WESTMINSTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INC. (WASI)

WASI Update

WASI Update—July 2026 Contact the Secretary at secretary@westminsterastro.org

Our **membership meeting** will be **July 8** at Bear Branch Nature Center. Our **guest speaker** will be Tom Reinert. His talk is titled "Light Pollution Reconsidered". Tom is a retired Washington, D.C., attorney and immediate Past president of DarkSky International, who spent most of his career representing airlines and railroads in labor and employment matters. His work included extensive experience translating complex scientific expert testimony for lay decision-makers. He is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School.

His environmental advocacy includes a decade working with local riverkeeper organizations on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland to combat water pollution. In 2013, seeing the Andromeda Galaxy with his naked eye from atop Kitt Peak rekindled his interest in astronomy and inspired a commitment to reducing light pollution.

Now residing in Northern Virginia and wintering in the desert outside Tucson, Tom and his wife Chris travel extensively throughout the western United States seeking dark sky locations. For several years, he has volunteered with DarkSky on legal and national public policy issues.

July 11 is our monthly planetarium show and **star party** at Bear Branch Nature Center. And the **member-only star party** there is **July 10 to 12**. The new moon is the 14th.

We're running a lot of events this month. Check out the calendar on the next page of this Update for details.

Our annual picnic will be Saturday August 1 at the pavilion at Bear Branch. It's a potluck, so let us know what you'll be bringing by entering that data here: https://westminsterastro.groups.io/g/main/table?id=37370&lv=&p=,,,20,0,0,0

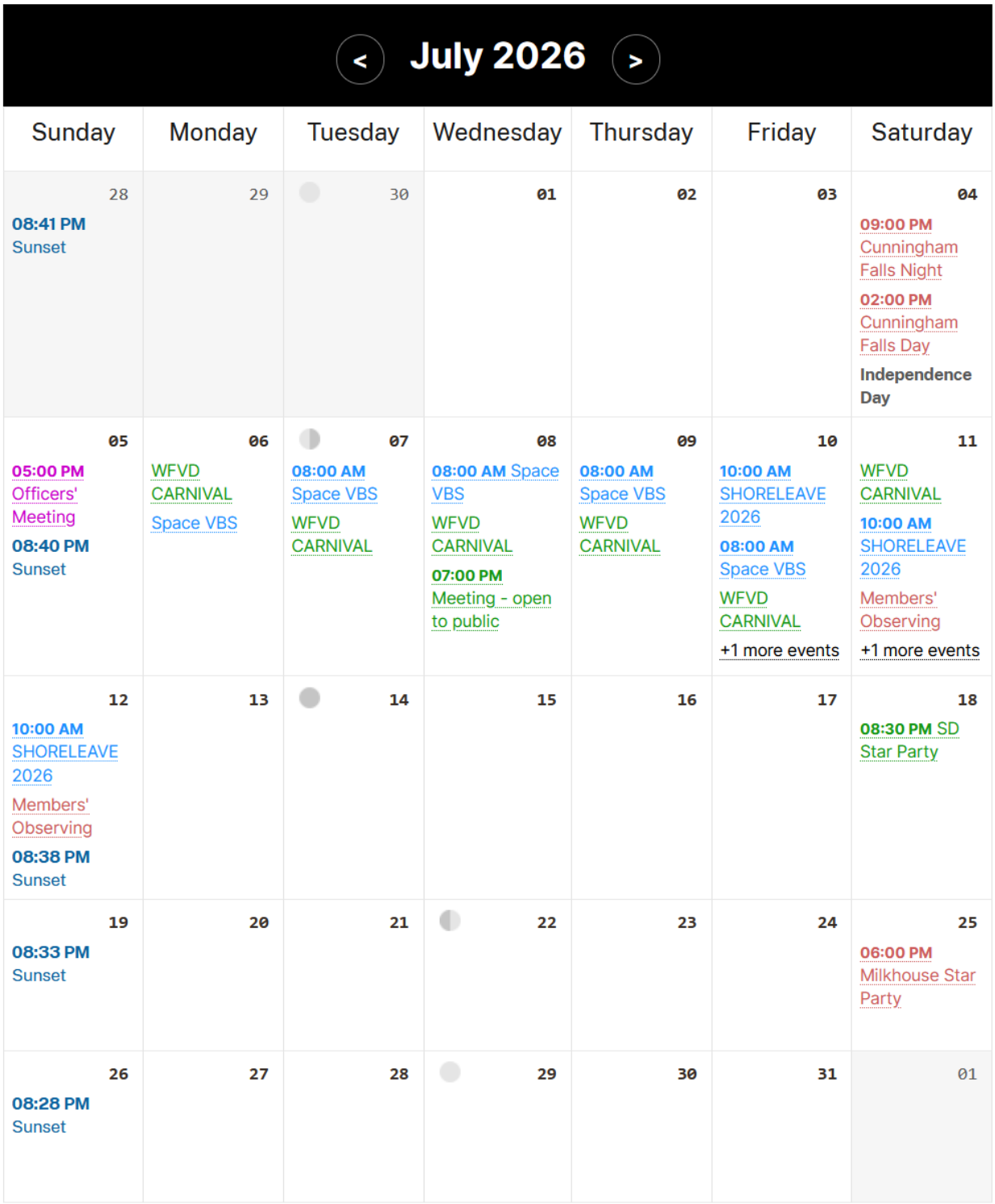
Did you know there's a solar eclipse coming? It's not getting much press as it's not much of an eclipse, with only about 5% of the sun getting obscured, but through a telescope (with safe solar filters!) it will be fun to observe. We're having an event August 12 at 12:30 at Bear Branch to watch it. You'll definitely want to take a peek through our special solar scope.

