



# CAPE FEAR *Skies*

Monthly Newsletter  
**Cape Fear Astronomical Society**  
Serving Wilmington, NC and Surrounding Areas



*Cape Fear Astronomical Society is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.*

**February 2024**

## **President's Message**

*by Ben Steelman*

I know our souls are raptured by the prospect of The Eclipse of the Century, and that some of you are making travel plans.

Among the Muggles, however, there's a lot of hubbub about some kind of football game on Feb. 10. Accordingly, the Executive Board has reluctantly decided to reschedule the next regular meeting to 7 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 3, in Room 212 of DeLoach Hall, on the UNCW campus. Please remember!

Associate VP Jon Stewart-Taylor has arranged a fascinating guest talk on the history of spectroscopy. A leading character will be William Huggins, the intrepid British Victorian astronomer, who figured in our recent talk on the transit-of-Venus expeditions in the 1800s.

Speaking of the Eclipse, the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center in Chapel Hill is celebrating its 75th anniversary on the weekend before, April 6 and 7, with the N.C. Science Fair, special planetarium screenings and a day of Eclipse activities on April 8, with live-streaming in the Dome, lectures and related planetarium programs. Complete details are at

<https://moreheadplanetarium.org/75th/>



Also, if you're still planning your summer, the Astronomical League's 2024 Convention (AlCon) will be July 17-29 in Kansas City. The astrophotographer and author Alan Dyer, along with David Levy and other luminaries, will be doing a livestream event July 26 on photographing The Eclipse of the Century. You can tune in on the Astronomical League's Facebook page or on

<https://explorescientific.com/pages/explore-alliance-live>

*Keep looking up!*

# Calendar

## February 2024

### Date – Event – Time

02 Last Quarter Moon

**02 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
5:30 PM; 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Moon – Ground Hog Day!**

**03 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
5:30 PM; 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Moon**

**04 ★ Cape Fear Astro Monthly Meeting ★**

**CFAS Monthly Meeting**

**7:00pm – 9:00pm - 212 DeLoach Hall; UNCW**

**Also simulcast via Zoom**

**07 Special Interest Group meeting; 8 p.m.**

09 New Moon

**09 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
5:30 PM; New Moon**

**10 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
5:30 PM; New Moon**

14 Moon and Jupiter; Waxing Crescent Moon near Jupiter:  
evening

14 ♥ Valentine's Day ♥

16 First Quarter Moon

22 Venus and Mars; Venus near Mars: morning

24 Full Moon; (smallest in 2024)

### Astro phenomena from:

<https://www.universalworkshop.com/astronomical-calendar-any-year/>

### 2024 Public Events

#### **PROBABLE DATES:**

March 16 - CBSP

April 12: 7 - 10pm - STAR PARTY 2024;  
by the Cape Fear Museum; CBSP  
(replaces State Wide Star Party)  
4.6 day old crescent Moon

May 28 – CBSP

June 15 – CBSP

July 23 – CBSP

Aug 10 – CBSP

Sep 14 – CBSP  
&

Sept. 14 - International Observe the  
Moon Night

Oct 12 – CBSP

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CBSP = Carolina Beach State Park

### 2024 Monthly Meeting Dates

Mar. 10, Apr. 14, May 5, Jun. 9,

Jul. 14, Aug. 11, Sep. 8, Oct. 13,

Nov. 10, Dec. 8

### Special Interest Group (SIG) Meetings

*The current plan is to hold a SIG the first  
Wednesday of the month. Topics will be  
announced.*

# SIG Reformation and Restart

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

During the last half of 2023, our Special Interest Groups (SIGs) suffered. Due to personal issues, i was unable to organize or host the SIGs, and they basically stopped. The issues are at least partially resolved, and I'm going to try to restart SIG meetings.

I'm planning a much less ambitious schedule: just one meeting a month to start with. After some on-line discussion, it looks like we'll use the **first Monday of each month**. With only one meeting per month, we'll need to address the various subjects we used to cover in separate meetings sequentially, either several topics in a given meeting, or a different topic in different months.

