

Event Horizon

ENCOURAGE. EXPLORE. DISCUSS

June 2026

Suncoast Stargazers

<https://suncoaststargazers.com/>



Image By Chris Schementi

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I'd like to remind all members that on the 4th Wednesday of every month we do offer a zoom presentation. We cover club business and then turn it over to interesting speakers covering a wide variety of topics. I send this reminder for two reasons. First, based on the recent attendance, many members have perhaps forgotten about this member benefit. Next, we are always looking for interesting speakers so if you would like to give a talk, or know anyone who might want to give a talk, please let me know at edmcsky@gmail.com.

Vice President Ed McDonough



On the Cover

The Pinwheel Galaxy aka M101. Takahashi FSQ-85, ZWO533M, Astronomik HaLRGB, processed in Pixinsight

I took this I'm my backyard, and integration is as follows:

7.5 hours Luminance

3.75 hours R, G, and B

3.75 hours of Ha

Total 22.5 hours

Chris Schementi

2025/2026 Season Reflections

As the 2025/2026 observing season winds down I thought it might be nice to do a recap. The Suncoast Stargazers used no fewer than four venues for our public events and of course our Dark Site for members only.

Robinson Preserve – This is what I affectionately refer to as our home field. We had nine events scheduled and I believe eight were held with one canceled due to weather. The average attendance here was 125 – 150. Our partnership with Manatee County and Aedan Stockdale is very special and goes back many years. We were also graciously permitted to use the Robinson Preserve NEST facility for our first and what will be our annual Suncoast Stargazer picnic.



Robinson Preserve

The Bay Common Ground Sarasota – We are invited here three times each observing season – October, January, and April. The skyglow is challenging and parking for our members is hit and miss, but Frances Bermudez (and her trusty golf cart) from the Bay does everything she can to keep us happy. It is a spectacularly picturesque venue. We get big crowds, easily averaging 225 – 250 each time.



The Bay Common Ground Sarasota

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Myakka State Park – These are our “dark sky” public events done in conjunction with The Friends of Myakka River organization and are scheduled every November and February. This past season, February was clouded out but November was spectacular. The Friends of Myakka River cap attendance at these events to 200. It is very peaceful and scenic there and the skies are nice and (relatively) dark, perfect for deep sky observing.



Myakka River State Park

Greenbrook Park, Lakewood Ranch – This was a special request, and we were able to work it in. Organized by the Lakewood Ranch HOA, attendance was expected to be less than 25 but a whopping 70 people attended! As we have come to find out over the years, stargazing is fun and extremely popular. I expect that we will be invited again next season.



Greenbrook Park @ Lakewood Ranch

Five Questions With...

Barry Halpern

To all of you Stargazers out there, I've written some thoughts about how this nerdy introvert was inspired by a few key moments in his life to develop a 60+ year passion for the simple act of "looking up" each and every time he steps outdoors.

I was born and raised in the Boston area, an only child, with access to some wonderful science resources through the Museum of Science which contained one of the first and best planetariums in the USA: the Charles Hayden Planetarium (opened in 1958). I was fortunate at a young age (about 10 years old) to have a one-on-one visit with the Planetarium's Director at the time, who inspired me to keep following my natural interests. Combine that with some great elementary, middle and high school math and science teachers, plus an incredibly supportive mother (we lost my father when I was very young), I was able to pursue and develop many of my own interests.

My first telescope was purchased because of the monthly ads in *Sky & Telescope* for a scope that I had thought was out of my price range (it cost just under \$200 for a six-inch reflector). Thanks to after school jobs, and some financial assistance from my mother, I was eventually able to purchase the scope when I was 15 years old.

Well! Back then there were no "go to" features. An equatorial mount was supposed to help you find what you were looking for, along with the use of giant-sized star atlases. Every time your target object finally showed up in the eyepiece, you felt a sense of achievement! You can imagine my first time out in the backyard, finally getting Saturn in the center of my eyepiece and seeing the rings! That was my first major "WOW" moment looking through a telescope, and the memory of that moment has stayed with me through the years. I had joined the American Association of Variable Star Observers ("AAVSO", now at www.aavso.org) and received a commenda-

tion for being their then youngest and active "observer"; as a volunteer "observer", we'd seek out some target variables, record our observations on their form, and mail it in to them. Imagine how differently this sort of thing works nowadays!

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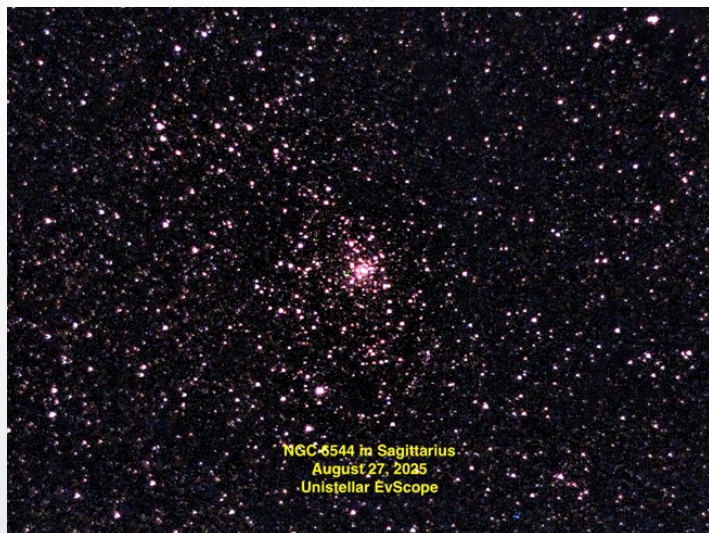
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While I never went into astronomy as a career (though in college I majored in astrophysics for a year before moving on to mathematics as a major, and becoming an actuary as a career choice), I've always maintained my interests, and have always had a telescope with me wherever I happened to live at the time. And for a kid who hated change and hated to move around, in my 50+ years of marriage, we have relocated 26 times, both within and outside of the United States.

While living in our home in the hills in Boulder, Colorado, we had a domed observatory for my 9.25" Celestron scope. I could go out there any time there was a cloudless sky and pursue my lifelong passion while seeking out new sights.

Continued on Page 6 Five Questions with

Nowadays my “goto” scope (pun intended) is one of the original Unistellar digital scopes. And I still go “wow” every time I see a star field such as the one below (out of the scope; no editing). I don’t have to carry heavy equipment, I don’t have to spend more than a few minutes to set up, and I’m ready to explore the universe.



Q1. What first inspired your interest in astronomy and the cosmos? Q2. Who inspired you to follow your dreams?

