www.holland-saaa.org

The Shoreline Observer
February 2026

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CLUB NOTES

Dear members,

I hope you are enjoying the winter weather and are able to stay warm.

It has been a terrible month for observing (100% clouds) and we missed a great Aurora show on January 19.

Nevertheless we had a great Arts Council reception turnout for the SAAA astro-photo exhibition where 72 people attended.

The exhibition is still on until February 21 so if you are tired of the clouds go see the picture show.

Our next membership meeting is on February 12 where Art Fleming will talk about perspective of scale.

Our next Hemlock Nature Center presentation is on Valentine's day February 14.

I will give a presentation on the Sun and Missions to the Sun.

IF it will be clear keep an eye on the sky on February 2nd since Regulus the brightest star in the Constellation of Leo will disappear behind the moon.

Prediction is a disappearance at 8.45 pm use binoculars since it will disappear on the bright moon limb and reappear on the dark limb.

Start your observing at least 10 minutes prior. Please visit https://is.gd/occultations for exact timing.

Unfortunately I have received a very low response on the surveys. To be exact I received 5.

We would like to know your view to move our club forward so please take a minute of your valuable time to inform us.

I hope to see you soon at one of our presentations or club meeting.

Clear skies,

Karl Rijkse

President SAAA

Friday Night (and Second Saturday) Viewing Times

7pm	January ~ March	**9pm**	**June ~ September**
8pm	April ~ May	**7pm**	**October ~ December**

February 2026 Dates and Times
Viewing is Clear Sky Dependent

February 2026 Muskegon Club

Their next scheduled event is Tuesday, February 10, 2026 7:30 P.M. Regular ZOOM Meeting (contact the Muskegon Club for more information)

Astronomy Riddle

What Star am I?
I cap the sky these evenings
Riding high near the zenith
Of all the stars, I'm the 6th brightest
And of 1st magnitude stars, the northernmost
Charioteering down the Milky Way
Even the Kids are with me

Answer will appear here next month.

This Month in Astronomy History

Shuttle Columbia breaks apart during reentry killing all seven (7) astronauts - 2003

Alan Shepard hits first golf balls on the Moon - 1971

Galileo Galilei born - 1564

Pluto discovered - 1930

Feb. 20: John Glenn is first American to orbit Earth - 1962

Light from supernova 1987a reaches Earth - 1987

What's in the Sky

By Peter Burkey

There's Much to See When the Sky Clears

February usually does not lend itself to stargazing for several reasons - bad weather, cold nights, and bad weather. It is unfortunate because on clear nights there is quite a bit to see.

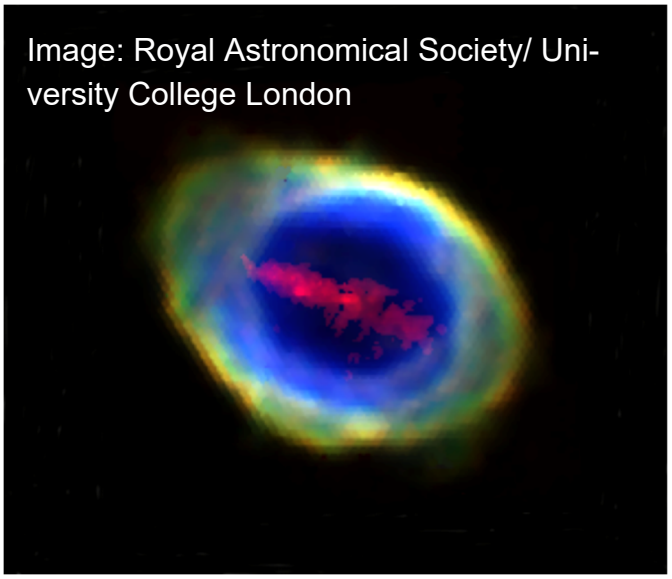
You probably have noticed the bright object in the south after sunset, and I'm sure regular readers know that it is the planet Jupiter. And if it is clear tonight you may spot a lovely Moon just to its left. Both objects provide some good viewing during the first half of the month.

