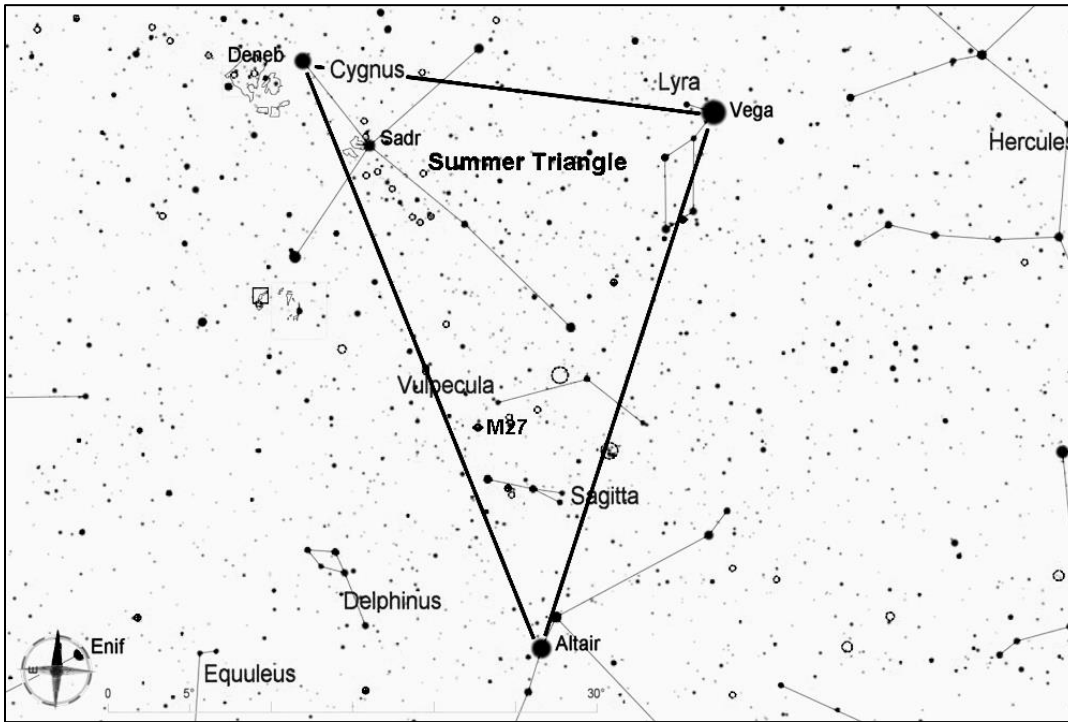


## NGC 7243 (Caldwell 16), Open Cluster in Lacerta

NGC 7243, or Caldwell 16, is a large and coarse cluster with an irregular shape. The Milky Way passes through this area of sky in the faint constellation Lacerta, the lizard, so there are many dimmer stars in the background. In the center of the cluster is a double star, Struve 2890, two matching blue-white stars of 9th magnitude. The cluster is about 2600 light years away.



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).

Notice that the distance from Deneb at the top of the Cygnus cross to Albireo at the bottom is about the same as the distance (in roughly the opposite direction) to the four dim stars in a diamond shape that form the head of Lacerta, the lizard. All the stars of Lacerta are dim, but this diamond shape should be visible to the naked eye under moderately dark skies. Once you have found the head of Lacerta, look about 1 degree to the west of the star 4 Lacertae to find NGC 7243.

