Rosette Nebula

This is a cosmic cloud located 5,000 lightyears from Earth, meaning its light takes so long to reach us, we're seeing it as it existed 5,000 years ago. The Rosette is much bigger than the more famous Orion Nebula – five times larger in fact – yet both span roughly the same area in the night sky because the Rosette is four times further away. This colorful image is full of red, gold and purple hues, lit up by NGC 2244, a young star cluster at the heart of the nebula.

SAVE THESE 2026 DATES!

April 27 at 6:00 p.m. IPTV **"The Stars at Night"** A dark sky documentary
April 29 at 8:00 p.m. IPTV **"Return to the Moon"** Follow the Artemis Mission
May 9 at 8:00 p.m. **"Types of Objects in the Universe"** by Paul Caligiuri at Ashton Observatory
May 15-17 North Central Region Astronomical League **conference** in Cedar Rapids
May 23 at 8:00 p.m. **"Stars & S'mores: The Perfect Camping Combination"** by Jim McGraw at Ashton Observatory
October 8 -10 **Iowa Star Party**, Whiterock Conservancy

May 2026 – President's Report

There are some wonderful benefits to being a member of DMAS. They include:

- ✓ Spending time with other amateur astronomers, sharing knowledge and experience
- ✓ Having a voice regarding club activities
- ✓ Enjoying the night sky with other club members
- ✓ Access to excellent telescopes and educational programs
- ✓ Sharing your love of the night sky with visitors to Ashton Observatory

Everyone who is a registered member of DMAS can attend our regular monthly club meetings. These are held the first Saturday of each month, except for July when we have our Annual Summer Picnic on the 2nd Saturday of July to avoid our country's 4th of July celebrations.

Club members are gearing up to attend the EICC (Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference), the annual NCRAL convention. This year's event is being held in Cedar Rapids.

The Cedar Amateur Astronomers club have put together what looks to be a great conference.

Our DMAS club members voted to close Ashton Observatory the weekend of EICC to allow more club members to attend the event.
Hope to see you there!

The Observatory Committee continues to work on preparations for installation of the new 14-inch Planewave telescope for the east dome when it arrives. It takes more than just bolting it onto the mount. We are fortunate to have members with extensive knowledge and experience with varieties and workings of telescopes which assists the committee with the scope installation. I know there has been much research on various factors involved in this entire process.

- JoAnn Cogil

May 2026 Ashton Classroom Programs – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 9 – "Types of Objects in the Universe" by Paul Caligiuri
Saturday, May 23 – "Stars & S'mores: The Perfect Camping Combination" by Jim McGraw

DMAS

The Des Moines Astronomical Society
Monthly Members' Meeting
May 2nd, at 6:30 P.M.
at Ashton Observatory

- Call to Order – Introductions
- Secretary's Report – April meeting minutes (printed in May Starlight Journal)
- Treasurer's Report
- Observatory Director's Report
- Timberline Report
- Member Comments
- Other Business
- Drake Spring Lecture Series // lectures begin at 8:00 P.M. CDT
  - May 8th – Mars Exploration: Landers, Rovers & Helicopters
  - May 15th – Telescopes: Infinite Knowledge through Infinite Diversity
- Dean Regas – Zoom presentations // zooms scheduled to begin at 6:00 P.M. CDT
  - May 5th – *It's About Time – How We Use the Sky*
  - June 2nd – *Webb & Rubin Telescope Updates*
- NCRAL 2026 Conference
  - May 15-17
  - in Cedar Rapids, Iowa
  - *Ashton Observatory will be closed this weekend as approved by membership*
- Next Membership Meeting Date: June 6th at Ashton Observatory
  - Time is 6:30 PM
- Adjourn

DMAS

Observatory Committee Report

May 2026, Greg Woolever, Observatory Director

The new season is underway. April weather is doing is normal uncertainty, but Saturday Public Nights are being well-attended regardless. There have been many private group events scheduled in April, and several cancelled and rescheduled due to weather issues. I thank our volunteers for being flexible in the face of all that changeability. The uncertain atmospheric conditions are "normal" but it still makes a challenge for hosting events — challenge for both our volunteers and for the guests hoping to have their night sky adventure.

Additional reservations for private groups for later in the season are happening too. You can view the schedule for private groups on the members side of our website.

