



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

Happy Holidays

It's that time a year again our **holiday potluck** is this Thursday at Henry Ford. This will be an in-person meeting only. This is finger food non-messy at request of the college.

Annual **officer elections** will take place at the January meeting. The club limits the term of each officer to no more than three consecutive years. This means we need to elect a new club president. We also need to elect a new treasurer. Our vice president and secretary offered to run again — they are not term-limited. Any club member in good standing can be nominated to run for any officer position. They can also be nominated from the floor on the day of club elections. Nominations must also be seconded by an additional club member. Gordon Hansen is the chair for the nominating committee. If you have a nomination you would like to submit, please contact Gordon.

It is also the time of the year for **membership renewals** you should be receiving your renewal email soon. Dues renew each calendar year and are \$25 if you renew prior to the end of January. After January 31, the renewal is \$30. Members who recently joined in September (or later) of 2025 are valid through the end of 2026 before they need to renew.

Winter Observing

The cold winter months bring in a new selection of observing targets. Here are some of my favorites:

- Thor's Helmet nebula (NGC 2359) in Canis Major
- The Witch Head nebula (IC 2118) near Rigel

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

- Pleiades open cluster (M45) near Taurus
- Andromeda galaxy (M 31)
- Orion Nebula (M 42) is my personal favorite. I enjoy taking my small dob out — even for a quick peek.

If you are planning a long winter observing session, take it from someone who works outside — layers are your best friend. Keep your head and feet warm and you will feel warmer. Warm wool socks help keep the moisture away.

Happy observing everyone!

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – October 23, 2025

Meeting called to order at 7:08 p.m. by President Arica Flores. Vice President Sean Pickard absent. Secretary Cheri Grissom and Treasurer Jameson Sullivan present. We had a total of 20 in-person attendees, plus 2 online, for a total of 22. Arica asked for member and guest introductions.

Member Observing: Jessica Edwards saw Comet Lemmon with binoculars. Gary Gibson had good views of the moon between trees from his suburban backyard. Arica gave a report on Astronomy at the Beach. The weather was great both nights, and we had long lines at the club's Dob. Mike Bruno spent some time out at the Lake Hudson observing area. Members from the University Lowbrow Astronomers were also out there. They saw two comets and one nice meteor from the Orionids. Dennis Salliotte went a bit south to the Wayne and Monroe County border and saw Comet Lemmon.

Club Business: Secretary's report is in "Star Stuff." Jameson provided the treasurer's report. Liam Finn reports that our social media is up to date, with Isha Kaushik posting for us on Instagram. Our AATB posts were popular. Jeff Gorman says nothing new to report for club equipment.

Projects/Committees/Events: We have a Beginners' Night coming up this Saturday. The weather looks clear but cold! Nominations for 2026 officers: Gordon Hansen is the head of this committee and they are

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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

October's Night Sky Notes: Spot the King of Planets

by Dave Prosper; updated by Kat Troche



Jupiter is our solar system's undisputed king of the planets! Jupiter is bright and easy to spot from our vantage point on Earth, helped by its massive size and banded, reflective cloud tops. Jupiter even possesses moons the size of planets: Ganymede, its largest, is bigger than the planet Mercury. What's more, you can easily observe Jupiter and its moons with a modest instrument, just like Galileo did over 400 years ago.



NASA's Juno mission captured this look at the southern hemisphere of Jupiter on Feb. 17, 2020, during one of the spacecraft's close approaches to the giant planet. This high-resolution view is a composite of four images captured by the JunoCam imager and assembled by citizen scientist Kevin M. Gill. Credit: NASA, JPL-Caltech, SwRI, MSSS | Image processing by Kevin M. Gill, © CC BY

Jupiter's position as our solar system's largest planet is truly earned; you could fit 11 Earths along Jupiter's diameter, and in case you were looking to fill up Jupiter with some Earth-size marbles, you would need over 1300 Earths to fill it up – and that would still not be quite enough! However, despite its formidable size, Jupiter's true rule over the outer solar system comes from its enormous mass. If you took all of the planets in our solar system and put them together, they would still only be half as massive as Jupiter all by itself. Jupiter's mighty mass has shaped the orbits of countless comets and asteroids. Its gravity can fling these tiny objects towards our inner solar system and also draw them into itself, as famously observed in 1994 when Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9, drawn towards Jupiter in previous orbits, smashed into the gas giant's atmosphere. Its multiple fragments

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.

