

Skylights

Newsletter of the Astronomical Society of Northern New England



JUL 2025

Skylights Editor:
Paul Kursewicz



Member of NASA's
Night Sky Network



**Astronomical League
Member**

ASNNE MISSION

ASNNE is an incorporated, non-profit, scientific and educational organization with three primary goals:

- 1) To have fun sharing our knowledge and interest with others.
- 2) To provide basic education in astronomy and related sciences to all who are interested.
- 3) To promote the science of Astronomy.

What's Up In July

By Bernie Reim

The month of July is named after Julius Caesar and it used to be the fifth month of the year when March was the first month. For us in the northern hemisphere, July always marks the first full month of summer. There will be plenty of action in our night sky this month and many interesting events in store for all of us.

There is nothing quite like gazing deeply into a crystal clear and warm summer night with some understanding of the celestial wonders we are looking at to spark our imaginations and create a desire in us to learn more about what we are really looking at including the true nature of our celestial neighbors that share the sky and our little corner of the universe with us in our journeys through space and time.

You don't even have to wait until summer to experience this, but you would have to travel. I just spent 2 perfect nights camping out under the stars with warm and clear night skies in early March deep in the Everglades National Park at the very southern tip of Florida where the land finally runs out and turns into water. I was surrounded by exotic species of birds including storks and pelicans and trees draped with Spanish moss with lots of alligators and manatees nearby.

Even the sky looked very different because Polaris was only 25 degrees high, which is the latitude in that part of the Everglades. That opens up nearly 20 degrees of new sky below the Winter Hexagon, including Canopus in Carina, the second brightest star in our sky after Sirius in Canis Major.

The highlights for this July include brilliant Venus's tracking through the constellation of Taurus the Bull in the morning sky, another very low arcing full moon on July 10, a nice conjunction of Neptune, Saturn, and the moon on July 16 before sunrise, the asteroid Vesta arcing through Virgo and Libra in the evening sky. Mercury and Mars will be low in the evening sky in Cancer and Leo and there will be several nice conjunctions of the moon and planets as there usually are. Jupiter will return to our morning sky in western Gemini.

The last remaining good highlight for this month will be the Southern Delta Aquariid meteor shower which lasts from July 12 to August 23 but peaks on the last day of July towards the morning. Look southwest a few hours before sunrise on Thursday morning July 31 towards the

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constellations of Capricorn and Aquarius to see about 25 meteors per hour from a good dark-sky site. The radiant in the sky from which all of these meteors will emanate is right between those 2 constellations. The challenge will be to distinguish Delta Aquarids from Perseids which don't peak until August 12 of next month, but start towards the end of this month.

Venus now rises around 3 am in Taurus. Notice that our sister planet will be just to the right and below the famous Pleiades open star cluster and the planet Uranus will be right between this pair. Then keep watching as Venus tracks eastward in its normal or prograde motion through Taurus close to Aldebaran, its brightest star on the 14th.

Through a telescope you will notice that Venus starts this month 64 percent lit by the sun and it will have grown to 75 percent lit by the end of this month as it gets farther away from us on its faster orbit around the sun. However, it will actually appear a little fainter even as it is getting more illuminated because it is also getting farther away from us at the same time. Venus will be exactly 100 times brighter than nearby Saturn in Pisces. Saturn glows with a gentle golden hue at 0.9 magnitude in Pisces looking southeast 2 hours before sunrise and Venus is a brilliant white light at minus 4.1 magnitude. Every 5 magnitudes is a difference of exactly 100 times in brightness. Then keep watching as Venus migrates into Orion during the last 3 days of this month.

You can see Mercury in our evening sky near the Beehive open star cluster in Cancer the Crab, near where Mars was last month. Similar to Venus, Mercury also goes through phases like the moon because both Venus and Mercury are inferior planets located between Earth and the sun unlike any of our other planets which are all beyond the earth from the sun. Mercury starts the month at 45 percent lit, and it will be down to 22 percent lit by the 14th. It will reach its greatest eastern elongation from the sun at 26 degrees on the 4th. Then it will drop lower quickly and disappear, reaching inferior conjunction with the sun at the end of the month.

Mars starts the month at magnitude 1.4, low in the west after sunset in Leo. It was right next to Regulus in Leo last month which created a colorful and dramatic conjunction since Regulus is the 21st brightest star in our sky and is located right on the ecliptic.

We are pulling farther ahead of Mars now so it continues to shrink in our sky. The moon will be only 4 degrees southeast of the red planet on July 28. Mars was at its best at opposition back on January 16 of this year when it became just brighter than Sirius at minus 1.4 magnitude. It is 3 magnitudes or about 15 times fainter now than it was just half a year ago.

