

San Diego Astronomy Association

Celebrating Over 50 Years of Astronomical Outreach



October 2026

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

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

Next SDAA Business Meeting

October 13th at 7:00pm

Via Zoom

Next Program Meeting

October 21st 2026

Via Zoom

October Program Meeting

Date / Time: October 21st @7PM

Location: Zoom

Info on page 2

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October 2026, Vol LXIV, Issue 10

Published Monthly by the

San Diego Astronomy Association

Incorporated in California in 1963

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Annual SDAA BBQ at TDS Saturday, October 10th

Members and guests are invited to our annual BBQ on Saturday, October 10th at TDS. Master Chef Dave Wood will be cooking chicken, bratwurst, hamburgers, veggie burgers, and beans. The club will also be providing: potato salad, cookies, chips, and condiments. Feel free to bring a side dish or dessert to share. We light up the grill around 4pm. Come for food and friends ... stay for the stars. Register here:

<https://sdaa28.wildapricot.org/event-6781806>

Newsletter Deadline

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

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>



San Diego Astronomy Association

SDAA October Program Information

Date: October 21, 2026, 7PM (via Zoom only)

Title: Astronomy at Yerkes Observatory – past, present, and future

Speaker: Dr. Luke Schmidt, Observatory Project Scientist

Join us for our upcoming SDAA Zoom program as we explore the rich history and bright future of Yerkes Observatory with Observatory Project Scientist, Dr. Luke Schmidt!

About the Speaker

Dr. Schmidt is responsible for managing activities that maximize the research potential and public usage of our telescope and instrument suite at Yerkes. He is also pursuing his own research interests, working with students, and active with public programming. He comes to Yerkes from Texas A&M where he was an Associate Research Scientist leading lab instrumentation projects including optical and opto-mechanical design, detectors, and control systems. He has been involved with the development of a variety of optical and infrared astronomical instruments including imagers, spectrographs, interferometers, and calibration systems for telescopes ranging in size from 0.25m to 25m in diameter located in the US Southwest, Hawaii, Chile, and Argentina. Before Texas A&M, Luke was an Instrumentation Scientist with the Magdalena Ridge Observatory Interferometer project and a Postdoc working on NESSI, a NIR spectrometer designed to study exoplanet atmospheres.

Insights from Dr. Schmidt:

"It's hard not to be impressed when you visit Yerkes. At first, by the grounds, building, and pieces of history it contains. However, it quickly becomes apparent that there is also a shared sense of purpose and excitement for the future within the staff. I have focused my career on learning how things work and building instruments to better understand our universe. I feel fortunate to be able to continue the Yerkes legacy of exploration, surrounded by daily reminders of the foundational work that has taken place here and has shaped our collective understanding of the universe."

