



# The American Astronomer

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF  
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Volume V, No. 2

March 2001



Lee and Doug Crenshaw in Jacksonville, FL, positioned the eclipsed sun at the top of their own astronomical Christmas Tree.



Steven LaFlamme, the AstroGeek, shot this photo through a Celestron 11-inch SCT during maximum eclipse (58%) from Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Wind chill was bitterly cold, but it proved to be worth the effort when he picked up his pictures at Wal-Mart.



Down in Alabama, Roseann Johnston didn't have a fancy camera, but just held her AAAA solar shades up in front of her little 110 camera and clicked. It's her first astrophoto!



Heidi and Isaac Kikawada viewed the eclipse at Foothills College near San Jose, CA, where the Peninsula Astronomical Society maintains its Solar telescope. Isaac took this shot in his backyard, just to show the sunspots, which were spectacular!

## Last December's Eclipse

AAAA members are a varied and talented lot. Not to mention creative. The December 25th eclipse last year provides a case in point. Because members of this club are spread out all over the country, we have an opportunity to experience astronomical events under different conditions, using different equipment, and then share our experiences with each other. What other astronomy club do you know of that provides such an opportunity!

And if you doubted it, the pictures on this page prove the point. Conditions on Christmas day varied depending on local weather. From frozen but clear New England to balmy California, AAAA members produced some interesting and unique images. From high-tech equipment to low-tech experiments, the results are impressive.

And if you haven't yet seen these photos and more in color on the AAAA web site, be sure to pay a visit and be impressed.

### Roseann Johnston Earns *Universe Sampler*

A hearty congratulations goes to Roseann Johnston of Vincent, AL, for earning both the naked eye and telescopic versions of the Astronomical League's *Universe Sampler*. Nice job, Roseann. We are proud of you.

*John Wagoner, AAAA President*

**AAAA Members:** When you have completed your AL observing projects, submit your observations to AAAA President John Wagoner for certification. Be sure to send COPIES of your records ONLY. Do NOT send originals of your observing logs.



# AAAA

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AMATEUR  
ASTRONOMERS

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The opinions expressed by contributors to the AMERICAN ASTRONOMER do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AAAA or the Editor. Articles representing supporting or opposing views will be published promptly after receipt.

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A Member  
Society of  
The  
Astronomical  
League

# President's Letter

First of all, I would like to congratulate Vincent, AL AAAA member Roseann Johnston for receiving the Astronomical League's *Universe Sampler*. This is a beginning program broken down into two sections, naked eye and telescopic. Roseann completed both using her naked eye, a pair of 50MM binoculars and a small Tasco refractor. Roseann's enthusiasm is infectious as she keeps on earning one certificate after another. We are proud that Roseann is a member of the AAAA.

The votes are in and the club has spoken. We will be keeping our old logo as our primary logo. Recently, I emailed the club to see if you wanted to keep our standard logo, logo 1, or if you wanted to change to a new logo, logos 2 and 3. We have pictured these choices on the back cover of the newsletter. The results were overwhelming that you wanted to stick with our old logo. The tallies were as follows as of press time: Logo 1 - 95; Logo 2 - 11; Logo 3 - 16.

Thank you for taking the time to vote, and I really enjoyed the comments that you sent to me. Even though we will be using our standard logo as our primary logo, we will spruce up the web site a little and maybe even the newsletter with the other logos as well. A big THANK YOU to AAAA member Alan Lebov for designing the new logos.

Finally, I would like to address an issue that comes up from time to time. In this day and age of privacy, I would like to assure each and every AAAA member that we keep their personal records strictly confidential. We do not give out your address, your telephone number or even email address to anyone. We do not sell any of the above to vendors, magazines, email lists, or anyone else who requests it. Please rest assured that any information that you give us stays with us. If you are receiving solicitations from any astronomy group, then your name, address, or email address came from another source. Look at the astronomy magazines that you subscribe to as well as astronomy vendors that you may have purchased from. Also, the AAAA is in charge of sending out Sky & Telescope's Skyline each week. If you are on this list, please know that we will not give, lease, or sell your email address to anyone. This has been our policy since the inception of the list. From time to time you will receive an email from the AAAA, but this is usually club business and is part of your membership benefits.