Which topics? We used to have meetings for Phenomena, Both Eyes (unaided-eye and binocular), New Astronomer, and Telescope Usage. All of these will show up in future SIG meetings, though probably not all in the same meeting. If there are other topics you'd like addressed, please feel free to point them out, and we'll see if we can help.

It's worth noting that i'm not a Real Astrophotographer (using the S50 is kinda like cheating), so i won't be addressing imaging or image processing questions. Those might be addressed in a special SIG if you ask Karl or Damain nicely.

The first meeting of the revised SIG will be on the evening of **Wednesday, February 7th at 8 pm via Zoom** (although if you want to come to my house, we can make it a hybrid meeting). I'll publish the invitation on the e-mailing list a week or so before the meeting.

Hope to "see" some of you then.

*The poem at right is from "Poetry of the Heavens",  
Authored, Compiled and Edited by Jerome Knuijt, 1989*

GO!



## Applied Astronomy

He took me out to see the stars,  
That astronomic bore;  
He said there was two moons near Mars,  
While Jupiter had four.

I thought of course he'd whisper soon  
What four fold bliss 'twould be  
To stroll beneath that fourfold moon  
On Jupiter with me.

And when he spoke of Saturn's ring,  
I was convinced he'd say  
That was the very kind of thing  
To offer me some day.

But in a tangent off he went  
To double stars. Now that  
Was most suggestive, so content  
And quite absorbed I sat.

But no, he talked a dreary mess,  
Of which the only fraction  
That caught my fancy, I confess,  
Was "mutual attraction."

I said I thought it very queer  
And stupid altogether,  
For stars to keep so very near  
And yet not come together.

At that he smiled, and turned his head;  
I thought he'd caught the notion;  
He merely bowed good-night and said,  
Their safety lay in motion.

Esther B. Tiffany

## Quote of the Month

*Wine is sunlight held together by water.*  
- Galileo

## Messier Marathon Anyone?

By Karl Adlon

You can learn about the Marathon here: <http://www.messier.seds.org/xtra/marathon/marathon.html>

And the 2024 Marathon here: <http://www.messier.seds.org/xtra/marathon/mm2024.html>

2024 is not a good year, with the Moon positioned such that all 110 are not visible on any single night.

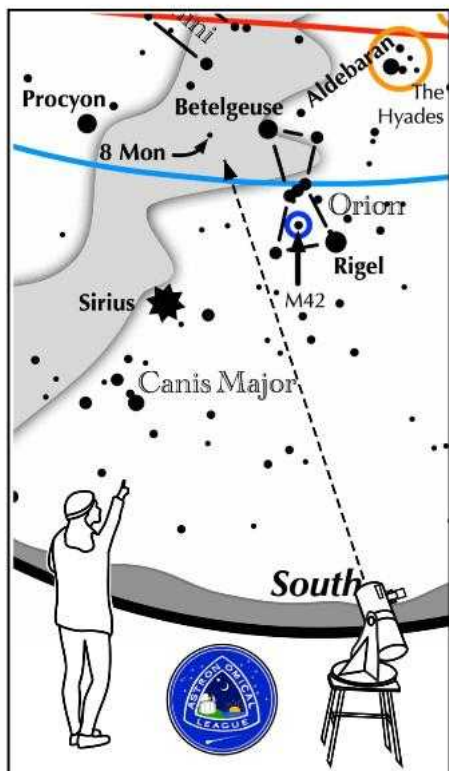
However, to see as many as possible this year, the primary weekend is March 9/10, and a secondary weekend of April 6/7.

What's that mean for CFAS? We have 4 possible dates and, given typical sky conditions, that may not be enough. But let's be optimistic and plan for the March weekend.

April may have few takers, given that many Total Eclipse travelers will be out of the area.

Lastly, if you are like me, all-nighters are almost impossible! But I would go anyway for the comradery and opportunity to look through many different scopes. There's a time near the middle of the night when we would have to wait for objects to rise in the east. This is a good time for those who want to call it a night.

## ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE Double Star Activity



### Other Suns: Epsilon (8) Monocerotis

#### How to find Epsilon Monocerotis on a February evening

Face south. Look for the Winter Triangle stars of Betelgeuse and Procyon. Epsilon Monocerotis is about 1/3 between Betelgeuse and Procyon. It is a 4.3 magnitude star so dark skies are needed to spot it.

Suggested magnification: >20x  
Suggested aperture: >3 inches

#### Epsilon (8) Mon

A-B separation: 12 sec

A magnitude: 4.4

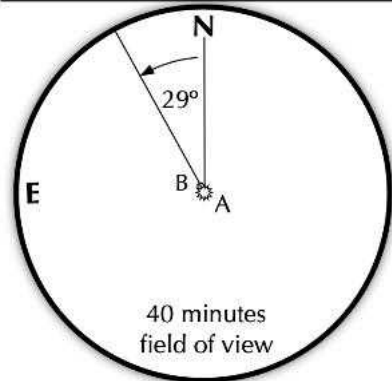
B magnitude: 6.6

Position Angle: 29°

Colors:

white

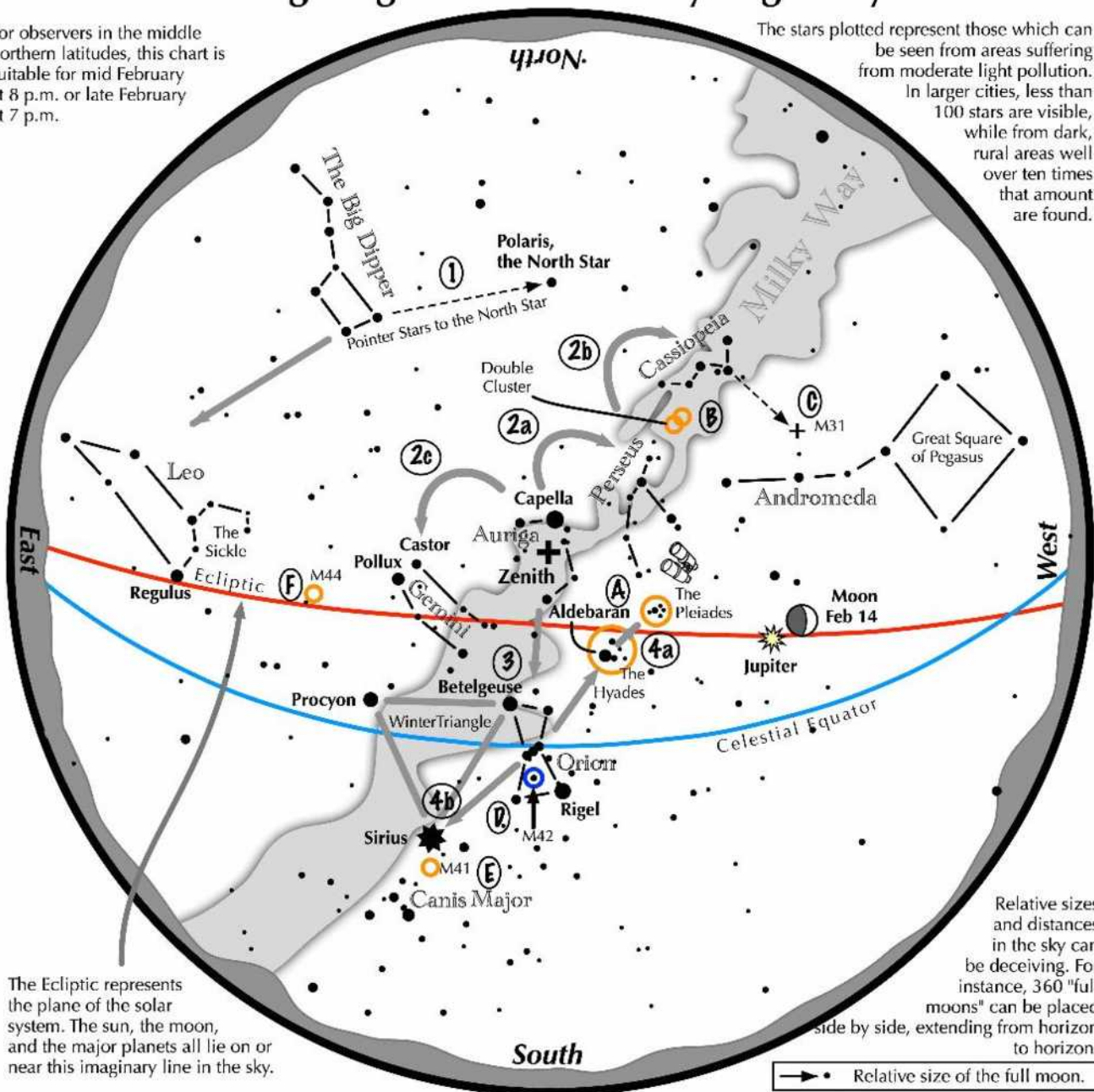
lilac



# Navigating the mid February Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid February at 8 p.m. or late February at 7 p.m.

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



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

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

→ • Relative size of the full moon.

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

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

### Binocular Highlights

- A: Examine the stars of two naked eye star clusters, the Pleiades and the Hyades.
- B: Between the "W" of Cassiopeia and Perseus lies the Double Cluster.
- C: The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval.
- D: M42 in Orion is a star forming nebula. E: Look south of Sirius for the star cluster M41. F: M44, a star cluster barely visible to the naked eye, lies southeast of Pollux.



## Get to Know YOUR Astronomical League



The Astronomical League (AstroLeague or AL) is one of the largest amateur astronomical organizations in the world. The organization serves to encourage an interest in astronomy (especially amateur astronomy) and promote the science of astronomy by:

- ✓ fostering astronomical education;
- ✓ providing incentives for astronomical observation and research;
- ✓ assisting communication among amateur astronomical societies.



CFAS is one of over 300 member societies affiliated with the AstroLeague. Your membership in CFAS allows you take full advantage of this relationship so periodically review the information below to see how the AstroLeague can support your astronomical interests and endeavors.