Mars has two moons, Phobos and Deimos. Phobos, at about 14 miles across is the larger and closer one. It is spiraling inward towards Mars at the rate of 6 feet per century, which is about half as fast as the moon is always moving farther away from the earth. At that rate there will be no more solar eclipses visible from our surface in about 100 million years. Phobos could smash into Mars or be torn apart by its gravity in about 40 million years. The other moon of Mars, Deimos at about 7 miles across is also a captured asteroid that is only temporarily masquerading as a moon of Mars. At some point Deimos will drift too far away from to be held by the gravity of Mars as a moon.

If you walk around on Deimos, you would only weigh a couple of ounces and you could run yourself into orbit since its escape velocity is only 12 miles per hour. Since Phobos is bigger, its escape velocity is higher, 24 miles per hour. Most of us can't run that fast but we could easily throw a baseball into orbit around Phobos.

Saturn and Neptune rise together at around midnight in Pisces the Fish. You can see Neptune in a good pair of binoculars, but to see its beautiful greenish-blue color along with the rings of Saturn right below it, you will need a small telescope. Neptune is another 2 billion miles beyond Saturn, which is nearly 1 billion miles away from Earth. You can see them both in the same field of view at low power through a telescope, which is very rare. I well remember that Saturn and Jupiter got so close together back on the winter solstice in 2020 that they were both visible in the same field of view in a telescope. Even though Saturn and Jupiter are fairly close every 20 years, that conjunction was the closest one in nearly 800 years, back in the "Dark Ages".

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What's Up "Continued from page 2"

The Southern Delta Aquariid meteor shower will peak on the morning of the last day of this month, Thursday the 31st. You can expect about 25 meteors per hour from a dark sky site. The moon will not interfere since it will be a waxing crescent and will set before midnight before this shower reaches it peak after midnight. This shower is caused by Comet 96P/Machholz, which orbit the sun every 5 and a quarter years. It was recently discovered by Donald Machholz in 1996. The meteor shower is created as the earth passes through part of its debris trail every year at the same time. When you see a meteor towards the end of July, the challenge is always to see if it is a Delta Aquariid emanating from Aquarius or an early Perseid emanating from Perseus the Hero in the north eastern sky.

July 2. First quarter moon is at 3:30 pm EDT.

July 3. Earth is at aphelion at 94.5 million miles from the sun at 4 pm today. It gets as close as 91.5 million miles at perihelion on January 4 each year. Venus passes 2 degrees south of Uranus this morning.

July 4. Henrietta Swan Leavitt was born on this day in 1879. She worked with the famous "Harvard Computers" to discover and develop the spectral classification system which gives us so much information about the stars. She went beyond that to also discover the period-luminosity relationship of Cepheid variable stars that we use to determine distances to stars and nearby galaxies. Edwin Hubble also used this method to discover that the Andromeda Galaxy is a separate galaxy and not just a nebula within our own galaxy.

July 10. Full moon is at 4:37 p.m. This is also called the Hay or Thunder Moon.

July 11. On this day in 1979 Skylab reentered our atmosphere, ending our first space station.

July 13. Venus passes 3 degrees north of Aldebaran this morning.

July 14. Saturn is stationary in Pisces today, beginning its retrograde, or westward motion. That will last until November 27 of this year.

July 16. The moon passes near Neptune and Saturn this morning.

July 17. Mercury is stationary in Leo, beginning its retrograde motion until August 10. The Canadian astronomer Wendy Freeman was born on this day in 1957. She does observational cosmology and is trying to figure out the nature of dark energy that is driving the

faster and faster expansion of the universe. Last quarter moon is at 8:38 p.m.

July 18. On this day in 1980 India became the 7th nation to launch a satellite.

July 19. Edward Pickering was born on this day in 1846. He led the "Harvard Computers" and discovered the first spectroscopic binary stars.

July 20. On this day in 1969 Armstrong and Aldrin became the first humans to land on the moon. We have only landed 10 more people since then and the Artemis mission will send humans to the moon again within a year or two. Viking 1 landed on Mars on this day in 1976. Seth Shostak was born on this day in 1943. He is an American astronomer that heads the SETI project look for extraterrestrial life.

July 21. The Canadian astronomer Sara Seager was born on this day in 1971. She teaches at MIT and works on chemical signals of exoplanets. The moon passes 7 degrees north of Venus this morning.

July 22. The moon passes 5 degrees north of Jupiter at midnight.

