

Snake River Skies

The Monthly Newsletter of the Magic Valley Astronomical Society.

March 2026

Membership Meeting

March 14th at the Herrett Center,
College of Southern Idaho main
campus at 7:00pm

Centennial Observatory

See Inside for Details

Faulkner Planetarium

See Inside for Details

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M-51 imaged by
Rick Widmer & Ken Thomason
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www.mvastro.org

March 2026!

Welcome! March begins with a spectacular total lunar eclipse visible across all of the Americas and Asia including Australia and New Zealand. Venus emerges into the evening sky as Saturn moves out, with the two making a close conjunction on the 8th. And Jupiter remains in prime position for observation from now well into April.

1. Venus returns to the evening sky while Saturn reaches conjunction. Jupiter continues to dazzle in Gemini. And a total lunar eclipse falls across much of the world.
2. The possibly spectacular Comet C/2026 A1 (MAPS) continues its approach to the inner solar system. Now at a dim 13th magnitude, it may appear extremely bright for a day or so in early April. [Bob King at Sky & Telescope has an update.](#) Stay tuned!
3. Enjoy this short and intriguing list of the [ten best features to see on the Moon](#), from BBC's *Sky at Night Magazine*.
4. With the Pleiades in prime viewing positions, [let's ponder the many names of this ancient star cluster](#) and how to see it for yourself in a telescope.
5. Finally, researchers published an fascinating paper that [explains how the massive black hole at the center of the Milky Way might really just be dark matter.](#)

In this issue you'll find what to see in the night sky this month...

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Monthly Event Calendar - March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Lunar occultation of Regulus	3 Total lunar eclipse Full Worm Moon	4	5 The Moon at aphelion	6	7 Mercury at inferior solar conjunction Conjunction of Venus and Neptune
8 Daylight Saving Time Starts 	9	10 The Moon at apogee Jupiter ends retrograde motion	11 Moon at Last Quarter 	12	13	14 MVAS General Mtg. 7:00p at the Herrett Center . Centennial Observatory Star Party
15	16 The Moon at perihelion	17 St. Patrick's Day 	18 New Moon 	19	20 Vernal equinox Conjunction of the Moon and Venus	21 Asteroid 20 Massalia at opposition
22 Neptune at solar conjunction The Moon at perigee	23 Close approach of the Moon and M45	24	25 Moon at First Quarter 	26 Mars at perihelion Conjunction of the Moon and Jupiter	27 Close approach of the Moon and M44	28 Earth Hour Telescope Viewing 
29	30	31				

Full Worm Moon. This name is traditionally thought to refer to the earthworms that appear as the soil warms in spring. Alternatively, during his travels in the 1760s, Captain Jonathan Carver wrote that this Moon name refers to a different sort of “worm”—larvae—which emerge from the bark of trees and other winter hideouts. **Sore Eyes Moon** is a Dakota, Lakota, and Assiniboine term referring to the blinding rays of the sun on snow. **Sugar Moon** (Ojibwe) is the time when maple sap runs. **Wind Strong Moon** (Pueblo) refers to the strong windy days that come at this time of year, which is very true in the Magic Valley.

Be Safe - Go Outside - Explore Your Universe

Total Lunar Eclipse of March 3rd 2026

Observing the eclipse!

The Moon will pass through the Earth's shadow between 01:45 and 07:23 MST, creating a total lunar eclipse. The eclipse will be visible any location where the Moon is above the horizon at the time, including Boise in the western sky. The Moon will lie 29° above the horizon at the midpoint of the eclipse.

The table below lists the times when each part of the eclipse will begin and end.

Local time	UTC	
01:44	08:44	Moon begins to enter the Earth's penumbra
02:30	09:30	The Centennial Observatory opens for viewing - the moon's left edge will be subtly darkened.
02:50	09:50	Moon begins to enters the Earth's umbra. Partial eclipse begins.
04:04	11:04	Totality, with the moon fully in the umbra, appearing dark red-orange (blood).
04:34	11:34	Midpoint of eclipse
05:03	12:03	Moon begins to leave the Earth's umbra. Total eclipse ends.
06:17	13:17	Moon fully outside the Earth's umbra. Partial eclipse ends.
07:18	14:18	The moon sets, appearing completely normal despite still being slightly in penumbral shadow
07:23	14:23	Moon leaves the Earth's penumbra

A total [lunar eclipse](#) will occur at the Moon's [descending node](#) of orbit on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, with an umbral magnitude of 1.1526. This eclipse is a member of Saros series 133. The position of the Moon at the midpoint of the eclipse is as follows:

Object	Right Ascension	Declination	Constellation	Angular Size
The Moon	10h 55m	6° 31' N	Leo	31'12"

The coordinates above are given in J2000.0.

During the eclipse, the Moon will occult [NGC 3423](#) over North America. [Deep-sky objects](#) are rarely occulted during a total eclipse from any given spot on Earth.

Important note: This event is weather dependent. Call the Centennial Observatory Star Line at 732-MOON(6666) for the latest on upcoming events. Cannot view the eclipse? You may view via streaming online at the following links:

Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles <https://www.youtube.com/live/JeOlqcK5Edg> this is one of the best.

TimeandDate.com <https://www.timeanddate.com/live/eclipse-lunar-2026-march-3>

Night Sky This Month – March 2026

1-2 March 2026. The fattening Moon lies just west of Regulus. The pair move closer together as the night and morning progress and make a close approach in the western sky as dawn arrives.

3 March. Full Moon, 11:38 UT (the full 'Worm Moon').

5-19 March. As the Moon moves out of the way in the evening sky, northern observers far from city lights can again spot the zodiacal light in the western sky after sunset. This whitish wedge-shaped glow emerges at a steep angle to the western horizon this time of year. It's caused by sunlight reflected by fine dust grains along the plane of the solar system. The zodiacal light is brightest closer to the Sun, so look for it about half an hour after the end of evening twilight as it extends up from the horizon towards the constellation Taurus.