No word yet from PlaneWave for the CDK14 telescope on order. It should be arriving before long, and then the installation will follow. We may reach out for your help to lift the equipment onto the mount. After that there is always the chance that some mount realignment might be needed, so that will take technical expertise of members of the Observatory Committee. Maybe we'll be lucky and everything attaches with little or no change from current alignment … keeping fingers crossed for that…

The optics of this telescope are magnificent, so be sure to check it out once we are operational.

Check the season schedule available on our website for the classroom program offerings — 2nd and 4th Saturdays each month. See you there.

Greg Woolever & the Observatory Committee: Dave Heck,
Norm Van Klompenburg, Jim VandeBerg, JoAnn Cogil, Greg Woolever.

The Night Sky for May 2026

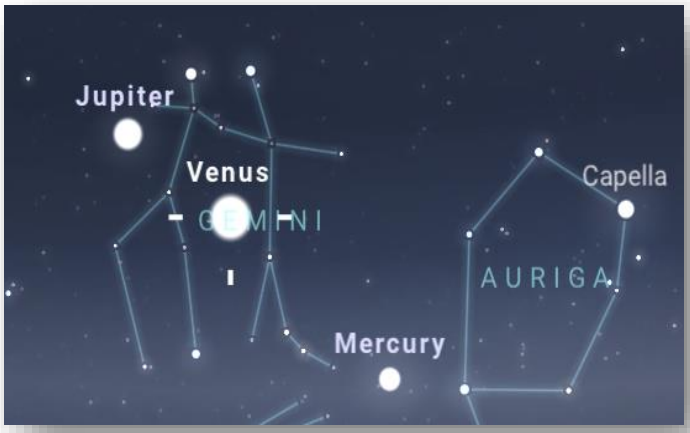
By JoAnn Cogil

May 5, 1961 – Alan Shephard became the first American in space, completing a 15-minute suborbital ride flying aboard the Mercury craft Freedom 7.

May 23, 1967, a powerful solar flare simultaneously jams all three U.S. ballistic missile early warning system (BMEWS) radars, causing the Air Force's Strategic Air Command (SAC) to go on high alert and put nuclear armed bombers into the air — before space weather specialists determine the cause was not the Soviet Union.

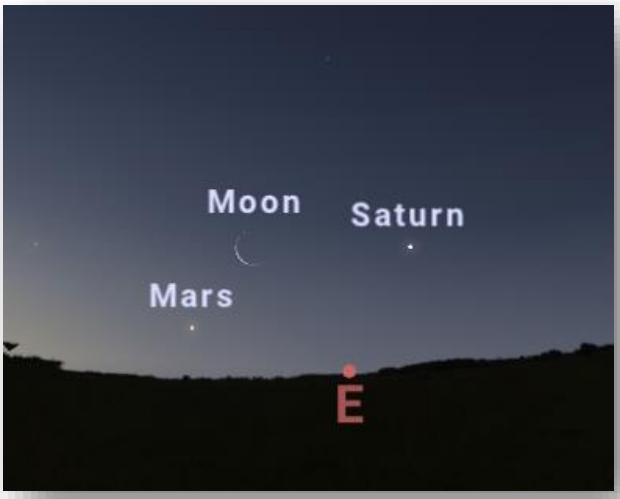
On May 24, 1969, the Apollo 10 crew orbited the moon, making this flight the 4th human spaceflight in the US Apollo program and the 2nd to orbit the Moon. This mission was described as a "dress rehearsal" for the first Moon land by Apollo 11, two months later.

Mercury - Will become visible as the month draws to a close.



Venus – our beautiful 'Evening Star' provides good viewing until almost midnight by month's end. On the 18th, it sits close to the Moon, the closest this pair get for the rest of 2026. Look for them at dusk in the west with Jupiter shining upward to the left of the pair and the bright star Capella shining to the right. On the 31st, Venus reaches its greatest altitude as it sits in Gemini with Jupiter still close by. The planet remains our 'Evening Star' until October. (Image credit: Stellarium)

Earth – The Milky Way becomes more prominent this month from our location. May 1st on Earth is one of the year's 'four cross-quarter' days. This is a day that falls about midway between the March Equinox and the June Solstice.



Mars – May be visible to the naked-eye, so look eastward at dawn, about 70 minutes before sunrise. On the 13th-14th, the red planet & Saturn will be near the Moon about 1 hour before sunrise. Image credit: Stellarium

Jupiter – remains visible for viewing until about midnight as it continues to dominate our night sky. The ringed planet draws closer to Venus as the month continues. These 2 planets will have a conjunction in June which will be a sight to see!