More information: <https://yerkobservatory.org/>





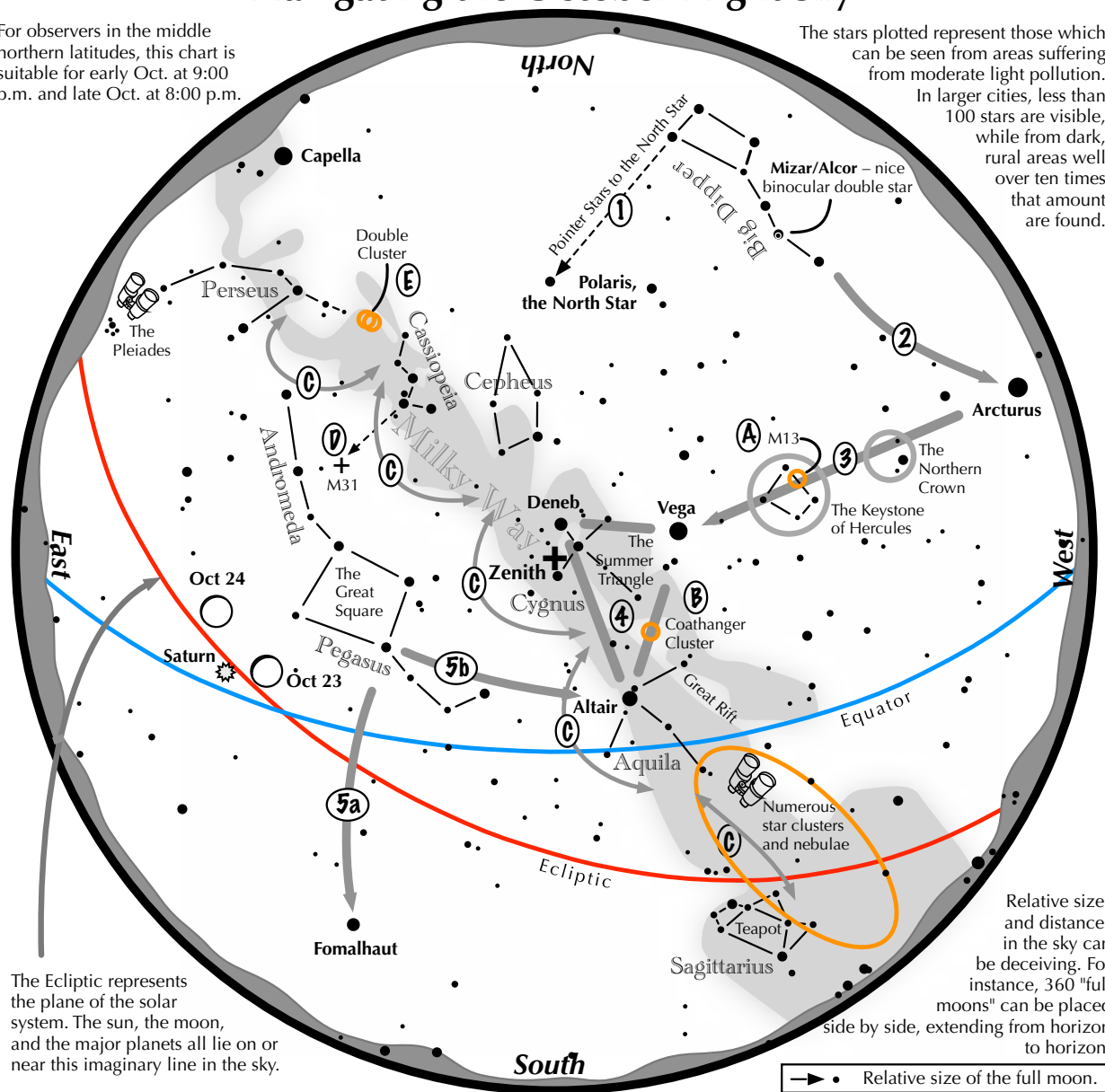
San Diego Astronomy Association

Navigating the October Night Sky

2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early Oct. at 9:00 p.m. and late Oct. at 8:00 p.m.

The stars plotted represent those which can be seen from areas suffering from moderate light pollution. In larger cities, less than 100 stars are visible, while from dark, rural areas well over ten times that amount are found.



The Ecliptic represents the plane of the solar system. The sun, the moon, and the major planets all lie on or near this imaginary line in the sky.

Relative sizes and distances in the sky can be deceiving. For instance, 360 "full moons" can be placed side by side, extending from horizon to horizon.

→ • Relative size of the full moon.

Navigating the October night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

- 1 Extend a line north from the two stars at the tip of the Big Dipper's bowl. It passes by Polaris, the North Star.
- 2 Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the early October evening sky.
- 3 To the northeast of Arcturus shines another star of the same brightness, Vega. Draw a line from Arcturus to Vega. It first meets "The Northern Crown," then the "Keystone of Hercules." A dark sky is needed to see these two dim stellar configurations.
- 4 Nearly overhead lie the summer triangle stars of Vega, Altair, and Deneb.
- 5 High in the east are the four moderately bright stars of the Great Square. Its two southern stars point west to Altair. Its two western stars point south to Fomalhaut.