We're looking for volunteers to present at upcoming membership meetings about, well, anything of astronomy interest. Maybe meteor showers, demos of your equipment, items of historical interest, the science of astronomy, etc. The sky is the limit (so to speak). Email Laurie to volunteer: treasurer@westminsterastro.org.

Outreach Events

WASI holds many events to introduce the public to the wonders of the night sky. We're always looking for members to help out with these. It's fun and who knows… you might encourage a youngster to become the next Carl Sagan. Questions? Email president@westminsterastro.org.

Here's this month's calendar. If you go to the calendar web page (https://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/events/wasi/) and click on an event it will give more details.



July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 08:41 PM Sunset	29	30	01	02	03	04 09:00 PM Cunningham Falls Night 02:00 PM Cunningham Falls Day Independence Day
05 05:00 PM Officers' Meeting 08:40 PM Sunset	06 WFVD CARNIVAL Space VBS	07 08:00 AM Space VBS WFVD CARNIVAL	08 08:00 AM Space VBS WFVD CARNIVAL 07:00 PM Meeting - open to public	09 08:00 AM Space VBS WFVD CARNIVAL	10 10:00 AM SHORELEAVE 2026 08:00 AM Space VBS WFVD CARNIVAL +1 more events	11 WFVD CARNIVAL 10:00 AM SHORELEAVE 2026 Members' Observing +1 more events
12 10:00 AM SHORELEAVE 2026 Members' Observing 08:38 PM Sunset	13	14	15	16	17	18 08:30 PM SD Star Party
19 08:33 PM Sunset	20	21	22	23	24	25 06:00 PM Milkhouse Star Party
26 08:28 PM Sunset	27	28	29	30	31	01

Membership Season Updates

Dues were due in MAY in line with Astronomical League (A.L.) deadlines and membership. All WASI membership cards show membership good through June 30 of your chosen payment year, after which (if renewal payment isn't received), access to "groups.io" is deleted, access to "members only" activities is no longer applicable, and Night Sky Network (NSN) permissions are reduced from "member" to "contact." Check your membership card or NSN profile to see when your membership ends and **refer any questions to** Treasurer@westminsterastro.org. Upon receipt of dues, reactivation is usually completed within a week, but since A.L. dues and rosters are submitted quarterly, there may be a gap in A.L. membership up to 3 months (affecting Reflector subscription, A.L. participation, and award eligibility).

The work of membership and treasury is performed by the Treasurer (a labor or love??), and on a completely **volunteer** basis. **Many thanks** to everyone who renewed in a timely manner, provided words of encouragement, and for your understanding. Now for some data on the end of this membership year:

- As of 6/24 our membership includes 127 households inclusive of 175
- This compares with 2024, 112 households inclusive of 137 people, and 2025, 116 households with 138 people
- Each year, more members are opting for **multi-year memberships at a reduced annual price** and less volunteer time for processing. As of this writing, 46% are currently due for renewal in 2027. Folks can renew for more years at any time.

Additional Membership notes

WASI membership FAQs are located here: https://westminsterastro.groups.io/g/main/files/Membership and hard copy was mail with every new/renewal card sent this season.

The 'groups.io' invite says membership cards get mailed by the end of the month. On average the new and renewed cards go out in less than a week.