That is all for now. I hope all of you are getting clear skies and lots of observing in. The Texas Star Party is coming up and since I run the observing programs there, I plan on having a great time, and enjoying those wonderful dark West Texas skies. If you are there, be sure to come up to me and introduce yourself.

*John Wagoner President  
American Association of Amateur Astronomers*

## OBSERVING IS THE HEART OF AMATEUR ASTRONOMY

The American Association of Amateur Astronomers provides the AL's FREE Observe Programs on our website in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document File format at no charge as a service to members of the AAAA, the Astronomical League, and the astronomical community at large. The Observing Programs which require a published manual must still be obtained from Astronomical League Sales, PO Box 572, West Burlington, IA 52655. (You can now purchase AL manuals online at the AL Sales website, <http://www.astronomicalleague.com>.)

AAAA encourages you to download these PDF files for your own use, and to distribute them, in either electronic or printed form, to your friends and other interested observers, as an encouragement to further participation in amateur astronomy.

AAAA members are eligible to earn any of the AL's observing awards. We encourage you to participate in all of the programs which interest you.

AAAA Members who have completed AL observing projects should submit their observations to AAAA President John Wagoner for certification. Be sure to send COPIES of records ONLY. Do NOT send original photographs or observing logs.

[www.corvus.com/aa01006.htm](http://www.corvus.com/aa01006.htm)

## A Letter from the Youth Activities Committee of the Astronomical League

### Controlling Light Pollution in the State of Pennsylvania. 1-12-2001

I. We, the members of the Astronomical League's Youth Activity Committee (YAC), encourage Pennsylvania to approve a plan now for improving the future of nighttime outdoor lighting in our community.

1. The increasing star-obscuring glow in our night sky is evidence of wasted energy.
2. Lighting that produces glare in our 'line-of-sight' is blinding and a safety hazard.
3. Unshielded, or excessive lighting intrudes into nearby homes, yards and natural areas.

II. Please design a plan to discourage outdoor lighting that:

1. Shines light upward into the sky, where it serves no purpose.
2. Creates glare in our line-of-sight, or intrudes into private properties/natural areas.
3. Is excessively bright, exceeding recognized industry\* recommendations (\*The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America).

III. "Full cutoff" & shielded lighting fixtures are now offered by all major lighting manufacturers. These fixtures efficiently distribute light downward, without glare, and control the spill of light into the neighboring properties and the night sky.

1. When glare is removed from the field of view the wattage of the lamp can be reduced significantly. Full cutoff optics redirects all of the light downward below the horizontal plane. Wattage can be reduced by 30% with no loss of visual performance.
2. People should turn off lights when they are not needed. For example, a business that closes at 9 p.m. doesn't need bright lights on all night. This wastes energy and it's bad for business efficiency.

IV. Through these improvements, we can improve nighttime visibility and public safety, conserve energy, be good neighbors and regain our disappearing view of the night sky. If you would like help in educating people about the benefits of these improvements, please contact the YAC.

Clear Skies and Bright futures,

*Ryan M. Hannahoe,  
Youth Activities Chairman for the  
Astronomical League  
Hstinst@aol.com*

[http://youth\\_in\\_astronomy.  
homestead.com/index.htm](http://youth_in_astronomy.homestead.com/index.htm)

\*\*\*\*\*

**Promoting Youth in Astronomy &  
Helping to save a hobby**

## From the AAAA eGroup

### Simple Things

I have just recently been bitten by the astronomy bug in a big way. Hope you don't mind my sharing notes from my Friday night log. You will have to excuse me if my enthusiasm is showing.

It's Friday evening and the skies are cloudless and clear. The telescope is set up and aligned for tonight's observations. The sun has just disappeared and the trees have turned to dark silhouettes against the horizon. The colors are deepening their hues. Various shades of red and purple yield to pastel pinks and aquamarine, blending into deeper blues. Above, in the west, is Venus, practically winking at me from the still turbulent atmosphere like the center of a star sapphire. Overhead, Jupiter and Saturn are hugging the waxing moon.

Now the cast of stars is beginning to appear: Sirius, Rigel, Betelgeuse, Aldebaran and Capella, the boldest and the brightest. Just a few minutes pass and the upper sky is turning a majestic cerulean blue. There's Bellatrix, Castor and Pollux, Procyon, Polaris, Dubhe. They are coming out faster now. The belt of Orion is flashing like a sign, Saiph, Alhena, Elnath and Zeta Tauri. In minutes, more than I can identify; moments later, more than I can count. Now whole constellations are coming out of hiding: Perseus, with its point directing me to the W in Cassiopeia, Orion is complete with sword, Taurus and Capella, Andromeda, Aries and Pegasus. WOW! I haven't even touched the scope yet.

