

STARLIGHT JOURNAL

AUGUST 2025



SAVE THESE DATES NOW!



Seestar S50



NGC 6888

93°W, 41°N / 2025-07-03 22:27

20min

NGC 6888 (Crescent Nebula) Image by DMAS member Paul Caligiuri

I took this image with my Seestar: 20 minutes and 120 images stacked and noise removed, brightened, contrasted, and color levels increase. This nebula is 5,000 light-years away and about 25 light-years across (150,000,000,000,000 miles). The beautiful cosmic bubble is located in the constellation Cygnus and powered by the winds of a Wolf-Rayet star named WR 136. The little Seestar continues to bring amazing deep sky objects to us at an affordable cost.

Saturday August 2 Board Meeting 5:30 p.m.
Saturday August 2 Membership Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Saturday August 9 “How Far is that Star” by Paul Caligiuri
Monday August 11 Perseid Meteor Shower peaks
Saturday August 23 “The Color of Stars” by JR Paulson
October 16-19 Iowa Star Party – Whiterock Conservancy

AUGUST 2025 – President’s Report

Summer is a time for picnics and many DMAS club members enjoyed our Annual Summer Picnic in July. There was good food and good conversations with a cooler July temperature.

A few club members are planning to enjoy dark skies at Merritt Reservoir for the Nebraska Star Party the 4th week of July. This location in Nebraska was designated last year as the 200th dark sky location in the United States. What a fantastic opportunity to have this location so close to home for which to enjoy truly dark skies. I look forward to hearing about their experiences.

Once again, we are experiencing some smoke haze from Canadian wildfires. This has impacted some of our Saturday evening public viewing events. When you cannot see the Big Dipper, you know night sky viewing is not good.

Stay cool as summer continues!

JoAnn



The Des Moines Astronomical Society

Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

August 2, 2025, at 5:30 P.M.

at Ashton Observatory

- Call to order
 - Donation
- Secretary’s Report – Minutes from May
 - Board meeting (printed in June newsletter)
- Treasurer’s Report
- Observatory Director’s Report
- Timberline Update
- Other Business
- Adjourn

The Des Moines Astronomical Society
Monthly Members' Meeting
August 2, 2025 at 6:30 P.M.
at Ashton Observatory

Call to order – Introductions

- Secretary's Report – Minutes (from June Member meeting)
 - Treasurer's Report
 - Donation
 - Observatory Director's Report
 - Timberline Update
 - Committee Reports
 - Radio Telescope
 - Member comments
 - Other Business
 - Adjourn
 - Next Board Meeting Date: September 6th at 5:30 P.M. at Ashton Observatory
- Next Membership Meeting Date: September 6th at 6:30 P.M. at Ashton Observatory

Observatory Committee Report August 2025

Greg Woolever, Observatory Director

Weather continues to make stargazing a challenge. Regardless, we continue to have visitors arrive on Saturday Public Nights. When weather conditions are cloudy, or even if storms are possible, a core of DMAS members always show up at Ashton by 7:00 p.m., and are ready to welcome guests if they come. Our plan is to be present for potential guests until at least 9:00 p.m. That has been our strategy for many seasons when the skies are not good.

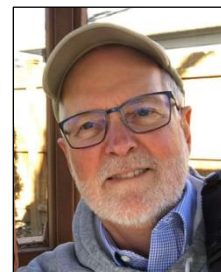
This past Saturday (July 19), in spite of total overcast, we had two groups come to Ashton. The first group was a mother and son. The son was very inquisitive about the equipment at Ashton.

A second group of three male adolescents arrived later. We weren't sure if they were coming to Ashton since they were socializing in the back of a pickup for a long time. But eventually they came inside Ashton and were most cordial and enthused to take our tour and demo of operations. Two were recent graduates from East High School, headed for college, and the third was still a student at East.

Otherwise, things are routine at Ashton – no major problems, and routine maintenance issues are resolved with little fanfare normally.

An ongoing challenge is finding and energizing DMAS members to engage with our main outreach activities of Saturday Public Nights. That includes having operators of the scopes, and people to talk to our guests about features of the night sky and what we do when observing the night sky. If you are enthused about astronomy, share your enthusiasm with visitors. If you are knowledgeable about astronomy, share your knowledge. If you have skills, share them.

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



The Night Sky for August 2025

By JoAnn Cogil

This month we enjoy some lovely night sky events. Whether evening or morning, there is something for everyone!