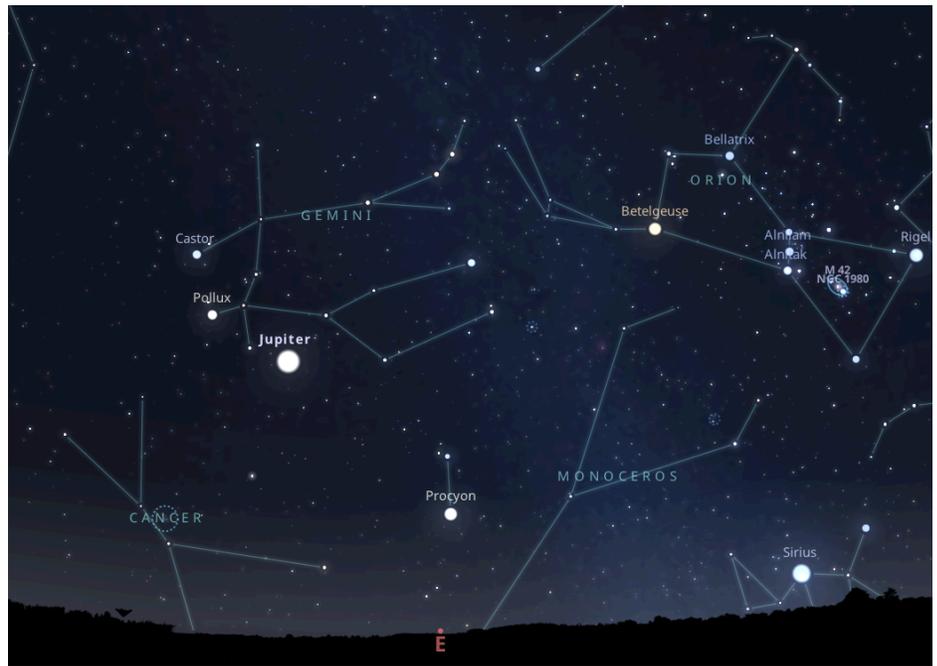
The observatory is adjacent to the athletic field situated between the Lincoln Park Middle School and High School buildings near

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).

slammed into Jupiter's cloud tops with such violence that the fireballs and dark impact spots were not only seen by NASA's orbiting Galileo probe but also by observers back on Earth!



Look for Jupiter near Pollux & Castor, the Gemini twins, on the evening of December 15, 2025. Binoculars may help you spot Jupiter's moons as small bright star-like objects on either side of the planet. A small telescope will show them easily, along with Jupiter's famed cloud bands. How many can you count? Credit: Stellarium Web

Jupiter is easy to observe at night with our unaided eyes, as well-documented by the ancient astronomers who carefully recorded its slow movements from night to night. It can be one of the brightest objects in our nighttime skies, bested only by the Moon, Venus, and occasionally Mars, when the red planet is at opposition. That's impressive for a planet that, at its closest to Earth, is still over 365 million miles (587 million km) away. It's even more impressive that the giant world remains very bright to Earthbound observers at its furthest distance: 600 million miles (968 million km)! While the King of Planets has a coterie of 95 known moons, only the four large moons that Galileo originally observed in 1610 – Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Calisto – can be easily observed by Earth-based observers with very modest equipment. These are called, appropriately enough, the Galilean moons. Most telescopes will show the moons as faint star-like objects neatly lined up close to bright Jupiter. Most binoculars will show at least one or two moons orbiting the planet. Small telescopes will show all four of the Galilean moons if they are all visible, but sometimes they can pass behind or in front of Jupiter or even each other. Telescopes

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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
April	25th	8:26pm	Observing (Spring Mill Pond)
May	23rd	8:55pm	Observing (Spring Mill Pond)
June	20th	9:13pm	Observing (Spring Mill Pond)

*dates not yet reviewed & confirmed by club board and subject to change.

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
December 5th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
December 10th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
December 12th	7:30pm	Winter Solstice Presentation

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
December 4th	None	Club Social & Potluck

November-December Meeting

Club Social & Potluck

FAAC Members

Description:

By club tradition, the final club general membership meeting for the year is a club social & potluck. There is not a featured speaker.

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 Spectroscope	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)

working on it.

Liam talked briefly about GLAAC (Great Lakes Association of Astronomy Clubs), the organization that puts on Astronomy at the Beach every year. Find them online at glaac.org. There is need for more participation in this group, from not only our club but other clubs who are part of the organization. Liam asked for more of our members to consider actively participating GLAAC. Their meetings are by Zoom on the second Tuesday of the month, starting at 7 p.m., usually going for about an hour and a half. A new president and vice president will be needed for 2026. Tim and Liam are willing to mentor you if you are interested! There is also an urgent need for help with the raffle that is put on at AATB each year. The raffle is a great source of funds for GLAAC, but Arica Flores cannot continue doing it entirely by herself and could really use some help! Please contact Tim Campbell, Liam Finn, or Arica Flores if you think you are someone who can help with AATB in any way.