July 23. Vera Rubin was born on this day in 1928. A large survey telescope named in her honor just started operations a week ago and the results are already spectacular, far better than expected. This telescope will gather more data in its first year than all of the data ever gathered by all of our telescopes combined. It has already discovered 2100 asteroids in its first test run. It will eventually create a 3-d picture of our galaxy and the whole nearby universe as it will take a complete sky survey every 3 days and then start over again to see if anything has moved. Vera Rubin first discovered the evidence for dark matter by measuring the rotations of stars in our galaxy. Fritz Zwicky first proposed dark matter back in the 1930's.

July 24. New moon is at 3:11 p.m.

July 25. Pluto is at opposition. Alex Filippenko was born on this day in 1958. He developed methods to use Type 1A supernovae that two independent teams of astronomers won Nobel prizes in physics for in 2011 to show that the universe is expanding at an ever-increasing rate.

July 28. The moon passes 1.3 degrees south of Mars.

July 31. The Southern Delta Aquariid meteor shower peaks.



Moon Phases

July 2
First Quarter

July 10
Full

July 17
Last Quarter

July 24
New

Moon Data

July 4
Moon at apogee

July 11
Pluto 0.02° south
of Moon

July 16
Saturn 4° south
of Moon

Neptune 3° south
of Moon

July 20
Moon at perigee

Uranus 5° south
of Moon

July 21
Venus 7° south
of Moon

July 22
Jupiter 5° south
of Moon

July 28
Mars 1.3° north
of Moon

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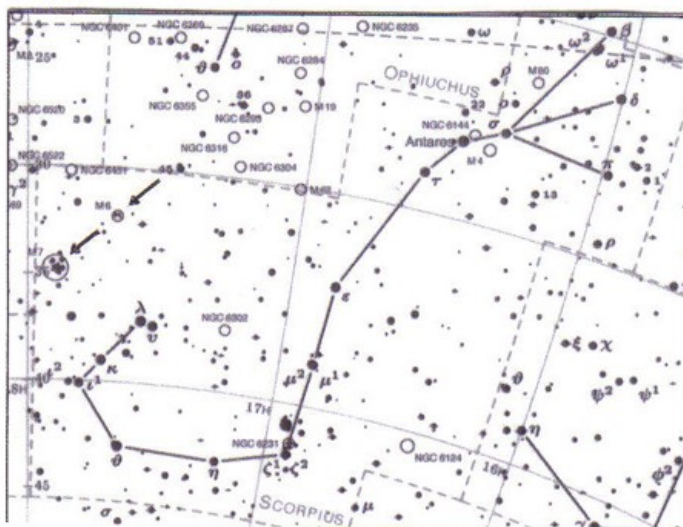
Skylights

Sky Object(s) of the Month - July 2025*

Messier 6 and Messier 7

By Glenn Chaple

Finder chart for M6 and M7
From Mag-7 Star Atlas
(Copyright Andrew L. Johnson)



The song "Love and Marriage," contains a line that goes, "you can't have one without the other." The words aptly describe the open clusters M6 and M7 in Scorpius. This cosmic "horse and carriage" lies in the southern sky above the Scorpion's stinger.

M7 is the brighter and larger of the two. With an overall magnitude of 3.3, it spans 80' – over twice the moon's apparent diameter. Readily seen with the unaided eye in the absence of bright moonlight or city lights, M7 was first reported by the Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemy nearly two millennia ago. "Ptolemy's Cluster" is a dazzling

sight in binoculars and small rich-field scopes – a striking aggregation of some 80 stars between magnitudes 6 and 10, immersed in a sparkling background of Milky Way stars. Because of its large size, M7 appears rather sparse in large-aperture scopes. Current studies indicate that M7 is 800 light-years away and is approximately 200 million years old.

Just five degrees northwest of M7 is its partner M6. This cluster, which is a magnitude fainter than M7 and one-third as large, lies just outside the glow of the Milky Way. Like M7, M6 is visible to the unaided eye and was recorded by Ptolemy. Rather than be saddled with the nick-name "Ptolemy's Cluster II," M6 was dubbed the "Butterfly Cluster." The outline formed by its brightest stars does indeed resemble the outstretched wings of this insect. M6, like M7, is at its visual best when viewed with binoculars or small RFTs. With the latter, you can see about 80 stars brighter than 11th magnitude. The most luminous of the cluster's member stars is the reddish-orange semiregular variable BM Scorpii, whose magnitude fluctuates from 5.5 to 7.0 in a cycle of roughly two years. M6 is twice as remote as M7 and half its age.

