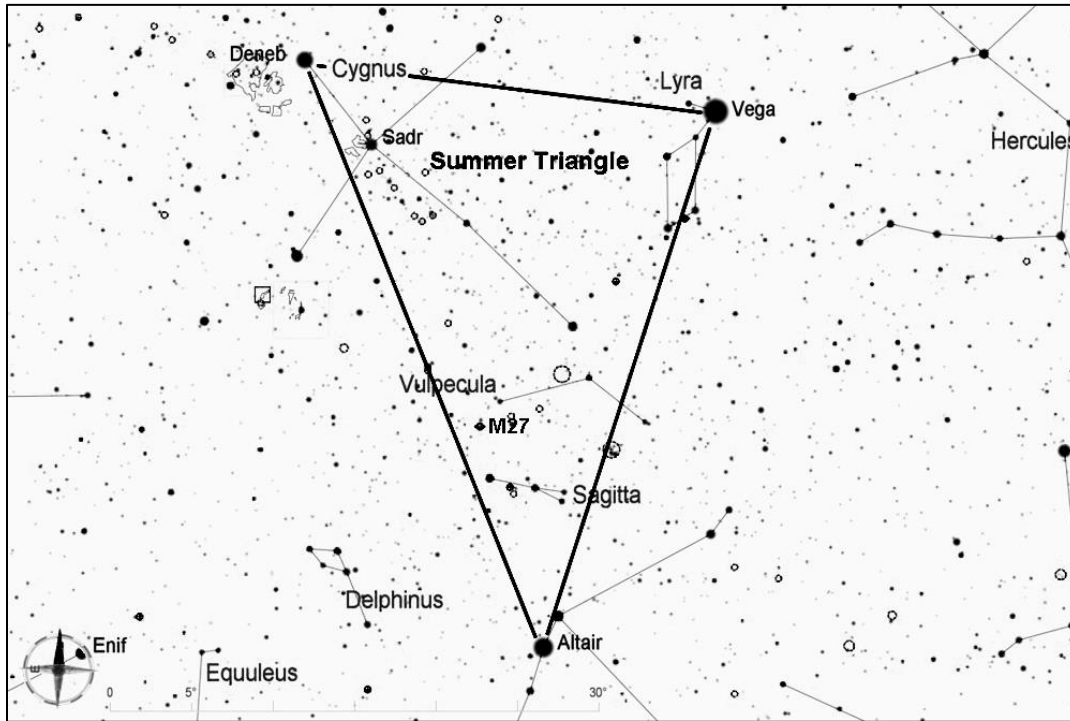


## NGC 7000 (Caldwell 20, North America Nebula) and Open Cluster NGC 6996 in Cygnus

This nebula gets its name from its curious resemblance to the shape of the continent. On a dark night, it can be seen with the naked eye as a hazy patch in the Milky Way, several times the diameter of the Moon. It consists of vast expanses of glowing hydrogen gas. The nebula is in a dense section of the Milky Way. A small open cluster that can be seen in roughly the "Great Lakes" region of the nebula is NGC 6996. A small open cluster that can be seen in roughly the "Great Lakes" region of the nebula is NGC 6996.



Start by finding the Summer Triangle, which consists of the three of the brightest stars in the sky--Vega, Deneb, and Altair. The Summer Triangle is high overhead throughout the summer, and it sinks lower in the west as fall progresses.

For this star hop, start from Deneb, the first-magnitude star that forms the tail of Cygnus, the swan (or if you visualize the brightest stars of Cygnus as a cross shape, Deneb is at the top of the cross).

From Deneb, the North America Nebula is just about 3 degrees to the east. It may be visible to the naked eye, and is a nice sight through binoculars on a dark night. With a telescope, it is best viewed with a wide-field eyepiece. There are faint patches of nebulosity and star clouds visible throughout the area. See if you can spot the dark nebula that represents the Gulf of Mexico.