I remind myself that this happens every night. I wonder how many of these incredible moments are lost to the hectic pace of life. I promise myself that there will be no shortage in the future, and in a couple of months there will be a whole new cast of characters for me to learn and marvel at. Overwhelming! Life really is beautiful. Psalm 8:3-4

*Starstruck Charlie  
txskywatcher@yahoo.com*

### Discovery

I accompanied my 11 year old son's gifted group down to the Kennedy Space Center last week. It had been scheduled to view the Discovery launch which was postponed, but we had a great 2 days viewing all the exhibits with special programs just for the school group that are not part of the regular tour. I also took my telescope and had a mini star party at the campground for the kids. Horrible light pollution, but gave them peeks at Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, M42 and Mizar. And as I was coming to work this morning, as I crossed the bridge into the Altamaha Delta marshlands, I saw something to the south. It was Discovery lifting off 300 miles away!

*Sam Reames  
sreames@darientel.net*

The American Association of Amateur Astronomers teams up with Bushnell Sports Optics and the David Chandler Company.

## Observing Aids from David Chandler Company

**Large Planisphere - \$10.00**  
**Small Planisphere - \$6.00**  
**Exploring the Night Sky - \$8.00**  
**Sky Atlas - \$13.00**  
**First Light Kit - \$25.00**

*At David Chandler Company, our printed products focus on the needs of the beginning observer. The Chandler philosophy is that the beginner will not be a beginner for long! We want to nourish the enthusiasm of the beginner with solid, helpful reference materials. All of our observing aids are clear, accurate, and reliable. They are designed to help the beginner become knowledgeable and proficient as quickly as possible.*

*We are excited that the American Association of Amateur Astronomers is able to make our products available to you through their AstroMax Online Store. We hope they will point you on your way as you begin to explore the universe.*

*David and Billie Chandler*

*PS: Be sure to take a look at the AstroMax Introductory Astronomy Kit, which includes our First Light Astronomy Kit, a pair of Bushnell Powerview 10x50 Binoculars, and full membership in the American Association of Amateur Astronomers. It's a great way to get started in astronomy for less than \$100! It makes a great gift, too.*

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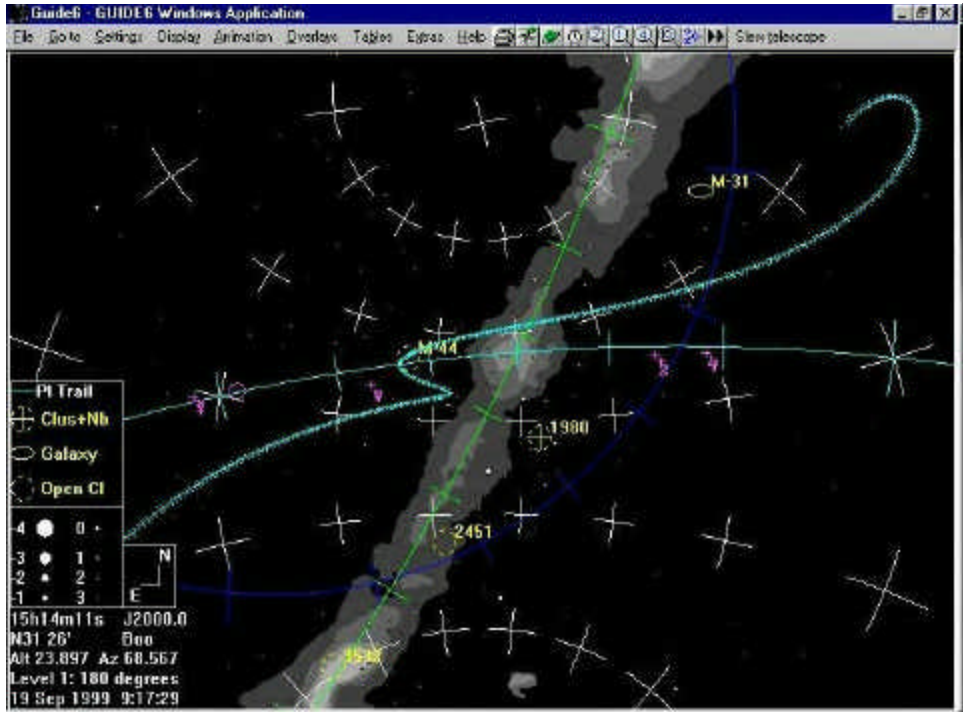
**aaaa@corvus.com**



