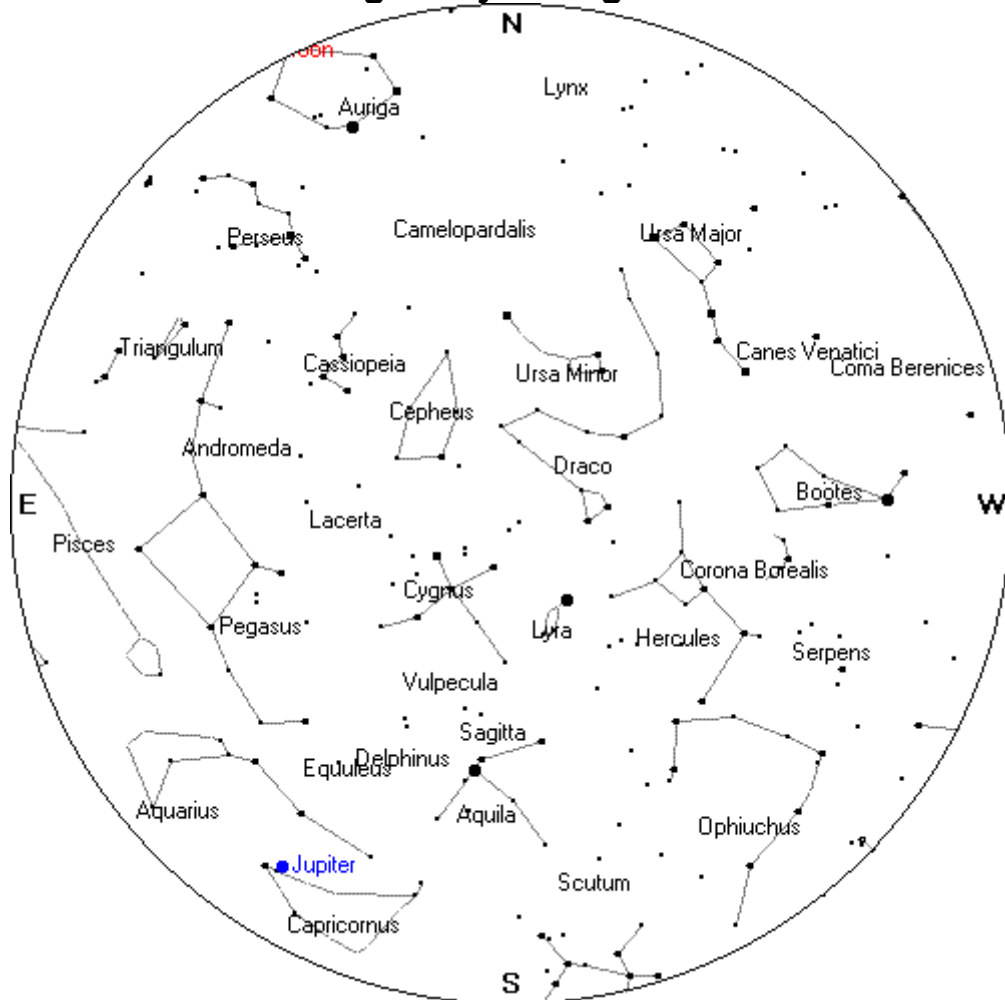


## Dundee Astronomical Society The Night Sky in August 2009



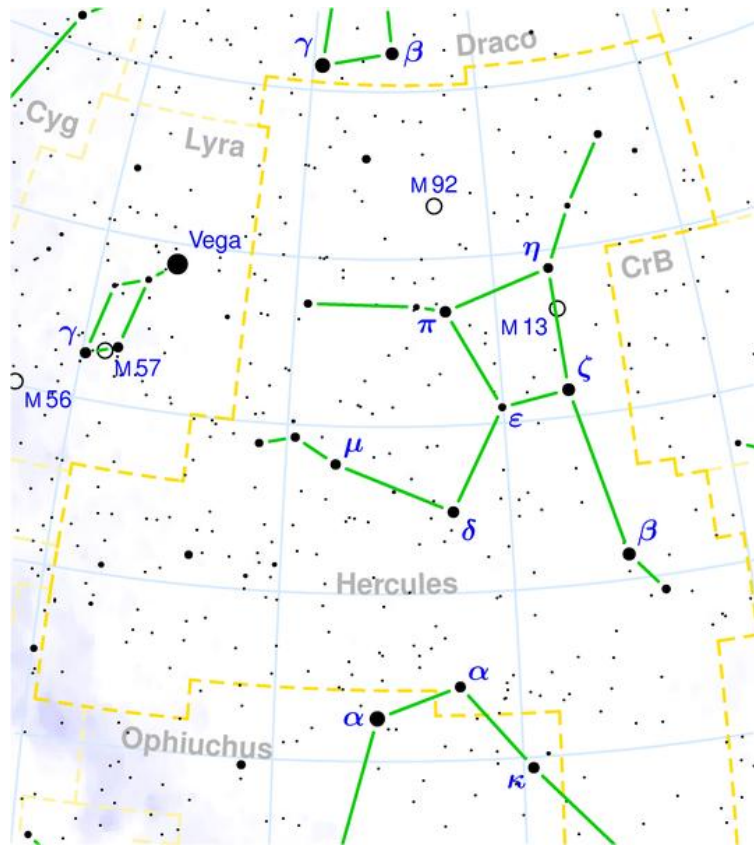
### The Sky at 10pm on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2009