Binocular Highlights

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



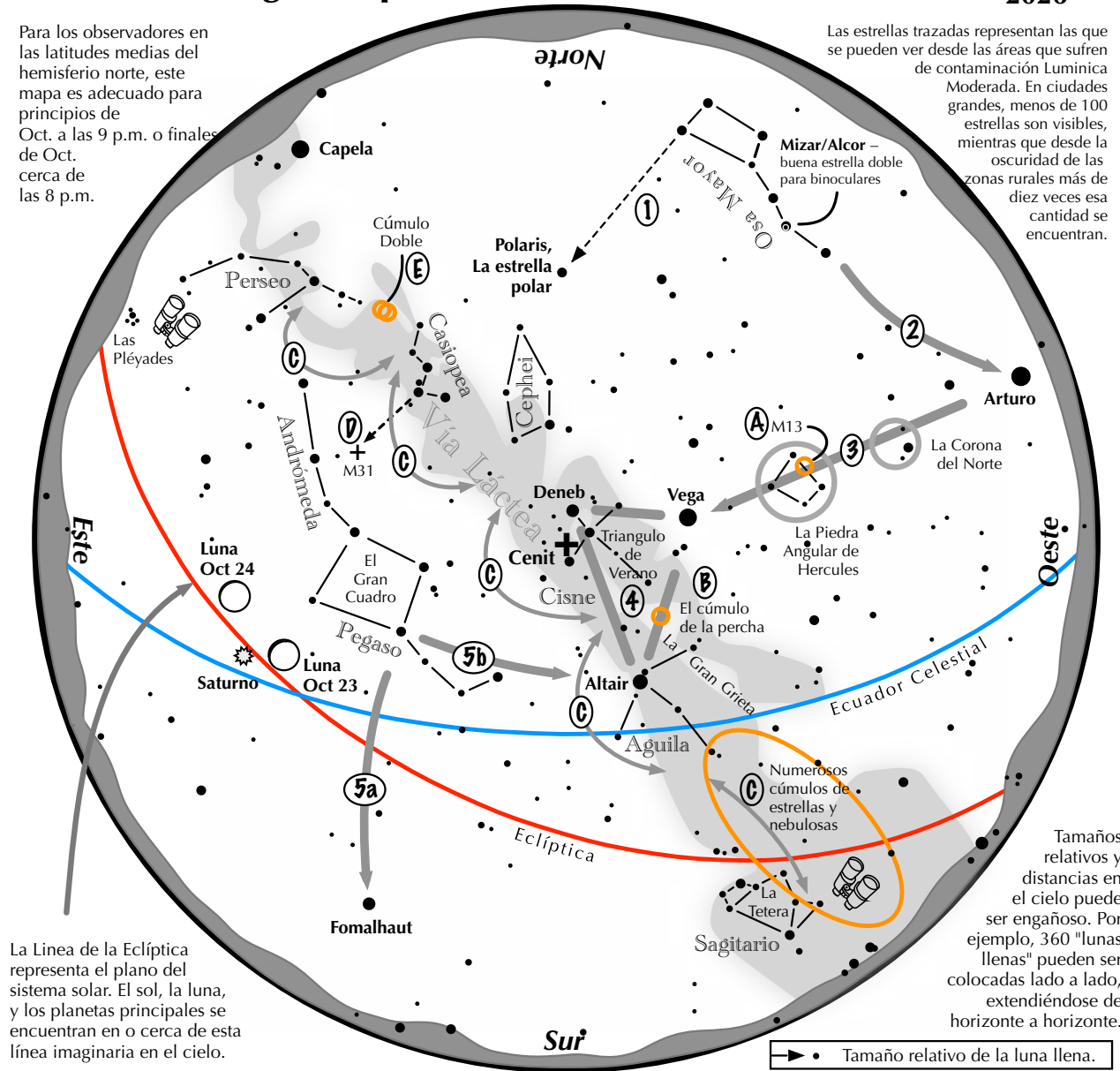


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Navegando por el cielo nocturno de Octubre 2026

Para los observadores en las latitudes medias del hemisferio norte, este mapa es adecuado para principios de Oct. a las 9 p.m. o finales de Oct. cerca de las 8 p.m.

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 puede ser engañoso. Por ejemplo, 360 "lunas llenas" pueden ser colocadas lado a lado, extendiéndose de horizonte a horizonte.

► • Tamaño relativo de la luna llena.

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

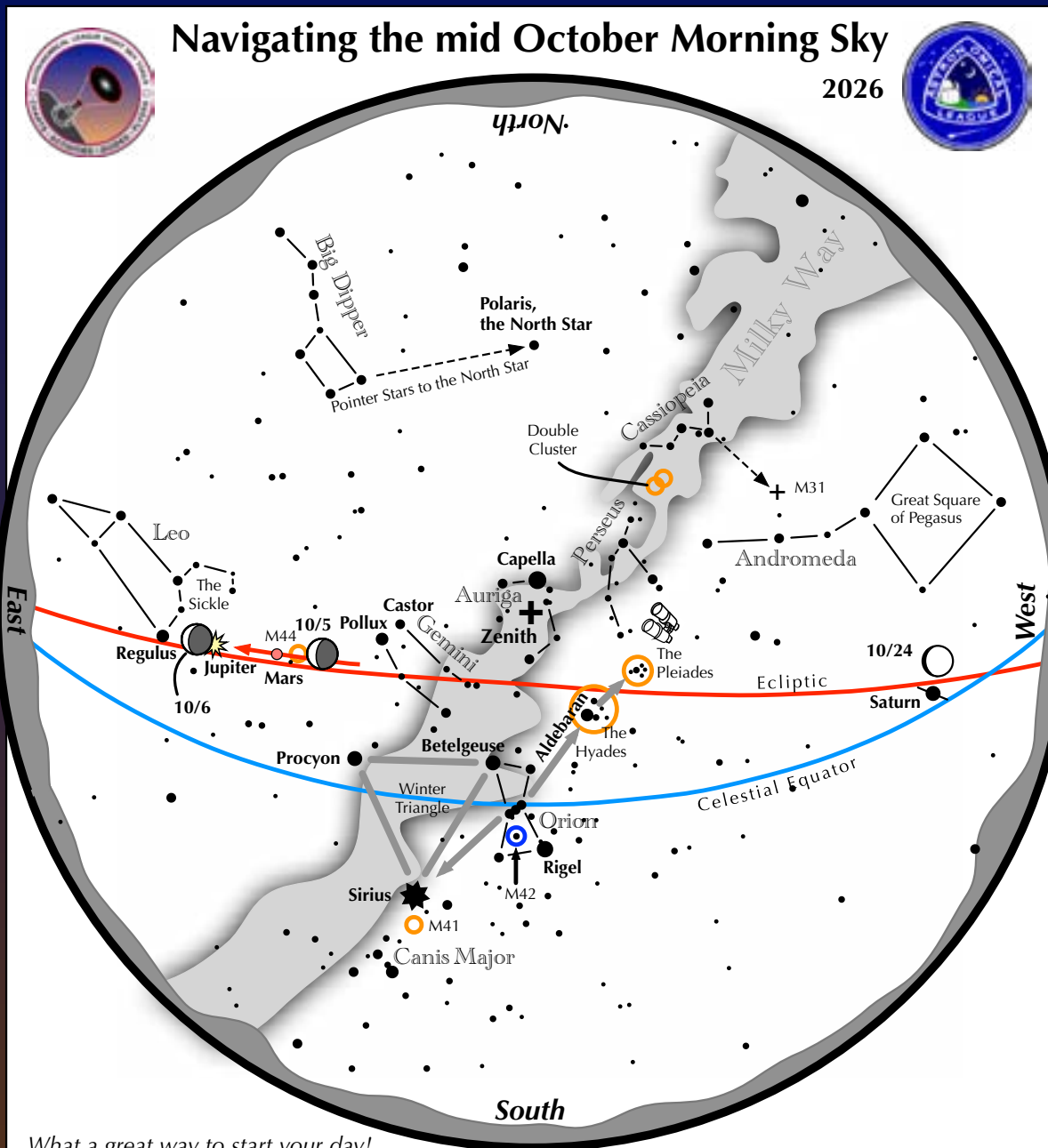
- 1 Haz una línea hacia el norte desde las dos estrellas en la punta de la Osa Mayor. Pasa por Polaris, la estrella polar.
- 2 Siga el arco del mango de la Osa Mayor. Se cruza con Arturo, la estrella más brillante en el cielo de la noche de octubre.
- 3 Dibuja una línea desde Arturo a Vega. Un tercio del camino se encuentra "La Corona del Norte". Dos tercios de esa distancia llevan a la "piedra angular de Hércules." Se necesita un cielo oscuro para ver estas dos configuraciones estelares tenues.
- 4 Las estrellas del Triángulo de verano, Vega, Altair y Deneb, brillan en el Cenit.
- 5 En lo alto del Este se encuentran las cuatro estrellas brillantes de la Gran Cuadro de Pegaso. (5a) Sus dos estrellas occidentales apuntan al Sur hacia Fomalhaut. (5b) Sus dos estrellas meridionales apuntan al Oeste hacia Altair.

