



STAR STUFF

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Newsletter

Star Stuff

This newsletter is published eleven times per year by:

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Officers

President: Arica Flores
Vice President: Sean Pickard
Secretary: Cheri Grissom
Treasurer: Jameson Sullivan

Departments

Webmaster: Liam Finn
Membership: Doug Bauer
Newsletter: Tim Campbell
Equipment: Jeff Gorman
Speakers: Sandra Macika

Club Information

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club meets on the fourth Thursday of each month, except for the combined November/December meeting which meets on the first Thursday of December – at Henry Ford College Administration Services and Conference Center in Dearborn.

President's Corner

by Arica Flores, President

Astronomy at the Beach

Hello all, it is that time a year again. Astronomy at the Beach is September 26th and 27th. We are back at Island Lake Recreation Area at the Kent Lake Beach site. Solar observing begins at 5pm and we'll transition to nighttime scopes at sunset. Observing ends at midnight. We need your help to make this a fun, enjoyable time for all. You can help make this year's event as big of a hit as past years.

The club is looking for people to bring their telescopes and share the views as well as your knowledge and passion with the public.

Gordon Hanson is also looking for table volunteers for both nights contact Gordon for more information and to sign up.

Liam is looking for a few people to man the club's 20" Obsession dob. Contact Liam if you are interested as always there are volunteer opportunities through GLAAC for things like setting up to taking down tables and chairs. You can contact Tim Cambell, Liam Finn or me if you are interested in more opportunities with GLAAC.

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – July 24, 2025

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m. by President Arica Flores. Secretary Cheri Grissom, Vice President Sean Pickard, and Treasurer Jameson Sullivan also present. We had a total of 25 in-person attendees. As this is one of our social nights with pizza and no guest speaker, we did not offer

Club Information

Refer to our website for a map and directions:

www.fordastronomyclub.com

Observing

The FAAC primary observing location is Spring Mill Pond located within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The Club maintains an after-hours permit. Club members can contact any club officer for procedures to enter or exit the park when the main gate is locked.

The club also has use of a private observing site near Gregory Michigan. See the FAAC Groups.io Group for more information.

Inquiries can be directed to info@fordastronomyclub.com

Membership

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The FAAC is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (FERA).

Fees

Annual - New Members: \$30
Annual - Renewals: \$25
(\$30 if not renewed by Jan 31)

Benefits

Membership includes the Star Stuff newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected

an online attendance option. Arica asked for member and guest introductions.

Member Observing Reports

Doug Bauer recently did some observing with the Seven Ponds club at their observing site. He reports a beautiful night with great views of all the familiar night sky targets. Gordon Hansen was lucky to get in three nights in a row of imaging from his suburban downriver home. Tim Campbell was at the U of M Dearborn observing event last Friday, where in addition to the usual rooftop observing, he opened the school's observatory. Liam Finn was also present. They observed M51, the Whirlpool Galaxy, some carbon stars, and other objects. As a reminder, U of M Dearborn has a public observing event two or three times a month, on Fridays, at the campus. These are free and open to the public. The schedule is published in "Star Stuff." Tim and Liam can always use additional FAAC volunteers to help out. You do not need to bring any equipment; U of M has their own telescopes, but having enough operators is always appreciated. Contact Tim or Liam for more information.

Arica reminded all of us about the FAAC Observers Award, which has yet to have any member complete the requirements. It's not that hard! Please consider trying for this. Details can be found under "Files" on Groups.io. You will find an overall outline of the requirements, forms for filling in your observing targets, etc., and lists of suggested or possible targets. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to ask at a meeting or contact any board member.

What's Up in the Night Sky

Sean started by going over our upcoming calendar of events, meeting dates, etc. These dates can also be found on our website and in "Star Stuff." Sean gave a list of upcoming ISS pass over dates for viewing in our area, plus lunar and solar transits.

We had a reminder about our upcoming August guest speaker, Neil Mottinger, of NASA/JPL. Neil has been heavily involved in planning the launches and navigation of unmanned interplanetary missions. He will be giving a talk on orbital mechanics via Zoom for our in-person and online attendees.

