



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:	Dan Smith
Vice President:	Sean Pickard
Secretary:	Cheri Grissom
Treasurer:	Arica Flores

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 Dan Smith, President

Upcoming Club Events

As June draws to a close, we are nearing the halfway point of the year. With only three meetings remaining before **Astronomy at the Beach**, we will need volunteers to staff our table. Having more help ensures that everyone can enjoy the event without a small group needing to remain at the table the entire time.

Additionally, our **club picnic** is on August 15th at Spring Mill Pond. Since tables are first-come, first-served, anyone who can arrive early to help reserve space would be greatly appreciated. Join in for some good food and company. Our monthly observing will be directly after, so bring your equipment. It's a great time to get in some solar observing as well. I'm hoping for a large turn out as that always makes the event better!

As I will be absent for our July meeting and observing session, I look forward to seeing everyone at the picnic!

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – May 28, 2026

Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m. by President Dan Smith. Vice President Sean Pickard and Secretary Cheri Grissom present. Treasurer Arica Flores absent. We had a total of 16 in-person attendees and six online, for a total of 22 present. Dan asked for member and guest introductions (no guests tonight).

Member Observing: Jameson Sullivan recently attended his first U of M-Dearborn Public Observing Night where he enjoyed clear skies. This

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

event is held at the U of M-Dearborn observatory two or three times a month. The dates and times are published in "Star Stuff" each month. Members of our club are welcome to come and observe and/or help. Don't bring your own equipment as they have a good number of 8" SCT telescopes and always need volunteers to operate them. The events usually draw between 40 – 80 members of the public. A few of our members went out to Spring Mill Pond at ILSP following our banquet on May 2, also enjoying clear skies. A long Starlink chain was observed, as was a beautiful moonrise. Isha Kaushik has dipped her toes into astrophotography, getting started with an image of the Big Dipper. Several members will be going out to Spring Mill Pond this Saturday as a makeup day for our first observing event that had to be canceled last Saturday due to weather. Messages will go out on Groups.io.

What's Up in the Night Sky: Sean went through our events calendar, which can also be found on our website, fordastronomyclub.com, as well as on our Groups.io site. There will be a Blue Moon this Sunday, May 31, which simply means it will be the second full moon in a month. Our next Public Observing night is scheduled for June 20. Sean also gave us a list of ISS lunar and solar transits coming up that would be viewable from ILSP.

Club Business:

Secretary's Report: Cheri reminded everyone that she will be sending out the Secretary's Report within a couple days of the meeting, a change that will hopefully keep members unable to attend our meeting in the loop regarding events coming up in the next few weeks.

Treasurer's Report: No report, Arica absent.

Club Picnic: Doug Bauer reminded us that it will be held on August 15, at Spring Mill Pond. The official start time is 5 p.m., but Doug will be there around 2 p.m. to save us a space and anyone who would like to come early is welcome.

"Star Stuff" Newsletter: Tim Campbell advised us that, due to budget cuts and restructuring at NASA, we are no longer able to get the articles that he has reproduced in our newsletter for a long time. Tim wanted to remind the membership that submissions from members are always welcome. Long ago, we used to have many members contributing articles on a variety of astronomy-related topics. You don't have to be an expert; we welcome your input to keep our newsletter interesting.

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

Scheduled Club Events

Month	Date	Sunset	Location
July	18th	9:05pm	Observing (Spring Mill Pond)
August	15th	5:00pm	Annual Club Picnic & Observing (Spring Mill Pond)

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
On Break		Summer break: Shows resume in the fall.

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
June 26th	Glen Swanson	The Making of an Enterprise: How Star Trek Helped NASA Dream Big
July 23rd	Club Members	Open Forum

June Meeting

The Making of an Enterprise: How Star Trek Helped NASA Dream Big and How NASA Helped Star Trek Stick Around

Glen Swanson

M.S. in Space Studies from the University of North Dakota, Author

Description:

The connections between NASA and Star Trek during the show's original formation will be examined. In addition, this talk will explore how the larger aerospace community of the 1960s provided technical advice, influence and support to Gene Roddenberry during Star Trek's initial airing on NBC from 1966-1969. Science fiction writers and fans rallied in support of the show through letter writing campaigns and public demonstrations designed to help convince network executives to save the show. During this same period a group of scientifically literate people and agencies worked behind the scenes not only to add technical realism to Star Trek but to help guide the creation of the show's popular fiction thereby conveying a level of credibility, respect and

Continued on Page 7

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).