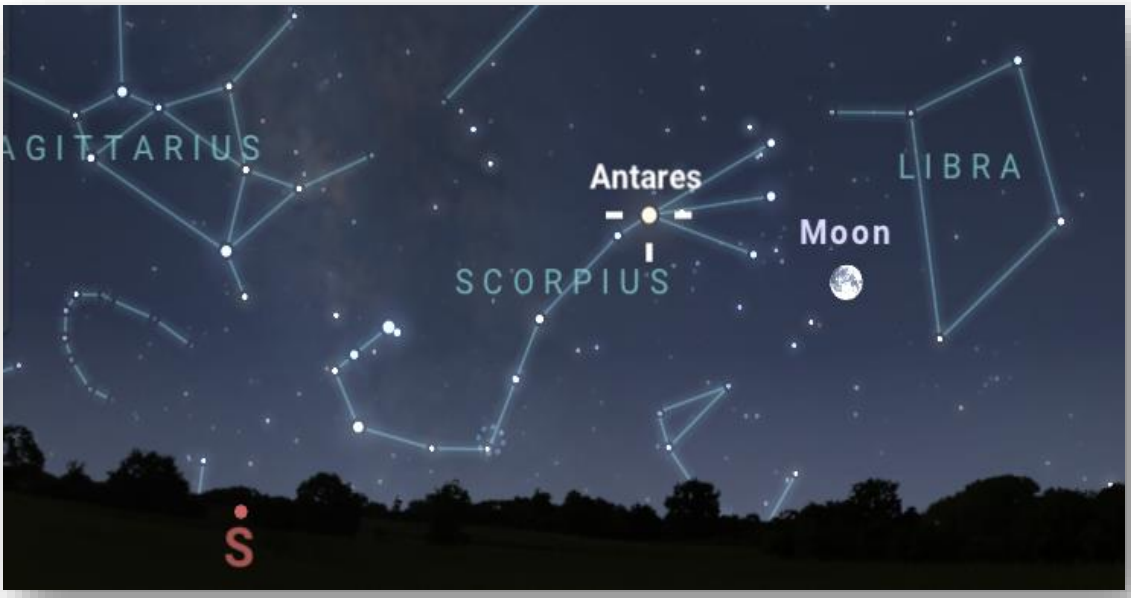
Saturn – shows again in our morning skies & becomes easier to see as the days go by. Don't miss the fun on the morning of the 14th as Saturn joins Mars and the Moon in the east.

Uranus – has a solar conjunction on the 22nd, which reduces our opportunities to view this small, icy planet. Uranus happens to be the coldest planet in our solar system.

Neptune – continues to stay near Saturn again this month & is visible about 2 hours before sunrise in the east. This planet is known to have the fastest winds in our Solar System, with winds estimated to exceed the speed of sound, which is 767 miles per hour.

Moon

1st – FULL Moon @ 12:23 PM CDT
9th – 3rd quarter
16th – NEW Moon @ 3:01 PM CDT
23rd – first quarter
31st – FULL Moon @ 3:45 AM CDT. The full moon this month is known as a "Blue Moon" as it is the second full moon in a month, which can be a relatively rare occurrence as they happen only every 2-3 years.



The full moon this month is known as the 'Flower Moon' for the wonderful blooming of flowers. It is also known as the (Corn) Planting moon, Hare Moon & Milk Moon.

On the morning of May 30th, about 3 AM CDT, the Moon will be to the right of the star Antares, a massive, supergiant red star in the constellation Scorpius. This star is one of the largest in our night sky and easily visible to the naked eye.

COMET WATCH

Comet 10P/TEMPEL (Tempel 2) – this comet should be around all summer and is expected to have its closest approach to the Sun on August 3, 2026. Its size is comparable to the city of Boston. It was discovered in 1873 and is classified as a 'Jupiter-family comet', as its orbit is controlled by Jupiter's gravitational effects. It orbits the Sun every 5.36 years.

METEOR SHOWER

Eta Aquariids – runs from 4/19 to May 28 and peaks on the night of May 5th into the morning of May 6th. It can have up to 50 meteors per hour but realistically it will be about 12-15 per hour. The night of the 5th our Moon is forecasted to be quite bright at 82% of full which does diminish our chances to see more meteors. Best viewing will be about 1-2 hours before dawn. The meteors in this shower come from the dust of Halley's Comet. These meteors are known for producing high percentages of "earthgrazers", long, bright meteors that speedily skim the atmosphere near the horizon. Fast meteors can leave glowing "trains" (incandescent bits of debris in the wake of the meteor) which last for several seconds to minutes.