Though the splashier M7 seems to get better reviews, I found M6 to be a more attractive sight when recently observed in the 1.5o field encompassed by my 4-inch f/4 Astroscan at 35X. M6 appeared as a tight little group, while M7 seemed sparse. Oddly enough, I was more impressed by M7 when I first viewed the two clusters with a 3-inch f/10 reflector at 30X back in the summer of 1977. Compare M6 and M7 and see what you think. Now if I can just get that "Love and Marriage" melody out of my head!

Your comments on this column are welcome. E-mail me at gchaple@hotmail.com.

* The July 2025 Sky Object of the Month was previously featured as the July 2009 issue.

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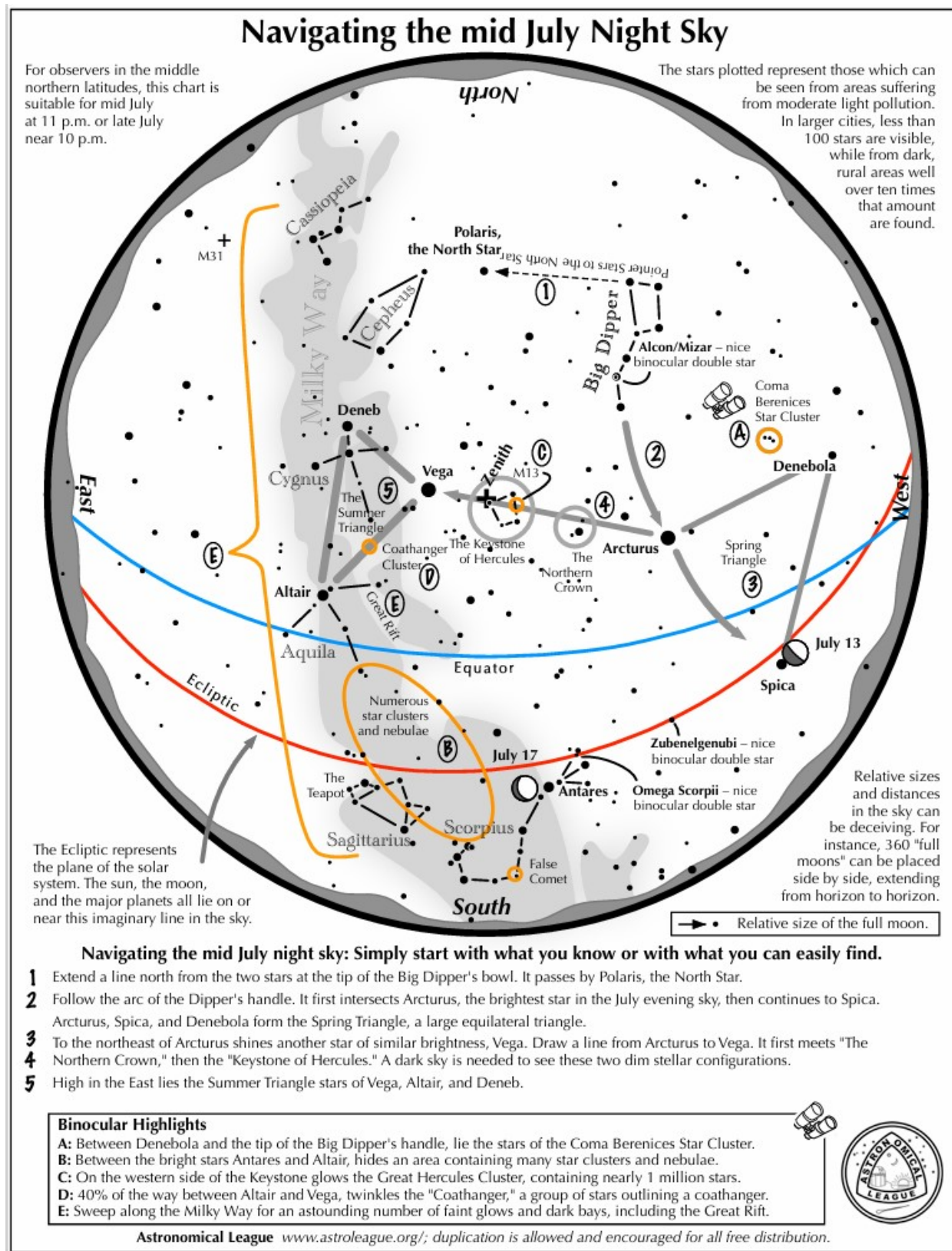
Wide Field Image

M6 & M7

Submitted by Paul Kursewicz



I took this 1 minute exposure with my camera some time ago at our observatory. Open Clusters M6 & M7 are seen in the mid and lower center region of my image. Some of the Milky Way can be seen, as well as, the Lagoon Nebula in the upper left corner. The straight line of multiple dots in the lower left edge of my image is a plane that flew by during the exposure.



