

San Diego Astronomy Association

Celebrating Over 50 Years of Astronomical Outreach



March 2025

<https://www.sdaa.org/>

A Non-Profit Educational Association
P.O. Box 23215, San Diego, CA 92193-3215

Next SDAA Business Meeting

March 11th at 7:00pm

Via Zoom

Next Program Meeting

March 19th

Via Zoom

March 19th Program Meeting

Topic: TBD
Speaker: TBD

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Image credit: NASA, ESA, CSA, Kristen McQuinn (STScI)

Image description: A concentration of bright blue stars occupies the bottom right corner of the image. At bottom center within them is a small blue bubble. The stars and bubble are part of a diffuse dwarf galaxy that extends beyond the image border. Background galaxies are scattered across the image, with some particularly prominent spirals located at upper left and upper right. The background of space is black.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline to submit articles
for publication is the
15th of each month.

The meeting will be held via Zoom.

See <https://sdaa.org/program-meeting/>

Link to SDAA Merchandise Store <https://sdaa28.wildapricot.org/SDAA-Store>

Link to Outreach Calendar <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=g-calendar@sdaa.org&ctz=America/Los>



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San Diego Astronomy Association Board of Directors Meeting February 11, 2025 – Unapproved and subject to revision

1. Call to Order

The meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order at 7:04pm with the following board members in attendance: Dave Decker, President; Kin Searcy, Recording Secretary; Gracie Schutze, Director; Drew Koning, Director; Jerry Hilburn, Director; Ross Salinger, Director; and 5 SDAA members. BOD members absent and excused were Bee Pagarigan, Mike Chasin, and David Wood.

2. Approval of Last Meeting Minutes

The January meeting minutes were approved by unanimous resolution.

3. Treasurers & Membership Report

The Treasurer's report was approved by unanimous resolution. SDAA membership is presently 831. Significant transactions: reimbursement for loaner scope repairs, TDS water system repairs, raffle gift card costs. One banquet invoice is pending and there will be a final banquet report next month. The 2025 County Board of Equalization Property Tax Exemption request has been submitted.

A single page financial summary report from the SDAA Foundation was included. Although this meeting was not a foundation meeting, board members desired additional details. **Action Item BOD 02/01:** Mike will setup a meeting with the Foundation financial team to review the Foundation portfolio.

4. Standard Reports. The February standard reports are included as submitted with Board discussion and action in italics.

a. TDS Operations Report for January 2025

Pagarigan/Myers

- Private Pads to be inspected and identified with respective numbers on a date TBD by Private Pad Committee Members.
- Member feedback survey for grid rebuild being considered
- Member request to install red lights for guidance at TDS main gate – work in progress
- TDS Spring Clean-up scheduled for April 26, 2025

b. Lipp Observatory

Rumsey

We continue to have excellent star parties. Number of visitors remains very high. USD Astronomy Professor has inquired about a class star party. Working the specifics and the target date is months out. I will request permission when more details are developed.



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Re: the Lipp, tracking when away from the meridian is less than ideal. Jim Traweek and I will go over the mechanics to correct. Anticipate completion before the next scheduled party on February 22, 2025 – Member Only Night. *Ed expects that the Lipp tracking problem is due to the coupling or a loose clutch.*

c. Loaner Scopes

Krizak

18 loaner items are currently out. 9 loaner items were returned in January; 12 were checked out.

An Orion XT10i (with encoders and push-to handbox) has been donated. It is pending testing and documentation before being added to the loaner fleet.

In tow with the XT10i were some additional goodies:

- An Orion rolling dob platform - not sure what we're going to do with this; it's not really useful for the loaner program. Likely sized for a 10" scope.
- Two Tele Vue DeLite eyepieces (7mm & 18.2mm) - these have been added to the SDAA-059 loaner eyepiece kit
- A 27mm Tele Vue Panoptic eyepiece - this will be added to the SDAA-057 loaner eyepiece kit
- A 21mm Baader Hyperion eyepiece - this has been added to SDAA-054 loaner eyepiece kit where it joins another donated 10mm Baader Hyperion.

A Vixen R130Sf 5" Newtonian mounted on a Vixen Porta II, was donated to the loaner program. The scope is in excellent shape and is now available as SDAA-076. The only modification I plan to make (assuming the shoes are the same size) is to swap the optical finder for a (recently donated) high quality red dot finder.

The MiniTower Pro + 8" SCT kit donated a couple months ago is still pending assembly, testing, and documentation.

d. Storage Facility

All but a handful of the remaining auction items have been picked up by their new owners. The remaining items are in a box not bothering anybody at the moment.

The Starmaster was picked up but replaced with a behemoth 12.5" Newtonian originally built by SDAA's very own Bill Lucas. The scope is unsuitable as a loner, and given the weight and complexity of setting it up on its huge Schaefer mount, it's unclear what we want to do with this telescope going forward. I've made a proposal that it be stripped for parts (primarily the optics) and those parts used to construct an outreach scope (in Dobsonian form) somewhat like the Starmaster. This could be a fun and educational



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project for some motivated SDAA members and based on what Mr. Decker tells me about Bill Lucas, I imagine he would be thrilled to see the mirror he ground being put to good use inspiring the next generation of ATMs.

As noteworthy as the Lucas Newtonian is, I submit that we need to move it out of the storage facility. We're already running low on floor space, even with a dozen items checked out. So we need to be conscientious about only storing items in the Miramar facility that meet one or more of these criteria:

- Loaner equipment and support equipment for maintaining loaners
- Donations that are expected to be loaners
- Outreach equipment (A/V stuff, table settings, office supplies)
- "Project" scopes under active development (not "someday..." projects)
- Short term storage/staging before items are moved to TDS (no more than a month)

e. Private Pads

Smith

1. No change in availability or waiting list since the last report. Nobody wants to commit to a lease with the power situation up in the air.
2. That being said, there seems to be a rumor out there that the Private Pads will be powered while the Public Pads are being worked on. I did get 3 enquiries about leasing a Private Pad while the Public Pads are being worked on. None pursued the issue when they were informed that the Private Pads would not be powered. Note: *See action item BOD 02/03 on grid reconstruction.*

f. SDAA Private Pad Policy Committee

Gracie/Mark/Bill/Bee

Tasks to be completed by Committee

- Website private pad photos, visible to public, need to be updated.
- A photo catalog of the inside of private pad structures to be completed to satisfy annual audit of structures per current lease agreement statement 6 and 10 (photos will not be posted publicly).
- Method to track remote pad owner annual usage.
- Clarification of pad transfer process to ensure waiting list is honored.
- Identify all pads with reflective numbers posted on a permanent rebar stake or similar
- Inspection and evaluation report of all pad areas



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Ongoing tasks completed and in progress

- Continue review/revision of SDAA Private Pad related documents (Lease, Pad Site Development & Regulation, TDS Rules, and Pad Offering Letter).
- Work alongside Private Observatory Committee to harmonize language where feasible.
- Employ terms and language as advised by legal consultation
- All polices are currently under review and revision via Google Workspace by committee members. Goal is to work alongside Private Observatory to finalize.