Both answers. When I was growing up, I developed an early interest in comic books (Superman of course), "sci fi" and space travel type stuff. My early favorite authors were Jules Verne and HG Wells. Importantly for me, in addition to the fictional reading I would do, I also was interested in non-fiction. One of the first “scient” books that I recall reading was *"Intelligent Life in the Universe"* by Shklovski and Sagan (yes, that Carl Sagan), published in 1966 and I was not quite in high school at the time. That book blew me away - easy to read and full of ideas that further the passion in me that has continued to this day! In fact, I still have my copy of that book on my bookshelf. Sagan continued to inspire with the original Cosmos television series, his novel (later a movie) “Contact”, and the “Pale Blue Dot” (book, YouTube video). If you readers aren’t familiar with any of those items mentioned, do yourself a favor and look them up!

Q3. Do you believe in life in our galaxy or on other planets? Q4. Will we ever find definitive evidence of intelligent extraterrestrial life?

My answer has always been “yes” to both questions, and my confidence has grown through the years. I’ll never move away from my grounding in all things scientific, which I believe has convinced me that the odds in favor of there being something “more” out there are simply insurmountable. My only caveat is that while I do believe we will eventually find conclusive evidence of life, it will take quite a bit of time to do so.

It was more than 30 years ago when the discovery of the first exoplanet was confirmed. That was quite a feat if you consider that several hundreds of years ago, most people thought that humanity was limited to a relatively small area on earth. The thought of other planets being “out there” was limited to a very few dreamers with incredible vision. Only 30 years after that first confirmation, we’ve now confirmed thousands of them. So now, when we raise our heads towards the night sky, we can be pretty certain we’re looking at one or more stars with planets around them. How many of those planets will have some type of life? I’m guessing it will take a while – a long while – but I’m truly convinced we’ll get to that point.

Q5. What do you think about when you look at the clear starry night sky?

From the beginning of my own time looking up at the night sky, I’ve always been amazed at how every person on earth possesses the ability to look backwards in time. Did you even realize that there are now eight billion people on our planet? When I was born, there were only 2.5 billion people – when I think about this population growth, it makes me feel pretty small. About as small as we all should feel when we remind ourselves how relatively insignificant a role in the universe that we may have. I say “may” have because despite my overwhelming confidence that we will find life elsewhere, the possibility remains that we won’t, and that we are as “unique” as we feel right now.

Bonus question. When you think of the universe or look at the stars do you feel the presence of a higher power or creator?

Yes I do, because there's nothing we know of or could imagine that could create something so spectacular. Human beings throughout the ages

have had experiences through our senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) many times when we (the global “we”) just can’t imagine what could have created that experience for us. One example: within the past eight years, I’ve had the good fortune to view two total solar eclipses. Of course, both of them created “wow” moments for me and those sharing the experience with me. But watching that black hole in the daytime sky also did something that even viewing Saturn’s rings for the first time couldn’t match: they brought tears to my eyes along with shouts of joy. And if you think about what “coincidences” of nature had to happen for us to be able to experience such an event (relative size of the earth and moon, just the right gravitational lineup, all of those clouds getting out of the way just in time, etc.) then you have to wonder how that was all possible and what might have enabled it to happen.

To help explain such experiences, humans have attributed them to “a” or “the” god or gods, to magic, to another dimension, or something that is currently unexplainable by science. Over the centuries, though, as we’ve learned more and more about the world and the universe, we’ve found more and more scientific explanations.

So, for me, I’m more comfortable saying that the universe and all it manifests is due to science rather than some unknowable creator.

But I’m going to keep “looking up” every chance I get and will continually feel humbled by our pale blue dot’s presence in this universe of ours.

By Timothy Milligan
Editor

[Continued from Page 4 2025-2026 Season Reflections](#)

Dark Sky Site – Not to be forgotten, we also have Andy’s Dark Sky Site for members only. Though available 4 nights a month, for both weather and logistical reasons we always seem to utilize it once a month on either last quarter or new moon Saturdays. This is where our imagers do much of their work, but it is wonderful for visual use too. The slower pace makes for wonderful chit chat and comradery among the members who attend. And if I may editorialize, more members should take advantage of the Bortle 4 skies here.



Dark Sky Site

And so now we plan for the 2026/2027 observing season. The tentative dates and venues can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. We start again on July 18th with our annual Summer Doldrums event at the NEST at Robinson Preserve featuring H Alpha solar observing. The Suncoast Stargazers look forward to yet another exciting season.

By Ed McDonough

Astronomy Terminology

ADC - *Atmospheric Dispersion Corrector*

An optical element that reduces color fringing caused by the atmosphere, especially near the horizon.

AF - *Auto Focus*

Autofocus system used in lenses or cameras. Often not used in astrophotography due to manual focus precision.

Alt - *Altitude*

Angle of an object above the horizon.

Alt/Az - *Altitude/Azimuth Mount*

A type of mount that moves up/down (altitude) and left/right (azimuth). Easy to use but not ideal for long exposures due to field rotation.

APO - *Apochromatic Refractor*

A telescope design that minimizes chromatic aberration using special lens elements.

APS-C - *Advanced Photo System - Type C*

A common crop sensor size used in many DSLR and mirrorless cameras.

Az - *Azimuth*

Angle of an object along the horizon, measured from north.

BIAS FRAMER - A bias frame captures the inherent, fixed readout noise and electronic offset of your camera's sensor, recorded with the shortest possible exposure time (e.g., 1/4000s) and the lens cap on, ensuring no light hits the sensor. These essential calibration frames, taken with the same ISO/gain and temperature as your main "light" frames, isolate the sensor's baseline electronic signal so it can be subtracted from other frames (darks, flats, lights) to improve signal-to-noise ratio in your final images, removing unwanted digital artifacts.

BG - *Background*

Often used to refer to background noise or brightness in an image, especially during post-processing or stacking.

BPM - *Bad Pixel Map*

A file or process that helps identify and correct hot or dead pixels in an image sensor during calibration.

CA - *Chromatic Aberration*

A type of image distortion where colors don't focus at the same point, creating color fringing around bright stars.

CCD - *Charge-Coupled Device*

An older but still respected type of camera sensor known for low noise and high-quality imaging. Often compared with CMOS.

CLS - *City Light Suppression*

A light pollution filter that blocks common artificial light wavelengths to improve contrast under bright skies.

CMOS - *Complementary Metal-Oxide Semiconductor*

The dominant type of modern camera sensor - known for fast readouts and low power use.

DARK FRAME - A calibration image taken with the lens cap on in total darkness, matching the exposure time, temperature, gain, and ISO of your "light" (actual) images to record sensor noise, hot pixels, and amp glow, which are then subtracted from your final photo to improve signal-to-noise ratio and image quality. They capture thermal noise, not photon signals, and are crucial for cleaning up long-exposure images, **especially from CMOS sensors.**

DARK FLAT OR FLAT DARK - A calibration image taken with the lens cap on (no light) but using the *exact same exposure time, ISO/gain, and temper-*

[Continued on Page 9 Basic Astronomy Terminology](#)

ature as your regular flat frames, serving to remove thermal noise and bias from the flats themselves, acting as a "dark frame for your flats" to ensure cleaner optical calibration. They are particularly useful for cooled cameras or longer flat exposures where sensor heat can add unwanted noise that standard dark frames don't fully correct for in flats, making your final image flatter and cleaner.