Mercury – moves into our morning sky & can be seen low in the eastern sky about 45 minutes before sunrise. It reaches its greatest western elongation on the 19th, making this the easiest way to see the little planet at its highest point above the horizon in the morning sky.

Venus – continues to rise early in the east, at almost 3 AM. Look at the constellation Gemini and you will find Venus. The morning of the 21st before sunrise, we find quite a party with Venus & Jupiter both in Gemini and the Moon & Mercury below in the constellation Cancer. Then on the morning of the 31st enjoy a view of Venus next to M 44, the Beehive Cluster. The Beehive is a lovely open cluster of about 1000 stars and is one of the closest to Earth at about 600 LY.

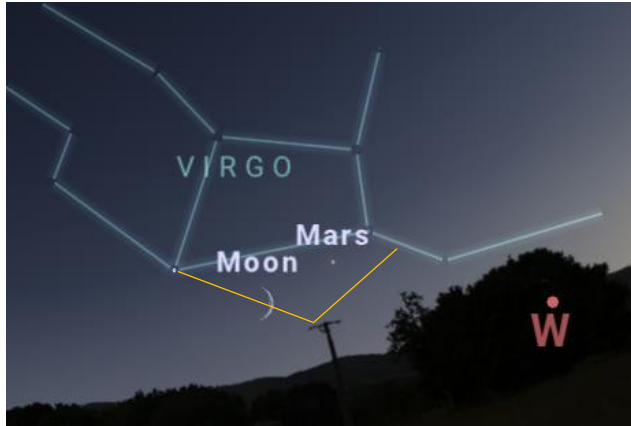


August 21st at 5:30 AM. Venus, Jupiter, and Moon & **Mercury (at yellow arrow)** (Image credit: Stellarium)

Earth – once again we are in the midst of the dog days of summer, when days are hot & sultry. But rest assured, the days are getting shorter!!

Mars – still in our western evening sky after sunset. The little red planet and our Moon meet up with the bright star Spica, the brightest star in the constellation Virgo, on the 24th-25th. The next evening these

three companions form a shallow 'V' in the evening sky.



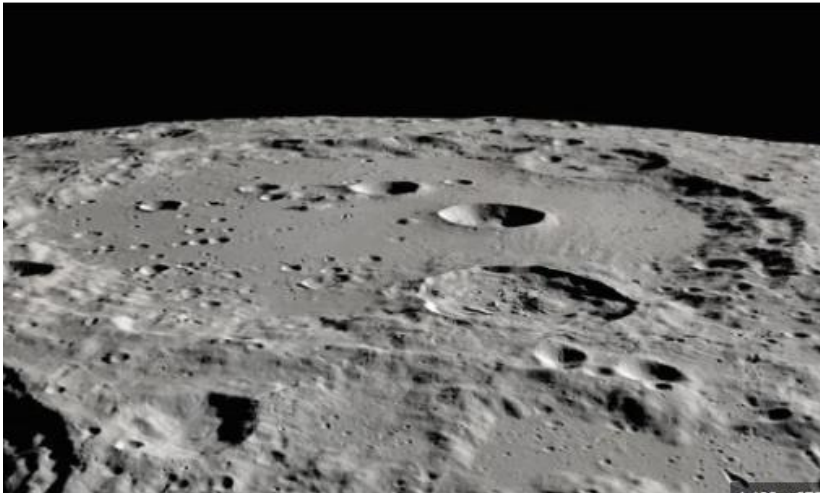
(Image credit: Stellarium)

Jupiter – stays close to Venus as they rise in the morning skies and can be found in Gemini the Twins. A very beautiful pair to see! Jupiter & Venus are so close together on the morning of August 12th they may look like one object.

Saturn – shines bright this month with a magnitude of 0.8 which makes it easy to see in the low eastern sky. The shadow of its large moon Titan has several transits across the planet this month. The race is on as we watch Saturn chase across the night sky after the Moon as both rise in the east on the evening of August 11th.

Uranus – shines with a magnitude of 5.8 but may brighten to a 0.1 magnitude by mid-month. On the early morning hours of the 16th, Uranus will be below the Moon which sits near the Pleiades by the constellation Taurus the Bull.

Neptune – this planet will rise with Saturn early month. We are always excited to see Neptune, which is the outermost planet in our Solar System. Saturn is about 793 million miles from Earth with Neptune 1.9 billion miles beyond Saturn, which makes seeing this blue planet quite a challenging but fun adventure.