Puntos destacados con binoculares

- A: En el lado occidental de la Piedra Angular brilla el Gran Cúmulo de Hércules, un círculo borroso de 500,000 estrellas.
- B: Casi a la mitad de la distancia entre Altair y Vega, Brilla la "Percha," un grupo de estrellas que describe un perchero.
- C: Recorre la Vía Láctea en busca de un número asombroso de destellos tenues y bahías oscuras, incluido La Gran Grieta.
- D: Las tres estrellas más occidentales de las "W" de Casiopea apuntan hacia el sur hasta M31, la Galaxia de Andrómeda, un óvalo "borroso."
- E: Entre la "W" de Casiopea y Perseo se encuentra el Doble Cúmulo.



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What a great way to start your day!

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid October at 5:00 a.m.

Late sunrises in October provide opportunities for early morning skywatching.

- Bright Jupiter shines high in the east.
- Crescent moon lies just west of Mars on October 5.
- The crescent moon glows next to and occults bright Jupiter on October 6.
- The near full moon glows in the west next to Saturn on October 24.
- During the first half of October, gaze high in the south and overhead to see these many celestial features: the Pleiades, the Hyades with Aldebaran, Orion, Capella and Auriga, the Winter Triangle with Sirius and Procyon, Gemini, and, in the east, Jupiter.