AstroLeague Home Page	<a href="http://www.astroleague.org">www.astroleague.org</a>
AL Observing Programs (Alphabetical Listing)	<a href="https://www.astroleague.org/alphabeticobserving/">https://www.astroleague.org/alphabeticobserving/</a>
Night Sky Tools	<a href="https://www.astroleague.org/navigating-the-night-sky-guides/">https://www.astroleague.org/navigating-the-night-sky-guides/</a>
AstroLeague Store	<a href="https://store.astroleague.org/">https://store.astroleague.org/</a>
Current and Past Issues of <i>Reflector Magazine</i>	<a href="https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/">https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/</a>
<b>Additional AL News, Information and Reminders</b>	Click <a href="#">HERE</a> for the AstroLeague News Page.  Contact Hank Lyon, <a href="mailto:hlyon8448@gmail.com">hlyon8448@gmail.com</a> , for any changes to your Reflector delivery preferences (US Mail or Email).

The AstroLeague Correspondent (or ALCor) is your link between CFAS and the AstroLeague. Don't hesitate to contact your ALCor if you need assistance with anything AstroLeague related whether its general information or detailed coordination of observing program completions for certification. **Check back each month to see any new links, postings or reminders.**

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### CFAS Correspondence:

Please contact the society at: CFAS, P.O. Box 7685, Wilmington, NC 28406

Members are welcome and encouraged to submit articles or other input for "CAPE FEAR SKIES". Submit any and all interesting items for publication to Karl Adlon, Editor (email [kmja79@yahoo.com](mailto:kmja79@yahoo.com)).

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### CFAS Officers:

President: Ben Steelman  
 Vice-Pres: Karl Adlon  
 Associate VP: Jon Stewart-Taylor  
 Secretary: George Pappayliou  
 Treasurer: Bill Cooper  
 ALCor: Hank Lyon

**Dues:** Dues for 2024 are \$25 for Individual and \$32 for Family Membership. Students dues are \$5 per year.

Mail to :CFAS, P.O. Box 7685, Wilmington, NC 28406

### Contact Us:

You can contact CFAS at [info@capefearastro.org](mailto:info@capefearastro.org)  
 Our website is <http://www.capefearastro.org/>