



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.

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – August 27, 2026

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Vice President Sean Pickard. President Dan Smith and Treasurer Arica Flores were absent. Secretary Cheri Grissom present. We had 15 in-person attendees, plus 12 online, for a total of 27. Due to our guest speaker's schedule, which we were happy to accommodate, we started our meeting with a talk, which we will follow with our regular business meeting.

Guest Speaker: Sandra Macika introduced Kalée Tock, a Stanford Online High School instructor, who gave a talk entitled "Observing Binary Stars." Ms. Tock started with an in-depth discussion, along with images, of eclipsing binary stars and the challenges encountered in determining individual colors, brightness, size, etc., due to the fact that, in most instances, one star periodically blocks the other. Some binary stars actually share an outer gaseous layer known as a common envelope. A pulsator, or pulsating variable star can sometimes be confused with a binary system due to the physical shrinking and swelling of this type of individual star.

The American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) is an organization of professional and amateur astronomers world-wide who contribute to scientific knowledge through the observation of the many different types of variable stars. Anyone with an interest in this type of thing is encouraged to join and participate.

There is also the Journal of Double Star Observations (JDSO), which publishes articles on all aspects of double and binary stars and is especially interested in contributions from amateur astronomers.

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

In our own night sky here on earth, there are many interesting binary stars to be observed. Probably the best known are Mizar and Alcor in the Big Dipper. These two are far enough apart to be made out naked eye if one is young and/or has excellent eyesight! Interestingly, Alcor itself is a binary system, with the main star and a companion red dwarf, and Mizar consists of four stars all together, made up of two pairs of binaries. It is estimated that it takes about 750,000 for Mizar and Alcor to orbit around each other.

Most of us have heard of William and Caroline Herschel, a brother and sister who lived in the late 1700s and early 1800s. They were among the first astronomers to ever take an interest in observing and studying double stars.

A question-and-answer period followed, after which we had a short snack break and then proceeded with our regular business meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Sean asked for introductions. We had no new members present tonight.

Member Observing: Jerry Jamula traveled to Spain this summer for the total solar eclipse and had a great time. He is planning on going to Egypt next year for another total eclipse. Dennis Salliotte says he was able to watch about ten seconds of the solar eclipse (sorry, Dennis, I didn't catch where exactly you were). Chris Strang commented that, during the recent Perseid meteor shower, he observed the brightest meteor he has ever seen in his life. Jameson Sullivan was in the Upper Peninsula and also saw several very bright Perseids. Jeff Anderson recently observed the Pac Man and Wizard Nebulae with his newest telescope.

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. Astronomy at the Beach will be happening soon, on September 18 and 19. There is going to be a partial lunar eclipse tonight, starting at 9:24 p.m. and reaching its maximum at 12:13 p.m., with about 96% of the disk covered. Skies should be great! Sean also gave us the upcoming solar and lunar ISS transits visible from the Island Lake area.

Club Business:

Secretary's Report: It's in "Star Stuff." Cheri asked if anyone needed a new lanyard or name badge holder.

Treasurer's Report: Arica absent, no report.

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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

Scheduled Club Events

Month	Date	Sunset	Location
	Pending		2027 Schedule TBD

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
September 25th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
October 14th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
October 16th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
September 24th	Dr. Deana Weibel	The Ultraview Effect and the Universe Beyond Our Solar System
October 22nd	Ardis Herrold	The NSF-DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory: Opening a New Era of Discovery

September Meeting

The Ultraview Effect

Deana L. Weibel, PH.D., Cultural Anthropologist, Professor of Anthropology at GVSU, Author of "The Ultraview Effect"

Description:

Astronauts looking back at Earth often describe the overview effect, a powerful shift in perspective produced by seeing our planet from space. But what happens when they turn away from Earth and look outward? Cultural anthropologist Deana Weibel has interviewed astronauts and other space professionals about encounters with stars, darkness, distance, and the vastness of the universe. Some describe views of the Milky Way and deep space that cannot be fully captured in photographs and that leave them with an intense awareness of both the grandeur of the cosmos and the limits of human knowledge. Weibel calls this pattern the "ultraview effect," a phenomenon different from the better known "overview effect." In this talk, she will share astronaut accounts of seeing

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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 2)

Social Media/Website: Liam absent, no report.

Club Equipment: Jeff Gorman had no report, though Tim Campbell advised us that he is no longer the caretaker of the club's Lunt solar telescope. That has been transferred to Liam Finn.