February is one of the best times of the year, weather notwithstanding, for constellations. With two dogs to his left, a rabbit at his feet, and a bull to his right Orion dominates the southern sky for most of the month and is always a favorite for young and old alike. Follow the line formed by the three belt stars down and to the left to Sirius, in the constellation Canis Major and the top two stars left to Procyon in Canis Minor. These are Orion's two hunting dogs. Hiding safely under his feet is Lupus, the Rabbit, but it is very dim and difficult to see.

Returning to Orion, follow a line from Rigel, lower right, to Betelgeuse, upper left, (his two brightest stars) to the Gemini twins, Castor and Pollux, then continue clockwise to Auriga, the Charioteer, with the bright star Capella and Taurus, the Bull, where you can spot the Pleiades cluster farther west. Also look for the V-shaped cluster of stars, the brightest of which is Aldebaran, the "Eye of the Bull". Six of these bright stars, Rigel Aldebaran, Capella, Pollux, Procyon and Sirius form the "Winter Hexagon", a lovely winter sight up in the sky.

What's in the Sky this Month: February

Information from EarthSky.org

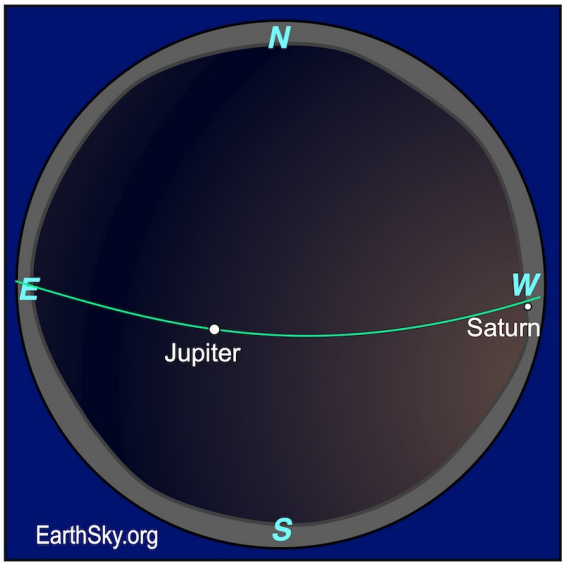


A study finds the iconic Ring nebula holds a mysterious iron bar.

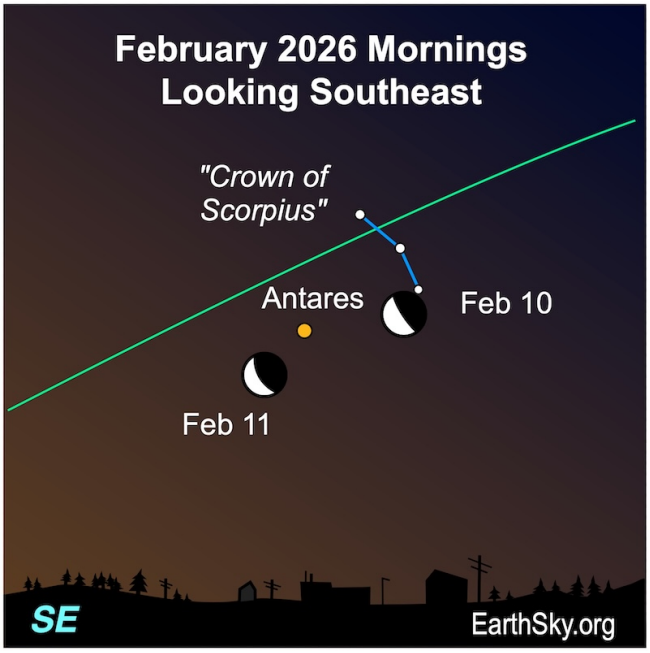
The iconic Ring nebula has been thoroughly studied by professional and amateur astronomers alike for centuries. And now, researchers say it's been holding a secret all this time.