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area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake observing site and private observing sites.

Astronomy or Sky & Telescope magazine discounts are available by contacting the FAAC club treasurer treasurer@fordastronomyclub.com for the discount form. The form should be sent to the respective publisher with your subscription request and payment. Do not send money directly to FAAC.

The FAAC has a pool of equipment including telescopes, cameras, and other gear used for outreach. Much of the gear can be borrowed for personal use in the interest of furthering your knowledge and experience in astronomy.

Please see the equipment list for further information.

Club Wear

Club logo-wear (embroidered with club logo) can be ordered directly through LLBeanBusiness.com

See the groups.io files section for ordering information and instructions on how to request the correct logo.

Communication

The FAAC uses Groups.io for our email distribution list (both formal and informal discussion.)

Observing nights & locations (scheduled and unscheduled as weather permits), equipment

August's Night Sky Notes: The Great Rift

by Dave Prosper; updated by Kat Troche



Summer skies bring glorious views of our own Milky Way galaxy to observers blessed with dark skies. For many city dwellers, their first sight of the Milky Way comes during trips to rural areas - so if you are traveling away from city lights, do yourself a favor and look up!

To observe the Milky Way, you need clear, dark skies and enough time to adapt your eyes to the dark. Photos of the Milky Way are breathtaking, but they usually show far more detail and color than the human eye can see - that's the beauty and quietly deceptive nature of long exposure photography. For Northern Hemisphere observers, the most prominent portion of the Milky Way rises in the southeast as marked by the constellations Scorpius and Sagittarius. Take note that, even in dark skies, the Milky Way isn't easily visible until it rises a bit above the horizon, and the thick, turbulent air obscures the view. The Milky Way is huge, but it is also rather faint, and our eyes need time to truly adjust to the dark and see it in any detail. Avoid bright lights as they will ruin your night vision. It's best to attempt to view the Milky Way when the Moon is at a new or crescent phase; a full Moon will wash out any potential views.



The Vera C. Rubin Observatory, located at Cerro Pachón, Chile, under the Milky Way. The bright halo of gas and stars on the left side of the image highlights the very center of the Milky Way galaxy. The dark path that cuts through this center is known as the Great Rift, because it gives the appearance that the Milky Way has been split in half. Image Credit: [RubinObs/NOIRLab/SLAC/NSF/DOE/AURA/B. Quint](https://www.noirlab.edu/)

Keeping your eyes dark-adapted is especially important if you want to not only see the haze of the Milky Way, but also the dark lane cutting into that

questions, events, outreaches, etc. are normally discussed via this list.

Join by visiting <https://groups.io/g/FordAstronomyClub> to request membership.

Articles & Submissions

Your submissions to Star Stuff are welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at: starstuff@fordastronomyclub.com

Observatory

The FAAC maintains and operates the Hector J Robinson Observatory (HJRO) at Lincoln Park Schools.

The observatory houses a 14" Celestron C14 Schmidt Cassegrain Telescope as well as other instruments and can be used by club members.

The observatory is adjacent to the athletic field situated between the Lincoln Park Middle School and High School buildings near

1701 Champaign Rd.
Lincoln Park, MI 48146

The school system has designated four "key-holders" within the club who have the ability to open the observatory.

Call (313) 444-5850 to learn when the observatory is opening (or request an opening).

haze, stretching from the Summer Triangle to Sagittarius. This dark detail is known as the Great Rift, and is seen more readily in very dark skies, especially dark, dry skies found in high desert regions. What exactly is the Great Rift? You are looking at massive clouds of galactic dust lying between Earth and the interior of the Milky Way.

Other "dark nebulae" of cosmic clouds pepper the Milky Way, including the famed Coalsack, found in the Southern Hemisphere constellation of Crux. Many cultures celebrate these dark clouds in their traditional stories along with the constellations and the Milky Way. One such story tells of a Yacana the Llama, and her baby, wandering along a river that crossed the sky – the Milky Way. The bright stars Alpha and Beta Centauri serve as the llama's eyes, with the dark sections representing the bodies of mother and baby, with the baby below the mother, nursing.