"Dark Skies- Protecting a Precious Resource" Youtube program by DMAS member JR Paulson

Friends,

The weather continues to be horrible for imaging. Despite the clouds, there are many increasing threats to our dark skies. This coming week is *International Dark Skies Week.* That's why I'm including a link to a YouTube presentation I did as a Bucket Class last year. It is entitled, *Dark Skies- Protecting a Precious Resource.* The link is:

https://www.youtube.com/grinnellcec/videos

Astronomical League

Explore these Rewarding and Educational Observing Programs

The **Astronomical League** is an umbrella organization of amateur astronomy societies. Currently their membership consists of over 330 organizations across the United States, including the **Des Moines Astronomical Society.** You can find many useful astronomy resources on their website.

Educational Opportunities

Dean Regas is **an astronomer, public speaker, author, and podcaster** who brings the complicated universe down to Earth for audiences of all ages.
Dean is an honorary member of the Des Moines Astronomical Society.
He is also the host of the "Looking UP" podcast.
Visit Dean at his astronomy website: https://astrodean.com/

Free Online Zoom Classes in 2026 with Astronomer Dean Regas

Feb 11: Life and Times of Galileo
Mar 11: Comets and Meteors
Apr 7: Top 10 Things to See in the Night Sky
(still available)
May 5: It's About Time - How We Use the Sky
June 2: Webb and Rubin Telescope Updates
July 7: Along the Milky Way
Aug: TBD (depending on the itinerary of my eclipse trip)
Sep 1: Ancient Greek Astronomy
Oct 6: Monsters in the Sky - Constellations of Fall
Nov 3: Life and Death of Stars
Dec 1: Exoplanets News

DMAS members will receive an email with free links to all of these programs!

"It's About Time"

Tuesday May 5 at 7:00 PM EDT

How do we measure time? It is mainly in the stars. Astronomer Dean Regas shares how we got the days, weeks, months, and years on our calendar as well as an even older look at what the Babylonians taught us.

Link for May 5:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84272240292?pwd=bhaebCUGsYR9HeYHlMWJC4tFazKmtP.1

Passcode:852080

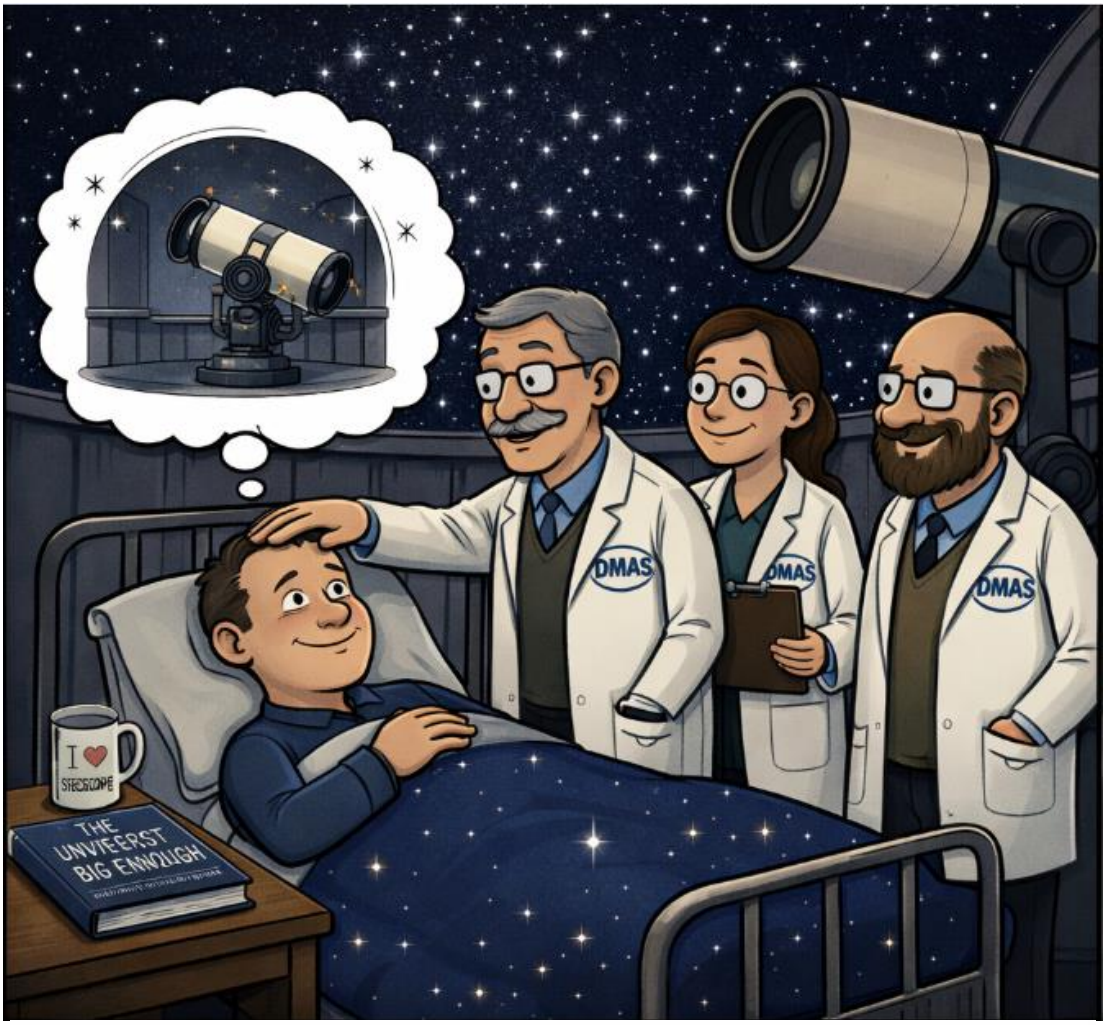
Please give a warm welcome to these new DMAS members:

