Cygnus.

Deneb is the alpha star – it is a very luminous super giant, A-class star, at a distance of 1600 light years. It is 60,000 times as bright as the Sun, It is possible that the North American Nebula (NGC 7000), situated just to the west of Deneb is illuminated by that star. The nebula itself is very difficult to see as it is very diffuse: in fact it is at least four times the width of the full Moon.

The other interesting object in the vicinity is



2.

the Pelican Nebula found between NGC 7000 and Deneb.

**NB.** NGC 7000 really does look like North America.

This picture shows a number of other interesting objects. M29 is a star cluster of about 20 stars but it is situated against the Milky Way background and can be easy to miss. The Veil Nebula, which is elusive, is thought to be the remnants of a supernova explosion 30,000 years ago. You can see other areas of nebulosity but exceptional conditions are required to see them. My own favourite object in Cygnus is the double star Albireo (Beta Cygni). One of the components is blue and the other is gold, although people do vary in their perception of the colour of these stars.

### **Smallest Earth – like Planet Seen**

European scientist have discovered what they describe as the smallest Earth – like planet orbiting a star outside of our Solar System. The planet is 14 times the size of the Earth – not so large that it qualifies as a gas giant – and is close enough to the star that it is unlikely to be icy.

The discovery was made using the highly sensitive Harps spectrograph on the European Southern Observatory's 3.6m telescope at La Silla.

The planet was found to be orbiting the star mu Arae in the southern constellation of Altar. It is the second planet discovered round the star and completes a full revolution in 9.5 days.