# Larry Robinson s Asteroid 1999 RB35

AAAA member Larry Robinson recently discovered that two newly numbered planets included another one for his Sunflower Observatory: (20517) 1999 RB35 1999 09 11 Olathe Robinson, L. Here is the web page regarding the discovery of this minor planet in 1999, the first at Sunflower: <http://members.tripod.com/~btboar/1999rb35.html>. There are now 20957 numbered planets.

The names Larry suggested for two recent asteroids he discovered at Sunflower have been approved by the Naming Committee. The first of these is now called **Olathe 18984 Kansas Town (18984) Olathe = 2000 RA8, Discovered 2000 Sept. 2 by L. Robinson at Sunflower Observatory in Olathe, KS.** Olathe, pronounced O-Lay'-tha, is the old Shawnee Indian word for "Beautiful." The township of Olathe was established in 1857, and later became a stop along the Santa Fe Trail. Larry s second asteroid is named **Sunflower 19019 Kansas Flower (19019) Sunflower = 2000 SB, Discovered 2000 Sept. 17 by L. Robinson at Sunflower Observatory in Olathe, KS.** The Sunflower, state flower



of Kansas, always faces the sun. Its seeds provide food and oil for humans and wild and domestic animals.

Friends Mark Abraham and Gina Fedon have also named asteroid 18873 (1999 VJ22) after Larry. It is now called

(18873) Larryrobinson.

Larry Robinson s Sunflower Observatory 739, is located behind his home in Olathe, KS. His web page describing the work he does there is <http://btboar.tripod.com/>

## Magazine

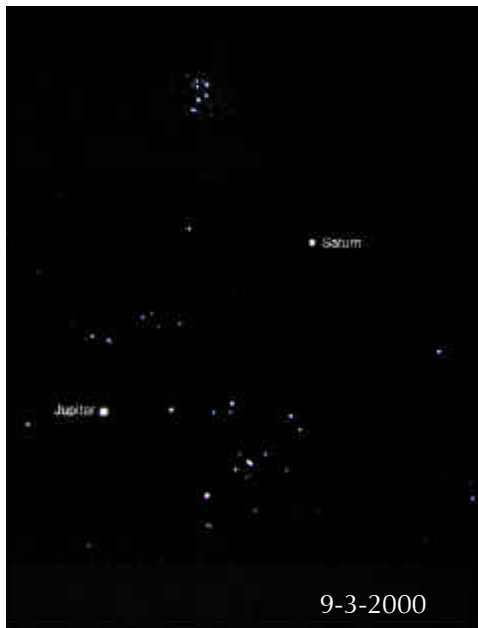
### Subscriptions

A regular subscription to Sky & Telescope magazine is \$39 per year, but you can get it at the club discount through the AAAA for only \$30 per year. Astronomy magazine is also \$39 per year, but the club discount rate is only \$29. Subscribe to these magazines or extend your current subscription on the AAAA web page. Or send a check for the correct amount, made out to AAAA, to:

AAAA, 3131 Custer Rd., Suite 175 PMB\*  
175, Plano, Tx. 75075  
WWW.CORVUS.COM

This edition of the *American Astronomer* newsletter can be downloaded in PDF format from the AAAA website. Print it off on your own color printer or read your club s newsletter online in full color!

[www.corvus.com/a4-news/a01-mar.PDF](http://www.corvus.com/a4-news/a01-mar.PDF)



9-3-2000



1-25-2001

## Planetary Motion

In January, AAAA member Isaac Kikawada from California caught Jupiter and Saturn which is reversing the retrograde motion now. I tried to show the retro movement by contrasting the from January 25, 2001 image with that of September 3, 2000, about when it started. *Isaac Kikawada, HeidiandIsaac@windandtree.com*

# AAAA News and Member Activities

# Astronomy Trivia

Welcome to Doug Paddock's  
Unofficial CG-14 Telescope Site  
<http://users.tellurian.net/skyguy/>



AAAA Member Douglas Paddock's astronomy web site features the Celestron C-14 Telescope in combination with the Losmandy G-11 Equatorial Mount. Together they become a CG-14. Both the Telescope and Tripod are manufactured in the USA. When completely assembled, it's an awesome sight.