Board Action

1. Still searching for a new chairperson to replace Pagarigan.

g. SDAA Monthly Programs Report for January 2025

Pagarigan/Searcy/Dorothy Wood

Work in progress

- Program speaker schedule for remainder of year work in progress
- Speaker fee of \$200 permitted on trial basis
- Tap in-house expertise speakers to reduce cost

Tasks Completed

- February speaker scheduled - Steve Murray
- Tentative plans for April in-person meeting, topic IDA, at MTRP (Decker/Searcy POC's). *This event is a partnership between MTRP, IDA, and SDAA and supports MTRP's application for designation as an Urban Dark Sky Place, which SDAA has supported. It will be held on April 24 from 6 to 9:30pm at the MTRP Visitor Center and include a California dark sky movie and star party on the terrace. **Action Item BOD 02/02:** Bee has the option to use this event as the April program meeting and will confirm.*



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h. AISIG

Wood

The AISIG meeting, scheduled for February 26th, will focus on planetary imaging. Several members of the SDAA will be discussing the equipment and processing techniques they employ to capture images of planets.

i. Newsletter

Kuhl

Nothing new to report this month.

j. Website

Stevens

Contacts page has been updated with the new Board and Committee Chairs. Please review. Some of the pictures are pretty old. Please send new pictures for anyone who would like theirs updated.

<https://sdaa.org/contacts/>

Drew noted that his board emails are not coming through and he and Steve Meyers worked the issue during the meeting in a side discussion.

k. SDAA Social Media Report for February 2025

Pagarigan

SDAA Podcast Hosts – Pagarigan/Morquecho

Tasks WIP or Completed

- Video/Audio from 2024 SDAA Events undergoing edit
- Video from 2025 Banquet undergoing edit
- Program schedule for 2025 work in progress

l. Outreach Report

Ammann

January started off with foul weather, cancelling Kumeyaay Lake Campground on January 3rd. The next night, January 4th we completed our monthly TDS Public Night, and also supported the Adventure Guides' Campout, YMCA Camp Marston for about 200 girls between the ages of 7-13. Working between the clouds, Craig Storms, William 'Prince' Oliver and Dennis Ammann showed the girls various celestial objects including Jupiter and Venus. On January 11th, SDAA member Doug Hansen, took on Oakoasis County Park alone, supporting Ranger Kyle's stargazing event. His telescope became inoperative, so he broke out his binoculars on a tripod and walked visitors across the night sky, successfully completing this event. Meanwhile, that same night, everyone else was at the annual SDAA Banquet at Hyatt Regency Hotel Mission Bay Resort. There were about 160 members and guests dining out and listening to Adam Block, a noted astroimager who titled his presentation, "Ancient Echoes of a Forgotten Sky" and gave insight on taking pictures of celestial objects. Mike Chasin was an excellent MC, keeping everything rolling and adding his humor to the night. On January 16th, Longfellow Elementary School was the kick-off of a marathon of endless schools until the end of the month. There was a great turnout of



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children and parents that night, along with Michael Gillen, Dave Whigham, William, Sonny Adams, and Dennis manning the telescopes. On Friday, January 17th Sycamore Canyon West experienced many visitors and SDAA astronomers. Same the next day for K.Q. Ranch with Brad Jameson and his son Braydon and daughter Addy, William, Craig, and Dennis providing the views of the heavens. Foul weather raised its ugly head for Nipaquay and Silver Strand Elementary Schools on January 21st and January 22nd respectively, as such had to be cancelled. Spreckels Elementary enjoyed an excellent sky on January 23rd, with William, Craig, Dave Whigham, and Dennis showing the children the night sky. Then on Friday, January 24th, Sycamore Canyon East, and Canyon View Elementary School were cancelled due to weather. Although Carson Elementary School enjoyed an excellent night sky on January 27th with William, Craig, Dennis, and Dave Whigham showing them the night sky, Marie Curie and Morning Creek were weather cancelled on January 28th and 29th respectively. La Mesa Dale Elementary, on January 30th fared better with Dave Decker, Gary Hawkins and his daughter Joy, Craig, William, and Dennis enjoyed sharing the night sky with the students and parents. Toler Elementary School was the last casualty to weather on January 31st which had to be cancelled. Horrible weather for January, but SDAA pressed on with its mission to educate the public about astronomy.

Here are the numbers for January:

2025	Previous Total	January	YTD
Completed	0	9	9
Canceled	0	8	8
Total Attendance	0	775	775

m. TARO

Wood

TARO was shut down for most of January due to several days of SDG&E power outages and bad weather. After the emergency power alerts had been lifted, a trip was made to TDS to check the observatory for any issues and restart the UPS. No issues were found although the weather continued to limit operations.

Completed projects - 0

New Projects added 2

Total projects scheduled - 11

Total scheduled imaging time 152 hours.



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n. Cruzen

Salinger

Nothing to report at this time.

o. Merchandise Report

Burch

All the preordered merchandise was paid for and shipped out. The store was restocked, and we had a few small sales in addition to what was sold at the banquet.

p. Astronomical League Report

Smith

Nothing to report.

q. JSF Report

Vacant

No Report

r. Grid Reconstruction -

Wood

North Grid Reconstruction

On February 5th, an onsite project kickoff meeting was held with members of the SDAA and the Neal Electric Project team. Neal Electric's team included project management, the on-site project supervisor, the primary electrical engineer from Elen Consulting and 3 members of the civil construction team.

After an orientation site walk for members of the Neal Electric team who were new to TDS, we held a meeting in the warming room to cover the following topics:

- Site Access by Neal personnel
- Safety processes and procedures
- Scheduling
- Permitting
- SDG&E pending approvals

Neal Electric is working with SDG&E on an expedited approval process that may see SDG&E approval and project coordination in as little as three weeks.

Action Item BOD 02/03: David Wood will publish a schedule of power outages and construction restrictions on the site affecting the SDAA membership and confirm power and restrictions for a USD event on 29 March.



