

Caption This

I had my 8" reflector here. Not only would I be able to better see the familiar objects such as the globular cluster of Hercules and the Ring Nebula of Lyra, but there would also be deep-sky objects that cannot be seen clearly or at all in Pennsylvania. There at home, the rich star fields of Scorpio and Sagittarius are flooded by the lights of a city to the south of where I live. What a mine to discover sky treasures in the Ethiopian sky!

Since the star horizon is shifted 30° southward, I can see some wonders for the first time. I was especially delighted to see the Southern Cross. With a 10x binoculars I could pick out the Jewel Box a little to the left of the second brightest star in the Southern Cross. That star cluster with contrasting star colors would need at least a 30x telescope to reveal its splendor.

In Ethiopia I have had my first view of the star Alpha Centauri, famous for being the closest visible star, 4.3 light years away. The light left that star 4.3 years ago. At 186 thousand miles per second, the light traveled over 25 trillion miles from Alpha Centauri to reach Earth. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet; therefore, Alpha Centauri means this star is the brightest star in the constellation Centaurus. (All constellations have an alpha star which is either the brightest or most famous star within it.)

I wish I could see the Large and Small Magellanic Clouds, galaxies near the Milky Way galaxy we live in. But they are hidden from Ethiopia in the hazy lower 10° of the southern sky. Those living in southern hemisphere countries such as Australia and Paraguay have an excellent view of the Magellanic Clouds in evening skies from December to March. But those of us in the northern hemisphere can see Polaris, the north pole star that they can never see.

While in Ethiopia I have heard much speaking in Amharic, a language I do not understand. But I have also "heard" the language of the stars, which is understood by men of every language. The stars declare the glory of God all over the earth. As the Bible says, "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:3,4). ◀

▼ JEWEL BOX



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"Do you have a good caption for the pop-eyed, thin-limbed, bug-sucker?"

We invite you to submit your caption for this photograph of a chameleon capturing a cricket. The photograph will be used on the back of the May issue, along with our choice of a caption or captions.

We appreciate your following these rules for submissions:

Please submit a postcard, not in an envelope, addressed to: Caption This Chameleon, 4253 Woodcock Lane, Dayton, VA 22821, or e-mail to captionthis@naturefriendmagazine.com. Mention "Chameleon" in subject line. Include your name and address.

Reply by February 15, 2009.