**Doug (right) with friend Jay and the Mighty Celestron CG-14**

The C14 is the largest of Celestron's Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes, and is most impressive in performance. The large 14-inch aperture offers 206% more light gathering ability than an 8-inch telescope does and 96% more than a 10-inch telescope. Lunar and planetary details are extraordinary when viewed through this instrument, and the large aperture and superb optics of the C-14 make for very exciting deep-sky observing of diffuse and planetary nebulae, open and globular star clusters, galaxies and binary stars. \$5,299.95



**The Losmandy G-11 Equatorial Head.**

The Losmandy G-11 Equatorial Mount is designed expressly for the Celestron C-14. The equatorial head is constructed of all black anodized machined aluminum and stainless steel. The Tripod is constructed of powder coated all machined aluminum, black anodized, adjustable from 33 - 48. The removable leg design allows for easy transporting. The custom designed quartz dual-axis electronics allows for extremely precise guiding for astrophotography on a rigid and stable, yet easy to use mount. \$3400.00



**Xmas Eclipse - Dec. 25, 2000**

I've noticed that people use different forms to name the constellations (Latin names, English names, German names, Genitives). Is there a rule for which variation to use when recording observations? In the *Universe Sampler* book it appears that the author prefers the genitive form. Just wondering.

*Heather L Sherbourne  
heatherls6@juno.com*

Heather:

Constellation names as used in English are usually considered to be Latinized, even though they may come from Greek or Arabic sources. That being the case, you can follow one of two rules.

If you do not plan to publish, just record the observation using the normal name of the constellation. In Latin, this is called the Nominative Case. For instance, you can write, M35 in Gemini or M42 in Orion. Notice that these are the names of objects in the constellation named. If you are naming a star, simply write Alpha in Gemini or even Alpha Gemini.

However, if you wish to be strictly correct, you really ought to use the Genitive form of the name. In English we call this the Possessive Case, and it shows up mostly in pronouns like his, her, their, in an expression using the preposition of, or in an 's tacked on the end of a noun: Bill's book or The Book of Job. Thus, when naming a specific star, you would write, Alpha Geminorum or Beta Scorpii. This would be translated literally as The Star Alpha of Gemini or The Star Beta of Scorpius. (If you really want to be cool, don't forget to learn the Greek Alphabet, too!)

Note that you would generally use the genitive form when referring to specific stars in a constellation, rather than the Messier and other deep sky objects it contains. I do not think I have ever seen the phrase M35 Geminorum.

My personal opinion is to use the Genitive form, since I am comfortable with it. (I took Latin in High School!) But if you find it cumbersome or confusing, do not worry about it. When you submit your observing logs for certification, you will not be graded lower because you did not use the Latin genitive. In fact, I think it is more important to recognize such notation for what it is when you come across it, rather than to be a stickler about using it in your own observing logs.

Hope this helps a bit.