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5. Old Business

- a. Survey Reading Assignment. Dave noted how useful many useful comments are contained in the survey and that individuals have volunteered to work on committees and projects.
- b. New Member Mentor. Jerry is working on a committee approach to restructuring the new mentor program to encourage new members and improve retention and plans to submit a charter to the board for this committee next month.
- c. Website – WA, Privacy, SDA, DNCA. Deferred.
- d. Telescope Build Member Competition. Deferred.
- e. Conflict of Interest Statements. The by-laws require Conflict of Interest Statements (COI) from board members and others. **Action Item BOD 02/04:** Dave will forward the forms to board members. Completed forms will be submitted to the Recording Secretary by end February.

6. New Business

- a. TDS Event for USD. Ed Rumsey requested approval for an astronomy event at TDS for approximately 40 USD students on March 29. No camping is involved. The board unanimously approved the request. Drew proposed that the SDAA have liability waivers for group visits to TDS. **Action Item BOD 02/05:** Since there is no policy on liability waivers at TDS, Dave or Mike will discuss liability waivers and insurance assignments with the SDAA lawyer and develop any needed forms and policies. **Action Item BOD 02/06:** Dave Decker accepted an action item to direct a re-view/revision of large group visit policies at TDS including associated requirements for waivers and insurance binders.
- b. TDS South Side (Private Pad area) Development. Drew reported that the South Side Development Committee, which consisted of 7 members including pad and non-pad leasees, met and debated whether to recommend approving the Neal Electric bid to rebuild the electric grid on the south side of TDS. Drew reported that the committee recommends unanimously that the SDAA BOD approves the Neal bid for restoring power to the area, as the private pad area is a key component of TDS. In addition, although proposed by some BOD members, the committee recommends that the SDAA does not conduct an additional member survey on this specific issue as the issue is complicated and such surveys do not appear to be required by the bylaws.



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The board structured the following motions, proposed by Kin Searcy and amended multiple times in real time by the BOD, and acted on them as indicated:

Motion One; Drew Koning; Second Gracie Schutze: Approve \$395k for the South side reconstruction without delay. In addition, pad direct connections may be considered on a case-by-case basis at member cost. Requirements for connection will be developed by the contractor. **(Approved unanimously)**

Motion Two; Drew Koning; Second Gracie Schutze: Conduct a 3-week survey of recommendations for further improvement to TDS. The BOD will review and submit the approved requirements to the contractor for inclusion in the design. (This may be new scope) The contractor will propose a phased implementation approach including:

1) Propose to incorporate the new requirements in the existing contract via change order for implementation with the ongoing work.

2) Propose to accommodate growth capabilities by accomplishing tasks that are cost effective to accomplish with the existing work such as trenching and conduit laying. This would also require a change order. **(Approved 5 - 1)**

Motion Three; Kin Searcy; Not Seconded: Solicit a bid for maintenance of the grid and annual inspections to remove SDAA from this responsibility. **(Postponed)**

Motion Four; Kin Searcy; Not Seconded: Pads may implement solar panels with batteries with board approval as a standard development proposal. SDAA will subsidize these installations at 50 percent of cost. **(Postponed)**

c. Project Proposals Committee. Jerry briefed a detailed proposal to establish a SDAA Project Proposal Review Committee. This would be a member committee to review, evaluate, and recommend action on project proposals submitted by SDAA members. The goal is to ensure fair, transparent, and strategic allocation of SDAA resources, including funding from the recently received endowment. This proposal was very complete and well received and is in alignment with the developing strategic planning process. **Action Item BOD 02/07:** Dave asked board members to review the proposal for a potential “unanimous mutual consent” decision via Board email, prior to the March board meeting.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:06pm.

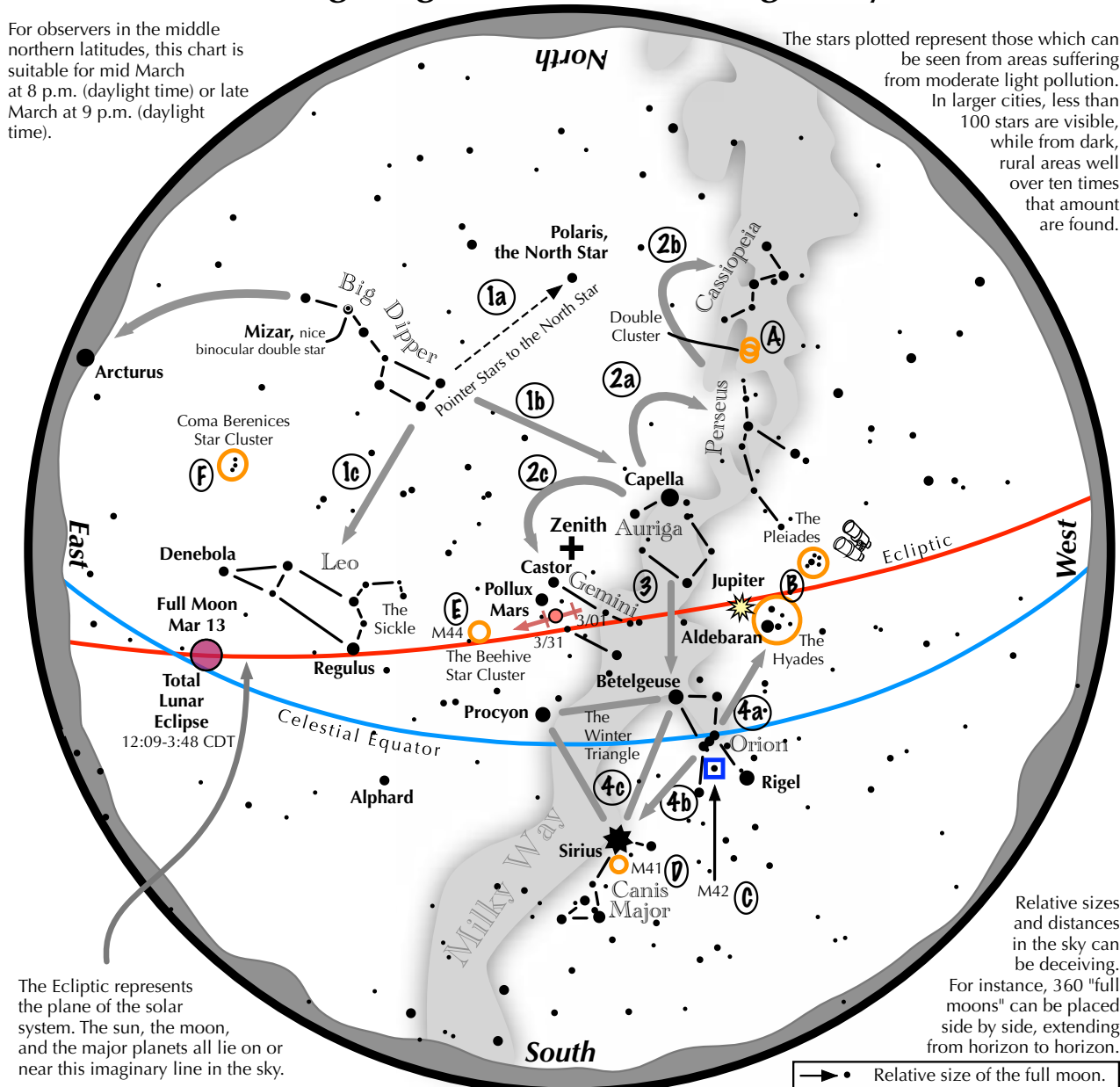


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Navigating the mid March Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid March at 8 p.m. (daylight time) or late March at 9 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 March night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