Ben Sinclair
James Rankin
Julie Walker
James Bruton
Sally Cone
William Cone
Bryn Clarke & Family (lifetime)

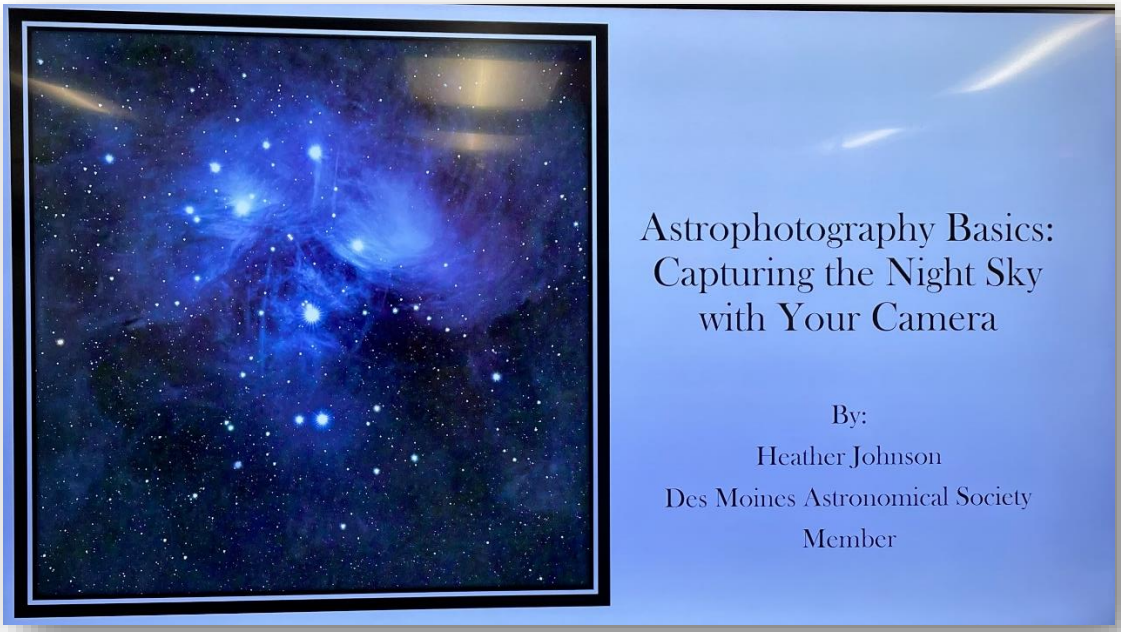
Bruce Mumm,
Treasurer

If you would like to join the Des Moines Astronomical Society or just make a contribution to further our efforts, scan the QR code above to use PayPal.
Many Thanks!!!