DARV - *Drift Alignment by Robert Vice*
A manual method for achieving polar alignment by observing star drift while slewing in declination.

DEC - *Declination*
The celestial equivalent of latitude, used in telescope mounts to locate objects in the sky.

DOB - *Dobsonian Telescope*
A type of simple, alt-azimuth mounted Newtonian reflector. Excellent for visual observing, not ideal for long-exposure astrophotography.

DR - *Dynamic Range*
The range between the darkest and brightest signals a camera sensor can capture without losing detail.

DSLR - *Digital Single-Lens Reflex*
A type of camera widely used in beginner astrophotography setups - especially with star trackers.

DSO - *Deep Sky Object*
Includes galaxies, nebulae, and star clusters - targets outside our solar system, usually faint and ideal for long exposures.

DARK - *Dark Frame*
An image taken with the same settings as a light frame, but with the lens cap on - used to subtract sensor noise and hot pixels.

EAA - *Electronically Assisted Astronomy*
Real-time or near-real-time observation using sensitive cameras and screens, rather than direct eyepiece

viewing.

ED - *Extra-Low Dispersion Glass*
A type of optical glass used to reduce chromatic aberration, especially in apochromatic refractors.

EFL - *Effective Focal Length*
Refers to the apparent focal length when accounting for sensor crop factor (e.g., APS-C vs. full frame).

EN - *Emission Nebula*
A cloud of ionized gas emitting its own light, often imaged using narrowband filters like H α .

EP - *Eyepiece*
An optical element used to view the image formed by the telescope. Interchangeable and available in various focal lengths.

EQ - *Equatorial Mount*
A mount aligned with Earth's axis, allowing smooth tracking of celestial objects - essential for long exposures.

EVF - *Electronic Viewfinder*
A digital display simulating an optical viewfinder. Not typically used in astrophotography, but present in some mirrorless cameras.

f/ - *F-Ratio (Aperture Ratio)*
The ratio of a telescope or lens's focal length to its aperture. Lower f/ numbers mean faster systems and shorter exposure times.

FF - *Full Frame*
A camera sensor size equivalent to traditional 35mm film. Offers a wider field of view compared to APS-C or MFT.

FF - *Field Flatteners*
An optical accessory that corrects edge distortion in images, especially when using refractors.

FL - *Focal Length*
The distance from the lens/mirror to the focal plane. Determines magnification and field of view.

FLAT FRAME - A calibration image of a

uniformly lit, even white field, used to correct your actual (light) astronomical images for optical imperfections like dust, vignetting (darker corners), and uneven illumination from filters, creating a smooth, clean background. These "flats" are captured by pointing your telescope at a consistent light source (like a light panel or T-shirt-covered sky) at the same focus, ISO/gain, and orientation as your light frames, effectively creating a map of optical flaws to be mathematically removed during processing.

FOV - *Field of View*

How much of the sky is visible through your setup. Affected by sensor size and focal length.

FPL-53 - *Type of ED Glass*

A high-end extra-low dispersion glass used in apochromatic telescopes to minimize chromatic aberration.

FPN - *Fixed Pattern Noise*

Sensor noise that repeats in a fixed pattern. Often corrected with calibration frames.

FPS - *Frames Per Second*

Important in planetary and lunar imaging where high-speed video is stacked to improve image quality.

FR - *Focal Reducer*

An optical element that shortens focal length (increasing field of view and speed). Common in SCT and refractor setups.

FRAC - *Refractor Telescope*

General shorthand for any refracting telescope (uses lenses, not mirrors). Many are ideal for astrophotography, especially APO models.

GEM - *German Equatorial Mount*

A common equatorial mount design ideal for long-exposure astrophotography. Offers stability and precise tracking.

GT - *GoTo Mount*

Mounts that can automatically point to and track celestial objects via a hand controller or software.

GUIDE - *Guide Camera or Guiding Setup*

Used in long-exposure imaging to correct minor tracking errors. Works with a guide scope or off-axis guider (OAG).

GOTO - *GoTo System*

Another term for GoTo mounts - useful for automated slewing and tracking.

GN - *Guide Number (less common)*

A flash-related term from photography, not typically relevant to astrophotography.

Ha / H α - *Hydrogen Alpha*

A specific deep-red wavelength of light emitted by ionized hydrogen. Commonly captured with narrowband filters when imaging emission nebulae.

by Keith Dennis

The Total Lunar Eclipse Experience

A total lunar eclipse was visible throughout the United States during the early morning hours on Tuesday March 3, 2026. Unfortunately, this was not a prime-time eclipse with the moon entering the penumbra at 3:44am local time (8h 44m UT) from Sarasota Florida. The west coast of the United States was favored since they could view the entire eclipse from beginning to end. On the east coast, totality occurred at 6:04am local time (11h 04m UT) with the moon being very low on the western horizon.

The weather was completely overcast the night before, fortunately the forecast called for clear skies after midnight on March 3rd. I was able to get two hours of sleep before awakening at 1:30am to see that the skies had completely cleared down to the horizon. The temperature was comfortable at 66°F with 87% humidity. I set up my equipment in a fenced area on the side of my house that had a view of the western horizon. My equipment included a Seestar S50 along with an Orion ED80T carbon fiber triplet apochromatic refractor on an Orion Sirius G mount. I took a snapshot of the moon every 5 minutes with the Seestar and a 60 second video with the refractor every 15 minutes. Overall, the Seestar images were equivalent if not better than those taken with a more conventional refractor setup. (See figures 1, 1a, 2, 2a) Just prior to totality, I had to shut down the Seestar S50 and move it to my driveway in the front yard where I had a better view of the western horizon. I was not able to take any totality images with the refractor since the moon was below the fence.

I reside on a barrier island in Sarasota, Florida called Longboat Key. One end of the island on the east faces Sarasota Bay while the other end facing west the Gulf of Mexico. This creates a laminar flow which stabilizes the atmosphere creating overall better seeing conditions than further inland. This is a definite advantage for

planetary imaging since you are at high magnification. This laminar flow is also helpful for wide field astrophotography since fine detail on the surface of the moon and deep sky images are also enhanced. The moon was only 10 degrees above the western horizon when totality occurred from my location. The moon set slowly behind the condominiums facing the beach on the Gulf of Mexico. By this time, the sky was blueish in deep twilight. I took a snapshot every minute until the moon set behind the condominiums. The seeing was rather good considering the very low altitude. I only took one 60 second video which was aligned and stacked in the Seestar S50. (See figure 4) However, the individual snapshots appear closer to the naked eye/binocular view of the eclipse than the aligned and stacked video images. (See figure 3 & 4)