Guest Speaker: We had the pleasure of welcoming Jim Shedlowsky once again with an enjoyable talk entitled "How We Found the Universe." Jim is a long-time member of several astronomy clubs and is currently the treasurer of the McMath-Hulbert Astronomical Society. He graduated in 1960 from U of M with a degree in engineering physics, then spent two years with the US Army as an artillery officer in Germany, after which he spent 36 years as an engineer/manager at General Motors. In his spare time, he wrote and recorded music and, as one of the Skee Brothers, appeared on American Bandstand in 1958. Jim's interest in astronomy began when he was a boy scout and visited the McMath-Hulbert Observatory.

The timeline of this talk covers approximately the last 125 years. At the beginning of that time, our grasp of the universe was rudimentary and, as it turns out, mostly in error. Astronomers had observed what they called "spiral nebulae," but there were differences of opinion on what they actually were. Popular belief was that they were small, distant clouds of gas, but a minority of scientists thought perhaps they were

“island universes,” similar to the Milky Way. After many years of research by Edwin Hubble and others, and Hubble’s studying of Cepheid variable stars in Andromeda and other spiral nebulae, Hubble’s paper was presented to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, on January 1, 1925. Our view of the size and nature of the universe changed profoundly after that. Over time, it was realized that there were countless other galaxies out there and the universe was vastly larger than we had previously thought.

Some other tidbits: In 1897, it was determined that the sun was between 20 and 40 million years old. In 1900, the sun was still considered to be the center of the Milky Way, and the Milky Way was still believed to be the entire universe. The Milky Way was believed to be 30,000 light years in diameter. Spiral nebulae were believed to be emerging planetary systems in the Milky Way.

This was a talk filled with information about astronomers from a hundred or so years ago who all contributed to our present-day understanding of the universe. There was so much information packed into this talk, I was unable to take it all down on paper! We are grateful to Jim for coming once again to talk to our club, and for ending his talk with a song, as always!

Question-and-answer period followed. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

November 6, 2025 Board Meeting Summary

(Videoconference meeting.) All board members present. Six other members present. Our next meeting (and last for this year) will be our annual Holiday Potluck party on December 4, at our usual location, Henry Ford College, Berry Auditorium, starting at 7:00 p.m. What we do every year is forego the December board meeting and use that date for our general meeting to avoid holiday conflicts. This

will be an open forum type meeting, which means we will have no guest speaker and no option for joining online. We are planning a few ice-breakers, mini-demos, and slide shows. Please bring a dish to pass, something non-messy so we don’t risk spilled food in the auditorium. Sean will do our usual “What’s Up” segment.

Treasurer: Jameson reported our current balance to the board.

Membership: Doug Bauer advises he will be sending out renewal notices in the next week or so. Doug will also be reserving the auditorium for our meetings for 2026.

Social Media/Website: Liam Finn suggested we try to put on a membership drive. Several ideas were discussed in addition to posting on our social media sites.

Nominations: Gordon Hansen has advised that the nominating committee has secured volunteers for all four of our board positions. There is currently just one person interested in each position, but of course additional volunteers are welcome between now and the election, which will be at the January meeting.

New Business: There will be an Astronomy Night at Spiritus Sanctus Academy in Plymouth on November 14, weather permitting. Club members are welcome to come out and bring a telescope. We have done this event in the past and there is always a big crowd and lots of interest from the students, parents, and staff about astronomy.

Banquet: As of now, it is planned for the South Lyon Hotel. Sean is making arrangements. We are penciled in for May 2, at 5:00 p.m. Arica moved that we allow Sean to make a \$100 deposit for reservation. Cheri seconded, passed unanimously.

Jupiter (Con't from Page 4)

will also show details like Jupiter's cloud bands and, if powerful enough, large storms like its famous Great Red Spot, and the shadows of the Galilean moons passing between the Sun and Jupiter. Sketching the positions of Jupiter's moons during the course of an evening – and night to night – can be a rewarding project! You can download an activity guide from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific at bit.ly/drawjupitermoons

Now in its ninth year, NASA's Juno mission is one of just nine spacecraft to have visited this impressive world. Juno entered Jupiter's orbit in 2016 to begin its initial mission to study this giant world's mysterious interior. The years have proven Juno's mission a success, with data from the probe revolutionizing our understanding of this gassy world's guts. Juno's mission has since been extended to include the study of its large moons, and since 2021 the plucky probe, increasingly battered by Jupiter's powerful radiation belts, has made close flybys of the icy moons Ganymede and Europa, along with volcanic Io. What else will we potentially learn in 2030 with the Europa Clipper mission?