PayPal



"He keeps wanting a larger and larger telescope.
I'm afraid he has *aperture fever*."



On Saturday April 25, our own Heather Johnson presented her program to a nearly full classroom. Her program on DSLR astrophotography featured awesome night sky images and excellent tips on capturing your own images. You can view some of her outstanding images at: Heather Johnson Photography - The Night Skies Heather also has a fun Facebook page with more wonderful images.

This Month in DMAS History

From the StarLight Journal 25 Years Ago, May 2001

There are no StarLight Journals in the online archives for January through June of 2001.

From the StarLight Journal 10 Years Ago, May 2016

Norm Van Klompenburg with Dark Sky informed the group that the Dark Sky website had new information that members might find informative and useful. He also reported that in Newton where new LED lights had been recently installed, customers had called in complaining about the brightness of the lights, and adjustments had been made to dim the intensity. The conclusion being that the intensity of the LED's can be varied and that municipalities are willing to work with the customer to adjust brightness.

DRAKE MUNICIPAL OBSERVATORY PUBLIC NIGHTS 2026
Lectures start at 8:00 p.m.

Dear Observatory Family,
Tell your friends and family, and as usual it is free and open to all.

All the best,
Herb Folsom

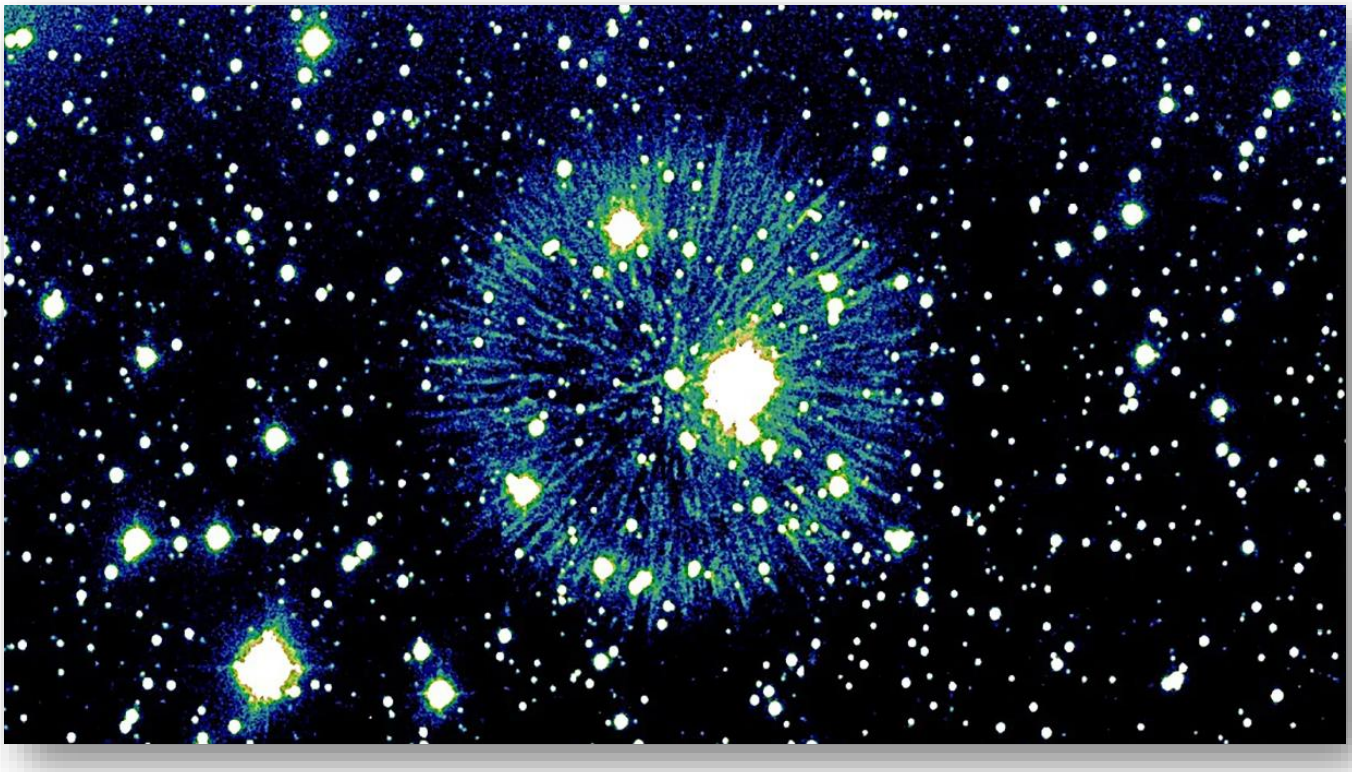
May 1st Cosmology Part 2: More Everything
May 8th Mars Exploration: Landers, Rovers & Helicopters
May 15th Telescopes: Infinite Knowledge Through Infinite Diversity