6 March. A fat gibbous Moon lies about 4° west of the star Spica in Virgo.

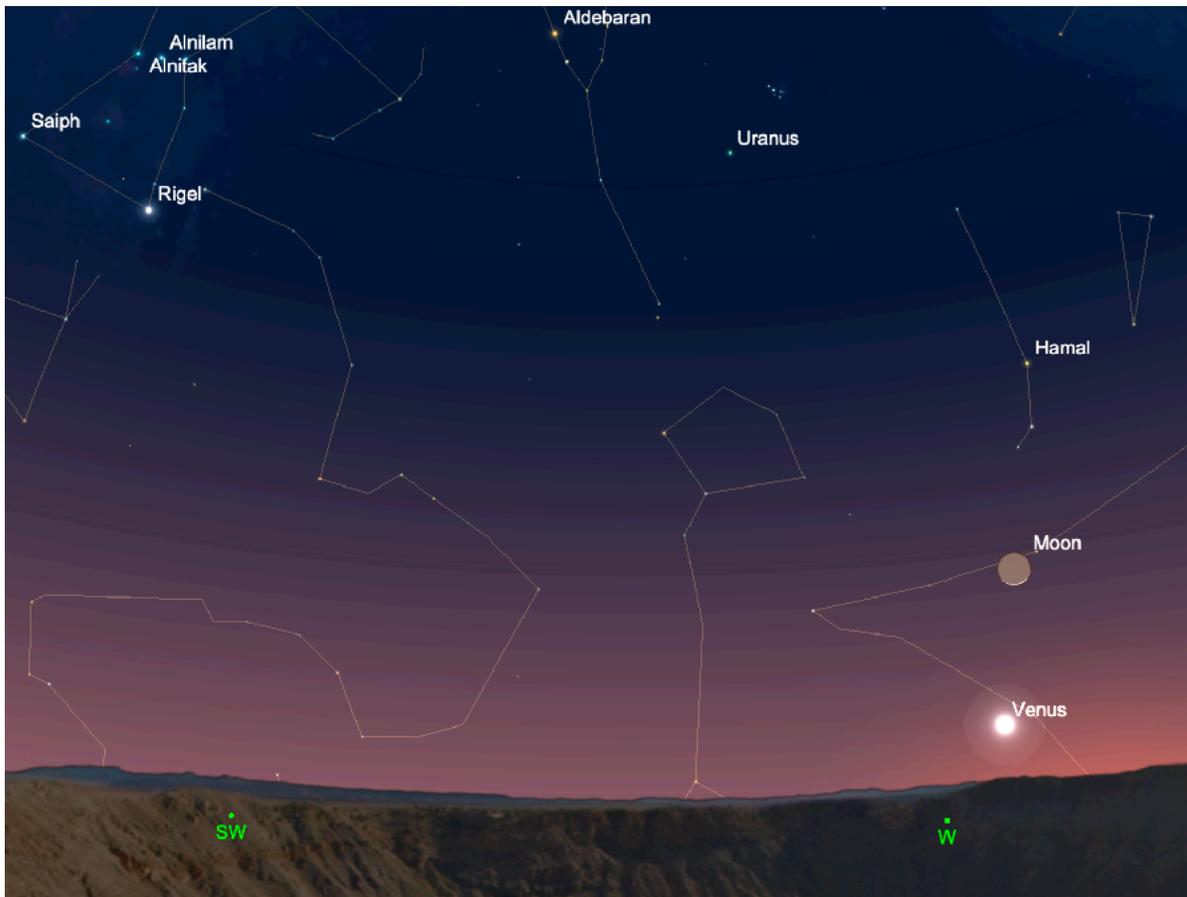
8 March. Daylight Saving Time begins today (Sunday), setting clocks ahead by one hour in much of North America and making all of us sleepier! Get your last look at Saturn this evening. It lies about 1° south of Venus in the western twilight sky after sunset. While it shines at magnitude +1.0, you might need binoculars or a telescope to extract it from the twilight. The planet moves closer to the Sun on the way to conjunction later in March.

10 March. If you're up early, look towards the southeast to see a nearly last-quarter Moon near the smoldering red-giant star Antares in Scorpius.

11 March. Last Quarter Moon, 09:38 UT

19 March. New Moon, 01:23 UTC.

20 March. The equinox arrives at 14:46 UT as the Sun crosses the celestial equator moving north. This marks the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere and autumn in the southern hemisphere.