- 1 Above the northeast horizon rises the Big Dipper. Draw a line from its two end bowl stars upwards to the North Star. Its top bowl stars point west to Capella in Auriga, nearly overhead. Leo reclines below the Dipper's bowl.
- 2 From Capella jump northwestward along the Milky Way to Perseus, then to the "W" of Cassiopeia. Next jump southeastward from Capella to the twin stars of Castor and Pollux in Gemini.
- 3 Directly south of Capella stands the constellation of Orion with its three Belt Stars, its bright red star Betelgeuse, and its bright blue-white star Rigel.
- 4 Use Orion's three Belt stars to point northwest to the red star Aldebaran and the Hyades star cluster, then to the Pleiades star cluster. Travel southeast from the Belt stars to the brightest star in the night sky, Sirius. It is a member of the Winter Triangle.

Binocular Highlights

A: Between the "W" of Cassiopeia and Perseus lies the Double Cluster. **B:** Examine the stars of the Pleiades and Hyades, two naked eye star clusters. **C:** M42 in Orion is a star forming nebula. **D:** Look south of Sirius for the star cluster M41. **E:** M44, a star cluster barely visible to the naked eye, lies to the southeast of Pollux. **F:** Look high in the east for the loose star cluster of Coma Berenices.



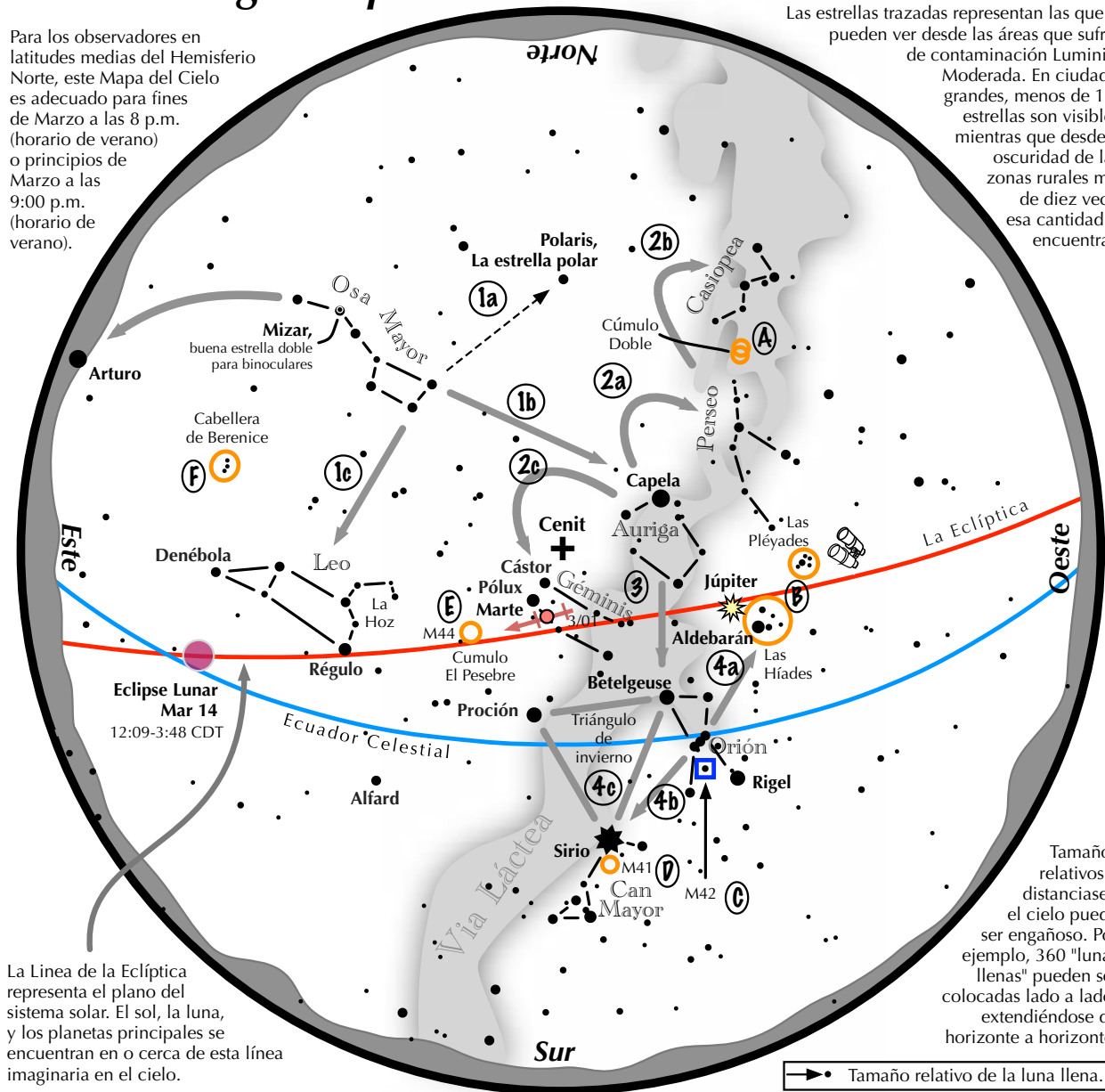


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Navegando por el cielo nocturno de Marzo

Para los observadores en latitudes medias del Hemisferio Norte, este Mapa del Cielo es adecuado para fines de Marzo a las 8 p.m. (horario de verano) o principios de Marzo a las 9:00 p.m. (horario de verano).

Las estrellas trazadas representan las que se pueden ver desde las áreas que sufren de contaminación Luminica Moderada. En ciudades grandes, menos de 100 estrellas son visibles, mientras que desde la oscuridad de las zonas rurales más de diez veces esa cantidad se encuentran.



La Línea de la Eclíptica representa el plano del sistema solar. El sol, la luna, y los planetas principales se encuentran en o cerca de esta línea imaginaria en el cielo.

Tamaños relativos y distancias en el cielo pueden ser engañosos. Por ejemplo, 360 "lunas llenas" pueden ser colocadas lado a lado, extendiéndose de horizonte a horizonte.