Secretary's Report (Con't from Page 1)

Club Equipment: Jeff is about halfway through the inventory this year. Gordon Hansen is helping with updating the list of what equipment we have and do not have.

Guest Speaker: Our speaker this month was Erica Hammerstein, Post-Doctoral Scholar, University of California, Berkeley. The topic of the talk was: "Hungry Black Holes and Stellar Snacks: Exploring the Landscape of Shredded Stars."

Erica took us back in history to tell us how the idea of black holes first originated back in the 1700s. Could there be objects so massive even light cannot escape? Jumping forward to the 1910s to 1930s, scientists including Einstein, Schwarzschild, and Oppenheimer, and others put forth theories that seemed to support the existence of these types of objects in space. Decade by decade through the 1900s, further theories were proposed. The first quasar was discovered. The first stellar mass black hole was also discovered, Cygnus X-1. In the later 1900s, progress was made on the idea of super massive black holes. Sagittarius A was discovered and confirmed to be a supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way.

From the 2000s forward, many more discoveries have been made. LIGO detects black hole binary mergers. We get the first image of a supermassive black hole shadow from the Event Horizon Telescope. Supermassive black holes can be studied relatively well if they are close and/or bright (bright, meaning they are actively accreting material from stars).

Erica described what a TDE, or tidal disruption event is (a black hole eating stars). These can produce luminous flares of radiation across the electromagnetic spectrum, which are able to be seen by our most powerful telescopes.

ZTF, the Zwicky Transient Facility, which is a wide-field sky astronomical survey, has discovered more than 100 new tidal disruption events. Our knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of supermassive black holes continues to grow.

Question-and-answer period followed. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

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>

Speaker (Con't from Page 4)

approval along with a certain cachet. Together, these elements helped influence network executives into funding production of the show for three full seasons. The studio could now recoup their investment by offering networks a syndicated package and, as a result, *Star Trek* became one of the most popular shows in the history of television.

Bio:

Glen E. Swanson holds a B.S. in History from Western Michigan University and an M.S. in Space Studies from the University of North Dakota. From 1998 to 2002, he served as Chief Historian of NASA's Johnson Space Center, where he edited the anthology "Before This Decade Is Out..." *Personal Reflections on the Apollo Program* (1999), winner of the Society for History in the Federal Government's George Pendleton Prize. He also co-authored *Fifty-five Trips Around the Sun: The History of Smiths Industries Information Management Systems in Grand Rapids, Michigan* (1999). Swanson founded *Quest: The History of Spaceflight Quarterly*, the recipient of the American Astronomical Society's Ordway Award for Sustained Excellence in Spaceflight History (2015). His writings have appeared in the Smithsonian's *Air & Space*, *Michigan History*, and *The Space Review*. Alongside his wife Deana Weibel, a professor of anthropology at Grand Valley State University, Swanson co-organizes the annual "Roger That!" space conference, held since 2017 in Grand Rapids to honor the late astronaut Roger B. Chaffee who perished along with his crewmates in the Apollo 1 fire. His latest book is *Inspired Enterprise: How NASA, the Smithsonian and the Aerospace Community Helped Launch Star Trek* (Schiffer Books, 2025). Glen is a Fellow of the Explorers Club and lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan with his wife Deana their son Luke.

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)	Gary Gibson	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 Spectrascopes	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

University of Michigan Dearborn Observatory

Month	Day	Time
June	26	10:00pm - Midnight
July	10	10:00pm - Midnight
	17	10:00pm - Midnight
	24	9:45pm - 11:45pm
August	7	9:30pm - 11:30pm
	14	9:15pm - 11:15pm
	21	9:00pm - 11:00pm

