

## THE STARRY SIDE

# We are landscapes!

BY GREELEY WELLS



Greeley Wells

I had an interesting insight one morning in the shower. Rubbing away at my eyebrows with the washcloth, I remembered there is a particular creature that lives in human eyebrows called a follicle mite. I thought, what are they doing now? Probably holding on for dear life as I scrub away at their home! And what do they do at night when I'm sleeping and they're free to walk about easily?

It suddenly occurred to me: I am a landscape! I am home to that follicle mite. And the follicle mites aren't alone—there are more creatures on the surface of our skin than skin cells themselves! And in our gut and throughout our bodies we host other minute creatures, a myriad of life forms. Most of them are doing wonderful things, like digesting our food for us. We are at one with them. As we walk through our own earthly landscape, they all come along with us, walking around in and on us! And frankly, we humans also walk around like little mites on this planet, doing some good things and some not-so-good things. Fundamentally, we are all simultaneously creatures and landscapes.

We're all neighbors and fellow creatures: gigantic, large, small or infinitesimal...it just depends on your perspective. I've seen one of those electron microscope photos of the small creatures living on our skin. It's hard to believe, but they have even tinier creatures crawling on *them*!

Perhaps we could look at our solar system—and maybe the whole cosmos—in a similar way. This insight made my morning, and I pass it on to you to ponder.

### The fall after summer

The Summer Triangle is late in coming to the summer sky, so in early fall it's still up there, moving farther and farther west

as fall goes on. As it works its way down into the west, the Summer Triangle carries with it the beautiful Milky Way, streaming right through it.

Pushing the Summer Triangle westward is Pegasus the horse. A simple large square, Pegasus is the foremost central constellation and one of the biggest in fall.

Off the northern corner (upper left corner on the illustration below) of Pegasus is a widening arch of parallel sets of stars

sweeping toward Perseus, which makes a triangle of constellations with Cassiopeia (the W shape that circumnavigates the North Star opposite the Big Dipper). Starting from that upper corner of Pegasus, three pairs of stars sweep northwest in a curved triangular shape, each pair getting wider apart.

That second pair of stars is very important. Look up from them and slightly to the left, about the same distance as the

space between the two stars. See that little fuzzy spot? That's the Andromeda Galaxy, our closest galactic neighbor and the only galaxy we can see with our naked eyes. It's actually moving towards us, and in some billions of years we're destined to collide with it! (I previously described this incredible collision in "Never touch each other" in the winter 2013 issue of the *Applegater*.)

### Of note

**Venus** is now the sentinel of the sunrise, brighter than anything but the moon. Venus, because of her sun-centric orbit, is always either in our dawn before sunrise or in our dusk after sunset. Only Mercury lives closer to the sun than Venus, which is why we don't get to see either of these planets for long.

**Jupiter** is high in the southwest at dusk in late summer, and he's steadily falling into the west as fall begins. The other planets are no longer very bright.

**The event of a lifetime** was on August 21, when the total solar eclipse of the sun came to our state and across our whole country. I did an expedition with a few artists, photographers, friends, and family to the totality zone more than an hour northeast of Bend. I'll share thoughts and images in an upcoming movie I am filming, directing, and producing—as well as on [greeleyandfriends.com](http://greeleyandfriends.com). If you like my articles, you may want to check out this website.

Here's to clear, dark night skies and bright stars for you,

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Illustration from [stellarium.org](http://stellarium.org).



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