Principal Meteor Showers in 2025

January 4
Quadrantids

April 22
Lyrids

May 6
Eta Aquarids

July 30
Delta Aquarids

August 12
Perseids

October 9
Draconid

October 21
Orionids

November 9
Taurids

November 18
Leonids

November 26
Andromedids

December 14
Geminids

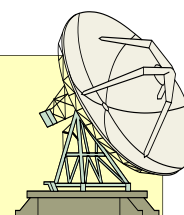
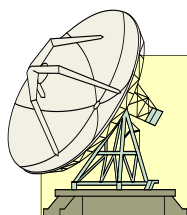
December 22
Ursids

Note: Dates are for maximum

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership fees are for the calendar year beginning in January and ending in December. **Dues (see page 18 for prices) are payable to the treasurer during November for the upcoming year.** New members who join during or after the month of July shall pay half the annual fee, for the balance of the year. Checks should be made payable to the Astronomical Society of Northern New England (A.S.N.N.E.). If you would like to mail in your dues, use the form on page 18. Or you can use PayPal via asnne.astronomy@gmail.com

A Member who has not paid current dues by the January meeting will be dropped from membership, (essentially a two-month grace period.) Notice of this action shall be given to the Member by the Treasurer. Reinstatement shall be by payment of currently due dues.



Got any News?

Skylights Welcomes Your Input.

Here are some suggestions:

***Book reviews -- Items for sale -- New equipment --
Ramblings -- Star parties -- Observing -- Photos.***

Our club has Merchandise for Sale at: <https://www.cafepress.com/shop/ASNNE/products>



**ALL money raised goes to our operating fund.
Any design can be put on any item.**

Contact David Bianchi dadsnorlax@yahoo.com for further details.



This article is distributed by NASA Night Sky Network

The Night Sky Network program supports astronomy clubs across the USA dedicated to astronomy outreach. Visit nightsky.jpl.nasa.org to find local clubs, events, and more!

July's Night Sky Notes: Spy the Scorpion

By: Kat Troche

As summer deepens in the Northern Hemisphere, a familiar constellation rises with the galactic core of the Milky Way each evening: Scorpius the Scorpion. One of the twelve zodiacal constellations, Scorpius contains many notable objects, making it an observer's delight during the warmer months. Here are some items to spy in July:



The star map of the Scorpius constellation highlights the star Antares and several notable deep-sky objects like the Rho Ophiuchi Complex, Messier 4, the Cat's Paw Nebula, and Caldwell 76, the Baby Scorpion Cluster. Credit: Stellarium Web

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Antares: referred to as “the heart of the scorpion,” this supergiant has a distinct reddish hue and is visible to the naked eye. If you have good skies, try to split this binary star with a medium-sized telescope. Antares is a double star with a white main-sequence companion that comes in at a 5.4 magnitude.

Messier 4: one of the easiest globular clusters to find, M4 is the closest of these star clusters to Earth at 5,500 light years. With a magnitude of about 5.6, you can spot this with a small or medium-sized telescope in average skies. Darker skies will reveal the bright core. Use Antares as a guide star for this short trip across the sky.

Caldwell 76: If you prefer open star clusters, locate C76, also known as the Baby Scorpion Cluster, right where the ‘stinger’ of Scorpius starts to curve. At a magnitude of 2.6, it is slightly brighter than M4, albeit smaller, and can be spotted with binoculars and the naked eye under good sky conditions.



A digital map of the Rho Ophiuchi Complex. Credit: Stellarium Web

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Lastly, if you have an astrophotography set up, capture the [Cat's Paw Nebula](#) near the stinger of Scorpius. You can also capture the [Rho Ophiuchi cloud complex](#) in the nearby constellation Ophiuchus. Brilliant Antares can be found at the center of this wondrous structure.

Manaiakalani

While many cultures tell tales of a 'scorpion' in the sky, several Polynesian cultures see the same stars as the demigod Māui's fishhook, [Manaiakalani](#). It is said that Māui didn't just use his hook for giant fish in the sea, but to pull new islands from the bottom of the ocean. There are many references to the Milky Way representing a fish. As Manaiakalani rises from the south-east, it appears to pull the great celestial fish across a glittering sea of stars.

Measure Your Darkness

While you can use smartphone apps or dedicated devices like a Sky Quality Meter, Scorpius is a great constellation to measure your sky darkness with! On a clear night, can you trail the curve of the tail? Can you see the scorpion's heart? Use our free printable [Dark Sky Wheel](#), featuring the stars of Scorpius on one side and Orion on the other for measurements during cooler months. You can find this resource and more in the [Big Astronomy Toolkit](#).