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

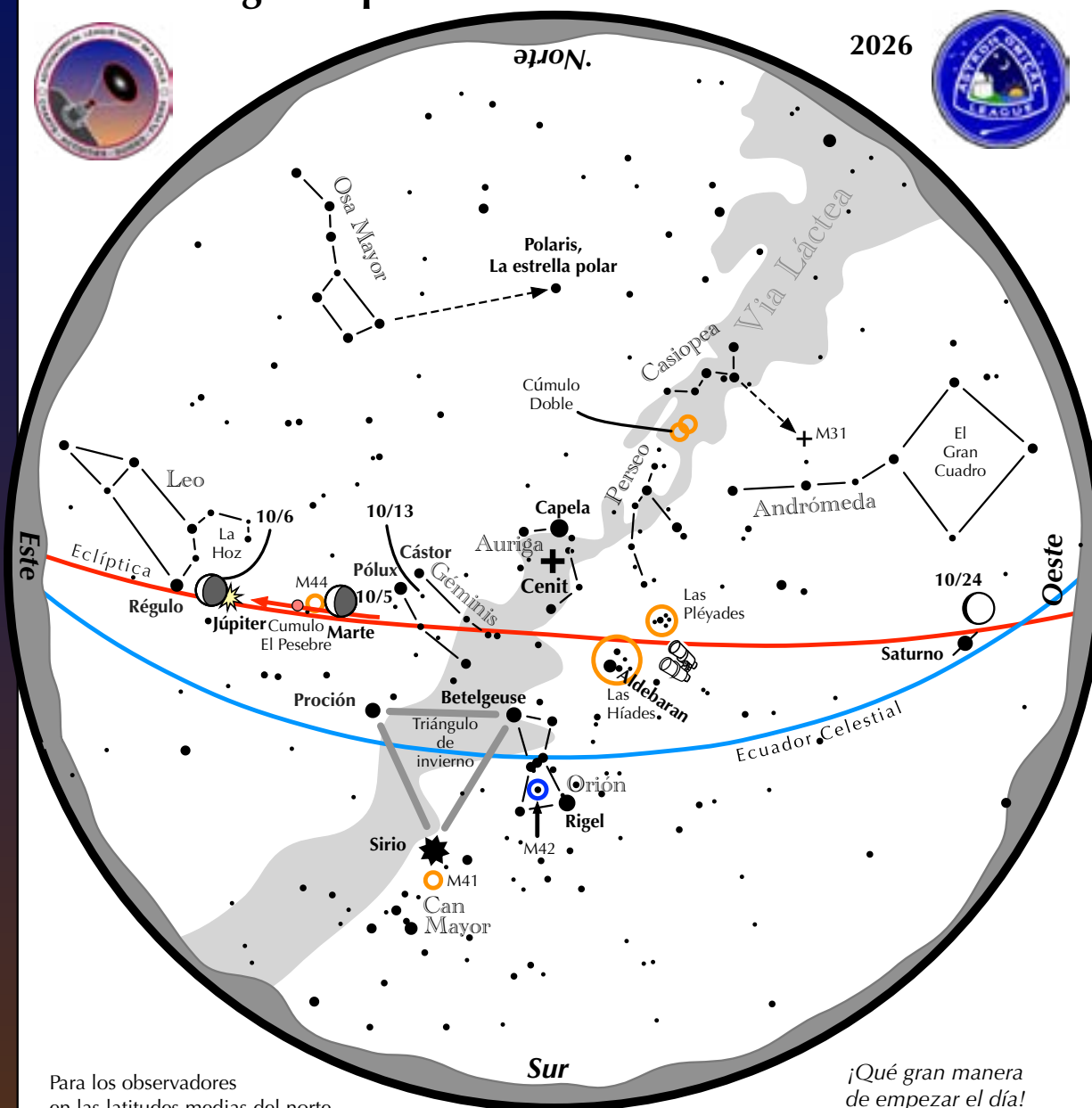
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Navegando por el Cielo Matutino de Octubre

2026



Para los observadores en las latitudes medias del norte, este gráfico es adecuado para mediados de octubre a las 5:00 a.m.

¡Qué gran manera de empezar el día!

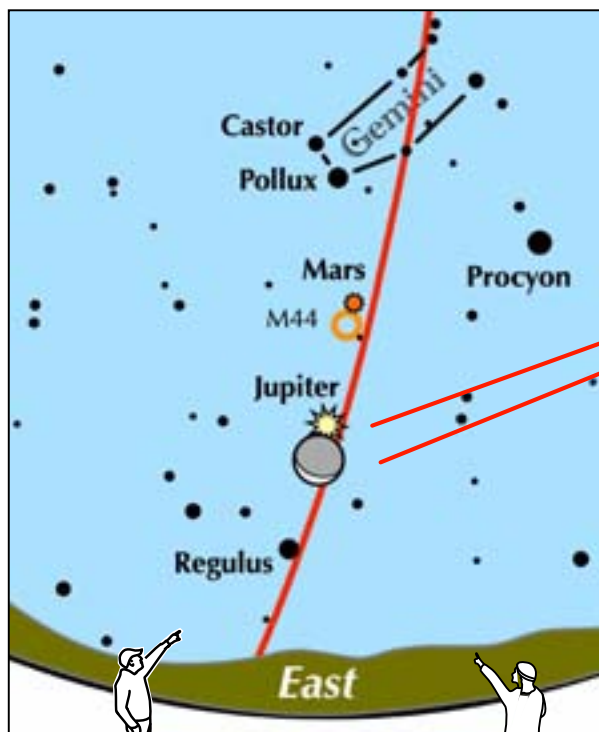
Los amaneceres tardíos de octubre brindan oportunidades para observar el cielo temprano por la mañana.

- El brillante Júpiter brilla casi en lo alto.
- Venus asciende por el horizonte oriental 60 minutos antes del amanecer.
- La luna en cuarto creciente brilla junto al brillante Júpiter el 13 de octubre.
- La luna creciente menguante brilla junto a Regulus el 16 de octubre.
- Durante la primera quincena de octubre, mire hacia el sur y hacia arriba para ver estas numerosas formaciones celestes: las Pléyades, las Híades con Aldebarán, Júpiter, Orión, Capella, el Triángulo de Invierno con Sirio y Proción, y Géminis.



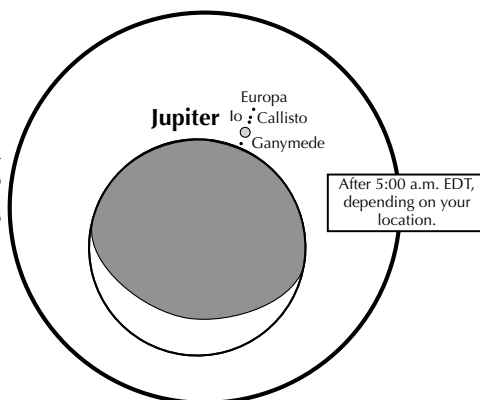
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In the early morning of October 6, try this challenge:



**View low in the east
on October 6
2 hours before sunrise**

**View through a
very low power
telescope**



**Moon occults Jupiter for the eastern US.
For the rest of us, it lies very close to Jupiter**

On the morning of October 6, the moon appears very close to Jupiter.