The naked eye and binocular views of totality were incredible! I would give this eclipse a Danjon number of 2. The Danjon scale is a five-point scale useful for measuring the appearance and luminosity of the moon during a total lunar eclipse. It was proposed by Andre-Louis Danjon in 1921. The Danjon scale is usually performed naked eye at mid-totality and given the values L1 to L5. Since I could only witness the beginning of totality, I would give this eclipse a Danjon number of L2. An L2 eclipse is deep red or rust colored with a very dark central shadow, while the outer edge of the umbra is relatively bright. (See Figures 3 & 4)

After the eclipsed moon was no longer visible, I dismantled my equipment and logged in to YouTube to watch live stream videos of totality already in progress. (See Figure 5) I watched live streams from the Griffith Observatory, Yucca Valley in California, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Waimea, Hawaii, Perth, Austral-

[Continued on Page 12 Total Lunar Eclipse Experience](#)

ia and Dunedin, New Zealand until the very end of the eclipse. I really wish I could have witnessed and imagined the entire event. I was only able to image the penumbral, partial and very beginning of totality. At least I was able to image 6 minutes of totality with the Seestar S50. I consider myself fortunate to have had clear skies down to the horizon as well as overall good seeing conditions from my location on the east coast.

My philosophy on Total Lunar & Solar eclipses is that all phases of the eclipse are just as exciting as totality. I typically view and image the penumbra and partial phases as we approach totality then the partial and penumbral phases as we leave totality. I have been fortunate to witness several total solar eclipses and experience the excitement generated during the partial phases as we approach totality. It never ceases to amaze me that after totality most solar eclipse chasers lose interest! Everyone is celebrating totality and people are not looking at the sun while it is still 98% eclipsed! Not me, I am photographing the eclipse right up to fourth contact! The same is true for lunar eclipses, I begin once the moon enters the earth's penumbra and end once the moon leaves the penumbra.

Fortunately, there is another partial lunar eclipse that will occur in the United States on August 27-28, 2026. This eclipse is 96% partial- almost total but not quite. The earthshine should appear spectacular during maximum eclipse. This event is at a more "reasonable time" starting at 9:23pm on August 27, 2026, with maximum eclipse at 12:12am and ending at 3:01am on August 28, 2026 Eastern Time. The Universal Times are 1h 23m, 4h 12m and 7h 01m respectively on

August 28, 2026. Something to look forward to this summer. Unfortunately, August is approaching peak hurricane season in Florida so let's hope for clear skies.

Overall, the March 3rd, 2026, total lunar eclipse from my location was a complete success! I am grateful for the ideal weather, seeing and being able to witness totality naked eye and with binoculars. The advent of electronic assisted astronomy, especially the Smart Scope revolution, gave me a chance to take photographs and images that I can treasure for a lifetime as well as share with the world through the internet.

Below: Moon enters the Penumbra. Image was taken on March 3, 2026 at 3:45am (8h 45m UT) while the moon was 40 degrees above the horizon. Instrumentation included an Ori-



on ED 80T 450mm carbon fiber triplet apo-

chromatic refractor on an Orion Sirius G equatorial mount. A ZWO ASI462 color camera, Orion 0.5x focal reducer, Astronomik L2 UV-IR cut filter with an MSI GF65 laptop computer upgraded to 40GB of RAM were used to acquire the image. The SER video was aligned and stacked with Autostakkert 3.1.4 and Registax 6.0.1.8. Further processing and sharpening in Photoshop CS4.

BELOW: Moon enters the penumbra: Seestar S50 snapshot photograph at 3:44 am local or 8h 44m UT while the moon was 40 degrees above the horizon. Slight processing and sharpening in Photoshop CS4.



RIGHT: Partial Phase begins. Image taken at 4:50am local time or 9h 50 while the moon was 26 degrees above the horizon. Instrumentation included an Orion ED 80T 450mm carbon fiber triplet apochromatic refractor on an Orion Sirius G equatorial mount. A ZWO ASI462 color camera, Orion 0.5x focal reducer, Astronomik L2 UV-IR cut filter with an MSI GF65 laptop computer upgraded to 40GB of RAM were used to acquire the image. The SER video was aligned and stacked with Autostakkert 3.1.4 and Registax 6.1.0.8. Further processing and sharpening in Photoshop CS4.



BELOW: Partial Phase begins at 4:50am (9h 50m UT) while the moon was 26 degrees above the horizon. Slight processing and sharpening in Photoshop CS4.



Right: Totality begins at 6:04am or 11h 04m UT while the moon was only 10 degrees above the horizon. Note the eclipse is rust colored with a very dark central shadow while the outer edge of the umbra remains bright. This is a Danjon value of L2. Slight processing & sharpening in Photoshop CS4.

[Continued on Page 15 Total Lunar Experience](#)

BELOW: A 60 second AVI video was taken then aligned and stacked using software internal to the Seestar. The video was taken at 6:09am (11h 09m UT) while the moon was only 9 degrees above the horizon. Slight processing & sharpening in Photoshop CS4. Note that Figure 3 is more representative of the naked eye/binocular view of totality.

[LIVE Total Lunar Eclipse \(Blood Moon\) March 3, 2026](#)

[TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE | MARCH 3, 2026 | GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY](#)

[LIVE: Total Lunar Eclipse \(Blood Moon\) - March 2-3, 2026](#)

References:

Time and Date. Com [Total Lunar Eclipse on March 2-3, 2026 – Where and When to See](#)

Time and Date.com [Partial Lunar Eclipse on August 27-28, 2026 – Where and When to See](#)

Danjon Scale: [NASA - Danjon Scale of Lunar Eclipse Brightness](#)

Danjon Scale: [Danjon scale - Wikipedia](#)



By Gregory T. Shanos

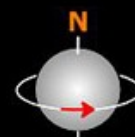
Jupiter
February 27, 2026
Shadow Transit Europa

Gregory T. Shanos Sarasota, Florida USA
Meade LX200GPS 250mm fl 2500mm f/10
ZWO ASI 662MC one-shot color camera
Vernonscope 1.25x Barlow Derotated 9 min

Magnitude: -2.5
Diameter: 42.8"
Phase: 99.4%
Altitude: 75°
Seeing: 7/10 Above Ave
Transparency: 7/10 Clear



01h 04.0m UT
Astronomik L2 UV/IR cut filter
CMI: 254.2° CMII: 57.0° CMIII: 319.9°



by Gregory T. Shanos



We have a **WINNER!**



Congratulations to Patti Norton of Bradenton
Winner of the Explorer Scientific FCD100 Telescope!



Jim Augustine, the donor, presents Patti with her
new telescope and gives her a few tips. Congrats,
Patti!!



Turn the Page! There is more!