Point and Shoot Camera Astro-Imaging (no telescope)

Canon PowerShot SX50 HS

Submitted By Paul Kursewicz

Andromeda Galaxy (M31)

RAW Mode, FL 900mm, f/3.5, ISO 1200, 18 x 3min, 10-18-17

[Going further through the Years]



Almost 8 years ago I took this image of M31 using a SX50 point-and-shoot camera. I was very impressed with the image. However, looking at it again today I see vignetting. I also see a lack of color in the stars, and in the galaxy itself. Over the years I have improved my photo editing techniques and have acquired several new editing programs. Knowing now that I can do better than this, I modified this image. My updated results can be seen on the next page.

“Continued on page 12”

Point and Shoot Camera Astro-Imaging (no telescope)

Canon PowerShot SX50 HS

Submitted By Paul Kursewicz

Andromeda Galaxy (M31)

Updated on 6-13-25



This is my original 2017 image, recently modified. If you are willing to put in the time and effort in the digital darkroom, it can be very rewarding. I will probably modify more of my old images. Especially during those times of clouds and smoke filled skies. There are two other galaxies shown in my image. The brightest and largest is M110, it is seen just above M31. The second and closest one to M31 is M32. In my image it looks like a large bright fuzzy star sitting on the outer edge of the spiral arm. The Andromeda Galaxy is situated in the constellation that bears its name, and spans approximately 220,000 ly.

cloud-scapes

Submitted by Paul Kursewicz



I had brought my truck in for service at the dealership. On the way out I snapped this picture of a beautiful cloud formation.

Guest Starparty 6-30-25



On Monday, June 30th five club members (Larry, Dave, Ian, Bernie, and Paul) met at the observatory to host a starparty for a family of four. Ian also brought a guest. So, we had a total of ten participants. The sky stayed pretty clear for most of the night. Ian and Bernie each brought a SeeStar50. We had some great views from each scope. We also used both of the observatory scopes. All had a great time.



Club Meeting & Star Party Dates

Date	Subject	Location
July 11	<u>ASNNE Club Meeting:</u> Business Meeting TBD. Club Meeting: No club meeting on Friday July 4th. Instead our July club meeting will be held at our Observatory on the 11th where we will have our annual club BBQ and Picnic. Bring your own food and drink. Gas grills will be available for use. In the past we started the BBQ between 5pm and 6pm. If it's clear that night we will have a starparty. If it rains, we will meet at The New School for our usual club meeting. Bernie Reim - "What's UP" Astro Shorts: (news, stories, jokes, reports, questions, photos, observations etc.)	Talmage Observatory at Starfield West Kennebunk, Me.
Last Month	Last month members met at The New School and on Zoom. Our guest speaker was Eric Levin. Eric gave a talk about Cosmic Expansion — a New Look at the Hubble Constant and the Cosmic Microwave Background.	
July 25	Club/Public Star Party: Weather permitting. Rain date June 26.	Talmage Observatory at Starfield West Kennebunk, Me.

Directions to ASNNE event locations

Directions to The New School in Kennebunk [38 York Street (Rt1) Kennebunk, ME]

For directions to The New School you can use this link to the ASNNE NSN page and then click on "get directions" from the meeting location. Enter your starting location to generate a road map with complete directions. It works great. http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/club-view.cfm?Club_ID=137

Directions to Talmage Observatory at Starfield [Alewife Road, Kennebunk, ME]

From North:

Get off turnpike at exit 32, (Biddeford) turn right on Rt 111. Go 5 miles and turn left on Rt 35. Go 2 miles on Rt 35 over Kennebunk River to very sharp 90 degree left turn. The entrance to the Starfield Observatory site is at the telephone pole at the beginning of the large field on the left. Look for the ASNNE sign on the pole.

From South:

