



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.

Summer Activities

by Tim Campbell, StarStuff Editor

Upcoming Outreach Events

The club's calendar is updated with numerous events this year.

The University of Michigan, Dearborn hosts public observing nights — typically a couple of these per month. I will post the schedule at the back of the newsletter. Please check out these events and come to support them. The observatory gets quite a large number of visitors (often 40-80 per night). Don't bring a telescope ... just yourself. The observatory has several Celestron C8 telescopes ... and we need volunteers to operate the scopes, tell the visitors where to look (you know the drill.) The next event is **Friday May 29** (evening events). See: <https://umdearborn.edu/casl/centers-institutes/um-dearborn-observatory>

We are also starting to get more requests for outreach.

There is an Outreach event for Solar Observing day at Lincoln Park Middle School this **Friday, May 29th** (daytime event 7:30am - 2:30pm). Show up if you can.

The Plymouth Library has requested an outreach event for the township. The event was earlier this month but was clouded out (cancelled). It will be rescheduled (date TBD).

Commerce Township has also requested an outreach event. The township requested September ... but the dates conflict with Astronomy at the Beach. The date being considered is **October 16th** (with a rain-date of October 17th). The GM club is also supporting this and working with the township parks & recreation to solidify the plans (location, time, etc.). I'll update club members as I learn more.

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

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – April 23, 2026

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. by President Dan Smith. Vice President Sean Pickard, Secretary Cheri Grissom, and Treasurer Arica Flores present. We had a total of 19 in-person attendees and three online, for a total of 22 present. Dan asked for member and guest introductions (no guests tonight).

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NASA Night Sky Notes

by Tim Campbell, StarStuff Editor



In preparing this month's edition of the newsletter, I visited the NASA Night Sky Network page to download the monthly article.

Instead of finding an article, I found the following notice:

Since 2018, the NASA Night Sky Network has provided articles featuring the latest stargazing and NASA news to share with your organization's readership. As of October 1, 2025, Night Sky Notes will be suspended until further notice, as cuts and restructuring are part of NASA's Fiscal Year 2026 budget. Download our [final](#) article below, and find all existing articles [here](#).

Unfortunately the monthly articles that we have enjoyed these many years has been eliminated. If they should resume, I will happily begin posting these articles again.

In the history of the club, members would occasionally write and submit articles for publication in the StarStuff.

If you have thoughts about any astronomy topics ... such as observing projects, learning experiences, how-to tips, technical articles, equipment reviews or any other topics of interest to astronomers, please consider doing a write up and submitting it for publication.

Clear skies,

Tim

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
June	20th	9:13pm	Observing (Spring Mill Pond)
July	18th	9:05pm	Observing (Spring Mill Pond)
August	15th	5:00pm	Annual Club Picnic & Observing (Spring Mill Pond)

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
June 17th	7:30pm	Summer Solstice Show

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
May 28th	Erika Hammerstein	Hungry Black Holes and Stellar Snacks: Exploring Shredded Stars
June 26th	Glen Swanson	The Making of an Enterprise: How Star Trek Helped NASA Dream Big

May Meeting

Hungry Black Holes and Stellar Snacks

Erika Hammerstein

Postdoctoral Scholar, University of California, Berkeley

Description:

It is thought that nearly every massive galaxy in the Universe hosts a supermassive black hole (SMBH) at its core. We know that these black holes play important roles in the formation and evolution of their hosts but studying them can be difficult. While some of these objects make their presence known through persistent, gas-fueled accretion, many more lie dormant, giving no obvious signs of their existence. Tidal disruption events (TDEs) occur when a star passes in close proximity to a SMBH such that the tidal forces shred the star. Over the last decade, there has been major progress in the search for TDE candidates in wide-field surveys across the electromagnetic spectrum. The host galaxies of these transients can be used to study the connection between SMBHs and their hosts, an important goal in understanding the origin of SMBHs

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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)

Member Observing: Gary Gibson has been using a nice 4 ½ inch classic Tasco reflector to observe Jupiter, Venus, and the Moon. Jameson Sullivan has recently observed a couple of faint fuzzies, M94, the Crock's Eye Galaxy, and NGC6888, the Crescent Nebula. Dan Smith managed to find a hole in the clouds recently and was able to see the Moon and Jupiter naked eye. These are the things we need to brag about when we live under the Michigan Nebula! Sean Pickard told us that Venus was very bright and clear in the Florida skies.

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. Our first Public Observing Night of the year will be held this Saturday, April 25, weather permitting. Our Banquet is coming up on May 2. Our May Public Observing Event will be May 23. There will be a Blue Moon on May 31. Sean then gave us the upcoming ISS lunar and solar transits for our area.

Club Business:

Secretary's Report: The report is in "Star Stuff," as it is every month, and will continue to be. Cheri had previously proposed to the Board that she begin publishing the General Meeting Minutes (aka Secretary's Report) to the membership, through [Groups.io](https://groups.io), as soon as possible after our monthly meeting. The reason behind this is that, for those who did not attend the meeting, there may be events coming up soon that they do not know about, and by the time the Secretary's Report comes out in "Star Stuff" just before the following month's meeting, those events have already passed. It is hoped that this may be a way to increase member participation in our club events.