Astronomy at the Beach: Gordon Hansen gave a report on how things are going. We are pretty much set, but as always, we are in need of volunteers to staff our club table under the tent. Gordon had previously sent out a sign-up sheet, but there were some glitches that he says have been corrected. To sign up, sign in to Groups.io, open the Databases file along the left-hand side, and then open "Astronomy at the Beach 2026." Then simply fill in your name for a time slot. Even just an hour or two is a tremendous help. You are welcome even if you are new to astronomy. Your job will simply be to greet the public at our table, answer questions they may have about FAAC or events going on outside the tent, perhaps pass out sheets for the children's scavenger hunt, help people with the "Your Weight on Other Planets" scale we have, etc. You will not be alone at the table; there will be at least a couple other people at all times to help you! Gordon is also asking for donations of old astronomy magazines, which we give away for free to the public. And if you have any old astronomy books collecting dust, we will take those, too. We sell those for 50 cents, softcover, \$1.00, hardcover. There will be cold water and pop provided for our volunteers.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Board Meeting Summary – September 3, 2026

(Videoconference meeting.) Meeting called to order at 7:14 p.m. by Vice President Sean Pickard. President Dan Smith was absent due to dealing with storm damage at his home. Secretary Cheri Grissom and Treasurer Arica Flores also present. Four other members present.

(Please note that the summaries printed in "Star Stuff" are just that, a brief summary of the board meeting minutes. Full minutes are in the club records.)

Our next General Meeting will be on September 24, and our guest speaker will be Dr. Deana Weibel, talking to us about "The Ultraviolet Effect and the universe Beyond Our Solar System." This talk will be in person. Sean

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>

will most likely do "What's Up," but if he turns out to be unable to, we will find someone to substitute.

Club Business:

Secretary's Report: No report.

Treasurer's Report: Arica gave us our current balance. We had a lengthy discussion of ideas on how to replenish our funds and draw in new members. Arica reminded us that we are approaching the time of year when dues will start coming in, so of course that will help. While we discussed several ideas tonight, we decided to table this discussion for a future meeting where, hopefully, we have more members present. We value everyone's input.

Membership: Doug Bauer reported that we have gotten a couple new members recently.

Social Media/Website: No report.

Club Equipment: Jeff Gorman was absent, but we had a lengthy discussion of certain items that the club owns. There was confusion, in particular, about the club banners and tri-fold display boards and we were able to confirm who has those. We talked about the fact that much of our club equipment, including telescopes and mounts, is rarely borrowed. Should we consider not hanging onto these anymore? Again, this was tabled for a later date when Jeff is with us and when we may have more members present to participate in the discussion.

Old Business:

Event Calendar: Arica brought up the fact that our club calendar still does not reflect the correct meeting dates for November and December, in spite of months of different members trying to fix it. She said that, for a short time recently, they were indeed correct, but they are no longer. As of right now, the calendar on Groups.io is correct, but the one on our website is incorrect. There seems to be some kind of technical glitch that is almost impossible to fix. Cheri volunteered to send out a Groups.io notice in late October to remind everyone of the correct holiday meeting dates for November and December. Long-time members know already, but we have a number of new members that may be looking at the calendar on the website, not realizing we change things up a bit for November and December. Plus, anyone who is not yet a

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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	Liam Finn

University of Michigan Dearborn Observatory

Month	Day	Time
September	25	8:00pm - 10:00pm

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

Speaker (Con't from Page 3)

the universe beyond Earth, consider why the view from space differs from the night sky as seen from the ground, and explore how awe and humility can encourage scientific curiosity rather than diminish it. She will also discuss the Voyager Golden Record as one of humanity’s most imaginative attempts to place our species within a much larger cosmos and communicate across an almost unimaginable distance.

Bio:

Deana L. Weibel (DEE-nuh WHY-bull), Ph.D., is a cultural anthropologist and professor at Grand Valley State University, where she teaches anthropology and

religious studies. Her research examines awe, exploration, and the ways scientific and cultural ideas shape how people understand the universe. She has conducted ethnographic research with astronauts, astronomers, engineers, and other space professionals at NASA centers, observatories, spaceports, and the Vatican Observatory. She is the author of *The Ultraview Effect: What We Can Learn from Astronauts about Awe, Humility, and Exploring the Unknown*, published by the University of California Press in 2026. She is also a co-author of a forthcoming book about the Voyager Golden Record. Her website is www.deanaweibel.space.

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

member but might be thinking about attending a meeting as a guest would not have the correct dates from our website.

P.O. Box: The renewal fee for our Post Office box will be due in October. It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously for Arica to pay the bill when it comes due.

New Business:

Astronomy at the Beach: Gordon gave a report. We have had several people sign up for the table on the sheet that has been sent around, but we need more. Gordon went over our AATB inventory list which was provided to everyone. We discussed who is bringing what, etc.

Nominating Committee: Gordon will chair this committee once again. He will enlist two other volunteers. We will be needing a new Vice President and Secretary as they are both term-limited.