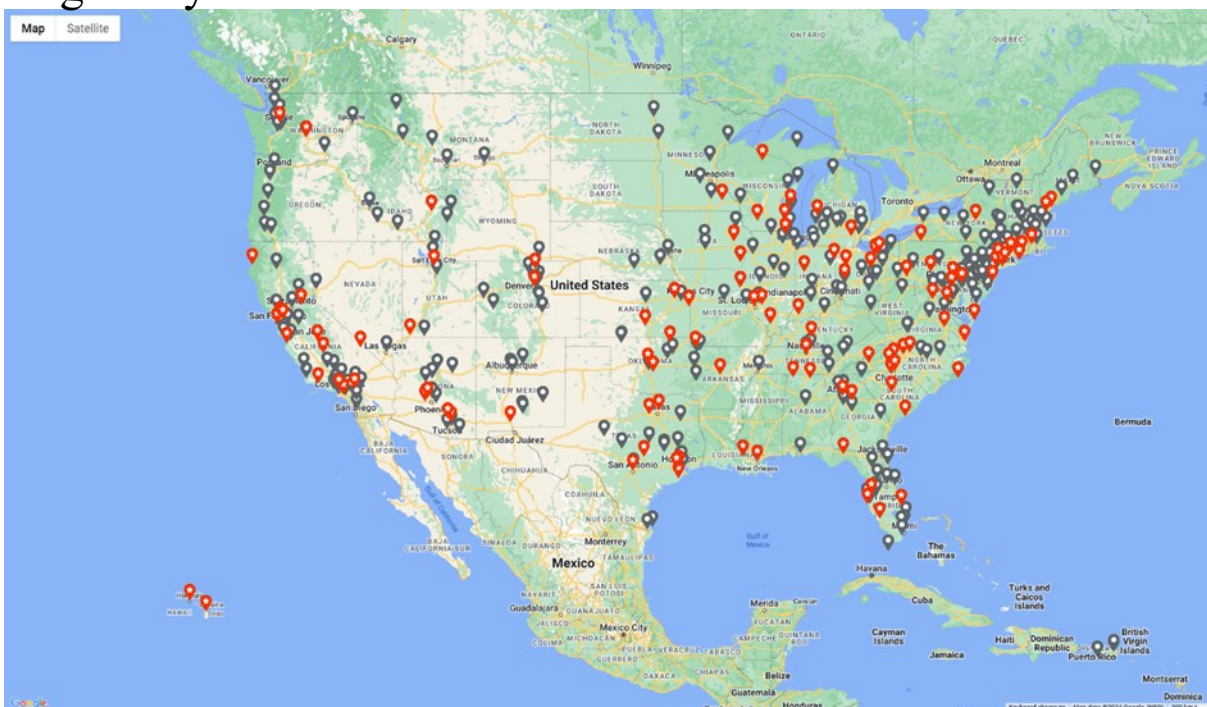
Get off the turnpike at exit 25 in Kennebunk. After toll both turn right on Rt 35. Go up over the turnpike and immediately turn right on Rt 35. About 4 miles along you will crest a hill and see a large field on your right. Continue until you reach the end of the field. Turn right into the Starfield Observatory site at the last telephone pole along the field. Look for the ASNNE sign on the pole. If you come to a very sharp 90 degree right turn you have just passed the field.

NSN also hosts archived video trainings on these toolkits and other topics via its YouTube channel and a [monthly webinar series](#) with scientists from various institutions worldwide. Lastly, a monthly segment called [Night Sky Notes](#) is produced for clubs to share with their audiences via newsletters and mailing lists.

Sharing the Universe

In 2007, a National Science Foundation grant funded further research into astronomy club needs. From that came three club resources: the [Growing Your Astronomy Club](#) and Getting Started with Outreach video series, an updated website with a national calendar, and club and event coordination. Now, you can find [hundreds of monthly events](#) nationwide, including virtual events you can join from anywhere.