In the activity, "Our Place In Our Galaxy", if the Milky Way were shrunk down to the size of North America, our solar system would be about the size of a quarter. At that scale, Polaris - which is about 433 light years distant from us - would be 11 miles away. Image Credit: [Astronomical Society of the Pacific](#)

Where exactly is our solar system within the Milky Way? Is there a way to get a sense of scale? The "Our Place in Our Galaxy" activity can help you do just that, with only birdseed, a coin, and your imagination. You can also discover the amazing science NASA is doing to understand our galaxy – and our place in it - in the Galaxies section of NASA's Universe page.

*Originally posted by Dave Prosper: June 2021
Last Updated by Kat Troche: July 2025*

Planetarium

FAAC members are volunteer operators for the Hammond Planetarium at Henry Ford College.

Planetarium shows are free and open to the public.

Four seasonal planetarium shows are offered per year with the stars and constellations of the current season as well as a multi-media presentation featuring select planets.

Public planetarium shows are normally the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. Please see the planetarium schedule for specific times. It is posted here:

fordastronomyclub.com/hfc-planetarium

Social Media

The FAAC has several social media accounts. Members are encouraged to join and follow them.

Facebook

facebook.com/FordAstronomyClub

Twitter

twitter.com/Ford_Astro

Discord

<https://discord.gg/RH6rhAPWb8>

Scheduled Club Events

Month	Date	Sunset	Location
August	30th	8:09pm	Spring Mill Pond
September	26th & 27th	4pm - Midnight	Astronomy at the Beach (Kent Lake Beach at Island Lake)

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
September 12th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
September 17th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
August 28th	Neil Mottinger, NASA/JPL	Orbital mechanics of launches and interplanetary travel.
September 25th	Dean Regas	Cincinnati Observatory (topic TBA)

August Meeting

Introduction to Deep Space Navigation

Neil Mottinger, Navigation Engineer at NASA/JPL

Description:

Neil will address the subject of how we calculate the orbit of a spacecraft from launch to arrival.

Neil specializes in deep space navigation at JPL. He has managed or served on teams responsible for tracking and managing the launch and guidance of numerous missions from Viking, Pioneer — through more recent missions such as InSight and Perseverance. Sometimes his involvement is primarily on the launch as is the case for missions such as DART, Psyche, and the Europa Clipper launched this past October.

Bio:

Neil is a 58-year veteran at JPL. His career began during the Apollo program and has crossed decades with work primarily on unmanned planetary exploration probes. He was involved with early missions

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Equipment

The FAAC maintain an equipment pool of telescopes, binoculars, cameras, and other equipment used for special events. Much of this equipment is available to members.

Each piece of equipment is either stored by a club volunteer who offers to be the caretaker of the item, or by the person who last borrowed the item.

Most equipment can be borrowed for one-month durations. At the end of the month, the borrower can extend the loan if no other members have requested it.

Some items are reserved for special events use and are not normally available to be borrowed.

If you are interested in borrowing an item, please contact either the current holder of the equipment, or contact the club equipment manager, Jeff Gorman, at equipment@fordastronomyclub.com