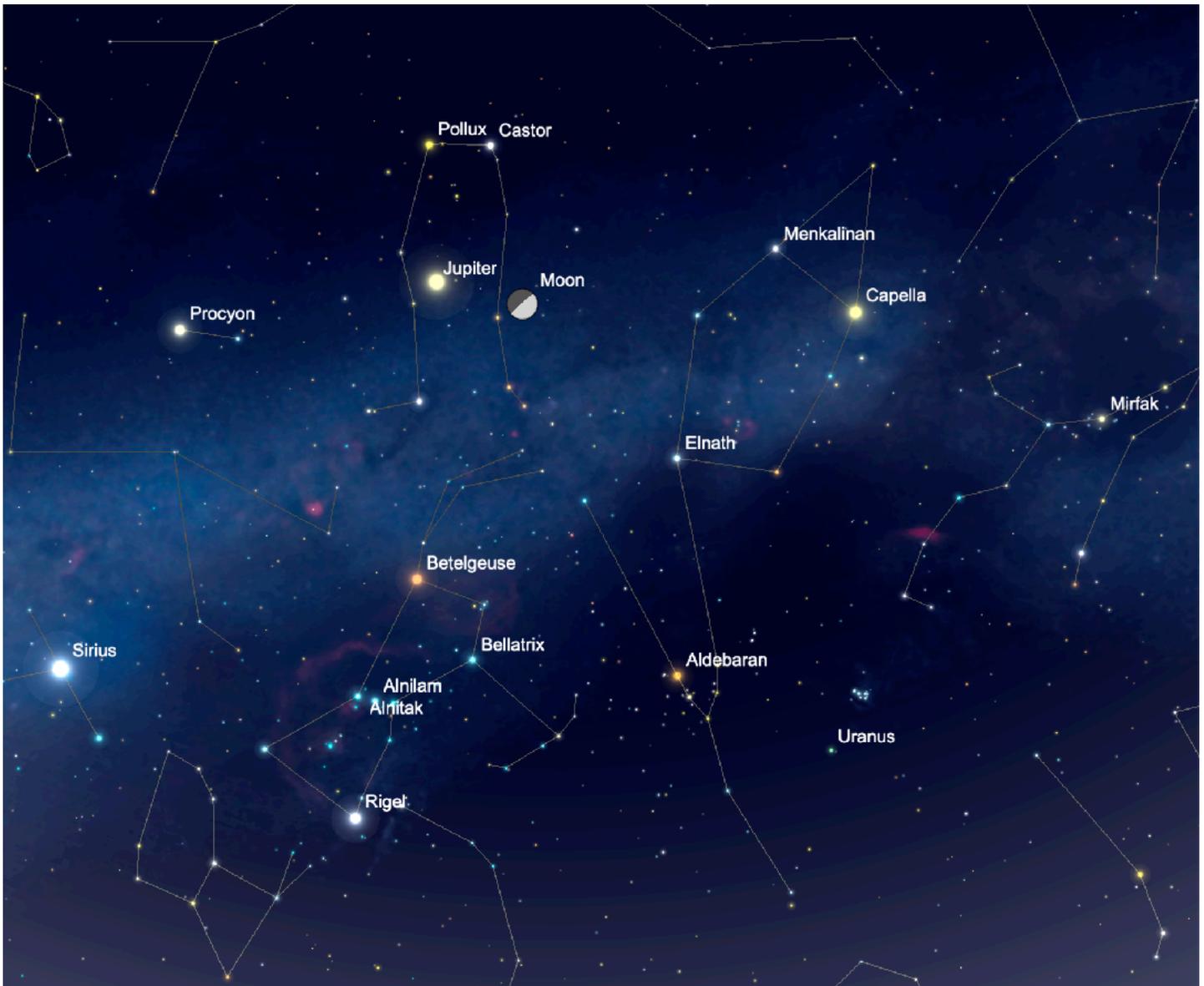
The crescent Moon and Venus in the western sky after sunset on March 20, 2026.

19-20 March. Look for a very thin crescent Moon above Venus in the western sky after sunset. Venus continues to move higher and grow brighter in the western twilight sky from now through September. This month, the planet shines at magnitude -3.9 and in a telescope shows a disk nearly full illuminated and about 10" in diameter.

22 March. The waxing crescent Moon lies about 6° from the Pleiades in the west-northwestern sky after sunset.

25 March. First Quarter Moon, 19:18 UTC

25 March. Look overhead to see the Moon and brilliant Jupiter near the stars Castor and Pollux in Gemini. Jupiter resumed prograde motion on the 11th and now moves eastward against the background stars. The planet remains in a prime position for observation in a telescope, especially for northern-hemisphere observers, and shines at an impressive magnitude -2.4. Saturn reaches conjunction with the Sun. It will slowly emerge in the morning sky in the coming weeks.



Jupiter lies between the waist stars of Gemini in March 2026.

Herrett Center for Arts and Science

Centennial Observatory



Upcoming Events

All events are weather permitting

Telescope Tuesday	Centennial Observatory	Tuesday, February 10, 2026	6:30-9:00 p.m.	\$1.50, ages 6 & under free, or free with planetarium admission
Monthly Free Star Party	Centennial Observatory	Saturday, February 14, 2026	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Free
Telescope Tuesday	Centennial Observatory	Tuesday, February 24, 2026	7:00-9:00 p.m.	\$1.50, ages 6 & under free, or free with planetarium admission

Faulkner Planetarium

[Now Showing](#)

Find Current Shows following the (ages 18-59): \$7.50 Seniors (ages 60+): \$6.50 Children (ages 2-17): \$5.50 CSI students (w/ activity card): \$5.50 Children under age 2: FREE. Buy your

*50% discount for Planetary

- Assistive listening
- Open captioning shows.
- No food, drink, or late entry.
- Dark conditions and intense for younger



link above. Admission: Adults (ages 60+): \$6.50 Children (ages activity card): \$5.50 Children [tickets](#) online.

Society members and families.

devices available upon request. available upon request for some

entry. audio/visual effects may be too children.

Astrophotography by BAS Member, Chris Peterson

Hello everyone!

My name is Chris Peterson, and I live in Caldwell, Idaho, with my lovely wife Taryn. Our two children have grown up and moved out to fulfill their life adventures.

My interest in Astronomy started young, gazing up at objects flying across the blue sky. My favorite being the “Yellow Banana” (Hughes Air West DC-9) on base to final over my house. This turned into a fascination with outer space and the mysteries of the Cosmos.

As a kid, I watched a plethora of outer space shows and movies. Battlestar Galactica and Buck Rogers were a couple of my favorites. Star Trek was too predictable for me, because 24 minutes into the episode the good guys always won... Whatever... Star Wars came out in 1977, which threw gas on my already lit fire for flight and outer space. I started building and collecting model rockets, and anything else that would fly.

In the early 80's, my parents gave me my first telescope, which was a Bushnell refractor. It was a crude beginner scope, but perfect for me to learn with. Around 1983, at the age of 13, I joined Boise Astronomical Society and started going to star parties with members who would pick me up along the way. After graduating from high school in 1988, I pursued an aviation career as a Corporate Pilot.

Fast forward to 2021

Taryn and I were en-route to Reno on a motorcycle selling trip, when I combed through the local Craigslist ads. I stumbled upon an Orion EON 130mm triplet refractor for a very nice price. I had a pile of cash from the motorcycle sale and was encouraged by my wife to purchase it. So, I met the guy in a casino parking lot and started handing him 100's. You can imagine what that looked like. HAHA!

Up to this point I have been studying both visual and astrophotography, which is a huge learning curve to say the least. I love all aspects of astronomy and feel they have their place in the hobby.

As I age and my eyes struggle, I am appreciative of EAA. I can view a screen in addition to an eyepiece and not have to quit. I enjoy gifting telescopes to the little kids in my life, especially those in our Sunday school class. I look forward to seeing you all at Star Parties!