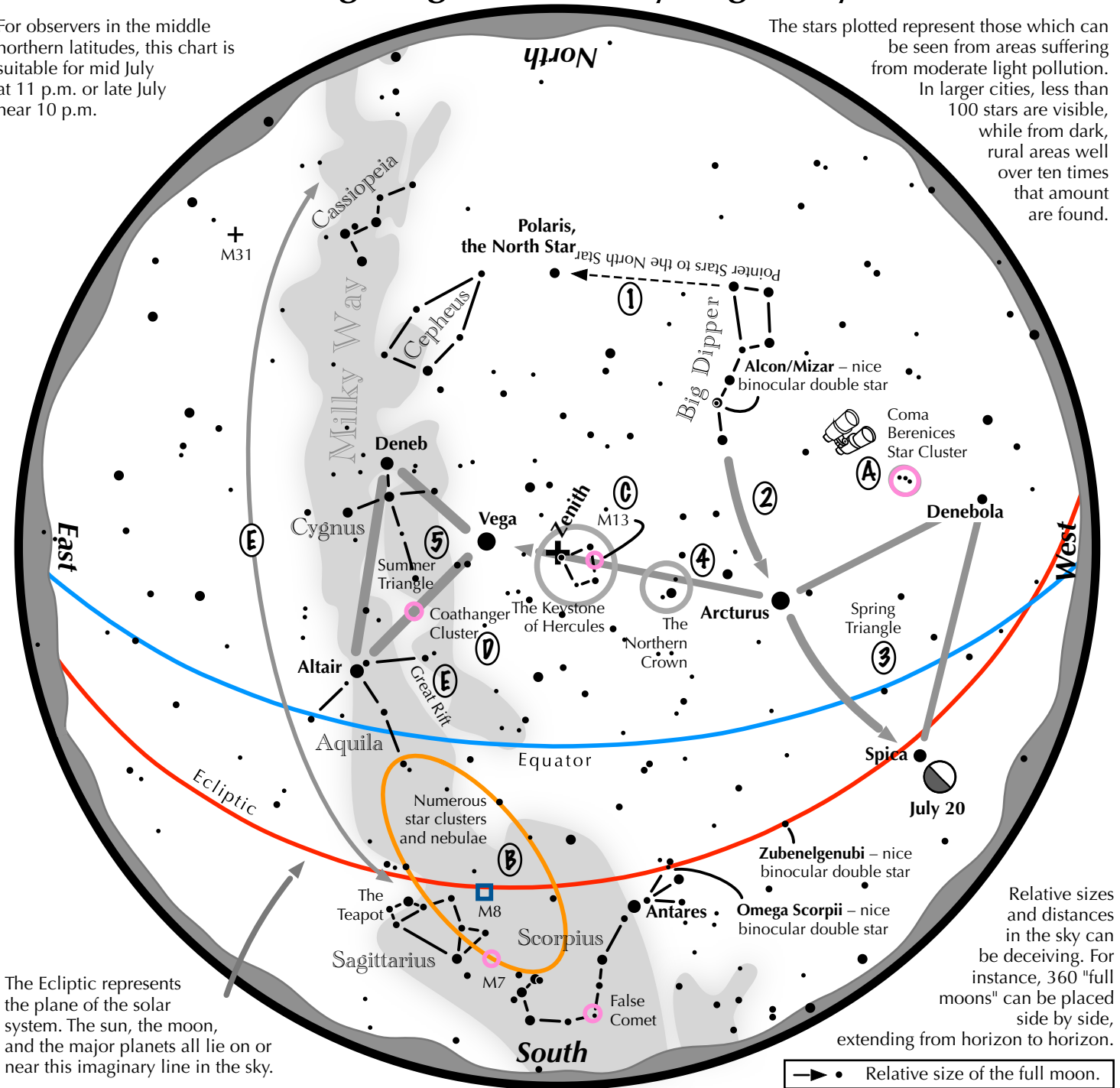
Month	Day	Time
September	11	8:30pm - 10:30pm
	25	8:00pm - 10:00pm
October	2	8:00pm - 10:00pm
	9	7:45pm - 9:45pm
	16	7:30pm - 9:30pm

Navigating the mid July Night Sky

2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid July at 11 p.m. or late July near 10 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 July 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 first intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the July evening sky, then continues to Spica.
- 3 Arcturus, Spica, and Denebola form the Spring Triangle, a large equilateral triangle.
- 4 To the northeast of Arcturus shines another star of similar brightness, 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.
- 5 High in the East lies the Summer Triangle stars of Vega, Altair, and Deneb.

Binocular Highlights

- A: Between Denebola and the tip of the Big Dipper's handle, lie the stars of the Coma Berenices Star Cluster.
- B: Between the bright stars Antares and Altair, hides an area containing many star clusters and nebulae.
- C: On the western side of the Keystone glows the Great Hercules Cluster, containing nearly 1 million stars.
- D: 40% of the way between Altair and Vega, twinkles the "Coathanger," a group of stars outlining a coathanger.
- E: Sweep along the Milky Way for an astounding number of faint glows and dark bays, including the Great Rift.