For those in the eastern half of the US, the planet and its Galilean satellites fully emerge from occultation after 5:00 a.m. The exact time depends on observing location.

Those in the western US see Jupiter immediately next to the dark edge of the crescent moon.

About 5:35 a.m. EDT, Ganymede's shadow begins transiting the planet. It lasts until 9:15 a.m. EDT. Its exit can be seen by west coast telescope users.

And Mars can be found approaching the Beehive star cluster.



San Diego Astronomy Association

Astronomical League Notes

By Mark Smith

The Western Region of the Astronomical League (WRAL) will be holding our 2nd in-person meeting on October 3rd in Las Vegas. In addition to discussions about how to support and grow our hobby, the agenda includes planning for reviving WRAL awards and a regional star party next year. The meeting will also feature a lecture, a Q&A session with the president of the Astronomical League, and an evening tour of a planetarium to learn how a modern facility operates and what the capabilities are. As it rebuilds itself into a viable branch of the Astronomical League, the WRAL continues to foster cooperation between member clubs. Several clubs are looking to hold a joint weekend star party in the Owens Valley in the spring and we are working on a Regional Calendar. The Regional Website is still looking for a permanent host, but it can currently be found at <https://sites.google.com/view/western-region-astro-league/home?pli=1&authuser=0>. You can find the main Astronomical League Website at <https://www.astroleague.org/> where you will find observing resources and observing programs where you can earn pins and certificates.

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

Private Pad News – The Pad Shutdown is Near (We Hope)

by Mark Smith

It has been a while since I've provided an update on the electrical grid that powers the Private Pads. You have probably seen the orange stakes marking the locations of the new power bollards and the new gate infrastructure and have wondered what the status of the construction is. After all, we thought the project would be complete by now. The reason for the delay is the County approval process. When we submitted the initial plans for approval, the County came back with a list of changes that they wanted. That resulted in an update to the plans and resubmission to the County. We are now waiting for the County to approve the revised plans. We have been waiting for a while now. Once the plans are approved, we expect that the contractor will begin work quickly, possibly in as little as 3-5 days. Once construction begins, Pad Lessees can expect to be without access to their pads for up to 6 weeks (current worst-case estimate, it could be as little as 2 weeks). Although pads with stand-alone power systems will still be remotely operational during construction, physical access to the pads is going to be severely limited. There will be an e-mail from the club when the shutdown is imminent, but if there is something you need to retrieve from your pad or if you have some maintenance you need done before access is restricted, you might want to head to TDS in the next week or two.

Once construction is complete, there will be an inspection and certification process followed by final inspections by the City and SDG&E before the new grid is powered up. The timing of those activities is unknown but could be several weeks. Although stand-alone power systems on the Private Pads will not be affected, any on-pad electrical infrastructure that was connected to the old grid will be permanently disconnected. While it is possible that some of that infrastructure may be able to be modified and be eligible for reconnection, such requests will be considered on a case by case basis and it is expected that the vast majority of current infrastructure will not be able to be modified sufficiently to be eligible for reconnection. While the exact requirements for new on-pad infrastructure are still being worked out, all work will need to be done by club approved, licensed electricians and will be subject to periodic inspection and maintenance requirements. Degradation of on-pad electrical infrastructure was a major issue with the legacy grid, and we are going to work hard to avoid the same issues with the re-built grid.

While we are waiting for electricity to return, we still have several Private Pads available. I realize that without electricity, the pads are of limited use to most members, but they still provide a viable option for many visual astronomers. In addition, if you are already a Pad Lessee, please continue to sign into your pad whenever you are at TDS whether you set up on your pad or are using the Public Pads. Although Pad Usage requirements have been waived while there is no power on the pads, the Private Pads Usage Data are the best TDS usage tracking information that we currently have.

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.



Astronomical.League

on Facebook ...

Monthly sky maps,
Observing activities,
AL LIVE sessions,
League news & a whole lot more!



AL YouTube Channel

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

SDAA Contacts

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Vice President
Recording Secretary
Treasurer
Corresponding Secretary
Director Alpha
Director Beta
Director Delta
Director Gamma

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Observatory Director
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Outreach
N. County Star Parties
S. County Star Parties
E. County Star Parties
Central County Star Parties
Camp with the Stars
K.Q. Ranch Coordinator
Newsletter
New Member Mentor
Webmaster
AISIG
Site Acquisition
Field Trips
Grants/Fund Raising
Julian StarFest
Merchandising
Publicity
Loaner Scopes
Cruzen Observatory Director
TARO Observatory Director
TDS Network
TDS Operations
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<https://sdaa.org/contacts/>

SDAA Editorial Staff

Editor - Andrea Kuhl
since April 2011

newsletter@sdaa.org

Assistant Editor: Craig Ewing

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

Pad 70 Downing Observatory Status

Two more members were able to collect excellent quality data this month using the Pad 70 system. The system now has a simplified startup procedure. The donated Edge11HD is at Celestron being cleaned and collimated. It will be made available with a QHY 585 Minicam setup as soon as it is returned. This will allow members to take galaxy images with only the seeing limiting the quality of the data. TDS continues seemed to have better than average skies this summer. While the Pad 70 system is booked up through February, we get cancellations so, if you are interested sign up by emailing me at ross.salinger@sdaa.org. I am still looking for a backup/co-manager on the project.