Moon

1st – First quarter

9th – **FULL Moon** at 2:56 A.M. CDT

16th – Last quarter

23rd – **NEW Moon** at 1:08 A.M. CDT.

The new moon provides great night-sky viewing as the skies are darker without any moon glow, an astronomer's favorite time!!

31st – First quarter

The August moon is known as the Sturgeon Moon for the sturgeon fish species in the Great Lakes and are also called the Green Corn Moon and the Grain Moon.



Even our Moon has some wonderful viewing events this month. On the evening of August 3rd, the Moon will sit just below Antares, a bright star in the constellation Scorpius in the south. The Moon's grey color will allow Antares to look lovelier than ever. Then on the 5th the Moon moves into the Teapot, an asterism in the constellation Sagittarius. Fun fact -- '**Mahina**' is the Hawaiian word for Moon.

Mauna Kea Observatories, Hawaii (*Image credit: Science Photo Library*)

Meteor Shower

Perseids – one of the best meteor showers of the year. It runs from July 17th through August 24th and is expected to peak on the night of August 11th-12th. There is a possibility of seeing up to 60 meteors per hour, but there will be an 84% waning gibbous moon (heading towards full moon phase on the 23rd) which will probably block out any but the brightest meteors.

This meteor shower results from the comet Swift-Tuttle which was discovered in 1862 and orbits by our Sun every 133 years. It is famous for producing large numbers of bright meteors. Usually, the best viewing is after midnight, but we could see a good number of meteors from late evening on.

Word – A monthly article by DMAS member Bruce Mumm

Every specialty has a specific jargon to describe unique conditions in the field; Astronomy is no different. This month's word is:



Elongation – angular distance from the sun. When a planet's elongation is positive (eastward) it is in the evening sky and conversely when negative (westward) it is in the morning sky.

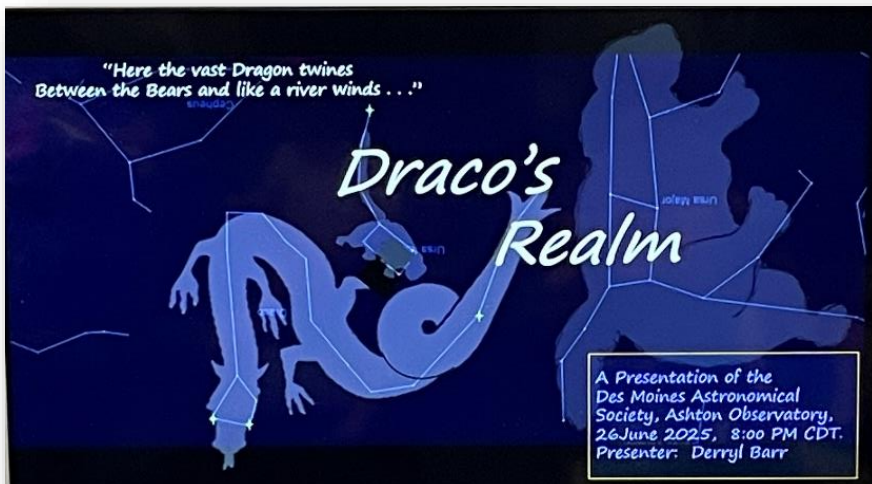
Astronomical League

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**.



On June 28, DMAS member Derryl Barr provided an interesting and comprehensive classroom program about the constellation Draco and the mythology in this area of the sky.





Hubble Telescope image of WHITE DWARF DEATH SNR 0509-67.5

Supernova remnant known as SNR 0509-67.5. The delicate sphere of gas, photographed by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, is the result of gas that is being shocked by the expanding blast wave from a supernova. The bubble is the visible remnant of a powerful stellar explosion in the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC), a small galaxy about 160,000 light-years from Earth. Ripples in the shell's surface may be caused by either subtle variations in the density of the ambient interstellar gas, or possibly driven from the interior by pieces of the ejecta. The bubble-shaped shroud of gas is 23 light-years across and is expanding at more than 11 million miles per hour (5,000 kilometers per second).