*Ed Flaspoepler, Vice President  
American Association  
of Amateur Astronomers*

March 2001



# 2001 A Space Odyssey or Spring Observing for 2001

by Brenda Culbertson  
Washburn University, Topeka, KS  
stargazr@holtonks.net

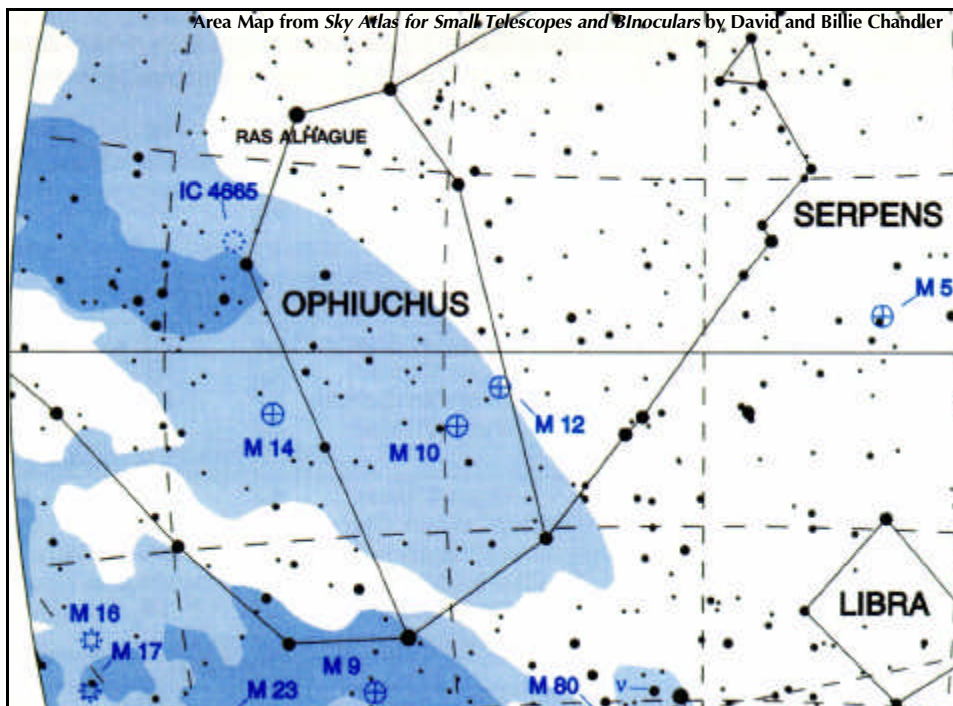
I've got to watch that movie again. A "space odyssey" is something we will all go on if skies stay clear and allow us time to have our adventures. I know we all like to look up and see the wondrous objects in the night sky, and we all do this in a variety of ways. There are the binocular observers, the small telescope observers, the big telescope observers, the photographers, and so forth. The list of types of observers is as extensive as the list of types of things we observe with. Our odysseys are all the same: to let our eyes venture where our bodies cannot go. Our means of travel are what differ.

OK, enough of the philosophical stuff. What I said was that we all like to look at things in the sky, and we use what we have to observe those things. Sometimes we have star parties to share our views (both visual views and opinion views), and other times we go out alone. I believe most of us observe alone, since it is difficult for more than one person to look through the eyepiece at a time. Also, some of us take longer to find cool stuff to look at, and our companions get tired of waiting, so they go home frustrated. Yep, it's kind of a lonely avocation. Some of us like it that way, but there are others who like to show off, and will not take their scopes out unless an audience is around. It doesn't really matter which kind of astronomer you are. The lone wolves and the glory hounds are all needed, and all are welcome in this hobby we call astronomy.

Now... how about some objects to look at, and to show to other people! ... Or, just keep them to yourself.

## Easy Objects:

How about a double star to start off your evening of observing? Look in the sickle of Leo. The second brightest star, **Al Gieba** or **Gamma Leonis** is the brightest star in the curve of the sickle. The double consists of a



second magnitude K type star and a G type star of about 3.5 magnitude. As the components of the double separate more in coming years, they will be more easily distinguished.

**M 81 and M 82** are objects for all northern latitudes to see. M 81 and M 82 are galaxies that lie between Dubhe (Alpha Ursae Majoris) and Polaris (Alpha Ursae Minoris) at 8th magnitude. These showpiece galaxies are best observed through telescopes with apertures of 8 inches or more, but can be easily found and observed in smaller instruments.

Finding star clusters in Ophiuchus can be done faster than trying to figure out how to pronounce this constellation's name. There are many Messier Objects in Ophiuchus, but **M 12** is probably one of the more stunning. Look for this 8th magnitude globular cluster two degrees north and 8.5 degrees east of Delta Ophiuchi. While you are there, look for the globular clusters **M 10** and **M 14** nearby. These globulars are part of our Milky Way's galactic halo.

## Moderate Objects:

Corvus has an interesting object for moderate to large size aperture telescopes: **The Antennae (or the Ringtail) Galaxies**. This object lies just WSW of Gamma Corvi (Minkar) and appears to be colliding galaxies. It is a combination of **NGC 4038** (the northern-most bulk) and **NGC 4039** (the southern extension).

Ursa Major holds many galaxies to be seen through all sizes of telescopes. **NGC 3184** is one of these. This galaxy is about 3/4 of a degree west of Tania Australis (Mu Ursae Majoris) and appears at about 10.5 magnitude. Mu may be seen in the same field of view with this galaxy. If you look around the

nearby area you may see other galaxies.