[chart courtesy of [www.heavens-above.com](http://www.heavens-above.com)]

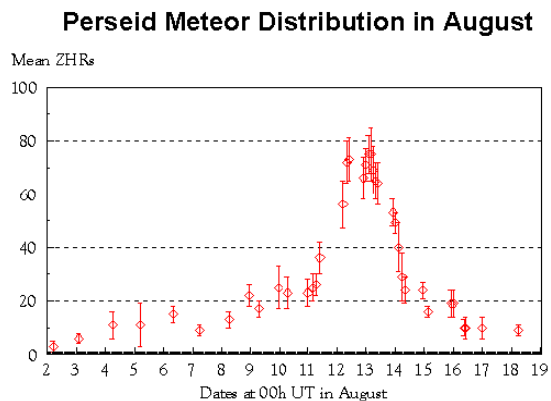
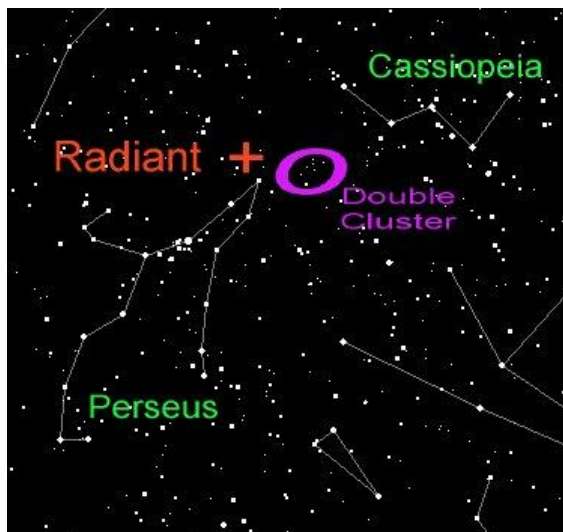
By August, the sky is reasonably dark by about 9.30pm and the three bright stars of the Summer Triangle help us to find our way round the sky. To the west of the bright star Vega, in Lyra, is the relatively faint constellation of Hercules which is one of Ptolemy's original 48 constellations. In mythology, Hercules was the son of Zeus and a mortal woman, Alcmene. He was hated by Zeus's wife, Hera, and this led to his famous twelve tasks, one of which was intended to kill him.

Contained within Hercules is the brightest globular cluster in the northern hemisphere, M13. Globular clusters are compact groups of stars which form a halo round our galaxy. M13 was discovered by Edmond Halley in 1714 and contains several hundred thousand stars. It is at a distance of 25,100 light years but is still a fine sight in a moderate sized telescope.

To the east of the obvious cross of Cygnus, the well defined Square of Pegasus, part of the winged horse, is well above the horizon. This is followed by Andromeda and Perseus. These are the great constellations of autumn which will be described in more detail later in the year.



August brings what is probably the best known meteor shower in the northern hemisphere. The shower spans from 23<sup>rd</sup> July until the 20<sup>th</sup> August but it is only for a few days before and after the 12<sup>th</sup> August that large numbers of meteors may be seen. At maximum on the 12<sup>th</sup> as many as 80 per hour are expected. The popularity of this meteor shower may be related to the relative warmth of the summer evenings. Look at the darkest part of your available sky and, given clear conditions, you are bound to see a few within about ten minutes. The meteors are tiny particles which enter Earth's atmosphere having been released from Comet Swift-Tuttle as it approached the Sun and where the comet's orbit crosses that of Earth.



Mercury is not well placed to be seen in the northern hemisphere during August.

Venus is well placed and very bright in the morning sky towards the east before sunrise.

Mars can also be seen in the morning sky quite near and above Venus. It is, however, much less bright and is still a very small disc of 5.5 arc seconds.

Jupiter will be due south at midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> August. It is a large object with a disc of 48 arc seconds and binoculars will show the Galilean satellites.

Saturn will not be visible throughout the month.

The Moon is full on the 6<sup>th</sup>, at last quarter on the 13<sup>th</sup>, new on the 20<sup>th</sup> and at first quarter on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Ken Kennedy**  
**Director of Observations**