We have 2 more Orphans looking for a Home



One of our FB followers, Paul Stanley has graciously donated this Orion SkyQuest XT8 Plus, Dobsonian Telescope to the club. As before, we will open this up for a drawing to our membership

It comes with 3 eyepieces, (2"/ 28mm , 1.25"/ 10mm & 1.25" shorty" Barlow 2X), a white light solar filter, instruction manual, a focuser and fine and coarse tuning knobs.

and not to be outdone, a second FB follower, Steve Barbagallo of Sarasota has donated this **Celestron G8 Model #11023**

This telescope comes with: 8" (203mm) Aperture – Schmidt-Cassegrain Design, Focal Length of 2032mm, 1 1/4" 25mm SMA Eyepiece, 1 1/4" Star Diagonal & Visual Back, 6x30 Finderscope, CG-5 EQ Mount and Tripod

This drawing is for new members who don't have a telescope. Email your name, address and phone number to: suncoaststargazers@gmail.com. You will be given a ticket number by return email. The drawing will be held July 1st. We will draw 2 winners from the same participants. The first drawing will be for the Orion SkyQuest XT8 Plus. The second drawing will be for the Celestron. Both winners will be notified by email and the winners will be announced in the September issue. Good Luck !!!

Artemis II Mission

On April 6th, 2026, Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover Jr., Christina Koch, and Jeremy Hansen traveled the farthest any humans have ever been from the planet Earth. The astronauts of the Artemis II mission soared to the dark side of our moon and back, and although they did not land on the lunar surface, they returned from their journey with invaluable knowledge for the future of human space travel.



Artemis II was a ten-day mission, launching April 1st and splashing back down to Earth on April 10th. In these few short days, the Orion spacecraft looped around our planet before sailing to the moon, catching it in its orbit before returning back home, all while running tests on equipment, making scientific observations, and communicating these findings with Houston. Not only did the Artemis astronauts research lunar geography on the far side of our moon, they were also involved in several groundbreaking studies on the effects of deep space travel on the human body. New technologies carried on the Orion spacecraft analyzed the effects of radiation and microgravity on things such as the immune system and sleep to better equip NASA to mitigate these issues on further crewed missions to the moon and even to Mars.

Our rocky red neighbor has always been a source of fascination to us here on Earth. From ‘War of the Worlds’ to ‘Loony

Toons”, the possibility of extraterrestrial life so nearby has proved endlessly exciting, and scientists spent years theorizing and even mapping out possible canals to prove the existence of life on Mars. Although none of this research has turned up proof of sentient life like many had hoped, exciting discoveries by the Mars Rovers of potential biosignatures in Martian canyons tells scientists that more information and even solid proof of microbial life might be uncovered through hands-on exploration.

Stepping foot on another planet certainly seems like a lofty goal, but this bold promise is the thing that draws people in. People want so badly to believe the fantastical is possible, and for the first time in many people's memory, space truly is becoming a tangible frontier. Science fiction rapidly becomes science fact through the efforts of scientists and astronauts like those involved with the Artemis mission, and now, a future in space seems more possible than ever. With every achievement of the Artemis mission, travel to Mars seemed more and more reasonable, and this excitement for the future of space exploration was fueled by the overwhelming elation in the present, pouring out in every minute-to-minute update we received from NASA and the crew.

These rapid-fire updates came from the internet, of course. Where else? Not only were livestreams and photos available through official NASA accounts, but the general public proliferated these images through their own social media, circulating the news as it came.



Continued on Page 20 *Artemis*

Such constant updates are not necessarily anything new; when humanity first landed on the Moon with the Apollo XI mission, American news anchor Walter Cronkite was on air with updates for nearly 30 hours, broadcasting live on CBS News. Artemis II simply took this to the next level, with every major milestone of the mission being livestreamed and watchable by phone or tablet or television. Any person at any time could tune in and see what the four furthest humans from home were studying right at that moment, and of course people were captivated. Not only was so much groundbreaking science being unraveled in front of their eyes, but beautiful photographs and videos kept coming back to remind everyone just how awe inspiring the universe around us can truly be.

Thousands of photos from the mission have been made publicly available by NASA, cataloguing the incredible sights from this historic trip. Yet among all of these striking, professional quality photographs taken by the crew of views never before seen by human eyes, there are also simpler photos, taken on cell phones with shaky hands. They're blurry, sometimes out of focus, or showing dust catching light through the windows and "dirtying" the view. But somehow, these images seem to touch people the most. There is something so real and achingly human in these photos, as though sent in passing by a good friend, that makes people feel so connected to this big universe we all find ourselves in.

One of the most resonant things streamed back to earth from the spacecraft was the crew's sheer awe at everything they witnessed. Not only were their observations furthering scientific inquiry, they were so staggeringly beautiful that the crew disrupted their inflexible schedule to experience the view for just a while longer. They coined the term "moon joy" to describe this wonder, and despite how far apart we were, that same

overwhelming awe was felt here on Earth, too, amplified by every video and photograph sent back.

Watching the streams and photos flood in truly was a feeling like no other. Millions of viewers all at once (10 million at its peak), chiming off in the chat with well wishes from across the world. Within the myopic view of our own lives, it gets easy to forget just how many people we share our Earth with, but looking down on our planet through these streams, everyone seeing the same home in this pale blue dot, is an incredibly moving reminder that we are not alone. Mission pilot Victor Glover Jr., from his vantage point near our moon, put it best; "In all of this emptiness...you have this oasis, this beautiful place that we get to exist together. We've gotta get through this together."



With the resounding success of Artemis II, space fervor is at an all-time high. Even those who may never have cared about the goings on at NASA watched rapt as updates flowed in, swept up in the excitement over humanity's return to our satellite companion. Even now, space holds the attention of the public, eagerly awaiting updates on the research from Artemis or future projects. As always, there is debate over whether it is reasonable to funnel money into space travel when there are so many issues on Earth that need to be addressed, not to mention the cost

of emissions. It seems to some that the goal is for those with the means to abandon Earth and leave behind the consequences of humanity, and this makes it very hard for many to feel the same connectedness and joy espoused by space enthusiasts right now. I think it very important to not only keep these very real reservations in mind when we look towards a future in the stars, but also to focus on what space research *can* do to help us here on Earth.

Even if (or when!) we one day reach Mars, this little blue ball will still be our home, and we need to remember to treat it as such. NASA's work is not focused solely on the possibility of deep space travel, but also researching our own planet to monitor its health and see what we can do to maintain it. It is no small feat to maintain an entire world, but with Victor Glover's words in mind, I'd like to hope that maybe people really are willing to put in the work for the home we love if we do it together.

The Artemis II mission was an incredible feat of science and teamwork that has drawn attention all across the world. The stage is set for a bold new phase of exploration, and with a larger audience than ever before, the world seems ready to see what the future holds, knowing that we are all an inextricable part of it.



By Kaya Lewis

If telescopes could talk

A short story from a 40 year old Celestron refractor....

I was born in Torrance California. Shortly afterwards I was sent to Oceanside CA where I was sold to a man who seemed very happy with me.

The man brought me home and his family was excited they called him Dad. Well Dad set me up in the living room right where everyone could see me, he was very proud of me. I remember he would stand there looking at me with a smile and run his hand down my tube.