Scutum has a cluster that is around 9th magnitude; **M 26** is located about one degree ESE of Delta Scuti. Some say that this cluster is not impressive, but the stars in it have a wide range of magnitudes.

## Difficult Objects:

Look for **NGC 6946**, a large spiral galaxy, about 2 degrees SW of Eta Cephei. This 11th magnitude galaxy has great detail in larger aperture telescopes.

Observers of planetary nebulae have described **NGC 3242** in Hydra as appearing to look like a human eye looking back at them. Larger instruments are necessary to see great detail. Otherwise, this object will probably appear as a pale, fuzzy disc. Look for the 9th magnitude nebula about 2 degrees south of Mu Hydrae.

How about looking at an area where there is "nothing" to look at? **B 72** is a dark nebula that takes on an "S" shape in Ophiuchus. Look about 1.5 degrees north of Theta Ophiuchi and just to the east. There are other dark regions nearby. Keep looking.

*Brenda Culbertson has been asked to be the keynote speaker during the Nebraska Star Party this summer. NSP8 runs July 15 - 20, 2001 at Merritt Reservoir, which is 27 miles south of Valentine, Nebraska. Her topic will be Prehistoric and Early Historic Observing Methods, which is a subject of special interest to archaeoastronomers.*

*Brenda says she is looking forward to sharing the information she has found on this topic, and would love to visit with any AAAA members who attend. The Web site for NSP8 is <http://www.NebraskaStarParty.org>. (Check out the T-shirt.)*

## Dates to Remember

### April

- 1 Daylight Saving Time begins (No fooling!)
- 7 Full Moon
- 21-23 Lyrid Meteor Shower (No Moon)
- 23 New Moon

### May

- 4 Venus at greatest brilliancy this cycle at -4.5
- 04-06 Eta Aquarid Meteors (Big Moon)
- 7 Full Moon
- 20 Moon/Vesta occultation
- 22 New Moon

### June

- 5 Full Moon
- 19 Moon/Saturn occultation
- 21 Summer Solstice, New Moon, Total Lunar Eclipse

### Solar, Planetary, and Lunar Observing

Don't forget to keep track of the Sun, Moon, the planets (Mars is coming into a good position at a nice time of the night), and all that other stuff. The A-Team is still keeping its eyes open for the Aurora Borealis, that wonderful northern glow. Comets are still around, too. And don't forget the meteor showers, as well as the International Space Station (ISS) and other orbiting objects.

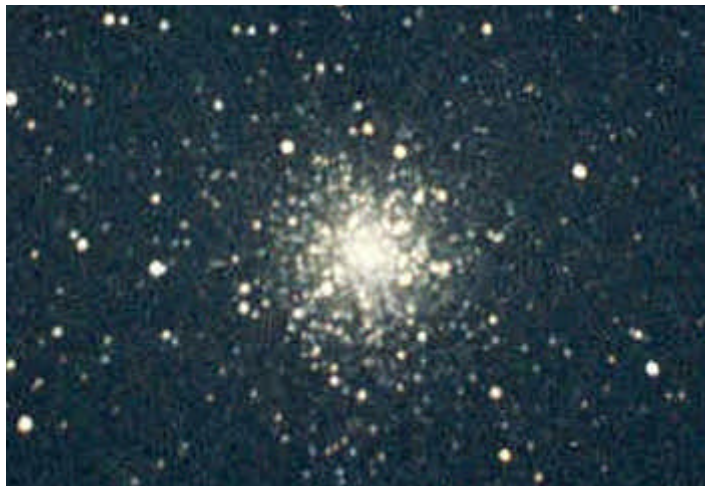
Mercury will be visible in the early morning early in April and in the early evening in May. Venus is up just before the Sun in April. Mars rises in the middle of the night during April and is closest to Earth on June 21.

Lunar observers can see occultations of stars from time to time. These are fun, but short. If you see a star near the lunar limb, keep an eye on it for a while and see if it get closer or farther from the limb. If it gets closer, you may be in for a treat by seeing our Moon pass between us and that star. As you watch, the star will blip out of view.

