

Re: Cherokee #3 Pronto & Cygnus (Part I)

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Cherokee wrote:

> 15 constellations bigger than Cygnus! Wow – I can only imagine how big
> some of the bigger ones are.

Yup. Virgo, Hydra, Cetus—many of these are big in part because they stretch on and on, and in part because they tend to glom areas of the sky that don't have anything recognizable in them. For instance, Camelopardalis, which except for a few open clusters and Kemble's Cascade is a pretty miserable constellation, is larger in terms of its "official" area than you might expect.

Kemble's Cascade is a nice object for the Pronto, by the way, although it's not the easiest thing in the world to find. If you feel like trying for it, here's how I find it: Start with Cassiopeia's W. (That is, orient yourself mentally so you see it as a W.) The right tip of the W is Caph, or beta Cas. The left tip is epsilon Cas, also sometimes known as Navi (named after one of the three doomed astronauts on Apollo 1, I think).

Extend a line from Caph, through Navi, and go on an equal distance. You will probably not see very much in the sky right there, but if you have measured your distance and direction accurately, you should find yourself somewhere in the midst of Kemble's Cascade, a long string of eighth and ninth magnitude stars. Here's a diagram, with north to the upper left:

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! Kemble's Cascade
! / Navi Caph
! ./ * *
! *
! *
! *
! CASSIOPEIA
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Kemble's Cascade is indicated by the small row of backslashes. It's a remarkable asterism, first discovered I think by the amateur astronomer Lucius Kemble, who I want to say was a priest of some sort (Jesuit?). It's really quite remarkable.

A similar but smaller asterism is the Coathanger, otherwise known as

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Collinder 399, which lies in the constellation of Vulpecula the Wolf.

It isn't very easy to find, either. Start with Albireo, a very nice double star that you will want to look at, if you haven't already.

South of Albireo is the constellation of Aquila the Eagle, whose lucida (brightest star) is Altair. If you see Altair as it's rising, it should be surrounded top and bottom by somewhat dimmer stars, and to their upper right is another somewhat dimmer star,