He told the kids don't touch my telescope and the Mom asked why don't you just put it in the closet, I didn't know what that was but Dad just let me stay in the living room.

On clear nights Dad would always carefully pick me up with one hand holding my legs and take me outside in the backyard. We saw many things together including the Moon, Jupiter and Saturn we looked at the moon a lot because it was easy to find. We always had fun.

After a few months Dad brought the kids out with us. We showed them the moon they were so excited when Dad told them that's where the astronauts landed on the moon. We also saw some double stars, Jupiter, Saturn and even the Orion Nebula. Dad brought me out whenever he could and the kids always wanted to look through me. But the older kid Bobby really likes me and we look at a lot of different things in the sky.

After a few years went by, I'm still setup in the living room and we don't go outside as much and Dad sometimes forgets to dust me off and Mom will sometimes hang her cloths on me to dry but she is careful not to hurt me.

A few more years later, I don't see the kids too much anymore, sports and school and Bobby is going away to college. Mom and Dad decided to remodel the house so Dad took off my legs, wrapped a blanket around me and put me in a dark place. This must be a closet.

I'm not sure how long it's been but someone is moving me, wait they are taking the blanket off and I see light. Who is this man, he must be nice

he's smiling and he's touching me like Dad did. I think I know you but I'm not sure. Then I see two kids I don't know them but this man is calling the boy Bobby. The man is putting my legs back on and I hear him say "I'm going to put you in the living room." But wait, this is a different living room where's Dad and Mom?

I can hear the man telling the two kids how their grandfather showed him the moon and Jupiter and Saturn with this telescope. I feel at home but different.

Later that day there's someone at the door and the man greets them hi Mom hi Dad. Wait, Mom & Dad, is this maybe my Dad & Mom, they look different. The man brings them over to me and says here she is. Then his Dad smiles and runs his hand down my tube, OMG that's my Dad and the man is Bobby and the two kids are his kids and I'm with my family again.

So that night was clear and the kids were excited about looking at the moon. Dad said I'll carry her out and with one hand holding my legs picked me up once more and carried me outside into the backyard. We had a wonderful time, Life is good.

By Jim Mack

A Readily Visible Morning Comet for April 2026

A brightening new comet designated C/2025 R3 (PANSTARRS) was visible low in the morning sky in the Great Square of Pegasus during the month of April 2026. The name is derived from the PAN-ORamic SURvey TElescope and Rapid Response System located at Haleakala Observatory in Hawaii. This facility consists of astronomical cameras, telescopes and computers that continuously survey the sky for moving or variable objects such as asteroids and comets. The comet was discovered on September 8, 2025 having originated from the Oort Cloud with an orbital period of 170,000 years. (See references 1 & 2) Comet C/2025 R3 (PANSTARRS) is expected to reach perihelion on April 19, 2026 at a distance of 0.5 AU from the sun. The comets closest approach to earth will occur on April 27, 2026, with its brightness expected to reach naked eye visibility at magnitude +2 to +3. After April 28th the comet will disappear into the sun's glare only to re-emerge in the evening sky in May 2026. Comet C/2005 R3 PANSTARRS will appear in the constellation of Eridanus and rise higher in the sky on each successive evening as it approaches the region below the belt of Orion. The comet will be fading at this point; however, imaging is still recommended to follow the comet through its journey in the solar system. Unfortunately, the comet will continue to remain low in the sky for the Northern Hemisphere.

After having seen various images of the comet taken by amateur astronomers on the Internet and on Facebook, I decided to attempt an observation. I woke up at 5:30am local time and set up my recently acquired Seestar S30 Pro on the driveway of my front yard. The light pollution was horrific with a streetlamp to my right and my neighbors' lights to my left. (See Photo 1) In addition, there was a wanning 29% phase moon in nearby Capricornus which did not help the situation. Fortunately, the sky was clear down to the horizon. The comet was conveniently situated within the Great Square of Pegasus. (See Figure 1) The four stars of the square are Alpheratz (α -And) at magnitude +2.1, Markab (α -Peg) at magnitude +2.5, Scheat (β -Peg) magnitude +2.4 and Algenib (γ -Peg) at magnitude +2.8. None of these naked eye stars were visible due to light pollution at this low altitude above the horizon from my location!

The Seestar S30 Pro has a wide field of view of 2.24 x 3.99 degrees. I had the smart telescope mounted in equatorial mode and began the setup procedure. Each software/firmware update of the Seestar includes a database of the most current comets that are visible in the sky. I tapped on the C/2025 R3 (PANSTARRS) icon, and the telescope slewed to the comet. To my amazement- the nucleus was perfectly centered in the field of view! Given the horrific light pollution, the Seestar S30 Pro easily found the comet, being only 19 degrees above the horizon, on the first attempt. I tweaked the nucleus slightly to the left to allow more of the plasma tail to be seen. (See Images 1, 2 & 3). I took 10 second exposures for a total of 2 to 3 minutes. The comet was at magnitude +4.4 on April 12, 2026 and magnitude +4.9 on April 13, 2026 according to the Comet Observation Database (See references 4 & 5). Note that the nucleus was bright, well condensed with a blueish plasma tail. I was surprised to see so many artificial satellite trails running through the image. The five-minute exposure had eleven visible satellite trails! (See image 1). Notice how many faint background stars were also visible in the field of view. These smart scopes are a "miracle" of technology since they can successfully image faint deep sky images in light polluted skies. Dark sky sites are no longer an absolute necessity for deep sky imaging, only highly recommended. A dust tail was not evident in my image and in other images I have seen on the internet. I attempted to view the comet with 10 x 50 binoculars once I knew where to look. I could not find the comet with binoculars due to light pollution.

In conclusion, I will continue to image Comet PANSTARRS on every clear morning- weather permitting until it is no longer visible. The comet will be lower in the sky during each successive observation as it continues to brighten. I encourage everyone to get out there and attempt to image/photograph this impressive comet and report all your observations to Carl Hergenrother PhD, Comet Section Coordinator at the Association of Lunar & Planetary Observers at comets@alpo-astronomy.org and carl.hergenrother@alpo-astronomy.org Once the comet re-emerges in the evening sky there will be a renewed interest since this would be a convenient "after dinner" comet. Let's hope it stays relatively bright with an impressive tail. Time will tell.

by Gregory T. Shanos

[Continued on Page 24 Visible Comet](#)



Photo 1: iPhone 16 Pro Max photo of my observing site on Longboat Key, Sarasota, Florida on April 12, 2026, at approximately 6 am local time or 10h Universal Time. Note the bright streetlight to my right and my neighbors' lights to the left. The Seestar S30 Pro is seen with an iPad screen glowing nearby. The comet was visible above the middle house with the flat roof across the street. Natural twilight and a wanning 29% moon nearby only added to the man-made artificial light pollution. *Photo by Gregory T. Shanos*

