



Evening sky in September 2018

With the arrival of Spring this September and Spring Equinox on 23 September, dust off your binoculars and use them to identify several impressive deep-sky objects in and around the constellations Scorpius and Sagittarius, situated high above the western horizon (see the 2018 Sky Guide South Africa available from local bookshops for reference).

In this region, you can find the impressive open star clusters Messier 6 (the Butterfly Cluster) and Messier 7 (the Ptolemy Cluster), as well as Messier 4, a globular cluster located close to the bright red star Antares in Scorpius. Nearer towards Sagittarius, lies Messier 8 (the Lagoon Nebula) huddled among several open clusters.

M8 is a beautiful emission nebula, bright enough to observe with your naked eye in dark conditions.

Venus, the evening star, continues to outshine all but the moon after sunset this September. Jupiter, also relatively bright, sets a few hours before midnight whereas Saturn, nestled within Sagittarius in the Milky Way, sets just after midnight. Mars, bright and reddish, can be observed throughout the night this month.

The moon will be in the evening sky until 1 September, and then returns as the new sickle moon on the 10 September. It continues to brighten our evening skies till 29 September, with full moon on the 25 September.