The Ring nebula is a vast ring of gas and dust blown off by a star as it ran out of fuel, leaving behind a tiny white dwarf. And at the center of this ring, the new study has revealed, is a mysterious bar-shaped cloud of iron.

The bar's length is roughly 500 times that of Pluto's orbit around the sun, with a mass comparable to that of Mars. And astronomers aren't quite sure how it got there.



As seen from across Earth this month – about 2 hours after sunset – the bright planet Jupiter will be in the east. It'll be visible until several hours after midnight. And Saturn will be sinking lower each night after sunset. By month's end, it'll set shortly after sunset. Note that these planets lie along the path the sun travels in the daytime (the green line on our chart). Chart via EarthSky.



This Month in Club History: February ‘90

Copy of the scanned document.

Hubble Space Telescope

The long-awaited launch of the Hubbl Space Telescope (HST) will be taking place, if al goes according to schedule, on March 26. It seem appropriate, then, to review some of the fascinatin aspects of this one-of-a-kind optical instrument.

When finally launched, the HST will hav cost over $2 billion, a price exceeding that of the 5 largest optical telescopes in the world combined. will see seven times farther into space than an telescope has before and will be able to dete objects 50 times fainter than the largest ground based telescope can. Its 94 inch diameter is rela tively small (Palomar's Hale telescope is 20 inches), but it contains the finest large optic system ever built.

The 94 inch primary mirror, 12 1/2 inc secondary mirror, and the scientific payload th receives the images are held precisely in place by framework called the metering truss. Because HS will undergo large and frequent temperature change in space, the entire structure's coefficient of expar sion must be essentially zero. The truss, measuring 210 inches by 115 inches and made of graphite epoxy, weighs a mere 252 pounds. In contrast, the tube of the 200-inch Hale telescope is 60 feet long and weight 120 tons. Despite temperature changes of over 280 degrees Fahrenheit in space, the truss will not expand or contract more than 1/10,000th of an inch. Supporting the mirror has been compared to securing a soap bubble at six points, but not deforming it in any way.

Next month: constructing the most precise mirror ever built.

Peter Burkey

(below) NASA's James Webb Space Telescope shows galaxy MoM-z14 as it appeared in the distant past, only 280 million years after the universe began in the big bang.

Kids Corner

https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/ A place where kids and grown-ups have fun with chnology.