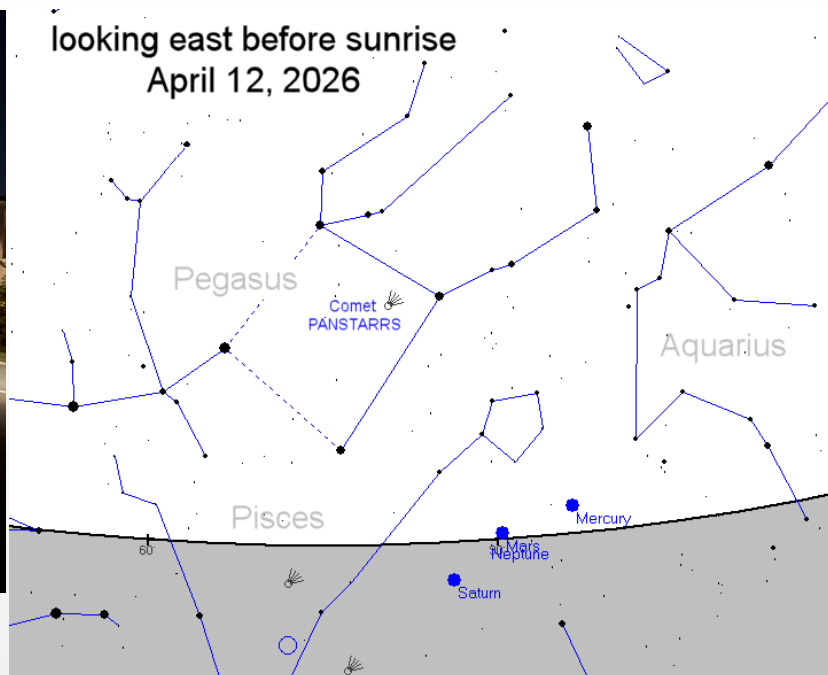


Figure 1: Note how low to the horizon the comet was on April 12, 2026. The comet was near the bright star Markab in the Square of Pegasus. Markab is visible to the naked eye at magnitude +2.5. However, during my imaging session from 6:09am to 6:11am local time (10h 09m to 10h 11m Universal Time), Markab and the comet were only 19 degrees above the horizon. Due to light pollution and the low altitude above the horizon, none of the stars in the Square of Pegasus were visible to the naked eye. Source: SpaceWeather.com



Image 2: My best image of the comet without any artificial satellite trails. Straight out of the Seestar- NO post processing. Taken April 12, 2026, at 6:01am local time or 10h 01m Universal time. The nucleus appeared bright, well condensed with a blueish plasma tail. A dust tail was not evident. Note the faint background stars were readily visible with this smart scope with an aperture of only 30mm. The field of view is $2.24^\circ \times 3.99^\circ$. The comet was only 19 degrees above the horizon when this image was taken. The COBS/Live Sky Website placed this comet at magnitude +4.4 on April 12, 2026.

by Gregory T. Shanos

Image by Greg Shanos

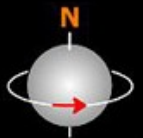
Jupiter- Oval BA
March 10, 2026

Gregory T. Shanos Sarasota, Florida USA
Meade LX200GPS 250mm fl 2500mm f/10
ZWO ASI 662MC one-shot color camera
Vernonscope 1.25x Barlow Derotated 6 min

Magnitude: -2.4
Diameter: 41.4"
Phase: 99.3%
Altitude: 85.5°
Seeing: 7/10 Above Ave
Transparency: 8/10 Clear



01h 23.7m UT
Astronomik L2 UV/IR cut filter
CMI: 202.5° CMII: 281.3° CMIII: 187.1°



by Gregory T. Shanos

Image by Greg Shanos

Jupiter May 9, 2026 Shadow Transit of Europa & Ganymede

Gregory T. Shanos Sarasota, Florida USA
Meade LX200GPS 250mm fl 2500mm f/10
ZWO ASI 462MM monochrome camera
Vernonscope 1.25x Barlow
Derotated 9 minutes in WinJupos

Magnitude: -2.0
Diameter: 34.6"
Phase: 99.9%
Altitude: 47°
Seeing: 5/10 Average
Transparency: 7/10
Light clouds, Hazy, Humid



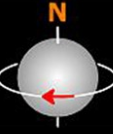
00h 59.4 UT
Baader 685nm R-IR longpass filter
CMI: 291.9° CMII: 273.1° CMIII: 194.9°
Moon above shadow is Europa



by Gregory T. Shanos

Image by Greg Shanos

Phases of Venus by Gregory T. Shanos Longboat Key, Sarasota, Florida



2023-01-07
22h 53.8 m UT
Mag: -3.9 Phase: 95% Dia: 10.5"



2023-04-07
22h 45.4m UT
Mag: -4.1 Phase: 75% Dia: 14.6"



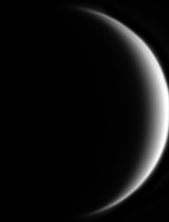
2023-05-29
22h 44.8m UT
Mag: -4.3 Phase: 53% Dia: 22.1"



2023-06-27
00h 27.8m UT
Mag: -4.4 Phase: 35% Dia: 31.5"



2023-07-13
00h 18.5m UT
Mag: -4.5 Phase: 22% Dia: 40.4"