Drake.edu/observatory/publicevents/

Here is a photo I took a week ago of the Lunar-Jovian conjunction as viewed from our front yard.
DMAS member - Vern Naffier

May 18, 2026 - Tonight there was a neat conjunction of Venus and the crescent moon. Photos taken from the parking lot of the Story County Conservation Center, North of Ames.

L. Allen Beers



This image shows the nebula **Pa 30**, which is the aftermath of a rare stellar explosion witnessed by astronomers in 1181. It is believed to be caused by the collision and merger of two white dwarf stars, a "failed" supernova event known as a Type Iax supernova. Unlike typical supernova remnants, this object features delicate, glowing filaments of sulfur gas radiating outward like a firework, powered by a surviving central star. The central star is one of the hottest known, with surface temperatures reaching approximately 200,000 Kelvin. The nebula was discovered in 2013 by amateur astronomer Dana Patchick and was later identified as the source of the 1181 "guest star".

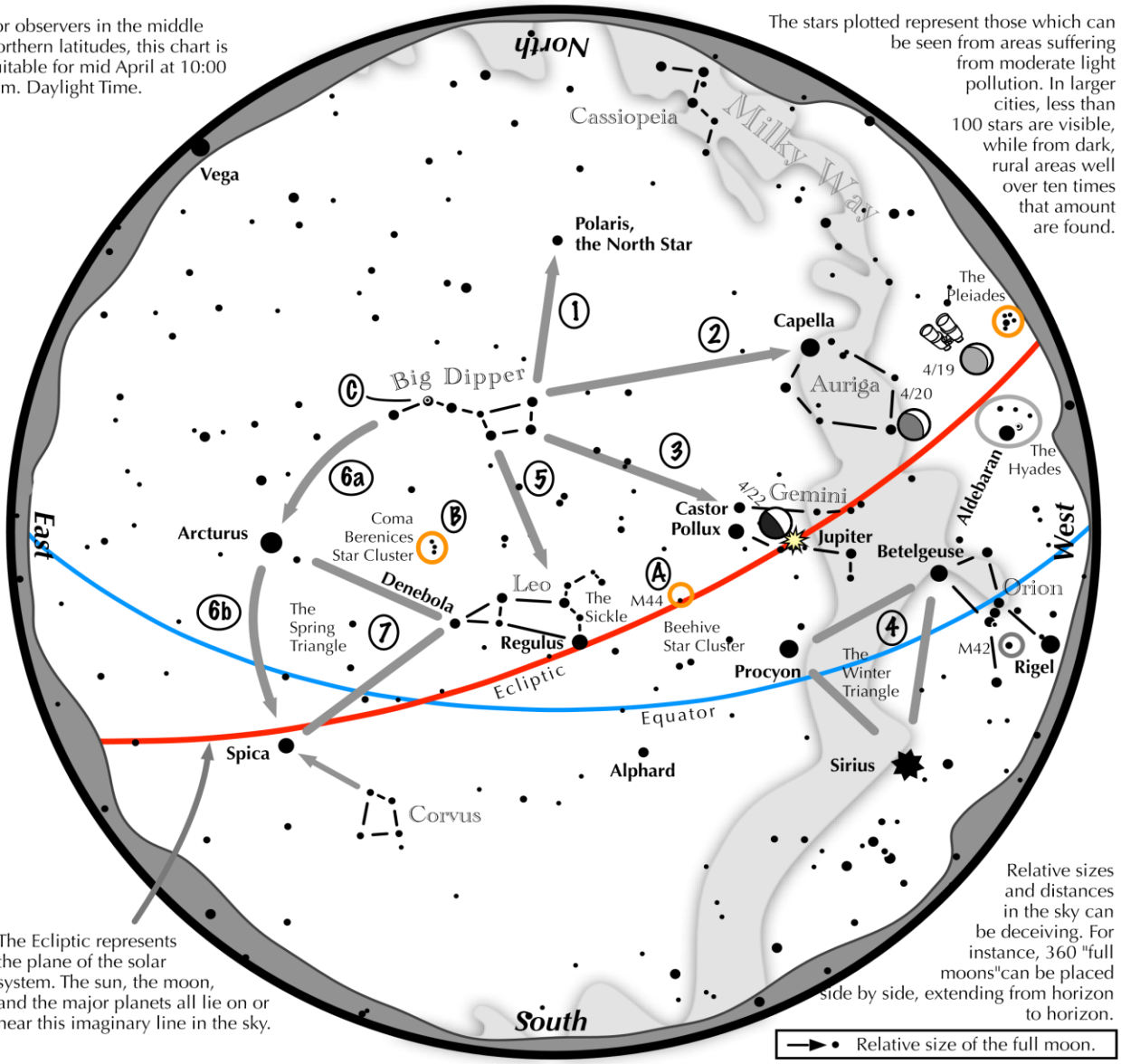
Historical Astronomy Events that Happened in May