Item	Held by	Item	Held by
Telescopes		Display Items	
TK1 Coronado Personal Solar Telescope (Doublestack) w/Meade Autostar Goto Mount	Kristie Whittington	Astronomy Event Sign (3' x 6')	Gordon Hansen
TK5 4.5" Reflector on Fitz GEM mount	Bob MacFarland	Astronomy Event Signs 18x24" (x8)	Liam Finn
TK6 8" Orion XT8i Dobsonian	Dan Smith	PVC Display Board - Folding	Sandra Macika
TK7 TPO 8" f/4 Newtownian Astrograph (OTA Only - no mount)	Scott Smith	Banner - Small (24" x 32")	Sandra Macika
TK8 20" f/5 Obsession Dob, Ladder & EP Kit	Liam Finn	Banner - Medium (24" x 72")	Sandra Macika
TKn Celestron 6" Refractor & AGT Mount		Banner - Large (32" x 16')	Sandra Macika
TKn Meade 8" f/5 Newtonian & LX-70 Mount		Tri-Fold Presentation Boards	Sandra Macika
Zhumell 20x80 Binoculars		Other	
Presentation Tools		Canopy (10' x 10')	Liam Finn
Projector (older)	Jim Frisbie	Pop Cooler	Sean Pickard
Projector (newer)	Gordon Hansen	TA Sky Quality Meter	Liam Finn
Projection Screen 8'	John McGill	36" Flat-Top Griddle	Gordon Hansen
Bullhorn	Liam Finn	Demonstration Tools	
Speaker System w/Wireless Mic	Liam Finn	Weigh on Planets Scale	Liam Finn
Logo Tablecloth (x2)	Gordon Hansen	Lunar Phase Kit	Bob MacFarland
		100' Scale Model Solar System Kit	Bob MacFarland
		NSN Meteorite (Outreach) kit	Sandra Macika

Item	Held by
Imaging Cameras	
C2 Meade Deep Sky Imager Pro III w/Autostar Suite	Gordon Hansen
C6 Canon 60Da Astrophotography DSLR and accessories	Tim Dey
Other Imaging Equipment	
CA1 Rigel Systems Spectrscope	Gordon Hansen
C7 Canon EOS EF 70-200mm f/1.4L IS USM lens & tripod mounting ring (for Canon EOS cameras)	Gordon Hansen
Rokinon 8mm f/3.5 Fish-Eye Lens (Canon EOS Mount)	John McGill
Special Event Items - Not available for Loan Out	
BK2 Zhumell 25x100 Binoculars, hard case, & Zhumell TRH-16 tripod w/soft fabric bag	Sandra Macika
TAK1 Night Vision Image Intensifier for telescopes (2" barrel size)	Tim Dey
Lunt 100mm H-alpha Solar Telescope with Celestron CG-5 equatorial mount	Tim Campbell

Secretary's Report (Con't from Page 2)

Club Business

The Secretary's Report is in "Star Stuff" each month. If you need a plastic badge holder or lanyard, you can see Cheri or Arica at any meeting or observing night.

Treasurer's Report: Jameson gave our treasurer's report. We had no income this past month, and our only expenses have been snacks for the meeting.

Social Media/Website: We will soon be adding our updated tri-fold brochure and updated membership application to our website.

Club Equipment: Jeff reports the annual inventory is complete, and our list of equipment has been updated. This evening, we had a longtime member, Mike McEvoy, bring a telescope to the meeting and donate it to the club. It is a beautiful vintage orange Celestron 8" SCT, with mount. Mike says it's been a very long time since he has used it, so it was decided that Gordon Hanson will take this scope and mount

home initially to go over it and make sure everything works. When that is done, Jameson has offered to be the caretaker. Thank you so much for your generosity, Mike!

Other Business: We had a brief discussion about the difficulty some members are having seeing current posts on our Facebook page. Liam and Arica are looking into this.

Doug reminded us that our annual Club Picnic is on August 2, just a little over a week away. This is also a scheduled date for our Beginners' Night. We are hoping for good weather for both! Come as early as you like. We can always use extra people to help save seats under the pavilion. Just in case we don't get the pavilion, we encourage you to bring enough chairs for you and your guests. We also encourage you to bring a dish to pass. Food will be served approximately 6 p.m. As of tonight, Doug has about 30 RSVPs. An RSVP is appreciated, but if you didn't get yours in and you decide at the last minute to come, please do so!

Gordon reminded us that Astronomy at the Beach will be here before we know it. We will be back at our usual location at Kent Lake Beach, Island Lake Recreation Area. We need many volunteers! Please consider helping. First, it takes a lot of people to staff our club's table over the two nights. You can sign up for as little as a single two-hour shift. No experience needed! Second, Liam said he will be bringing the club's 20" Dob, weather permitting. If so, we will need volunteers to help with the telescope itself, as well as wrangling the line of people waiting to look through it. Finally, on Friday, starting about lunchtime, is when GLAAC will be doing all of the set-up of tents, tables, chairs, etc. This is another volunteer opportunity. If you can donate a bit of your time to help with this very worthy event that we hope will continue for years to come, please contact Gordon Hansen, Arica Flores, or Liam Finn.