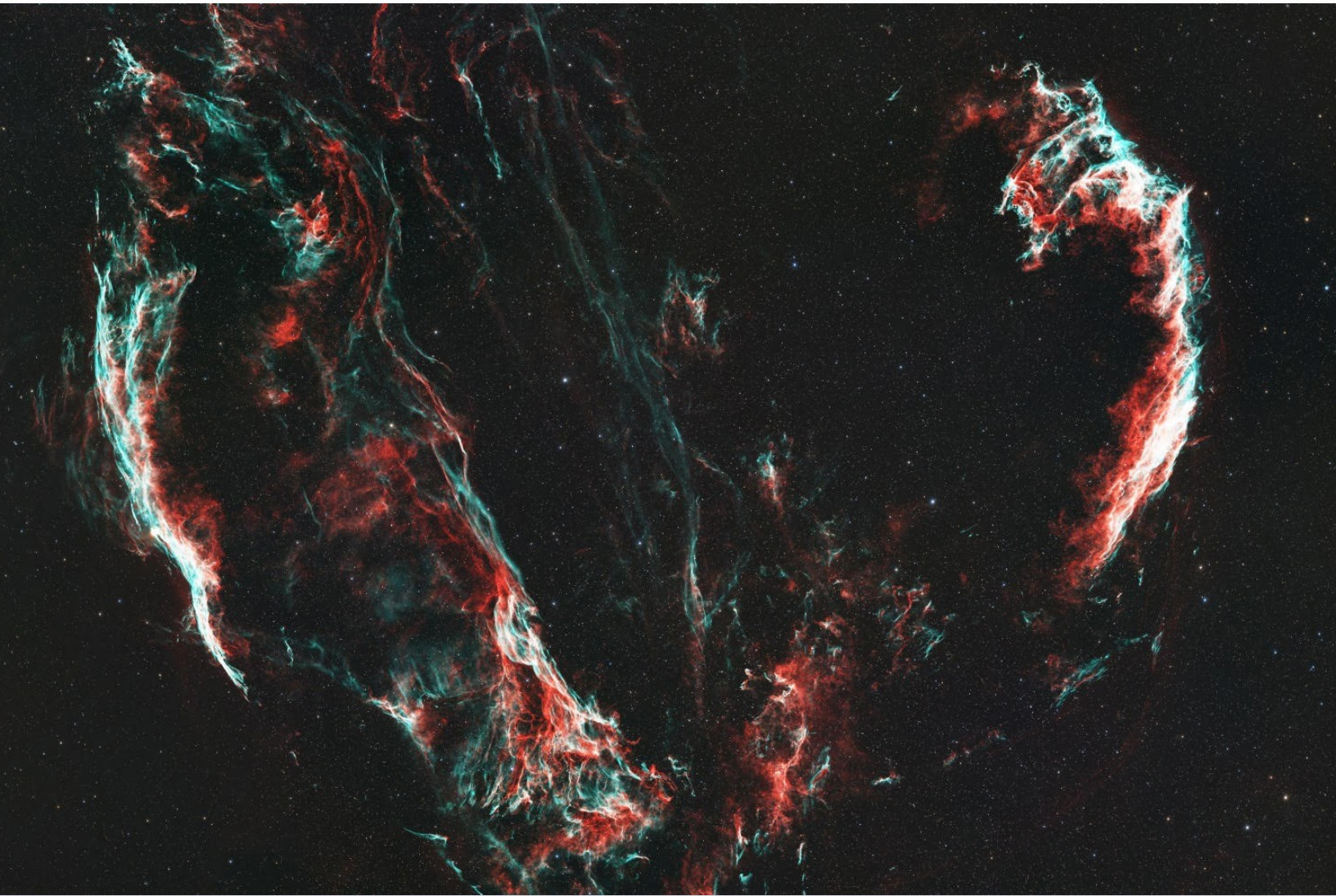
2023-07-22
23h 55.7m UT
Mag: -4.4 Phase: 13% Dia: 47.4"



2023-07-30
23h 26.7m UT
Mag: -4.3 Phase: 6% Dia: 52.9"

Meade LX200 GPS 10-inch SCT 2500mm f/10
ZWO ASI 290MM monochrome camera Prime Focus
Antlia 850nm Infrared longpass filter

Image by Keith Dennis



by Keith Dennis

Images by Scott Smith



Seestair S50 𠂆 NGC 5128
SSmith2112 / 82° W, 27° N / 2026.04.11 23:44 19min



Seestair S50 𠂆 NGC 4038
SSmith2112 / 82° W, 27° N / 2026.04.11 22:52 98min



Linda McKenna and Donna Wright trekked to Colorado in April to observe the splendid dark skies. This was taken in Leadville using an intervalometer set for 71 30 sec shots.



2026/2027 Observing Season

7/18/26 – Robinson Preserve, Summer Doldrums Event, Morning Solar Observing

9/19/26 – Robinson Preserve

10/17/26 – Robinson Preserve

11/7/26 – Myakka State Park, Dark Sky Special with Friends of Myakka River

11/14/26 – Robinson Preserve

12/12/26 – Robinson Preserve

1/16/27 – The Bay Sarasota

1/23/27 – Robinson Preserve, Full Moon Special

2/6/27 – Myakka State Park, Dark Sky Special with Friends of Myakka River

2/13/27 – Robinson Preserve (featuring Mars)

3/13/27 – Robinson Preserve (featuring Mars)

4/10/27 – Robinson Preserve

4/17/27 – The Bay Sarasota

5/15/27 – Robinson Preserve

Bon Voyage Chris Schementi

Suncoast Stargazers is about to lose one of our most valued members: Chris Schementi. Chris and his family are about to move to Raleigh, NC. He will be missed by the Suncoast Stargazers.

Chris has always been there to answer questions from the newbies and give advice to the veterans. His enthusiasm for astronomy shines through his every movement. As an 8th grade teacher, he has the skills to breakdown complex astrological concepts into language 13 year olds could decipher – which some of us are in terms of our astronomy knowledge. He's always been generous with his time and attention.

We have imposed upon Chris at least 3 times to present different topics to our Zoom Meetings. One on telescope focus and collimation – that I followed (mostly), and one on spectroscopy in astronomy that I pretended to follow. Regardless, we appreciate the time and effort he went to on our behalf.

Chris, you will be missed. Don't be a stranger. Please keep attending the Zoom calls and sharing your knowledge with us. Best of luck in Raleigh.



By Donna Wright *President Suncoast Stargazers*

Here are some great gift ideas!



Click on any of the above 3 items to purchase them.

2026/2027 Observing Season

7/18/26 – Robinson Preserve, Summer Doldrums Event, Morning Solar Observing

9/19/26 – Robinson Preserve

10/17/26 – Robinson Preserve

11/7/26 – Myakka State Park, Dark Sky Special with Friends of Myakka River

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12/12/26 – Robinson Preserve

1/16/27 – The Bay Sarasota

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2/6/27 – Myakka State Park, Dark Sky Special with Friends of Myakka River

2/13/27 – Robinson Preserve (featuring Mars)

3/13/27 – Robinson Preserve (featuring Mars)

4/10/27 – Robinson Preserve

4/17/27 – The Bay Sarasota

5/15/27 – Robinson Preserve

A friendly reminder

Suncoast Stargazers has NO ANNUAL DUES! So please do your part to help this 501(c)(3) Private Foundation with a tax deductible contribution. Your help no matter how big or small, goes a LONG ways. Might I even say that it goes Lightyears? You can make your contribution by following this link:

<https://my.cheddarup.com/c/tax-deductible-contribution/items>

The views expressed in each article are those of the individual authors and are shared to encourage exploration and discussion within the Suncoast Stargazers community. While the organization does not officially endorse specific products mentioned, we support our members in sharing their knowledge and experiences. Authors are responsible for the accuracy and content of their contributions.



Who are the Suncoast Stargazers?

We are the Suncoast Stargazers, a very large, active and knowledgeable astronomy group in the Bradenton, Sarasota and Venice area of the Suncoast. We strive to showcase our members community involvement with “open to the public” star parties monthly. Our members also have access to a dark site observing complex, monthly zoom meetings, help with using your equipment, and Astro Imaging guidance. Whether you are new to the hobby, mid-tier, or advanced, you are welcome here. Join us and register as a full benefit member and/or also feel free to follow us on our FB page. Post your questions. Ask for help. Show off your images. It’s all free, no membership fees.

We are also proud affiliate members of the Science and Environment Council of Southwest Florida
<https://www.scienceandenvironment.org/>