Nominations and Election, 2026

This year there will be several openings in the SDAA Board of Directors and the SDAA Foundation Board. Open positions in the SDAA Board are elected by the general membership in November each year. The Directors for the SDAA Foundation are not elected by the membership; they are selected by the SDAA Board.

The revelation of our benefits from the Chalmer Trust in 2023 led to a massive restructuring of our club. Moving from the 60 years of success as a simple non-profit to a complex multi-corporate structure has been painful, yet it has opened up myriad opportunities to support our Mission; regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The SDAA is rapidly expanding into a new opportunity space! There are several SDAA Board positions open for nominations now, and there will be several Foundation Directors positions open for appointments in the months to come. If this sounds exciting to you, you are curious about the duties involved, or you know of another member that is; please contact one of our current Officers or Directors soon, to explore this opportunity.



San Diego Astronomy Association

NASA Night Sky Notes

October 2026



NASA's Night Sky Network (NSN) distributes this article.

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!

October's Night Sky Notes: Spooky Stargazing

By Kat Troche



Perseus holding the head of Medusa. Credit: Stellarium

The Ghoul

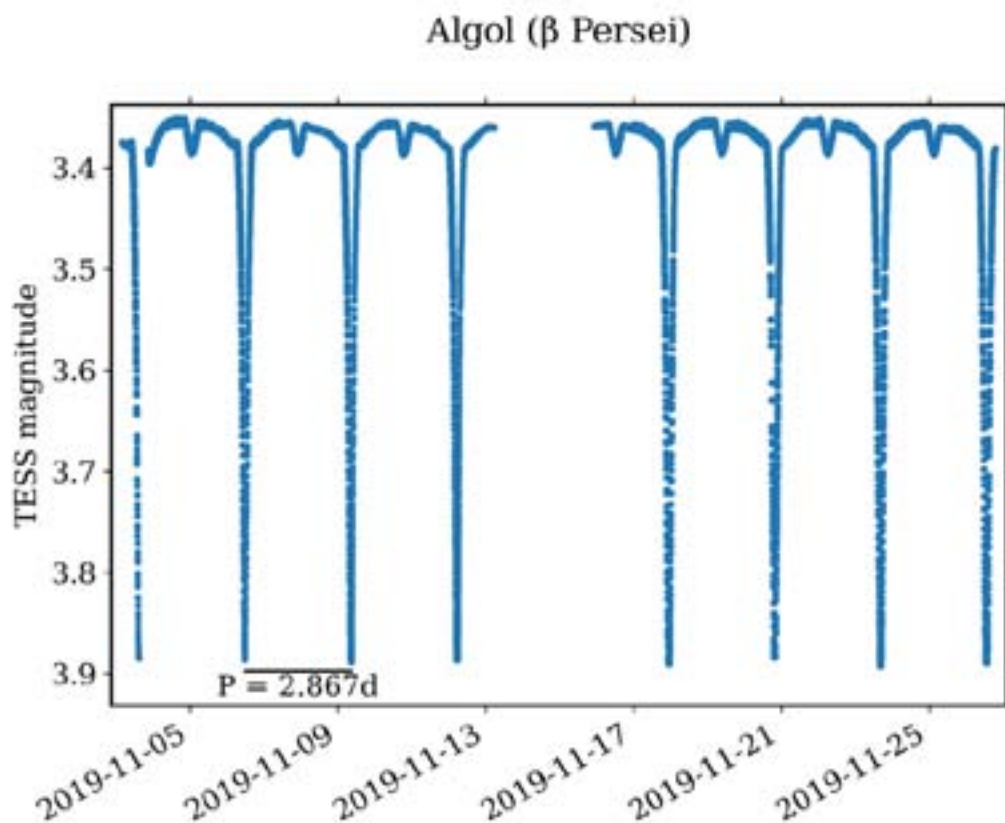
Located within the constellation Perseus lies a star called Algol, also known as 'Demon Star' or 'The Ghoul'. You can spot this star during the autumn months, along with Cassiopeia and Andromeda in the northeastern sky, beginning after 9 PM. In Greek mythology, this star represents the 'blinking eye' of the gorgon Medusa. But how can a star blink?



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NASA Night Sky Notes

October 2026



Light curve of the eclipsing binary star Algol recorded by NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), stored on NASA's [Mikulski Archive for Space Telescopes](#) (MAST). Credit: NASA/Wikipedia Commons

Algol is a triple-star system, with two of the three stars orbiting one another. This [eclipsing binary](#) causes the system to go from a bright +2.1 magnitude to a slightly dimmer +3.4 magnitude about every three days. Using data from NASA's [Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite](#) (TESS) mission, this light curve shows the regular dimming, or Medusa's 'blinking eye'!