*Brenda Clubertson  
stargazr@holtonks.net*

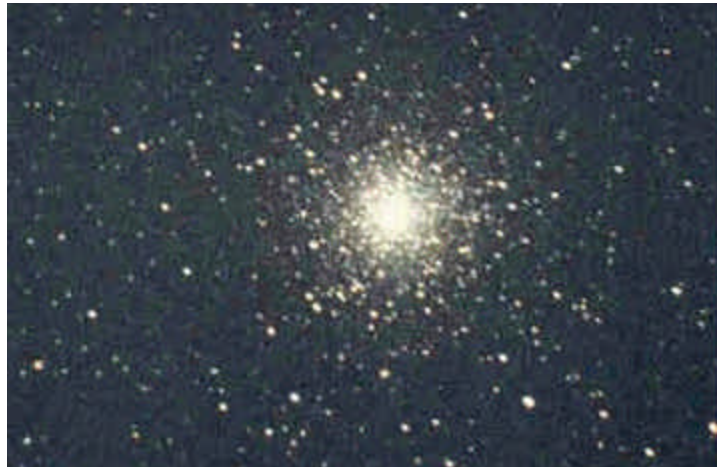
### M10 NGC 6254 Globular Cluster in Ophiucus

Image copyright  
Mark Cunningham  
Craig, Colorado



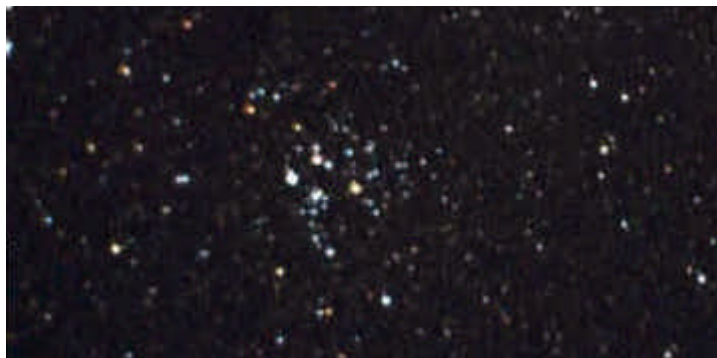
### M12 NGC 6218 Globular Cluster in Ophiucus

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Craig, Colorado



### M26 NGC 6694 Open Cluster in Scutum

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Craig, Colorado



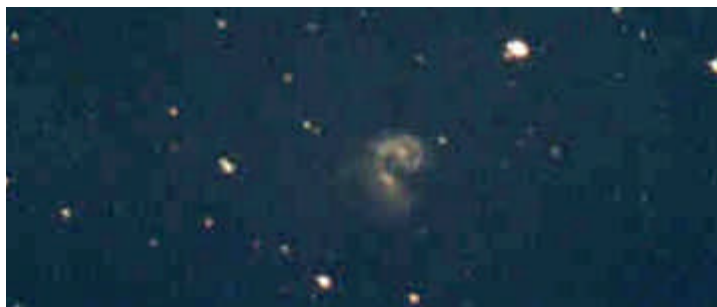
### M81 NGC 3031 Spiral Galaxy in Ursa Major

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Craig, Colorado



### NGC4038/9 The Antennae Interacting Galaxies in Corvus

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## AAAA Establishes Online Discussion Group

The American Association of Amateur Astronomers has started a new online discussion group, hosted by Yahoo Groups.

The purpose of the group is to create a forum in which AAAA members can share ideas, experiences and challenges, and just get to know each other. If you are an AAAA member, or have friends interested in amateur astronomy and the AAAA, we invite you, and them, to become a part of this Discussion Group. The Quad-A eGroup now has 120 members.

If you would like to join the AAAA discussion group, please send an e-mail request to: Quad-A-subscribe@yahoo.com or visit the web site at: <http://www.yahogroups.com/list/Quad-A/info.html>

[www.yahogroups.com/group/Quad-A](http://www.yahogroups.com/group/Quad-A)



## New Club Logos?

In early March, we sent an e-mail to AAAA members asking us to help select a new club logo. The vote is in and you, the members, have spoken: We will keep our old logo! The vote was overwhelming for logo 1. The results were as follows:

Logo 1 - 96

Logo 2 - 12

Logo 3 - 16

Even though we will be keeping our old logo as our primary logo, we like the new logos, too, so we will be using them to spruce up our web page. A big THANK YOU to AAAA member Alan Lebov for designing the new logos. And thanks to everyone for voting. I really enjoyed reading your comments concerning the logo contest.

John Wagoner - President - AAAA

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