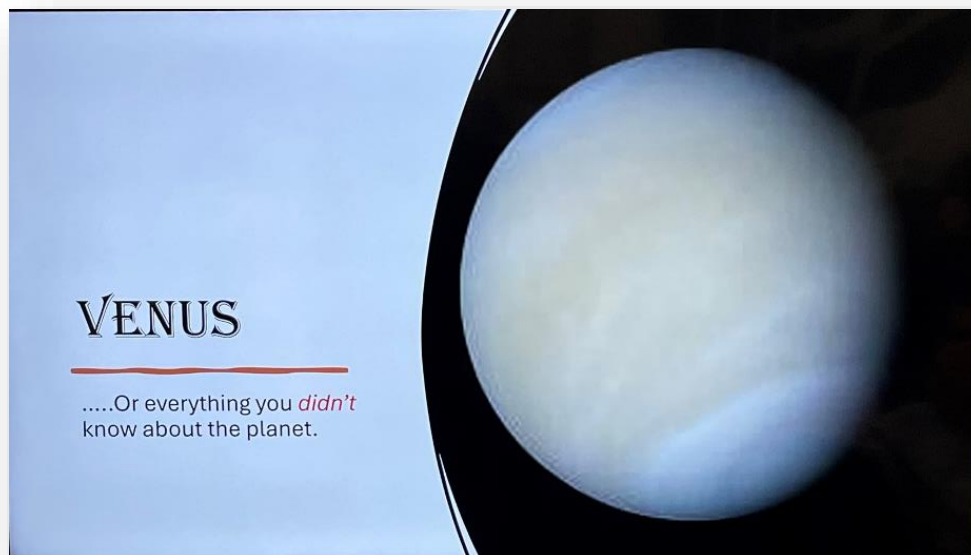
DES MOINES ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY 2025 SUMMER PICNIC!







After our annual picnic, DMAS member JR Paulson provided a wonderful classroom program on the fascinating planet Venus.



DES MOINES ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
PLEASE WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS!

January – Chris Conmy
January – John Moreland
February – Cindy Cunningham
February – Peter Steier
February – Teddy Collis (Associate)
April – Doug Duval
May – Kyle Wright
June – David Olsgaard
June – Katie Price
July – Chris Bailey
July – John Hawkinson

Drake Observatory Summer 2025 Lecture Series Schedule

Visitors can expect an Astronomy lesson followed by stargazing with expert guidance. **Lectures begin at 9:30 PM**, regardless of weather. **Sky Viewing begins at dark if sky conditions are favorable.** Children 15 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. **Admission is free and open to all!**

Please note that public events in the summer start at 9:30 PM, with the gates opening at 9:00 PM



North Central Region Astronomical League (NCRAL) 2026 Conference in Cedar Rapids!

Cedar Amateur Astronomers Announce “Mission Possible”, NCRAL’s Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference for 2026.

Cedar Amateur Astronomers are actively planning the 2026 Eastern Iowa Cosmic Conference Mission Possible, which will be held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The date and venue are already set for **May 15-17** at the DoubleTree by Hilton. The format will be similar to previous conferences but with some exciting changes. We’ve heard your requests to add round tables, workshops, or panel discussions to enhance the overall experience. Challenge accepted.

Plans include exciting new speakers and topics, fun surprises, and social activities. We are working with local businesses to provide options for those who want to bring spouses or family. The weekend will kick off Friday night at the Eastern Iowa Observatory and Learning Center with food, talks, tours of interactive displays and exhibits, and, of course, observing through an exciting array of research-grade equipment.



Saturday will be filled with groundbreaking speakers, the business meeting, awards banquet, astro-photography contest, door prizes, and some social activities mixed in. We are also working on several astro-themed destinations for early arrivers on Friday or before you hit the road on Sunday. **Mark your calendar for May 15 - 17, 2026**, and look for updates in upcoming issues of the NCRAL Blotter. CAA is kicking it up a notch, so you won’t want to miss this one.

[This Month in DMAS History](#)

From the StarLight Journal 25 Years Ago, August 2000

Date: Fri, 28 Jul 2000 04:01:11 -0500

From: "Tom Bailey"

It is 3:55 am and I'm just getting ready to leave for Canada. I walked out my door to carry some things to the truck and I noticed a distinct spike of light to the northeast. I stood there and watched it for a while and realized it was moving and changing intensity. I then stepped behind a tree to block the light from streetlights and saw a beautiful auroral display. I hope this is a sign of things to come this coming week while I'm up north. I'm loaded up on Fuji 800 just in case. I'll post some aurora shots when I get back if I'm lucky enough to get any.