GLAAC has an excellent keynote speaker lined up for this year. Brother Guy Consolmagno, director of the Vatican Observatory, and author or co-author of many books, including the popular "Turn Left at Orion" will be at the event!

Finally, Gordon is soliciting donations of astronomy books or magazines. We give the magazines away for free at our FAAC table, and charge 50 cents or a dollar for the books.

Gordon also advised us that, if you are looking for your club discount with "Sky and Telescope" or "Astronomy" magazines, the way to do that is to contact the magazine's customer service phone number and ask for the group discount.

Finally, a reminder that our club will be electing new officers in January. It sounds like a long way off, but it's going to be here before we know it. All four of our officer positions are open, as they are every year, but we have a couple of positions where the current officers are either term-limited or unable to continue for other reasons. FAAC belongs to all of us and has since its inception in 1992. Our officers are volunteers

that come from our membership. We need the help of each and every one of you to make our club a success now and into the future. Please consider running for an officer position.

Short Presentation: Sean Pickard now has his official press credentials and was able to attend the Axiom 4 launch at the Kennedy Space Center. Sean flew down to Florida on June 7, but due to postponements, the launch didn't take place until June 25, at approximately 2:30 a.m. In between, Sean flew back to Michigan and then back to Florida. Four astronauts, from the U.S., Hungary, India, and Poland comprised the crew for this mission. They will be doing research and experiments at the ISS representing 31 different countries. Sean provided us with both still photos and video of the launch.

Sean reminded all of us about the FAAC YouTube channel called "Astronomy For Everyone," which premiered in June of 2009. Since that time, new episodes are produced regularly, and we are now up to 191 episodes, all available on YouTube. There is a wealth of information to be found, covering a range from brand-new to very experienced astronomers. Check it out!

We spent a few minutes on Q & A for Sean, and then the remainder of our time was spent socializing and eating!

We adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

August 7, 2025 Board Meeting Summary

A Note: All FAAC members are welcome to join our monthly board meetings. An invitation to join online goes out each month, and we would love to see you there. Maybe you would like to share some input; maybe you just want listen to see what these meetings are all about. Remember, this is your club, and we need you to

**help make it a success now and going forward.
Please join us!**

(Videoconference meeting.) All board members present. Six other members present. Our upcoming general meeting on August 28 will feature guest speaker Neil Mottinger of NASA/JPL. He will give a talk on orbital mechanics of interplanetary unmanned missions. This will be a video presentation via Zoom, instead of our usual Webex. Also, our speaker has requested an earlier start time than our usual 8 p.m. We will plan to start the meeting at 7 p.m. sharp and have a very brief business meeting, then start our speaker at 7:20. We may have to forego Member Observing and/or What's Up, or possibly have those after the speaker, if there is time.

Treasurer: Jameson gave our current balance, and listed expenses for the previous month. No income.

Social Media/Website: Liam advises he has made some updates over this past month.

Club Equipment: Jeff reports that we have had two different telescopes donated to the club recently. Thank you to Mike McEvoy for donating his vintage orange Celestron C8 with mount, which is now in Gordon's possession, and he will go over it to ensure everything runs smoothly. Also, a couple of months ago, at our Beginners' Night, someone (name unknown) had mentioned to a couple people he wanted to donate a telescope and ended up leaving it there to be discovered as the last members were packing up to go. Jameson took it home. It is a Celestron Astro Master 70AZ with tripod and eyepiece. It has been tested and works.

Our FAAC Picnic, held on August 2, was a great success. We had a little over 40 people attend. We had an abundance of good food. Arica thanked everyone who had a part in planning, cooking, and hauling equipment back and forth, and of course everyone who brought side dishes.