Night Sky Network: Current and Future

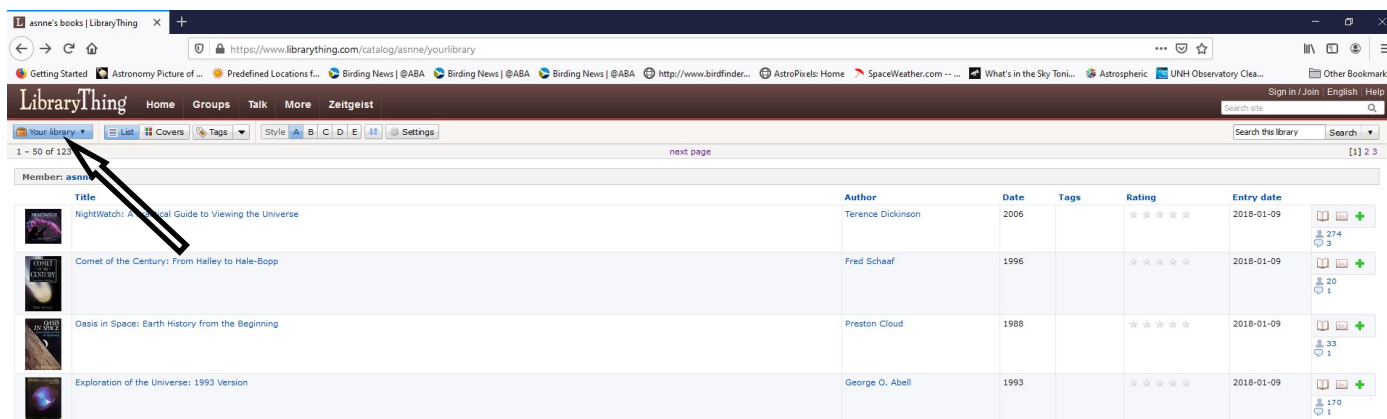


Map of Night Sky Network clubs within the United States as of November 2024

As of November 2024, NSN has over 400 clubs as far north as Washington State, west as Hawaii, and south as far as Puerto Rico. Astronomy clubs worldwide share the wonder of the day and night sky with their communities, and the Night Sky Network is happy to support US clubs with public engagement tools. Through their outreach efforts, member clubs have reached more than 7 million people to date, and the community is still going strong. Find an upcoming star party near you on our [new public website](#).

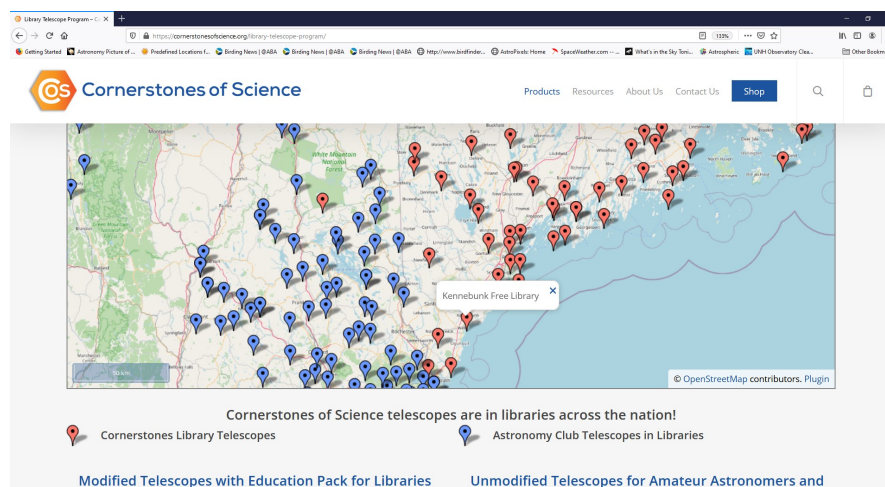
Astronomy Club & Library Resources

Our club has a library of astronomy books which are stored at The New School in Kennebunk, Maine (our monthly club meeting location). To request a book(s), contact one of the club officers. A listing of books is provided here: <https://www.librarything.com/profile/asnne> . After clicking on the link, a window will open. Click on “Your library” near the upper left corner (as shown by the arrow below). Then scroll down to the end of the page to go to the next page.



Would you like to borrow a telescope? While many astronomy clubs may have a scope to lend out, there are also many libraries which have telescopes for their guests to use. Here are a couple of links.

The following link will bring up an active map (see screen shot below) of the USA showing the libraries which have telescopes to lend out: <https://cornerstonesofscience.org/library-telescope-program/>



The below link will show a list of known participating library locations for the state of Maine.
<https://www.librarytelescope.org/locations/usa/maine>

To join **ASNNE**, please fill out the below membership form. *Checks should be made payable to: Astronomical Society of Northern New England (A.S.N.N.E).* For more details, please visit our website:

<http://www.asnne.org>



Astronomical Society of Northern New England
P.O. Box 201
Kennebunk, ME 04043-1338

2025 Membership Registration Form

(Print, fill out and mail to address above) or Use PayPal via asnne.astronomy@gmail.com

Name(s for family): _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip code: _____

Telephone # _____

E-mail: _____

Membership (check one):

Individual \$50 _____ Family \$ 60 _____ Student under 21 years of age \$10 _____ Donation _____

Total Enclosed _____

Tell us about yourself:

1. Experience level: Beginner _____ Some Experience _____ Advanced _____

2. Do you own any equipment? (Y/N) And if so, what types?

3. Do you have any special interests in Astronomy?

4. What do you hope to gain by joining ASNNE?

5. How could ASNNE best help you pursue your interest in Astronomy?

6. ASNNE's principal mission is public education. We hold many star parties for schools and the general public for which we need volunteers for a variety of tasks, from operating telescopes to registering guests to parking cars. Would you be interested in helping?

Yes _____ No _____

7. ASNNE maintains a members-only section of its web site for names, addresses and interests of members as a way for members to contact each other. Your information will not be used for any other purpose. Can we add your information to that portion of our web site?

Yes _____ No _____