1374 BC May 3 – Mesopotamian astronomers record seeing a total solar eclipse.
1783 May 4 – Astronomer Sir. William Herschel mistakenly reports active volcanos on the Moon.
1897 May 27 – The 40 inch refractor at Yerkes Observatory is used for the first time.
1910 May 19 – The Earth passes through the tail of comet Halley
1996 May 1 – Comet Hyakutake passes the sun with a tail four times the distance of the earth to the sun.
1973 May 14 – The first manned space station Skylab is launched by NASA
1981 May 24 – Neptune's third moon Larissa is discovered.
2005 May 6 – The Cassini space probe discovers Saturn's moon Daphnis.
2023 May 11 – 62 new moons of Saturn are announced, bringing the total to 145

Navigating the mid–April Night Sky 2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid April at 10:00 p.m. Daylight Time.

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 April night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

1. Extend an imaginary line north from the two stars at the tip of the Big Dipper's bowl. It passes Polaris, the North Star.
2. Draw another imaginary line west across the top two stars of the Dipper's bowl. It strikes Capella low in the northwest.
3. Through the two diagonal stars of the Dipper's bowl, draw a line pointing to the twin stars of Castor and Pollux in Gemini.
4. Look in the west-southwest for the bright Winter Triangle stars of Sirius, Procyon, and Betelgeuse.
5. Directly below the Dipper's bowl reclines the constellation Leo with its primary star, Regulus.
6. Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It first intersects Arcturus, then continues to Spica.
7. Arcturus, Spica, and Denebola form the Spring Triangle, a large equilateral triangle.

Binocular Highlights

A: M44, a star cluster barely visible to the naked eye, lies to the southeast of Pollux.
B: Look nearly overhead for the loose star cluster of Coma Berenices.
C: In the Big Dipper's handle shines Mizar next to a dimmer star, Alcor.

Astronomical League
www.astroleague.org

Our 2026 Des Moines Astronomical Society Officers, Directors & Observatory Committee

President: JoAnn Cogil
Vice-President: Pat Meade
Secretary/ALCor: Jim VandeBerg
Treasurer: Bruce Mumm
Observatory Director: Greg Woolever
At Large Director: Norm Van Klompenburg
At Large Director: Jessica Weinreich
At Large Director: Dave Bailey
Observatory Committee: Greg Woolever, Norm Van Klompenburg. Dave Heck, and Jim VandeBerg

Contact us at:
info@DMastronomy.com

The *Starlight Journal* is the monthly newsletter of the **Des Moines Astronomical Society, Inc.** P.O. Box 111, Des Moines Iowa 50301-0111. Our Observatory is located in Ashton Wildwood Park, 8755 West 122nd Street North. Founded in 1970, we are a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. Our website is DMastronomy.com. More information and photos can be found on our Facebook page.

Article Deadline: Before the 21st of the month, please send your articles, photos, sketches, poems, cartoons, and news to Jim VandeBerg (FinePineCabin@gmail.com) Articles may be edited to fit the allotted newsletter space. Copyrighted material must have permission from the copyright holder. Views and opinions expressed within submissions are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Des Moines Astronomical Society, Inc.

The Purpose of our Society

- Secure the pleasure and benefits of an association of persons interested in amateur astronomy
- Promote the science of astronomy
- Encourage and promote activities of an astronomical nature
- Foster observational, computational, technical, and creative skills in various fields of astronomy
- Pursue activities with other amateurs and professionals
- Educate the public

Des Moines Astronomical Society
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