AATB: Gordon has generously agreed to chair the committee again this year. He went over an inventory of all the supplies we will need and who has them. This will be evolving. As always, we will need plenty of club volunteers to help staff our table, help run club telescopes, etc. Please consider coming out and helping. More info will follow.

Monthly speaker (cont'd from page 5)

including the Viking mission to Mars and Pioneer, the predecessor of the Voyagers — including work on the famous *Pioneer Anomaly* — to more recent missions such as the Perseverance mission to Mars and the more recent Europa Clipper.

Neil has also worked with space agencies of other countries including Germany, Japan, and India to help them with spacecraft guidance.

Neil grew up on a farm in the Midwest and became interest in space while looking at planets through a backyard telescope — something I think most of us in this room (and online) can relate to.

University of Michigan Public Nights at the Observatory

2025 Schedule

Public nights at the U of M Observatory will be held, weather permitting, on these nights.

- Observing sessions require suitable sky conditions. To learn the status of any event, check the Observatory's home page and/or CASL social media pages beginning one hour before the event. Please arrive no later than one half hour before the scheduled end of the session.
- All sessions are free and open to the public. These events are family friendly, but best suited to children over the age of 4. Observing sessions are primarily held outdoors. Please dress appropriately for personal comfort during your visit.
- The Observatory is located on the main campus of the University of Michigan-Dearborn, in the Science Learning and Research Center (SLRC). Park in the parking lot behind the SLRC (Parking Lot A) and enter the building through the west door. Take the elevator to the third floor, and turn left to go through the double doors to the observing deck.

For more information visit our website at:

<https://umdearborn.edu/casl/centers-institute/um-dearborn-observatory>

Club volunteers are welcome and appreciated at these events. If you would like to volunteer, you *do not* need to bring a telescope. The observatory has several 8" Celestron SCT telescopes on piers located on the observation deck — but they appreciate have enough volunteers on hand to staff each telescope.

Contact Liam Finn or Tim Campbell if you are interested.