Chris

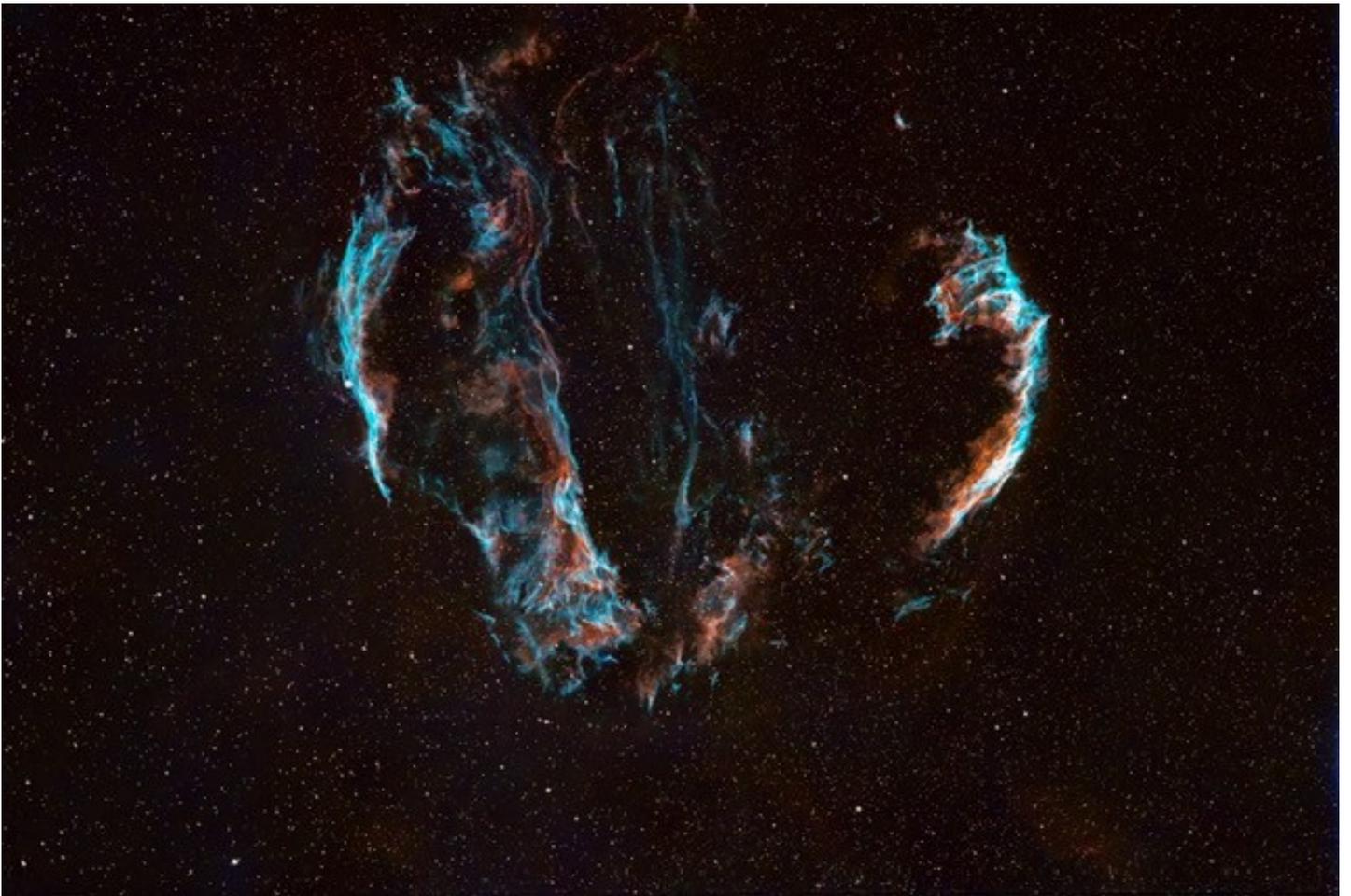


Set-up at the Idaho Star Party.