Navegando por el cielo nocturno: simplemente comience con lo que sabe o con lo que puede encontrar fácilmente.

- 1 Sobre el horizonte noreste se alza la Osa Mayor. Dibuja una línea desde sus dos estrellas finales hasta la estrella polar. Las estrellas superiores del tazón apuntan al oeste a Capela, casi por encima. Leo yace debajo del tazón de la Osa Mayor.
- 2 Desde Capela, salte hacia el noroeste a lo largo de la Vía Láctea hacia Perseo, luego hacia la "W" de Casiopea. Siguiendo salto hacia el sureste desde Capela a las estrellas gemelas de Cástor y Pólux en Géminis.
- 3 Directamente al sur de Capela se encuentra la constelación de Orión con sus tres estrellas del Cinturón de Orión, su brillante estrella roja Betelgeuse y su brillante estrella azul-blanca Rigel.
- 4 Usa las tres estrellas del Cinturón de Orión para apuntar al noroeste hacia la estrella roja Aldebarán y el cúmulo estelar Hiades, y luego hacia el cúmulo estelar de las Pléyades. Viaja hacia el sudeste desde las estrellas del cinturón hasta la estrella más brillante en el cielo nocturno, Sirio. Es un miembro del Triángulo de invierno.

Puntos destacados con binoculares

A: Entre la "W" de Casiopea y Perseo se encuentra el Doble Cúmulo. B: Examina las estrellas de las Pléyades y las Híades. C: M42 en Orión es una nebulosa formadora de estrellas. D: Mire al sur de Sirio para el cúmulo estelar M41. E: M44, un cúmulo de estrellas apenas perceptible a simple vista, se encuentra al sureste de Pólux. F: Mira alto en el este para ver el cúmulo de estrellas perdidas de Cabellera de Berenice.



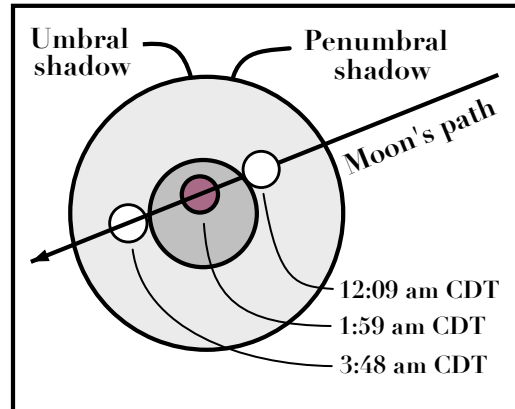
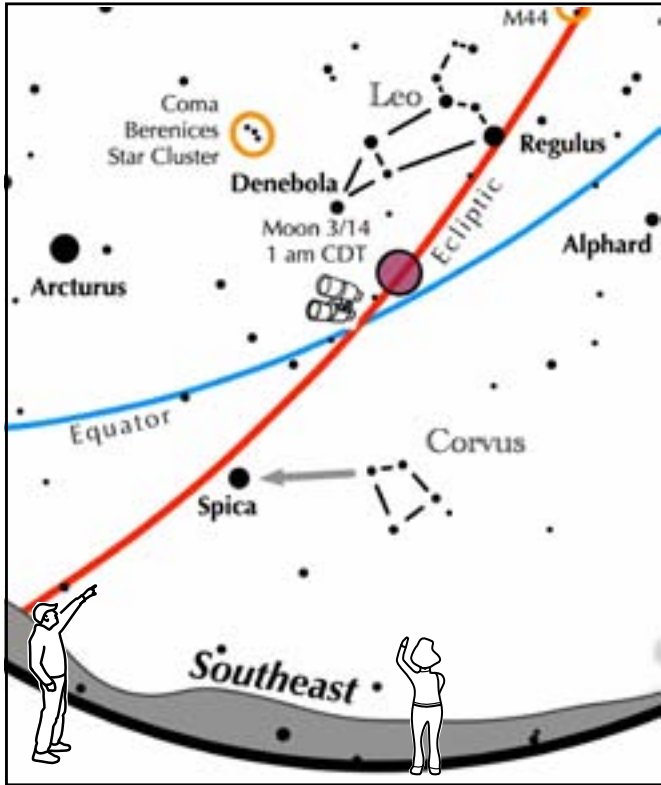
Liga Astronómica





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If you can observe only one celestial event in the evening this March, see this one.



The Moon slides through a total eclipse

In the hours just after midnight on March 14, the brilliant full moon slides into Earth's shadow.

- Even though the partial umbral eclipse begins at 12:09 am CDT, darkening might not be noticed for another 5 minutes.
- When totality is reached, the full moon's brilliance is gone, allowing the stars to appear. Can you see that the moon lies mid-way between Regulus to the upper right and Spica to the lower left?
- At mid eclipse, what color is the moon? How red is it?
- During the partial phases, can you notice that the shadow's edge is not straight, but curved?



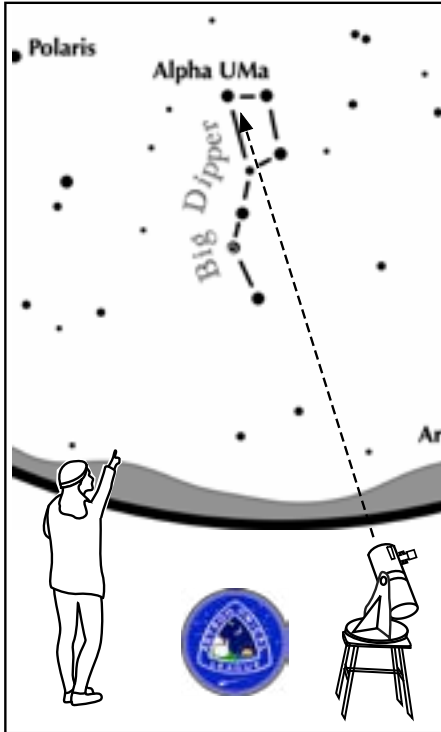
View to the southeast
on March 14
at 1 am CDT





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ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE Double Star Activity



Other Suns: Alpha Ursae Majoris

How to find Alpha Ursae Majoris on a March evening

Face northeast. Look for the Big Dipper standing upright on its handle. Alpha is the star on the upper left corner of the bowl.