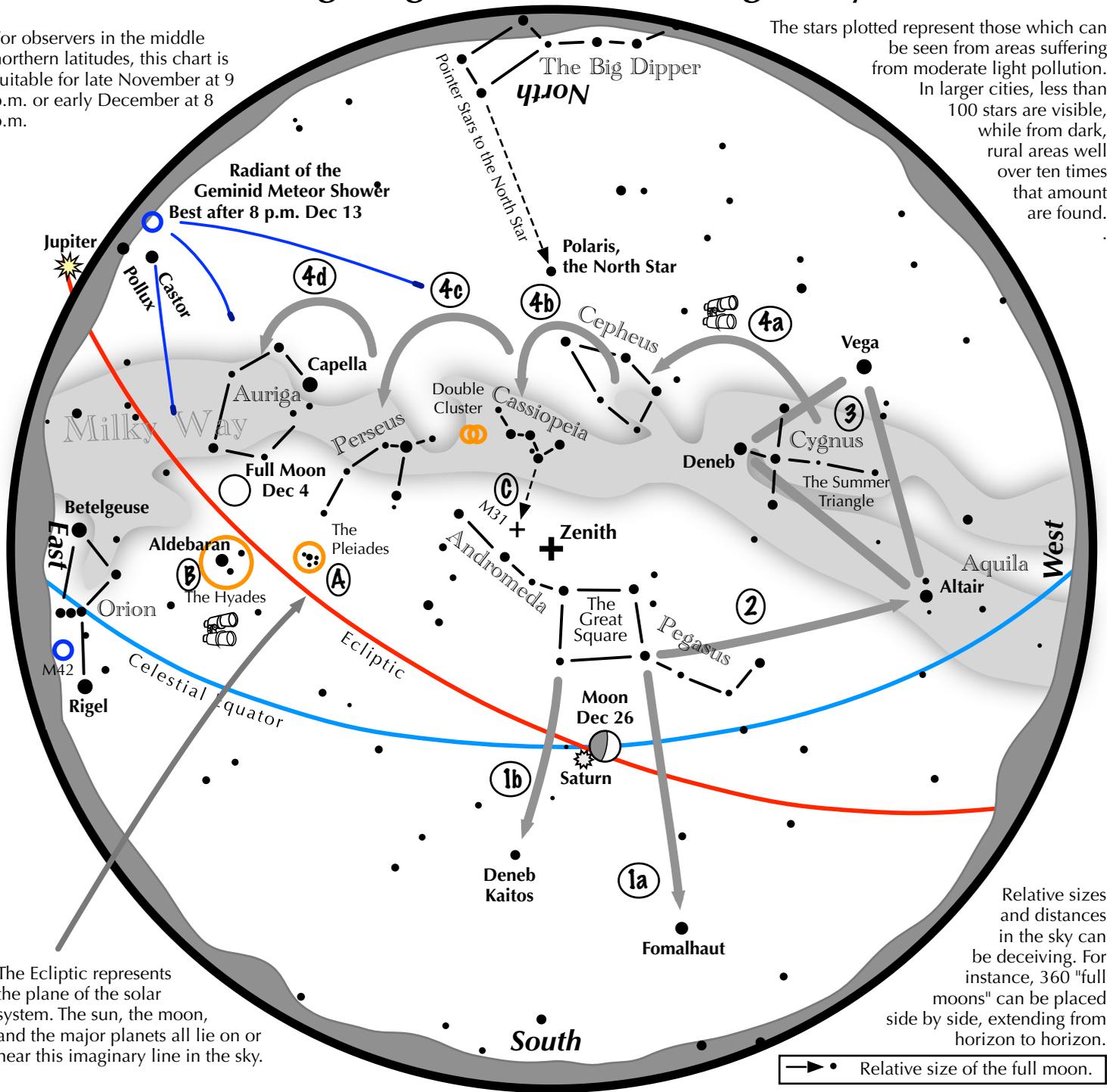
Find the latest discoveries from Juno and NASA's missions to Jupiter at science.nasa.gov/jupiter/

Navigating the December Night Sky

2025

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for late November at 9 p.m. or early December at 8 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 December night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

- 1 Face south. Almost overhead is the "Great Square" with four stars about the same brightness as those of the Big Dipper. Extend an imaginary line southward following the Square's two westernmost stars. The line strikes Fomalhaut, the brightest star in the southwest. A line extending southward from the two easternmost stars, passes Deneb Kaitos, the second bright star in the south.
- 2 Draw another line, this time westward following the southern edge of the Square. It strikes Altair, part of the "Summer Triangle."
- 3 Locate Vega and Deneb, the other two stars of the "Summer Triangle." Vega is its brightest member while Deneb sits in the middle of the Milky Way.
- 4 Jump along the Milky Way from Deneb to Cepheus, which resembles the outline of a house. Continue jumping to the "W" of Cassiopeia, to Perseus, and finally to Auriga with its bright star Capella.

Binocular Highlights

- A and B:** Examine the stars of the Pleiades and Hyades, two naked eye star clusters.
- C:** The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval.
- D:** Sweep along the Milky Way from Altair, past Deneb, through Cepheus, Cassiopeia and Perseus, then to Auriga for many intriguing star clusters and nebulous areas.