Idaho Star Party at Bruneau Dunes Below: Photo of M31





Veil Nebula Complex



Set-up for Solar

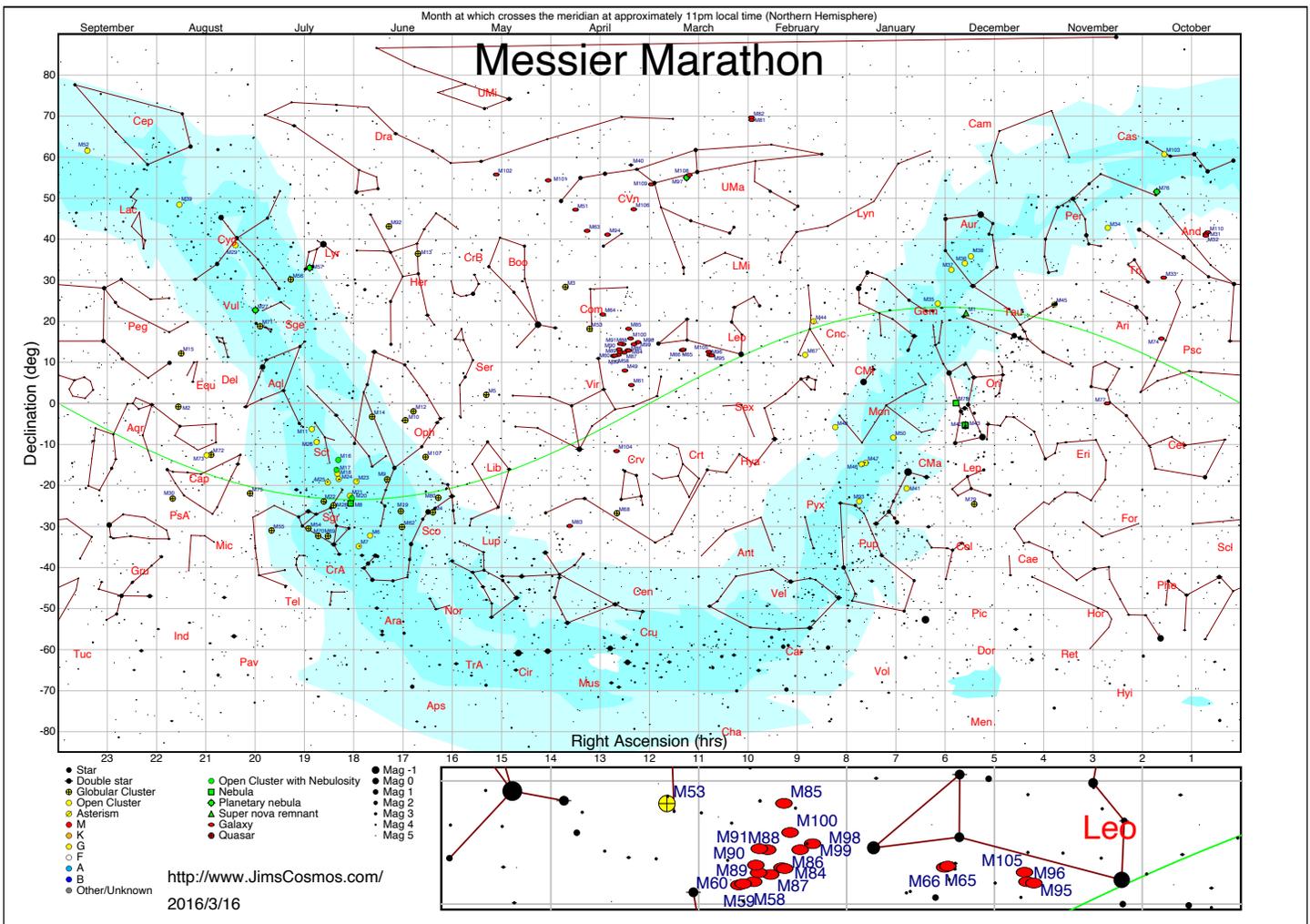
Phil Harrington's Cosmic Challenge



This month's suggested aperture range:
All are welcome

Target	Object Type	RA	DE	Constellation	Magnitude	Size
Messier Marathon	You name it	Yes	Yup	Many	2nd to 11th	1.4' × 1.0' to 190'x60'

Once a year, around the Vernal Equinox, the Sun's position in the sky makes it possible to see nearly the entire Messier catalog in a single sunset-to-sunrise observing session. That is on March 20 this year. On that day, the Sun lies in Pisces, just two days past new Moon, allowing observers to spot 108 of Charles Messier's 109 deep-sky objects in one night. Some add NGC 5866 in Draco as M102 to the marathon, to round up to 110 objects. Only M30, a faint globular cluster in Capricornus, is lost to solar glare for most northern observers. (Technically, M30 can be seen from locations south of about 30° north latitude.)



This challenge, now known as the Messier Marathon, began in the late 1970s when amateur astronomers realized that a brief window around the March equinox offered this rare opportunity. Who ran the very first marathon is still uncertain. There are reports of attempts by a club in Spain in the late 1960s, though no documentation survives. The first recorded marathon took place in 1977, when Tom Hoffelder, Tom Reiland, and Ed Flynn of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh logged impressive totals of 98, 101, and 103 objects, respectively.

Independently, the late comet hunter [Don Machholz](#) suggested the idea in the September 1978 issue of the San Jose Astronomer, the newsletter of the [San Jose Astronomical Association](#). He subsequently recorded 107 Messier objects in one night.

The concept reached a wider audience when the late [Walter Scott Houston](#) mentioned it in his Deep-Sky Wonders column in Sky & Telescope (March 1979). From there, the Messier Marathon evolved into a global tradition: part endurance test, part celebration of deep-sky observing, and a race against the rotating Earth.

DEEP-SKY WONDERS

WHEN MISS WILLIAMSON began her Messier Club in Montreal during the 1940's, no one anticipated how popular the idea would become. Today there are several dozen groups that award certificates to persons who have observed all the 110 Messier objects. What is the next challenge for observers?

One suggestion comes from Tom C. Hoffelder and the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh. Near the March equinox, club members hold an informal competition to locate the most Messier objects by a single observer during a dusk-to-dawn marathon.

At this time of year it is possible to see more than 100 objects from the Messier catalogue. Mr. Hoffelder has seen 101 on the night of March 25-26, E. D. Flynn 98 on March 24-25, and C. T. Reiland 103 on April 11-12. Needless to say, the sky has to be clear down to the horizon, and unobstructed by trees or hills. There must be little interference from moonlight. This year, the March new moon comes on the 28th, well placed for anyone interested in a Messier marathon.

There is only one object, M30 in Capricornus, which cannot be seen at this time of year. The diagram on the facing page shows the apparent horizon near the March equinox for an observer at 40° north latitude. Also plotted are several Messier objects which will be difficult to locate.

Along the sunset horizon are six marginally visible objects. The Andromeda trio of galaxies M31, M32, and M110 are also above the horizon in the morning, but they are not as well placed then. It is best to search for M74 and M33 with low magnification — try using your finder scope. M77 in Cetus may be the easiest of these evening objects.

Before sunrise, four Messier objects challenge the marathon observer. M73 in Aquarius is a group of four stars that should be within the reach of a 10-inch telescope in twilight. The others, M55, M72, and M73, are all difficult. If you

hope to pass the 100 mark, it will be necessary to glimpse at least two objects on the above list.

Your success will depend a lot on your experience. You should already have observed most of the Messier objects. A guide such as *The Messier Album* by John Mallas and Evered Kreimer (available from Sky Publishing Corporation) is very useful. Also a great help is a list prepared by Mr. Hoffelder which gives the best order in which to search for the objects. For a copy of the list, send him a long, self-addressed envelope with 28 cents postage at 6782 S.W. Basin Ct., Stuart, Florida 33494.