Treasurer's Report: Arica provided our current balance. There are only a couple days left to buy a Banquet ticket. Please see Arica tonight if you would like to attend.

Social Media/Website: Liam absent. Isha Kaushik reported that we are getting lots of interest in our observing events listed on Facebook and Instagram.

Club Equipment: Jeff advises he is in the process of sending out emails to all of our equipment caretakers to update our inventory, to be finished by the end of June.

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>

Guest Speaker: Our speaker tonight was Bill Keel, Professor Emeritus, Physics and Astronomy, University of Alabama. The title of the talk was “Light Echoes and the Feeding Habits of Supermassive Black Holes.”

Most large, luminous galaxies have been shown to have enormously massive central black holes. These are often quiescent, detected only by their gravitational effects on surrounding stars. However, if they are surrounded by infalling gas, the resulting radiation can be spectacular, producing active galaxies and their brightest variety, quasars. Sky surveys and citizen science programs such as Galaxy Zoo led to the detection of enormous clouds of gas around many such galaxies (the best-known being Hanny’s Voorwerp near IC 2497), whose properties show that the nucleus was much brighter as seen from the clouds than we see it directly. As volunteers around the world continue to identify these clouds, we are piecing together the growth history of these black holes on timescales otherwise inaccessible to us - hundreds of thousands of years. Processes involving whole galaxies unfold over hundreds of millions of years, but the compact and dynamic regions near their central black hole can flare and fade so fast that we can watch it happen. And if we missed the flare, sometimes the surroundings will show us the ghost of quasars past.

Question-and-answer period followed. Meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

May 7, 2026 Board Meeting Summary

(Videoconference meeting.) President Dan Smith absent; all other board members present. Five other members present.

Club Business: With last month’s General Meeting, Cheri began sending out the Secretary’s Report to all members through Groups.io within a couple days of the meeting. This is to help members know of events coming up soon that may be otherwise overlooked as the Secretary’s Report doesn’t come out until just before the following month’s meeting, as has been the practice for a very long time. It will still be published in “Star Stuff: as usual. We did receive one response from a member who thought it was a very good idea. Additional feedback is still welcome.

Treasurer’s Report: Arica reported our current balance. The FERA annual report is due soon and Arica will have it to them on time.

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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)	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

Speaker (Con't from Page 4)

and galaxy formation and evolution. In this talk, I will discuss the importance of probing the SMBH population with TDEs, discovery methods using ground-based surveys, and interesting properties and behaviors of these events and their host galaxies.

Bio:

Dr. Erica Hammerstein is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research focuses on time-domain astrophysics, studying some of the most destructive phenomena in the Universe: the destruction of stars by supermassive black holes.

Her work utilizes data taken from ground-based observatories across the world, combined with programs on space observatories like NASA's Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory, Hubble Space Telescope, and James Webb Space Telescope. She received her PhD in astronomy from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2024, with her thesis titled "Population Studies of Tidal Disruption Events and their Hosts: Understanding Host Galaxy Preferences and the Origin of the UV/Optical Emission." She received her bachelor's degree in astronomy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 2018.

Secretary's Report (Con't from Page 5)

Membership Report: Doug Bauer advises we currently have 74 paid memberships and 34 lifetime memberships.

Club Equipment: Jeff Gorman has sent out the annual emails to caretakers to confirm our inventory. Three of twelve people have already responded.

Banquet: We had discussion about how the banquet went. The consensus was it was a nice location and good food. A few improvements were suggested if we use this venue next year. Congratulations to the Sirius Award winner announced at the banquet, John McGill.

GLAAC is requesting our annual donation as soon as possible so they can make arrangements to get tables and chairs for AATB. They will have to use a different company this year as the previous company's prices have gone up a lot. Costs were discussed. Arica moved and Cheri seconded that we go ahead and make our \$500 donation to GLAAC as soon as possible. Passed unanimously.

Tim Campbell mentioned the recent stargazing event put on by Milford Parks And Recreation and told us

that Commerce Township wants to do something similar. They have also contacted the GM Astronomy Club, and it sounds like this would be a joint event with them. Their initial date conflicted with AATB, so October 9 is now the tentative date; however, there are weather concerns. Look for more information on this.

Arica brought up the fact that, in May, we have traditionally donated \$150 to the Henry Ford College Foundation for their scholarship program in the math and physics departments. We did not do this last year but would like to get back to donating. Arica moved and Cheri seconded that we make this \$150 donation. Passed unanimously.

Gordon mentioned that he recently talked to Jim Frisbie, and Jim let him know that the Plymouth Library, which is the location where our monthly astrophotography group meetings are held, has asked if we will do an astronomy event for them. They have already set a date for May 22, with a rain date of May 24. We would like to see our members come out and bring their telescopes. Look for further information to be published on Groups.io.