Alpha UMa

A-B separation: 381 sec

A magnitude: 2.0

B magnitude: 7.0

Position Angle: 204°

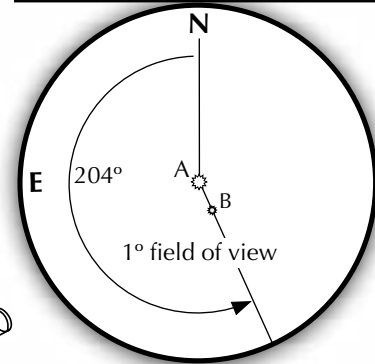
Colors:

orange

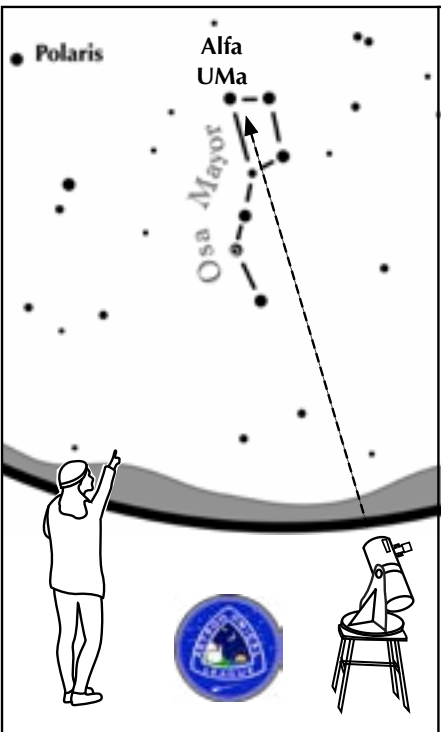
dark orange

Suggested magnification: >20x

Suggested aperture: >3 inches



Try binoculars!



Otros Soles: Alfa Ursae Majoris

Cómo encontrar a Alpha Ursae Majoris en una tarde de Marzo

Mire al noreste. Busque la Osa Mayor de pie sobre su mango. Alfa es la estrella en la esquina superior izquierda del Cazo.

Alfa UMa

A-B separación: 381 sec

A magnitud: 2.0

B magnitud: 7.0

PA: 204°

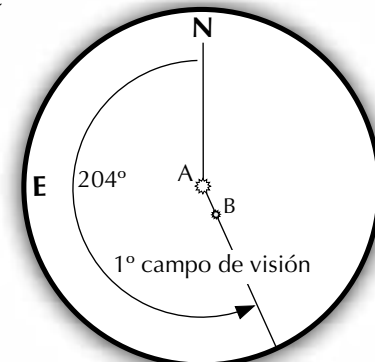
Colores:

naranja

roja oscura

Ampliación sugerida: >20x,

Apertura sugerida: >75 mm



Un objeto binocular!





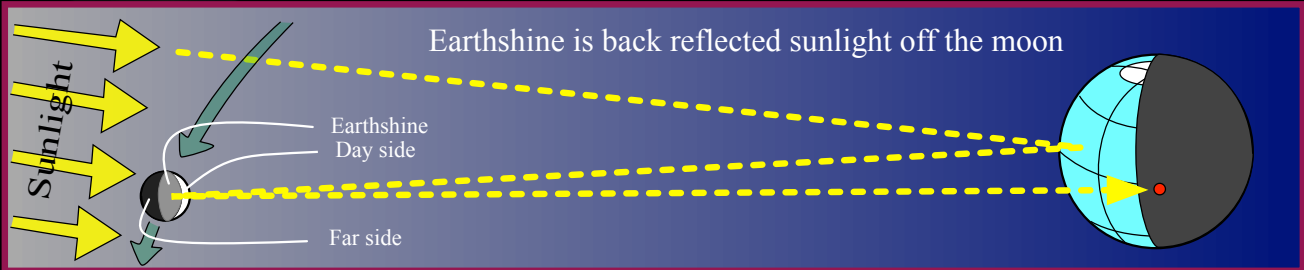
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Evening Earthshine

aka "The old moon in the new moon's arms"



In a very strange sense, Earthshine is the reflection of Earth on the moon.



Older than 4 day-old moon:

Distinguishing Earthshine with the unaided becomes harder with each passing evening. However, the moon's night side can still be seen through a telescope for a few more nights.

4 day-old moon:

- Sets up to 5 hours after sunset.
- The glare from its brightly lit day side begins to make seeing Earthshine slightly more difficult.

3 day-old moon:

- Sets up to 3.5 hours after sunset.
- Earthshine is very prominent.

2 day-old moon:

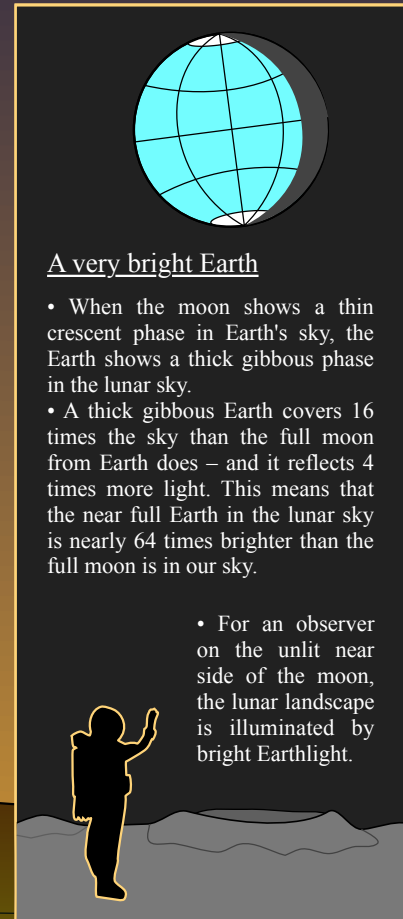
- Sets up to 2 hours after sunset.
- The bright twilight mutes the diaphanous glow of the Earthshine.

1 day-old moon:

- Typically sets 60 minutes or less after sunset.
- Earthshine appears very subdued because of the moon's placement in the bright twilight, and the thinness and relative dimness of the crescent.
- Binoculars help pick up the very thin lunar crescent in the twilight just above the horizon.

New Moon, 0 day-old moon:

- Sets with the sun.





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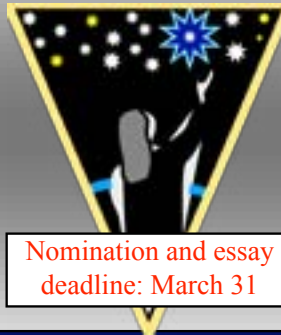


Attention Grandparents!

Do you have a grandchild who

- is 8-14 years of age,
- enjoys writing, and
- loves astronomy?

Encourage your young person to enter the **AL Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism** competition!



<https://www.astroleague.org/jack-horkheimer-youth-awards/>

Actually, the young writer may be nominated by anyone, not just by a grandparent. But they must be sponsored by an Astronomical League regional officer or by an Astronomical League club officer. Only one nominee per sponsor is permitted.