NASA Climate Kids: It's all about climate.
https://climatekids.nasa.gov/

SciJinks: It's all about weather! https://scijinks.gov/

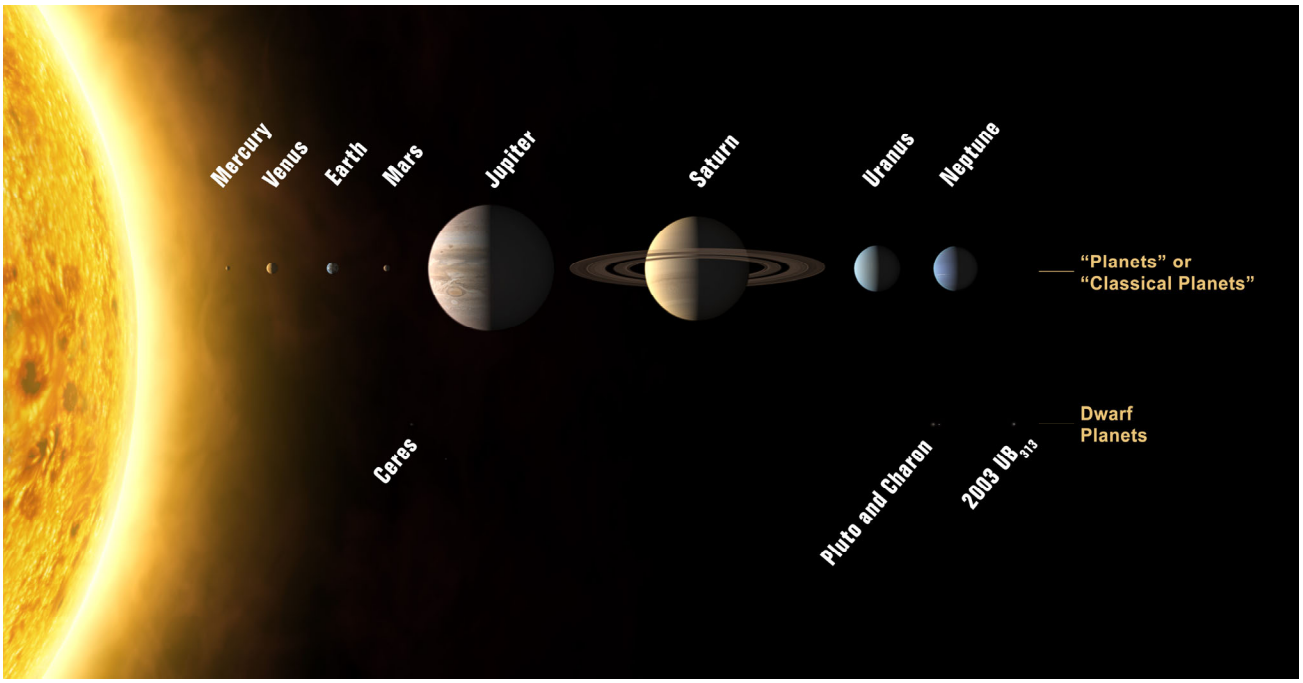
Kid's Corner Extra!

Our Solar System

Our solar system includes the Sun, eight planets, five officially named dwarf planets, hundreds of moons, and thousands of asteroids and comets. Our solar system is located in the Milky Way, a barred spiral galaxy with two major arms, and two minor arms. Our Sun is in a small, partial arm of the Milky Way called the Orion Arm, or Orion Spur, between the Sagittarius and Perseus arms. Our solar system orbits the center of the galaxy at about 515,000 mph (828,000 kph). It takes about 230 million years to complete one orbit around the galactic center.

Our solar system extends much farther than the planets that orbit the Sun. The solar system also includes the Kuiper Belt that lies past Neptune's orbit. This is a ring of icy bodies, almost all smaller than the most popular Kuiper Belt Object – dwarf planet Pluto.

Beyond the fringes of the Kuiper Belt is the Oort Cloud. This giant spherical shell surrounds our solar system. It has never been directly observed, but its existence is predicted based on mathematical models and observations of comets that likely originate there.



Club Members' Photos

A well-attended (over 70 people) opening of our astronomy photography showing at the Holland Arts Council..

Photo Credit to the Holland Arts Council

Selling Equipment?

If you want to sell your telescope or other astronomy equipment, we will provide space on this page of our newsletter.

Any member interested in selling their astronomy equipment to other members can do this via the Newsletter. SAAA will not be otherwise involved or responsible for any bidding/selling transactions. The member should list the asking price, provide a picture and a phone number for direct contact. Please send to Barb/Editor (barbwbrown@hotmail.com) seven (7) days before the end of any month in order to be included in the next month's issue.

Upcoming Keyholder Schedule

Members may contact the designated keyholder to schedule (48 hour notice) a private tour of our Planetarium. Use our membership information to obtain the keyholder's phone or email.

Feb 1-7 Michael Long
Feb 8-14 James Reier
Feb 15-21 Karl Rijkse
Feb 22-28 Frank Roldan
Mar 1-7 Barry Schoenfelner

NASA's Photo of the Day!

https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html features the NASA photo of the day.

Have you missed a copy, or lost one, or just want to browse old issues of Astronomical League's *Reflector*?
Astronomical League's quarterly *Reflector* magazine:
https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/

Publication Information

Self-published for SAAA members by a SAAA member. January 2026

Editor is appointed by the SAAA board. Email: barbwbrown@hotmail.com
Previous Issues of our newsletters are found on our website at: Holland-saaa.org

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https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/