University of Michigan Dearborn Observatory

Month	Day	Time
May	29	9:45pm - 11:45pm
June	5	9:45pm - 11:45pm
	12	10:00pm - Midnight
	26	10:00pm - Midnight
July	10	10:00pm - Midnight
	17	10:00pm - Midnight
	24	9:45pm - 11:45pm
August	7	9:30pm - 11:30pm

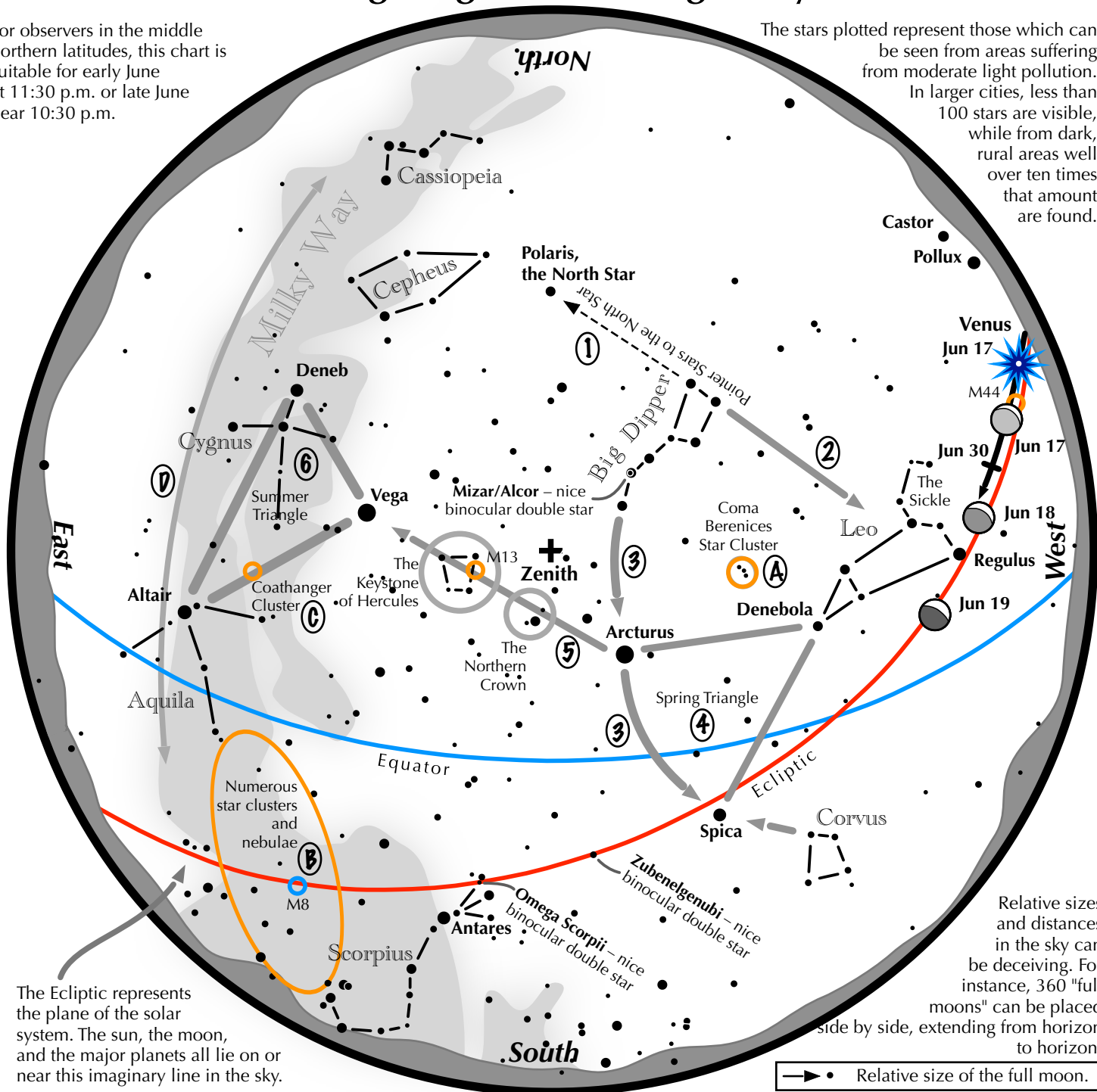
Month	Day	Time
August	14	9:15pm - 11:15pm
	21	9:00pm - 11:00pm
September	11	8:30pm - 10:30pm
	25	8:00pm - 10:00pm
October	2	8:00pm - 10:00pm
	9	7:45pm - 9:45pm
	16	7:30pm - 9:30pm

Navigating the June Night Sky

2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early June at 11:30 p.m. or late June near 10:30 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.



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 June 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 Draw another line in the opposite direction. It strikes the constellation Leo high in the west.
- 3 Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It first intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the June evening sky, then Spica.
- 4 Arcturus, Spica, and Denebola form the Spring Triangle, a large equilateral triangle.
- 5 To the northeast of Arcturus shines another star of the same 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.
- 6 High in the east are the three bright stars of the Summer Triangle: 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 of 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.

