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Milky Way Galaxy



Would you try to look up at a night sky? You will see a crowd of stars like a bright streak across the sky.

There is a Greek myth that tells why this streak of stars is called the Milky Way. Zeus, king of the gods, tricks his divine wife Hera into suckling Heracles while she is asleep. When she wakes up and realizes that she is breastfeeding an unknown baby boy, she pushes him away and her spurting breast milk becomes the Milky Way.

The Milky Way galaxy is our home in space.

The center of the Milky Way galaxy looks bulgy and is brightest in the direction of Sagittarius in the low southern sky. In the summer, the Milky Way lies faintly from the south to the north through such constellations as Sagittarius, Aquila, Lyra, with Cygnus near the zenith, making a crisscross bridge over the Milky Way.

On May 12, 2022 the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan and an international team of astronomers announced that they had formed a single earth-sized virtual telescope and unveiled the first image of the black hole called 'Sagittarius A * 'at the heart of our own Milky Way galaxy.

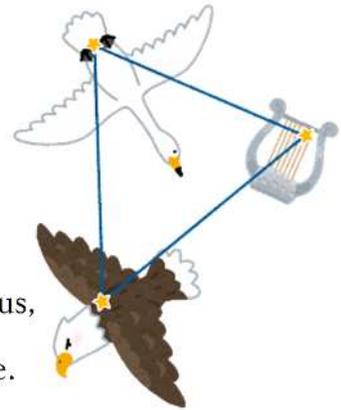
The global research team of more than 300 astronomers of the Event Horizon

Telescope (EHT) Collaboration linked radio observatories across the planet and made a virtual 10,000 km diameter telescope. EHT captured the first direct visual image of the black hole at 27,000 light-years away from the earth. It provides the evidence that this object, about a million to 10 billion times more massive than our sun, exists as a black hole.

You can see a bright white star in the eastern sky in July.

It is Vega known as *Tanabata Orihime*, the first magnitude star in Lyra. Together with Altair, the brightest star

in Aquila, and Deneb, the (alpha) star at the tail of Cygnus, these three first magnitude stars form the Summer Triangle.



Each star in the Summer Triangle composes the *Tanabata* legend. Vega in Lyra is *Tanabata Orihime*, the Weaver star. Altair in Aquila is *Tanabata Hikoboshi*, the Cowherd star. Between Vega and Altair you can see the Milky Way running down from the zenith to the southern horizon. The white bright star in the Milky Way is Deneb in Cygnus. The Swan stretches its slender neck out of Deneb to Vega and Altair and builds a bridge with its wide-spread wings. That creates a crisscross. Kenji Miyazawa depicts it as the Northern Cross in his "The Night of the Milky Way Train".

The origin of *Tanabata* is a festival in China called 乞巧奠 or *kikkoden*, in which Chinese people used to plead for skills on July 7 every year. Two stars, the Cowherd star and the Weaver star, cross the Milky Way and meet each other once in a year. The legend was introduced into Japan in the Nara Era and merged with Japan's indigenous faith in *Tanabata-tsume*, a goddess excellent at weaving clothes, as an offering to pray for a rich harvest. And people are now celebrating *Tanabata-tsume* to wish to be good at handcraft and sewing.



Well, do you think that *Tanabata* should be on July 7?

The date is according to the lunar calendar with a time-lag from the Gregorian calendar. So the National

Astronomical Observatory of Japan has named *Tanabata* on July 7 as “traditional *Tanabata* ”and appealed to people to observe the Milky Way and the *Tanabata* stars. Please check it on <https://www.nao.ac.jp>, and you will find that the traditional Tanabata will be on August 4 in 2022.

When it comes to a famous summer constellation in Japan, you are sure to name Scorpius together with the Summer Triangle. It lies over the Milky Way lifting a large S-shaped poison stinger in the low southern sky. The red colored first magnitude star, Antares is outstanding near the heart of Scorpius. It will get closer to the orbits of Mars and the other planets. The moment Mars and Antares stand in a row, Antares looks as if it is competing for its redness with Mars. That’s why the Greek named it Anti-Ares in a sense of opposing Mars. From our eyes on the earth the tip of the Scorpion’s tail and Sagittarius are on the way toward the heart of the galaxy. In the direction of the galactic center, stars are dense and the Milky Way is deeper in color with wider spread.

The Milky Way is the galaxy we live in. Humans have proved the evidence of a supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way at 27,000 light-years away from the earth. The *Tanabata* legend concerning the Summer Triangle and the Milky Way arouse humankind to dream and vigorously explore spectacular cosmic activities.

You will be able to see a Supermoon on July 14, 2022, and a Total Lunar Eclipse from 19:16 to 20:42 on November 8, 2022, and Mars closest approach on December 1, 2022. We can enjoy these cosmic phenomena throughout this year.

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