The objects which Mr. Hoffelder, who used a 10-inch f/5.6 reflector, could not find during his marathon try were M74, M77, M33, and M110 in the evening sky. In dawn he missed M55, M30, M72, and M73. Mr. Reiland found his 103 objects with a 6-inch f/6. If you try this marathon, write me about your results.

If an all-night observing session in March is not for you, why not meet the challenge of a group of galaxies in eastern Canes Venatici? They should be moderately easy for most amateurs to find.

Start with NGC 5377 at right ascension 13h 54.3m, declination +47° 27' (1950 coordinates). This 11th-magnitude galaxy is about 3' long, and easy to find with my 4-inch Clark refractor. If your telescope is on a carefully adjusted equatorial mounting, there is a good way to locate this elongated spindle, for it has the same declination as the famous Whirlpool galaxy, M51, at 13h 27.8m. After centering M51 in your eyepiece, NGC 5377 is only a 4½° sweep to the east. Norton's *Star Atlas* plots this object with the Herschel designation 187¹.

Even easier to find are a pair of galaxies southeast of Alpha Canum Venaticorum. Set your finder on this 3rd-magnitude star and move 2½° east to the triplet of stars with Flamsteed numbers 15, 16, and 17 (only 15 and 17 are plotted in Norton's). Moving south about 1½° should place 4'-long NGC 5005 within your telescope's field. Its coordinates are 13h 08.5m, +37° 19'. My estimates of this galaxy's total magnitude agree well with the catalogue value of 9.8.

About a degree to the southeast is NGC 5033 at 13h 11.2m, +36° 51'. This is a spiral galaxy appearing nearly 10' long and 5' wide. With such large dimensions and a listed magnitude of 10.3, it would be expected to have a very low surface brightness, but this is not the case. It is easy to see in my 4-inch Clark, and distinct in a 5-inch Apogee scope at only 20 power. I wonder if amateurs using large-aperture binoculars might be able to pick up this object.

WALTER SCOTT HOUSTON
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Like any athletic event, success depends on preparation. Time is precious, and there is little margin for indecision. Observers must be completely comfortable with their equipment and have a clear plan for what to observe and when. Objects can be located either with GoTo telescopes or by star hopping. The latter is the preferred method of diehard marathoners.

Star hopping requires a reliable atlas. I have relied on Sky Atlas 2000.0 for years, but since it is out of print, excellent modern alternatives include [Sky & Telescope's Pocket Sky Atlas](#) and the [Cambridge Star Atlas](#). These plot Messier objects accurately and match the limiting magnitude of most finder scopes. Circling targets in advance is strongly recommended, and some observers also mark them on an all-sky chart. Preprinted [Messier cards](#) are also available from Sky Publishing.

Free planetarium software such as [Stellarium](#) and [Megastar](#) offers another good choice. (Megastar tip: look under "Download Options" and select "Zip" to download the installation files.) These programs let observers to customize finder charts to match their telescope's field of view and limiting magnitude, then print them in the exact sequence needed for the night.

You will also need a checklist showing the order in which the objects should be found. There are many available online, but click here for [my own checklist](#) that I have used for decades.

Equally important is selecting an observing site. Ideally, it should offer dark skies and an unobstructed horizon, though such locations are increasingly rare. If you do not already have a suitable site, begin searching well in advance.

On marathon night, arrive early to set up before sunset. I recommend starting with obvious targets such as the Pleiades (M45), the Orion Nebula (M42 and M43), and Gemini open cluster M35, which are visible even before full darkness. A trio of bright open clusters in Auriga (M36 - M38) may also be visible early on, but don't spend too much time looking for them early on. These stay accessible for hours.

As twilight deepens, attention turns to the fainter "rush-hour" objects - those that set shortly after dark. These include M31, M32, M33, M74, M77, M79, and M110. Of these, M74 and M77 are the most challenging. Do not spend more than five minutes on any one object; if it eludes you, move on and return later if time allows.





Previous page: From the author's "Messier Photo-thon" last year, here are two rush hour objects: M79 and M15 (this, morning, in the trees). To see all of his results, [click here](#).

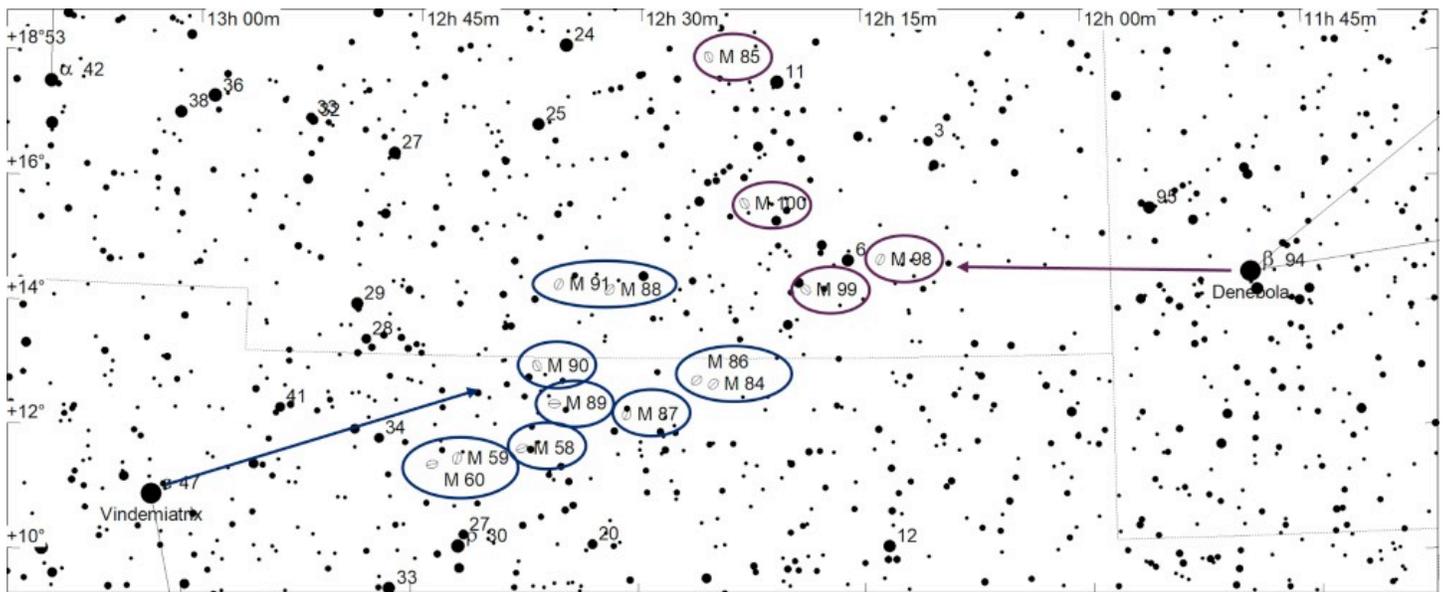
Once the rush-hour targets are in the bag, the pace relaxes a little as you continue to conquer the winter sky. Remember, you'll need a good southerly view for targets such as M41, M46, M47, and M93, as well as for later targets to come.