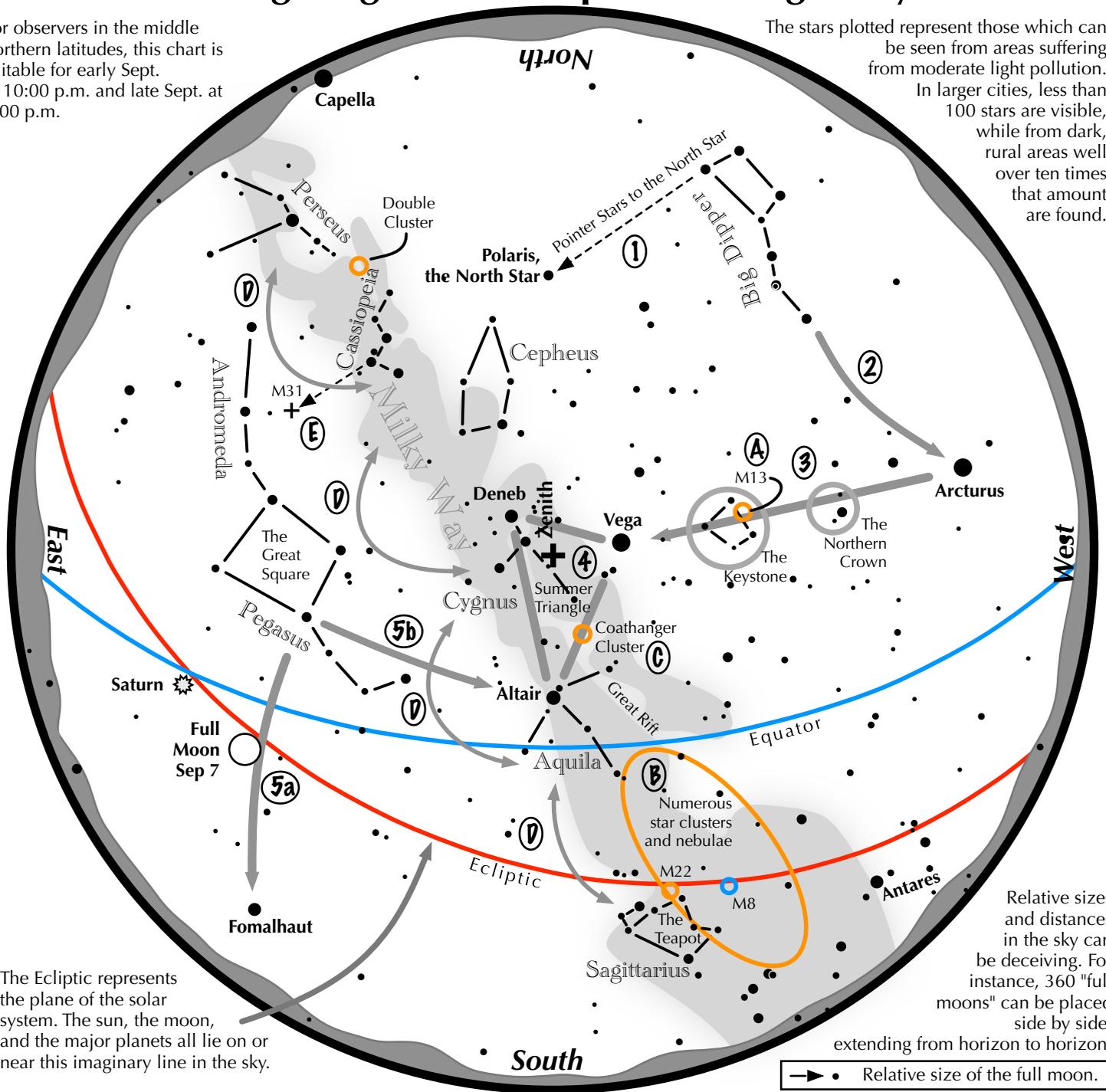


April 25	9:30pm – 11:30pm
May 2	9:30pm – 11:30pm
May 16	10:00pm - Midnight
May 30	10:30pm – 12:30am
June 6	10:30pm – 12:30am
June 20	10:30pm – 12:30am
June 27	10:30pm – 12:30am
July 18	10:30pm – 12:30am
July 25	10:30pm – 12:30am
August 1	10:30pm – 12:30am
August 15	10:00pm - Midnight
August 22	10:00pm - Midnight
September 12	10:00pm - Midnight
September 19	9:30pm – 11:30pm
October 10	9:30pm – 11:30pm
October 17	9:30pm – 11:30pm
October 31	8:00pm – 11:00pm

Navigating the mid September Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early Sept. at 10:00 p.m. and late Sept. at 9:00 p.m.

The stars plotted represent those which can be seen from areas suffering from moderate light pollution. In larger cities, less than 100 stars are visible, while from dark, rural areas well over ten times that amount are found.



The Ecliptic represents the plane of the solar system. The sun, the moon, and the major planets all lie on or near this imaginary line in the sky.

Relative sizes and distances in the sky can be deceiving. For instance, 360 "full moons" can be placed side by side, extending from horizon to horizon.

→ • Relative size of the full moon.

Navigating the mid September night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

- 1 Extend a line north from the two stars at the tip of the Big Dipper's bowl. It passes by Polaris, the North Star.
- 2 Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the September evening sky.
- 3 Nearly overhead shines a star of similar brightness as Arcturus, Vega. Draw a line from Arcturus to Vega. It first meets "The Northern Crown," then the "Keystone of Hercules." A dark sky is needed to see these two dim stellar configurations.
- 4 The stars of the summer triangle, Vega, Altair, and Deneb, shine overhead.
- 5 The westernmost two stars of the Great Square, which lies high in the east, point south to Fomalhaut. The southernmost two stars point west to Altair.

Binocular Highlights

- A:** On the western side of the Keystone glows the Great Hercules Cluster.
- B:** Between the bright stars Antares and Altair, hides an area containing many star clusters and nebulae.
- C:** 40% of the way between Altair and Vega, twinkles the "Coathanger," a group of stars outlining a coathanger.
- D:** Sweep along the Milky Way for an astounding number of faint glows and dark bays, including the Great Rift.
- E:** The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval.