<https://www.astroleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/Journalism-Form.pdf>

AL Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award



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NEWS from the Radio Astronomy Special Interest Group (RASIG)

The Society of Amateur Radio Astronomers (SARA) is hosting its Western Conference at the Very Large Array (VLA) in New Mexico from March 14–16. The VLA, managed by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO), is one of the world’s premier radio telescope facilities, alongside others such as the 110-meter Green Bank Telescope in West Virginia. For more details about the VLA, visit : <https://public.nrao.edu/telescopes/vla/>.

Conference information, including the full agenda, can be found here: <https://radio-astronomy.org/node/390>.

This exciting event will feature presentations by SARA members and professional radio astronomers from the VLA. Highlights include a special VIP tour of the VLA, where attendees can ascend into one of the iconic dishes, as well as a visit to the nearby Long Wavelength Array (LWA).

The conference is open to both in-person and virtual attendees:

- In-person registration: \$55
- Online registration: \$15

RASIG is organizing a group for those interested in attending in person. If you’d like to join the group, attend virtually, or learn more about RASIG, SARA, or radio astronomy in general, please reach out to Curt Kinghorn at CurtKinghorn@gmail.com.

Don’t miss this incredible opportunity to explore the fascinating world of radio astronomy!





Astronomical.League

on Facebook ...

Monthly sky maps,
Observing activities,
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Observing Program Previews: What a program requires of the Observer.

Our View from Earth: How to find interesting celestial objects in three minutes. Perfect for club viewing.



San Diego Astronomy Association

Private Pad News

by Mark Smith

I promised a couple of months ago that I'd give you an update on the power situation out on the Private Pads when there was something to report. While the power is still out on the Private Pads and will remain so until the electrical grid on the south side of TDS is rebuilt, I can report that the Board of Directors has approved the rebuilding of that portion of the electrical grid. While there is still a lot of work to be done, and it is likely to be many months before we see power out on the Private Pads again, the process has started.

That doesn't mean that when the grid is rebuilt that things will return to the way they were before the grid was shut down. This is not a repair; it is a complete rebuild of the grid from scratch. The current plan is for one riser with outlets for every two pads and none of the current on pad electrical will be reconnected. This may seem like a step backwards, but the Club is only required to maintain an electrical grid throughout the private pad area. This has historically meant to a junction box near the edge of the road near the pad. Everything on the pads themselves has always been the responsibility of the individual pad holder. This is the same as the power company being responsible for the wiring up to the electrical meter, but the homeowner is responsible for the wiring in the house.

This is being done to protect the grid. While the grid itself had deteriorated badly over the years, the wiring on many of the Private Pads was in very bad shape as well. As anybody who has been involved in troubleshooting electrical problems at TDS can attest to, it was not uncommon for issues on a single pad to take down large sections of the grid. The only way to ensure that the new grid is protected is to isolate all of the legacy wiring.

What does that mean for the Pad Lessees? That is still being worked out. In some cases, working off an extension cord and power strip may be a viable option for the foreseeable future. In other cases, that is clearly impractical. There are also pads with significant investment in on pad electrical infrastructure. Several options have been discussed. If direct connections to on pad electrical infrastructure are allowed, the on-pad wiring will certainly need to be updated and inspected (at the pad Lessee's expense) and be subject to periodic inspections. As an alternative, some kind of club subsidy could be offered to install small solar setups. How any of this would work is still in the early stages of discussion and more information will be provided as decisions are reached.

The bottom line is that progress is being made, but there is more work to be done both on the Club side and the Electrical Contractor's side. As the plans are being developed, the club is interested in knowing your thoughts. Is operating off an extension cord and power strip from an outlet near the road practical on your pad? Would you want to re-establish your on pad electrical infrastructure? Is a solar installation something you might be interested in? Feel free to provide your feedback either to me or directly to the Board of Directors.

If you have any feedback, are interested in leasing a Private Pad, or just have questions about them, please don't hesitate to contact me at pads@sdaa.org or emarksmi@san.rr.com.



San Diego Astronomy Association

Astronomical League Notes

By Mark Smith

I've been talking mostly about observing lists in these articles, but I thought I'd talk about some of the other things the Astronomical League does. Yes, the observing clubs are a key part of the organization, and they can really help to give your time under the stars a focus, but there are other ways the Astronomical League can help.

Let's start with something we all already enjoy, the Monthly Newsletter Materials. Every month the League provides some materials for member organization Newsletters that include a nice monthly Star Map, one (or more) monthly observing target to focus on, and generally an informational page providing places to look for more information. This will direct you to both the League's Facebook and YouTube pages, both of which are regularly updated and have a lot of good observing information.

If you are more of a magazine person, the Astronomical League has an excellent quarterly magazine called "The Reflector." What is more, all of the back issues are available online at <https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/>. The Reflector not only has club news but also observing and imaging articles. It is almost a Sky and Telescope/Astronomy light. In addition to the great articles, it features some great astrophotography images taken by League members. Maybe you can get one of your images published!

Finally, the Astronomical League promotes member organization events and even hosts their own star party and a convention every year.

If you are interested in what you've read, I invite you to explore what the Astronomical League has to offer and use it to help guide or enrich your astronomy. You may even decide to join the next time you renew your SDAA membership. If you have any questions about the Astronomical League, please don't hesitate to contact me at ALCOR@SDAA.org.



San Diego Astronomy Association

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Have a great new piece of gear? Read an astronomy-related book that you think others should know about? How about a photograph of an SDAA Member in action? Or are you simply tired of seeing these Boxes in the Newsletter rather than something, well, interesting?

Join the campaign to rid the Newsletter of little boxes by sharing them with the membership. In return for your efforts, you will get your very own byline or photograph credit in addition to the undying gratitude of the Newsletter Editor. Just send your article or picture to Newsletter@SDAA.Org.



San Diego Astronomy Association

NASA Night Sky Notes

March 2025



This article is distributed by NASA's Night Sky Network (NSN).

The NSN program supports astronomy clubs across the USA dedicated to astronomy outreach. Visit nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov to find local clubs, events, and more!

March's Night Sky Notes: Messier Madness

By Kat Troche

March is the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere; with that, the hunt for Messier objects can begin!



Showing a large portion of M66, this Hubble photo is a composite of images obtained at visible and infrared wavelengths. The images have been combined to represent the real colors of the galaxy. Credit: NASA, ESA and the Hubble Heritage (STScI/AURA)-ESA/Hubble Collaboration; Acknowledgment: Davide De Martin and Robert Gendler

What Are Messier Objects?