From the StarLight Journal 10 Years Ago, August 2015

A NEW DOME IN OUR FRONT VIEWING FIELD

Norm Van Klompenburg noticed an ad for a used SkyShed, a small movable observatory capable of housing our 14 inch SCT scope currently being stored at Ashton. It was for sale from an Ankeny resident. Norm and Greg looked at the SkyShed and saw that it was in good condition. A favorable deal was negotiated, and the matter was discussed by DMAS members attending the annual picnic at Ashton July 11. A vote was taken approving the expenditure of \$600 for purchase. The seller delivered the SkyShed on Friday July 17, and helped Norm and Greg to assemble it. The new dome is located over one of the existing piers in the front yard. Plans are to install the SCT scope once a larger concrete slab is created around the pier. **It is expected that use of the dome and scope will be for members only, and not for public visitors, because the dome can only hold two or three people at a time.** Thanks to Norm and Greg and DMAS for this new tool to observe the stars.



Nebraska Star Party Puts on a Show!

Some awesome lighting photos taken last night (7/20/25) around 10:30 pm at the Merritt Reservoir, south of Valentine, Nebraska. There were some severe thunderstorms to our north at the time, including a tornado warning; thank goodness that the tornado moved east of here. The skies cleared up afterwards and some got to use their scopes. The winds kept up all night too.

-L.Allen Beers

2025 IOWA STAR PARTY October 16 -19

Whiterock Conservancy - Coon Rapids, IA

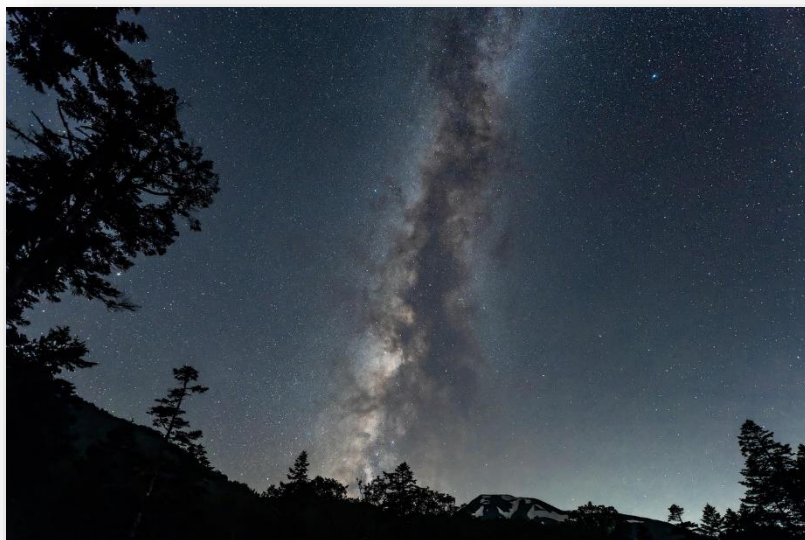
The 2025 Iowa Star Party will be held October 16th to October 19th at the Whiterock Conservancy in Coon Rapids. (About 1 ¼ hours west of Des Moines).

Whiterock Conservancy is blessed with some of the darkest skies in Iowa because of its location away from city lights. It is a great place for amateur astronomers in the Midwest to set up their telescopes and enjoy the night skies. It is also a fun place for recreation. Daytime activities available include canoeing, hiking, and birdwatching. Registration for the Iowa Star Party is available now. You may complete the following form and use PayPal to complete the process, or simply print and mail the form:

You can register at: www.iowastarparty/ispreregistration.php

Public Night - Saturday, October 18th at 5:30 PM

Participants in the Iowa Star Party don't want to keep the wonders of the night sky to themselves. They are also excited about sharing them with the public.



There will be **free public viewing on Saturday, October 18th** starting at 5:30 PM at the Whiterock

Conservancy Star Field. Sun sets at about 6:00 PM. Civil Twilight ends at 6:30 PM, and Astronomical Twilight ends at 7:30 PM. After a short introduction to the night sky, members of the public are welcome to look through various telescopes. If the weather is clear, visitors will have the chance to see galaxies, nebulae and stars millions of light years away, as well as