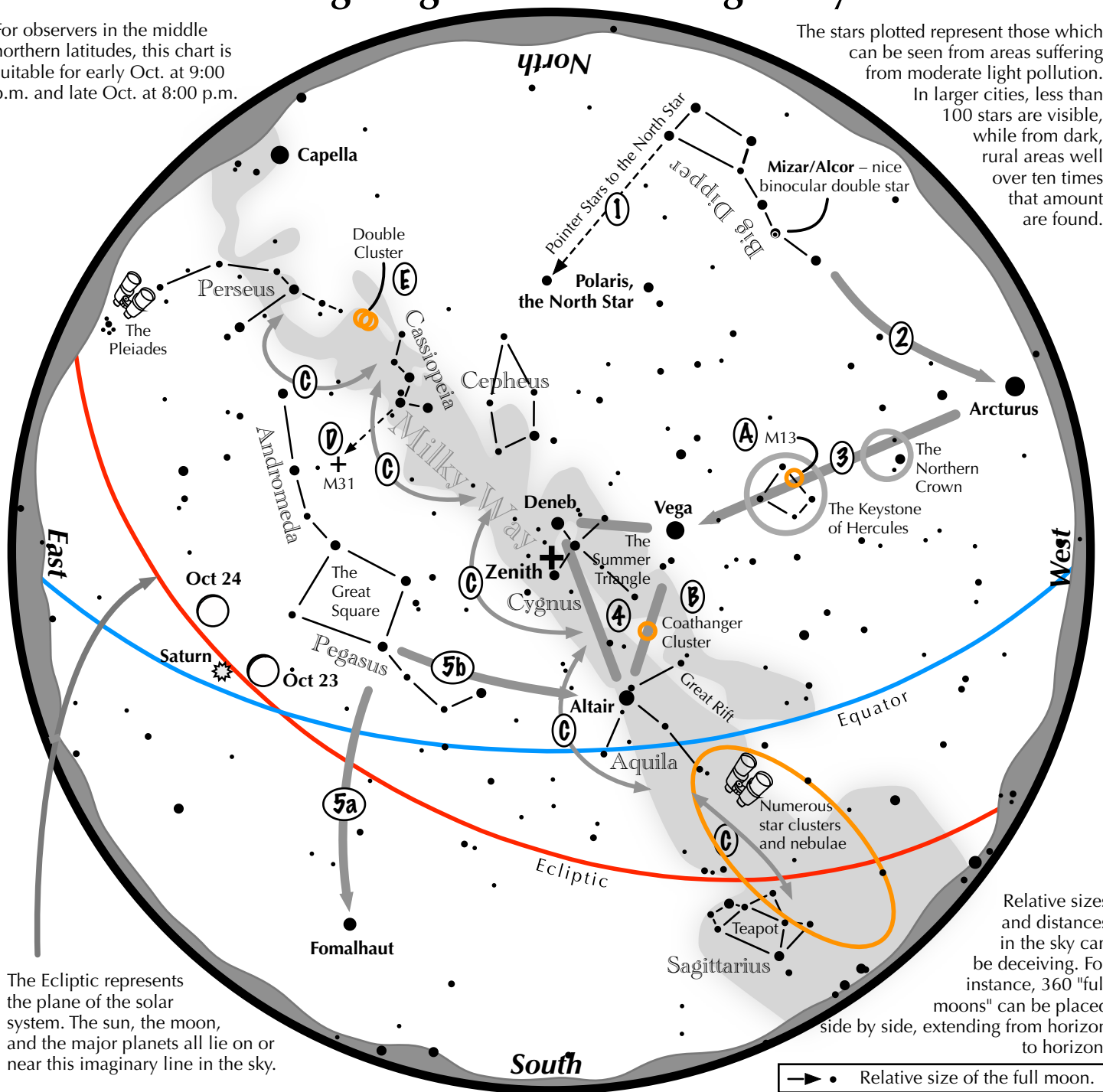
2027 FAAC Banquet: Setting this up is designated as the Vice President's job. Sean will not be the VP in 2027. But we can't wait that long to decide on a date and venue for our banquet as places fill up months in advance. So Sean will make sure we have that settled by the time the new year rolls over, and the new VP can simply follow up on the rest of what's needed. We had a brief discussion of dates, with no decision yet, and those present seemed to think the South Lyon Hotel would be nice to use again.

Navigating the October Night Sky

2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early Oct. at 9:00 p.m. and late Oct. at 8:00 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 October 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 early October evening sky.
- 3 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.
- 4 Nearly overhead lie the summer triangle stars of Vega, Altair, and Deneb.
- 5 High in the east are the four moderately bright stars of the Great Square. Its two southern stars point west to Altair. Its two western stars point south to Fomalhaut.

Binocular Highlights

A: On the western side of the Keystone glows the Great Hercules Cluster, a ball of 500,000 stars. **B:** 40% of the way between Altair and Vega, twinkles the "Coathanger," a group of stars outlining a coathanger. **C:** Sweep along the Milky Way for an astounding number of fuzzy star clusters and nebulae amid many faint glows and dark bays, including the Great Rift. **D:** The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval. **E:** Between the "W" of Cassiopeia and Perseus lies the Double Cluster.