During the 18th century, astronomer and comet hunter [Charles Messier](#) wanted to distinguish the 'faint fuzzies' he observed from any potential new comets. As a result, Messier cataloged 110 objects in the night sky, ranging from star clusters to galaxies to nebulae. These items are



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designated by the letter ‘M’ and a number. For example, the Orion Nebula is [Messier 42](#) or **M42**, and the Pleiades are [Messier 45](#) or **M45**. These are among the brightest ‘faint fuzzies’ we can see with modest backyard telescopes and some even with our eyes.

Stargazers can catalog these items on evenings closest to the new moon. Some even go as far as having “Messier Marathons,” setting up their telescopes and binoculars in the darkest skies available to them, from sundown to sunrise, to catch as many as possible. Here are some items to look for this season:



M44 in Cancer and M65 and 66 in Leo can be seen high in the evening sky 60 minutes after sunset. Credit: Stellarium Web

Messier 44 in Cancer: The Beehive Cluster, also known as Praesepe, is an open star cluster in the heart of the Cancer constellation. Use Pollux in Gemini and Regulus in Leo as guide stars. A pair of binoculars is enough to view this and other open star clusters. If you have a telescope handy, pay a visit two of the three galaxies that form the Leo Triplet - **M65** and **M66**. These items can be seen one hour after sunset in dark skies.



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Locate M3 and M87 rising in the east after midnight. Credit: Stellarium Web

Messier 3 Canes Venatici: M3 is a globular cluster of 500,000 stars. Through a telescope, this object looks like a fuzzy sparkly ball. You can resolve this cluster in an 8-inch telescope in moderate dark skies. You can find this star cluster by using the star Arcturus in the Boötes constellation as a guide.

Messier 87 in Virgo: Located just outside of Markarian's Chain, M87 is an elliptical galaxy that can be spotted during the late evening hours. While it is not possible to view the [supermassive black hole](#) at the core of this galaxy, you can see M87 and several other Messier-labeled galaxies in the Virgo Cluster using a medium-sized telescope.



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Locate M76 and M31 setting in the west, 60 minutes after sunset. Credit: Stellarium Web

Messier 76 in Perseus: For a challenge, spot the Little Dumbbell Nebula, a planetary nebula between the Perseus and Cassiopeia constellations. With an apparent magnitude of 12.0, you will need a large telescope and dark skies. You can find both M76 and the famous [Andromeda Galaxy \(M31\)](#) one hour after sunset, but only for a limited time, as these objects disappear after April. They will reappear in the late-night sky by September.

Plan Ahead

When gearing up for a long stargazing session, there are several things to remember, such as equipment, location, and provisions:

- **Do you have enough layers to be outdoors for several hours?** You would be surprised how cold it can get when sitting or standing still behind a telescope!
- **Are your batteries fully charged?** If your telescope runs on power, be sure to charge everything before you leave home and pack any additional batteries for your cell phone. Most people use their mobile devices for astronomy apps, so their batteries may deplete faster. Cold weather can also impact battery life.



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- Determine the **apparent magnitude** of what you are trying to see and the **limiting magnitude** of your night sky. You can learn more about apparent and limiting magnitudes with our [Check Your Sky Quality with Orion](#) article.
- When choosing a location to observe from, select an area you are familiar with and bring some friends! You can also [connect with your local astronomy club](#) to see if they are hosting any Messier Marathons. It's always great to share the stars!

You can see all 110 items and their locations with NASA's [Explore the Night Sky interactive map](#) and the [Hubble Messier Catalog](#), objects that have been imaged by the Hubble Space Telescope.



San Diego Astronomy Association

2025 TDS Star Party Schedule

Date	Type	Sunset	Astro. Twi.	Moonrise(set)	Closing	Illumination
Jan-04-2025	Public	4:56 PM	6:23 PM	(10:11 PM)	9:30 PM	28.3%
Jan-25-2025	Member	5:15 PM	6:40 PM	4:44 AM	9:30 PM	16.3%
Feb-01-2025	Public	5:21 PM	6:46 PM	(9:08 PM)	10:00 PM	14.9%
Feb-22-2025	Member	5:40 PM	7:02 PM	3:26 AM	10:00 PM	31.8%
Mar-01-2025	Public	5:46 PM	7:08 PM	(8:00 PM)	10:00 PM	5.0%
Mar-29-2025	Member	7:06 PM	8:30 PM	(7:47 PM)	11:30 PM	0.2%
Apr-19-2025	Public	7:21 PM	8:49 PM	1:47 AM	11:30 PM	65.5%
Apr-26-2025	Member	7:26 PM	8:56 PM	5:45 AM	11:59 PM	1.7%
May-17-2025	Public	7:42 PM	9:17 PM	12:27 AM	11:59 PM	79.6%
May-24-2025	Member	7:46 PM	9:24 PM	4:16 AM	11:59 PM	8.6%
Jun-21-2025	Member	7:59 PM	9:41 PM	2:50 AM	11:59 PM	19.3%
Jun-28-2025	Public	8:00 PM	9:41 PM	(10:55 PM)	11:59 PM	15.1%
Jul-19-2025	Public	7:55 PM	9:32 PM	1:29 AM	11:59 PM	32.1%
Jul-26-2025	Member	7:51 PM	9:26 PM	(9:22 PM)	11:59 PM	5.2%
Aug-16-2025	Public	7:31 PM	9:00 PM	12:15 AM	11:59 PM	46.0%
Aug-23-2025	Member	7:23 PM	8:50 PM	7:39 AM	11:59 PM	0.4%
Sep-13-2025	Public	6:56 PM	8:19 PM	11:06 PM	11:00 PM	60.5%
Sep-20-2025	Member	6:47 PM	8:09 PM	6:27 AM	11:00 PM	1.1%
Oct-18-2025	Member	6:11 PM	7:33 PM	5:17 AM	10:30 PM	7.1%
Oct-25-2025	Public	6:04 PM	7:26 PM	(8:37 PM)	10:30 PM	16.9%
Nov-15-2025	Public	4:47 PM	6:12 PM	3:07 AM	9:00 PM	18.1%
Nov-22-2025	Member	4:44 PM	6:10 PM	(6:26 PM)	9:00 PM	6.3%
Dec-13-2025	Public	4:43 PM	6:11 PM	1:58 AM	9:00 PM	33.2%
Dec-20-2025	Member	4:46 PM	6:14 PM	(5:17 PM)	9:00 PM	0.7%

SDAA is now registered with the employer fund-matching platform Benevity. If your workplace offers matching charitable donations for non-profits and uses Benevity to distribute funds, you can now designate the San Diego Astronomy Association. Thank you for supporting the SDAA!

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Send dues and renewals to P.O. Box 23215, San Diego, CA 92193-3215 or renew on-line. The notice that your membership in SDAA will expire is sent by email. Dues are \$60 for Contributing Memberships; \$40 for Basic Membership; \$70 for Private Pads; \$5 for each Family membership.