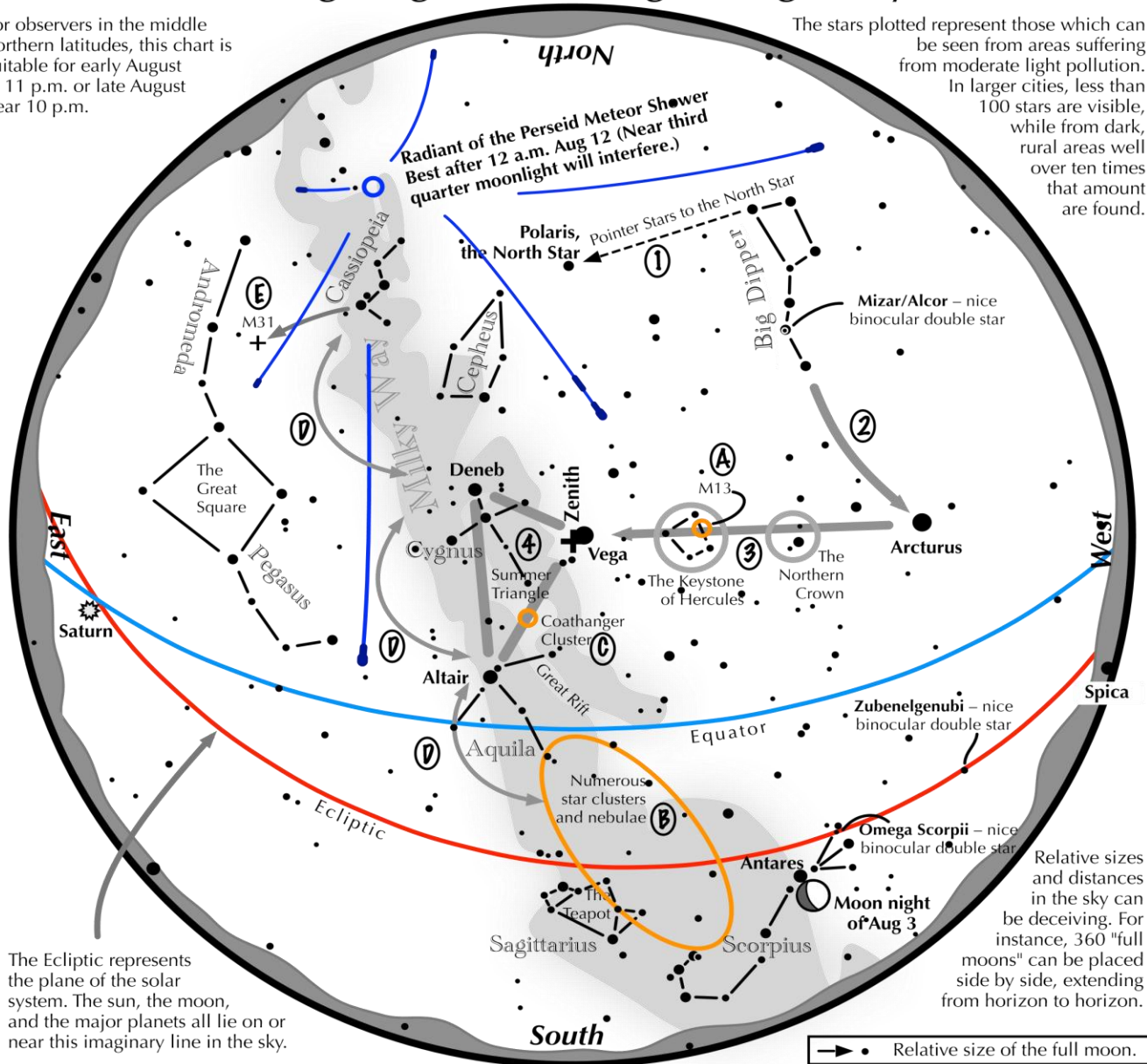
some of the planets in our cosmic

backyard, the Solar System. All ages are welcome, and appropriate attire for the weather, as well as a blanket, are recommended. If weather is cool, participants should dress more warmly than they might think is needed, in order to maintain comfort

Navigating the mid August Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early August at 11 p.m. or late August 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.



Navigating the mid August 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 June 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 High in the East lies the summer triangle stars of Vega, Altair, and Deneb.

Binocular Highlights

- A: On the western side of the Keystone glows the Great Hercules Cluster.
- B: Between the bright stars 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, including the Great Rift.
- E: The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval.

Astronomical League www.astroleague.org/outreach; duplication is allowed and encouraged for all free distribution.





Our 2025 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 that 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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