As the night progresses, the winter sky gives way to spring constellations. Near midnight comes the marathon's greatest test: the Virgo Galaxy Cluster. The Virgo Cluster (aka the Realm of Galaxies) contains no fewer than 14 Messier objects within a 45-square-degree area. Nowhere in the entire sky are so many Messier objects packed into such a small region as here. To make matters worse, there are many more galaxies that Messier missed, but that are likely bright enough to be seen through your telescope. They can be overwhelming without detailed charts. Customized printed charts are invaluable here. Avoid using tablets or phones, as reddened screens are usually too bright and too small for efficient work.

Enter the Realm slowly. Remember, there is no need to rush. While some treat this gaggle of galaxies as individual objects, I have always found it easier to attack them en masse, staging my assault in two waves. One enters the Realm from the west, the other from the east.

For the western attack, begin at the star Denebola (Beta [β] Leonis, the tail of Leo the Lion. From there, move one finder-scope field (about 7°) due east, to a small triangular asterism formed by four faint stars. The northernmost star also forms part of a diamond pattern seen just to the north. From there, you can pick off M98, M99, M100, and M85.

The eastern assault on the Realm begins from the star Vindemiatrix (Epsilon [ϵ] Virginis) in Virgo. From there, follow a path about a finder-scope field due west, where you will be greeted by a pair of stars, including 5th-magnitude Rho (ρ) Virginis and a fainter, 7th-magnitude star. To their north are M60, M59, M58, M89, M87, M84, M86, M90, M91, and M88. It's also easiest to find M49 and M61 by moving from Vindemiatrix to Rho Virginis. Follow an arc of stars to the southwest for M49, then look through your finder-scope farther south for a wide triangle of dim stars. M61 lies within.



Above: Finder chart for the Virgo Cluster (Realm of Galaxies) Chart generated using [Megastar](#).
Click on the chart to open a printable PDF version.

After conquering the Realm, relief sets in. By around 2:00 a.m., summer constellations rise in the east, bringing showpieces like M8, M11, M13, M17, M22, and M57. Work steadily southward along the Milky Way as dawn approaches. By 3:30 a.m., the marathon enters its final stretch. Objects in Scorpius and Sagittarius are now well-placed, although low southern targets demand speed and clear horizons. Pause only briefly at M54, M69, and M70, then hurry to M55 and M75. Finish with M2 in Aquarius and M15 in Pegasus.

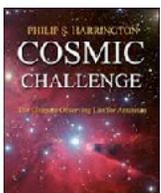
As birds announce the coming dawn, try the final pair: faint globular M72 and the sparse asterism M73. Unless you are south of about 30° north latitude, M30 will remain unattainable. Those who manage it earn serious bragging rights.

I'm proud to say that I've run the marathon over 20 times. That's hardly a record. The late Don Machholz completed the marathon 50 times! My best effort occurred years ago, when I was able to spot 109 of the objects through my long-gone 13.1-inch homemade Dob (yes, with Coulter optics... kids, ask your grandparents what Coulter was!). I only missed M30, which was not unexpected from where I am at 40° north latitude. That same year, I managed to spot 101 objects using 11x80 binoculars before the objectives frosted over. Last year, I tried something different. I did my first Messier "Photo-thon." Just as with a traditional Marathon, planning a "Photo-thon" starts well before sunset. I attempted my first run using the [Celestron Origin](#) and the [ZWO Seestar S50](#), operating both simultaneously and assigning different targets through their built-in scheduling features. The key is organizing objects in time order, especially the tight evening and morning "rush hours", and dividing them logically between the two instruments. Exposures must stay short (I limited mine to 10 minutes or less), since the goal is not prize-winning images but clear evidence of each Messier object.

Setup and placement are just as critical. I positioned one scope for the clearest western view and the other to favor the east, spreading them across my yard to maximize sky coverage. Each scope was powered by an external power bank. The Origin was attached to a Jackery Explorer 300 Plus, while the S50 ran with the Eveready U3006B until dawn. Evening twilight made plate-solving difficult. Add in a few ill-placed trees blocking the horizon, and I managed to capture only one classic early target - M79 in Lepus - before the rest slipped away. The morning rush proved more forgiving thanks to my open eastern horizon. Morning objects continued to be captured even as dawn brightened the sky, with M15 being my last. By sunrise, I had recorded 85 Messier objects, which I felt was not bad for a first effort. But as Arnold Schwarzenegger once famously uttered, "I'll Be Back!"

Messier marathoning is challenging, exhausting, freezing, and deeply rewarding. This year's New Moon falls on Wednesday, March 18, making the weekends of March 14-15 and 21-22 the best choices. The time to start planning is today. Now, if only the clouds will cooperate!

About the Author:



Phil Harrington is a contributing editor to [Astronomy](#) magazine and is the author of 9 books on astronomy. Visit www.philharrington.net to learn more. [Phil Harrington's Cosmic Challenge](#) is copyright 2026 by Philip S. Harrington. All rights reserved. No reproduction, in whole or in part, beyond single copies for use by an individual, is permitted without written permission of the copyright holder. This newsletter editor has received the authors permission to use this article!