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Using the constellations Cassiopeia and Andromeda, locate Perseus. You can find Algol by using the star Almach as a guide. Credit: Stellarium

There is no shortage of resources on how to calculate the dimming – or minima – of Algol, from interactive charts to data plots. Find the one that works best for you. Because it has a similar magnitude of brightness, you can compare Algol's brightness to the nearby star Almach (Gamma Andromedae) in Andromeda using a small telescope or binoculars.

Witch Head Nebula

Between the Eridanus and Orion constellations lies a spooky silhouette, illuminated by the star Rigel. IC 2118, or the [Witch Head Nebula](#), is a reflection nebula about 900 light-years away from Earth. Because reflection nebulae rely on nearby starlight to appear visible, they can be difficult to see with the naked eye, especially if they are as far away as this one. While the Witch Head Nebula can't be seen with the naked eye, telescopes with very large apertures and low magnification make it easier to catch under dark skies. Astrophotographers, with or without smart telescopes, can image this haunting outline within a few hours, depending on equipment and sky quality. And what is a witch without [their broom](#)! You can find the Witch's Broom in the Western Veil Nebula, located in the constellation Cygnus.



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An infrared portrait of the Witch Head nebula from NASA's Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer, or WISE, shows billowy clouds where new stars are brewing. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

Want more tips for getting into the season? Read our article on how you can make some spooky sidewalk astronomy fun for your community with [Trick or Treat: Sidewalk Astronomy!](#)



San Diego Astronomy Association

2026 TDS Star Party Schedule

Date	Type	Sunset	Astro. Twi.	Moonrise(set)	Closing	Illumination	Hosts
Jan-10-26	Public	4:58 PM	6:25 PM	12:42 AM	9:30 PM	51.1%	Ed Rumsey
Jan-17-26	Member	5:04 PM	6:30 PM	6:56 AM	9:30 PM	1.2%	Ed Rumsey
Feb-07-26	Public	5:23 PM	6:47 PM	11:28 PM	10:00 PM	69.1%	Jim Traweek & Jannet
Feb-14-26	Member	5:30 PM	6:53 PM	5:31 AM	10:00 PM	8.0%	Ed Rumsey
Mar-14-26	Member	6:52 PM	8:14 PM	5:03 AM	11:00 PM	20.3%	Igor von Nyssen
Mar-21-26	Public	6:57 PM	8:20 PM	(10:19 PM)	11:30 PM	10.8%	Ed Rumsey & Dave Wood
Apr-11-26	Public	7:12 PM	8:37 PM	3:32 AM	11:30 PM	36.3%	Ed Rumsey & Kin Searcy
Apr-18-26	Member	7:17 PM	8:44 PM	(9:13 PM)	12:00 AM	2.9%	Jim Traweek & Craig Ewing
May-09-26	Public	7:32 PM	9:05 PM	2:01 AM	12:00 AM	53.2%	Jim Traweek
May-16-26	Member	7:37 PM	9:12 PM	(8:03 PM)	12:00 AM	0.2%	Ed Rumsey & Kin Searcy
Jun-06-26	Public	7:50 PM	9:31 PM	12:31 AM	12:30 AM	69.0%	Ed Rumsey & Kin Searcy
Jun-13-26	Member	7:53 PM	9:35 PM	4:47 AM	12:30 AM	3.1%	Steven Myers
Jul-11-26	Member	7:55 PM	9:34 PM	3:30 AM	12:30 AM	10.8%	Ed & Kate Rumsey
Jul-18-26	Public	7:52 PM	9:29 PM	(10:47 PM)	12:30 AM	25.7%	Bob Roth
Aug-08-26	Public	7:37 PM	9:07 PM	2:19 AM	12:00 AM	22.1%	Ed Rumsey & Kin Searcy
Aug-15-26	Member	7:29 PM	8:58 PM	(9:14 PM)	12:00 AM	12.6%	Jim Traweek
Sep-05-26	Public	7:04 PM	8:28 PM	1:15 AM	11:30 PM	35.5%	Bob Roth
Sep-12-26	Member	6:55 PM	8:18 PM	(7:41 PM)	11:30 PM	3.6%	Paul Krizak
Oct-03-26	Public	6:27 PM	7:48 PM	12:17 AM	11:00 PM	50.0%	Mark Eby
Oct-10-26	Member	6:18 PM	7:39 PM	7:50 AM	10:30 PM	0.1%	Paul Krizak
Nov-07-26	Member	4:49 PM	6:13 PM	5:40 AM	9:30 PM	2.5%	Bob Roth
Nov-14-26	Public	4:44 PM	6:09 PM	(9:06 PM)	9:00 PM	27.2%	Jim Traweek
Dec-05-26	Member	4:39 PM	6:06 PM	4:33 AM	9:00 PM	10.3%	
Dec-12-26	Public	4:40 PM	6:08 PM	(7:57 PM)	9:00 PM	13.1%	

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 \$70 for Contributing Memberships; \$40 for Basic Membership; \$70 for Private Pads; \$5 for each Family membership.