

# Constellation Discovery Series: Cygnus

**Translation: Swan**

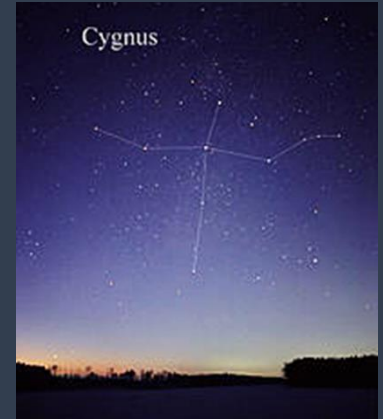
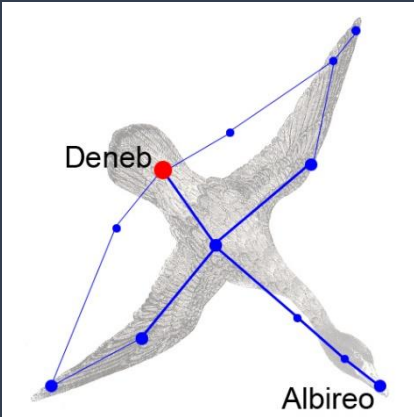
## **Visibility:**

- **Cygnus, the swan, is a prominent constellation in the northern sky.**
- **Found close to the constellation Draco and Ursa Minor, which houses the North Star.**
- **Cygnus consists of several stars, the brightest of which make up its well-known asterism the Northern Cross.**
- **Of the six stars that make up this asterism, the most prominent is a star called Deneb.**

## **Additional Facts:**

- **You can use Deneb to find the Milky Way galaxy in the night sky. This is because the long part of the Northern Cross goes through the center of the Milky Way.**
- **Cygnus's asterism is also included in a prominent part of the night sky known as the Summer Triangle.**
- **The Summer Triangle serves as an astronomical calendar, marking the seasons.**
- **When the stars of the Summer Triangle light up the eastern sky at dusk in middle to late June, it's a sure sign of the change of seasons. Spring is giving way to summer.**
- **However, when the Summer Triangle is seen high in the south, at dusk or early evening, the Summer Triangle's change of position indicates that summer has begun to ebb into fall.**

## Examples:



## Myths:

**One story based in Greek mythology told of two close friends, Cygnus and Phaeton, who were continually competing. One day, they each challenged the other to a race across the sky, around the Sun, and back to Earth. In an effort to gain the advantage, they both cut too closely to the Sun and their chariots were burned up. They both fell to the Earth and were knocked unconscious.**

**Upon recovering, Cygnus began looking for his friend, Phaeton, and discovered he was trapped by the roots of a tree at the bottom of the Eridanus River. In an effort to save his friend, Cygnus repeatedly dove into the river, but could not reach him.**

**While he sat grieving on the bank of the river, Cygnus begged for Zeus to help him. Zeus replied that if he gave Cygnus the body of a swan, he would be able to dive deeply enough to save his friend. However, if Cygnus did take on the body of a swan, he would also be giving up his immortality and would only live as long as a swan would normally live. Cygnus readily agreed to this in order to save his friend. In honor of this great unselfish act, Zeus placed Cygnus' image (that of a swan) into the night sky.**

**Another story originates from a group of Native Americans. However, they saw Cygnus as a goose instead of swan. The story tells of how a hunter shot a beautiful goose with an arrow. The hunter and his companions searched for the fallen goose, but could not find it. When they looked into the night sky, they saw the spirit of the goose flying through the heavens.**