Websites and Other Helpful Astronomy Links.

Information on passes of the ISS, the USAF's X-37B, the HST, the BlueWalker 3, and other satellites can be found at <http://www.heavens-above.com/>

Visit <https://saberdoesthe...does-the-stars/> for tips on spotting extreme crescent Moons and <https://curtrenz.com/moon.html> for Full Moon and other lunar data.

Go to <https://skyandtelesc...ads/MoonMap.pdf> and <https://celestron-si...RReeves-web.pdf> and <https://nightsky.jpl...ObserveMoon.pdf> for simple lunar maps. Click on <https://astrostrona.pl/moon-map/> for an excellent online lunar map. Visit <http://www.ap-i.net/avl/en/start> to download the free Virtual Moon Atlas. Consult <http://time.unitariu...moon/where.html> for current information on the Moon and <https://www.fourmila.../lunarform.html> for information on various lunar features. See <https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/4955> a lunar phase and libration calculator and <https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/5187/>

The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC) quick map. <https://www.universa...ise-and-sunset/>

For more on the planets and how to locate them, browse <http://www.nakedeyeplanets.com/>

Summaries on the planets for each month can be found at <https://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/>

The graphic at <https://www.timeandd...lanets/distance> displays the apparent and comparative sizes of the planets, along with their magnitudes and distances, for a given date and time.

The rise and set times and locations of the planets can be determined by clicking on <https://www.timeandd...stronomy/night/>

Click on <https://www.curtrenz.../asteroids.html> for information on asteroid occultations taking place this month.

Visit <http://cometchasing.skyhound.com/> and <http://www.aerith.ne...t/future-n.html> and <https://cobs.si/> for additional information on comets visible this month.

A list of the closest approaches of comets to the Earth is posted at <http://www.cometogra.../nearcomet.html>

A wealth of current information on solar system celestial bodies is posted at <http://www.curtrenz.com/astronomy.html> and <http://nineplanets.org/>

Information on the celestial events transpiring each week can be found at <https://stardate.org/nightsky> and <http://astronomy.com/skythisweek> and <http://www.skyandtel...ky-at-a-glance/>

Free star maps for any month may be downloaded at <http://www.skymaps.com/downloads.html> and <https://www.telescop...thly-Star-Chart> and <http://www.kenpress.com/index.html>

Data on current supernovae can be found at <http://www.rochester...y.org/snimages/>

Finder charts for the Messier objects and other deep-sky objects are posted at <https://freestarcharts.com/messier> and <https://freestarcharts.com/ngc-ic> and http://www.cambridge..._april-june.htm

Telrad finder charts for the Messier Catalog are posted at <http://www.custerobs...cs/messier2.pdf> and <http://www.star-shin...ssierTelrad.htm>

Telrad finder charts for the SAC's 110 Best of the NGC are available at <https://www.saguaroa...k110BestNGC.pdf>

Information pertaining to observing some of the more prominent Messier galaxies can be found at <http://www.cloudynig...ur-astronomers/>

Author Phil Harrington offers an excellent freeware planetarium program for binocular observers known as TUBA (Touring the Universe through Binoculars Atlas), which also includes information on purchasing binoculars, at <http://www.philharrington.net/tuba.htm>

Stellarium and Cartes du Ciel are two excellent freeware planetarium programs that are available at <http://stellarium.org/> and <https://www.ap-i.net/skychart/en/start>

Deep-sky object list generators can be found at <http://www.virtualcolony.com/sac/> and <https://telescopius.com/> and <http://tonightssky.com/MainPage.php>

Freeware sky atlases can be downloaded at <http://www.deepskywa...-atlas-full.pdf> and <https://www.cloudyni...ar-charts-r1021> and <https://allans-stuff.com/triatlas/>

For current sky charts visit the NASA Night Sky Network <https://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/news/212/>

McDonald Observatory famous radio program stardate is now a podcast <https://stardate.org/podcast>

Magic Valley Astronomical Society

550 Sparks St.
Twin Falls, ID

The Magic Valley Astronomical Society (MVAS) was founded in 1976. The Society is a non-profit [501(c) 3] educational and scientific organization dedicated to bringing together people with an interest in astronomy.

In partnership with the Centennial Observatory, Herrett Center, College of Southern Idaho - Twin Falls; we hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings and observation sessions, at which we share information on current astronomical events, tools and techniques for observation, astrophotography, astronomical computer software, and other topics concerning general astronomy. Members enthusiastically share their telescopes and knowledge of the night sky with all who are interested. In addition to our monthly public star parties we hold members only star parties at various locations throughout the Magic Valley.

MVAS promotes the education of astronomy and the exploration of the night sky along with safe solar observing through our public outreach programs. We provide two types of outreach; public star parties and events open to anyone interested in astronomy, and outreach programs for individual groups and organizations (e.g. schools, churches, scout troops, company events, etc.), setting up at your location. All of our outreach programs are provided by MVAS volunteers at no cost. However, MVAS will gladly accept donations. Donations enable us to continue and improve our public outreach programs.

Membership is not just about personal benefits. Your membership dues support the work that the Magic Valley Astronomical Society does in the community to promote the enjoyment and science of astronomy. Speakers, public star parties, classes and support for astronomy in schoolrooms, and outreach programs just to name a few of the programs that your membership dues support.

Annual Membership dues will be:

\$20.00 for individuals, families, and \$10.00 for students.

Contact Treasurer Jim Tubbs for dues information via e-mail: jtubbs015@msn.com

Donations to our club are always welcome and are even tax deductible. Please contact a board member for details.

Lending Telescopes: The society currently has three telescopes for loan and would gladly accept others please contact President Robert Mayer, for more information on these and other benefits.



Telescopes are an individual thing and not practical for public use. However, everyone should have the experience of a good look at the Moon for at least 5 minutes in their life time. It is a dimension and feeling that is unexplainable. Pictures or TV can't give this feeling, awareness, or experience of true dimension. A person will not forget seeing our closest neighbor, the Moon.

Norman Herrett in a letter to Dr. J. L. Taylor, president of the College of Southern Idaho