What's Up for July

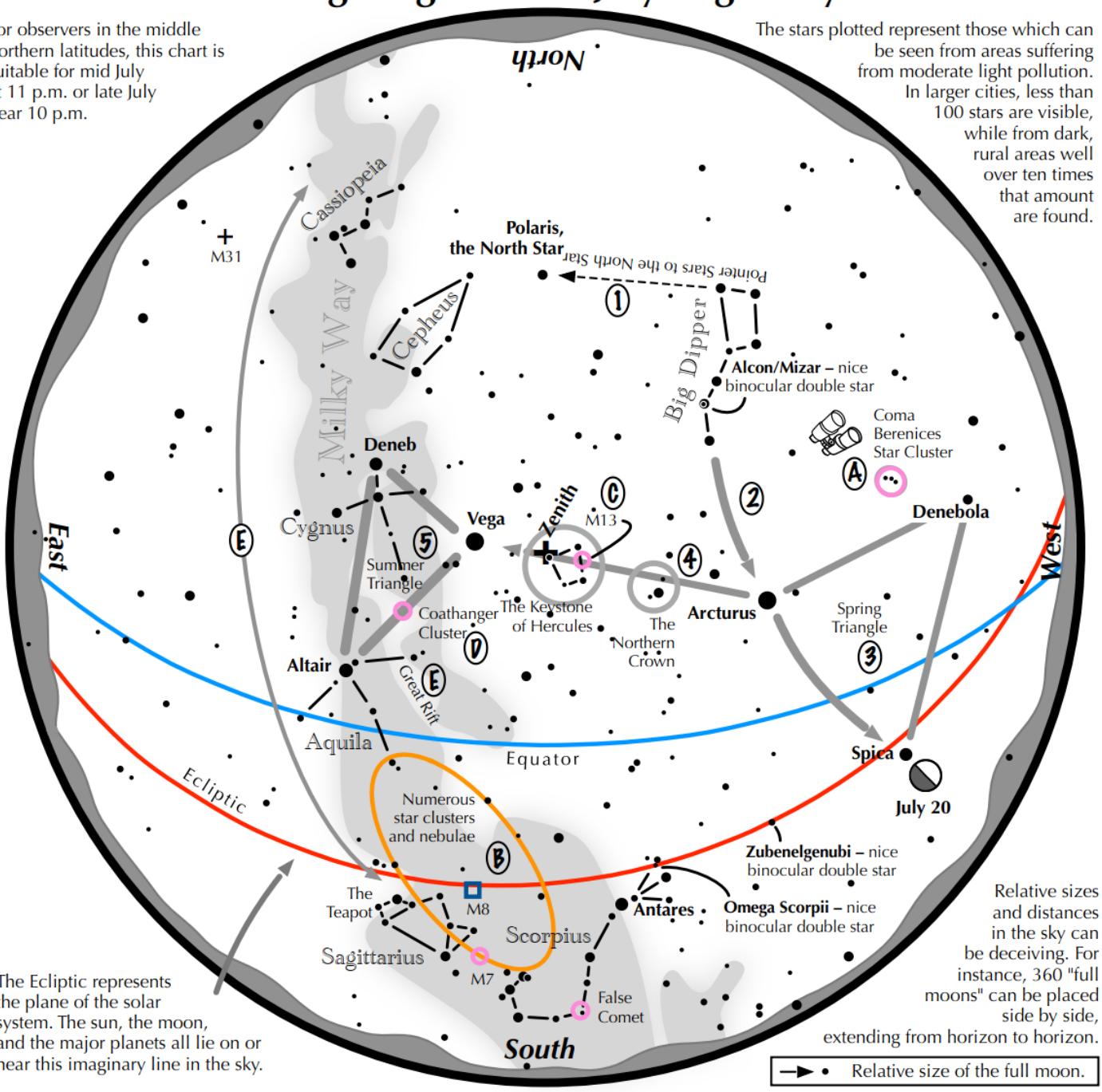
If you miss this broadcast, check the Astronomical League's YouTube channel for playback. This broadcast includes a more detailed presentation of what to look for in July 2026 skies.: https://www.youtube.com/@astronomical.league

Also, on the Astronomical League (A.L.) channel, some highlights of observing and Citizen Science programs and challenges: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDq3N0G6cmI

Navigating the mid July Night Sky 2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid July at 11 p.m. or late July near 10 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 mid July night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

1. Extend a line north from the two stars at the tip of the Big Dipper's bowl. It passes by Polaris, the North Star.
2. Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It first intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the July evening sky, then continues to Spica.
3. Arcturus, Spica, and Denebola form the Spring Triangle, a large equilateral triangle.
4. To the northeast of Arcturus shines another star of similar brightness, Vega. Draw a line from Arcturus to Vega. It first meets "The Northern Crown," then the "Keystone of Hercules." A dark sky is needed to see these two dim stellar configurations.
5. High in the East lies the Summer Triangle stars of Vega, Altair, and Deneb.

Binocular Highlights

A: Between Denebola and the tip of the Big Dipper's handle, lie the stars of the Coma Berenices Star Cluster.
B: Between the bright stars Antares and Altair, hides an area containing many star clusters and nebulae.
C: On the western side of the Keystone glows the Great Hercules Cluster, containing nearly 1 million stars.
D: 40% of the way between Altair and Vega, twinkles the "Coathanger," a group of stars outlining a coathanger.
E: Sweep along the Milky Way for an astounding number of faint glows and dark bays, including the Great Rift.

The Astronomical League
OC
Open Cluster Program

M6 & M7

When these two big, bright, and beautiful open star clusters appear in the early evening in early July, summer is upon us.

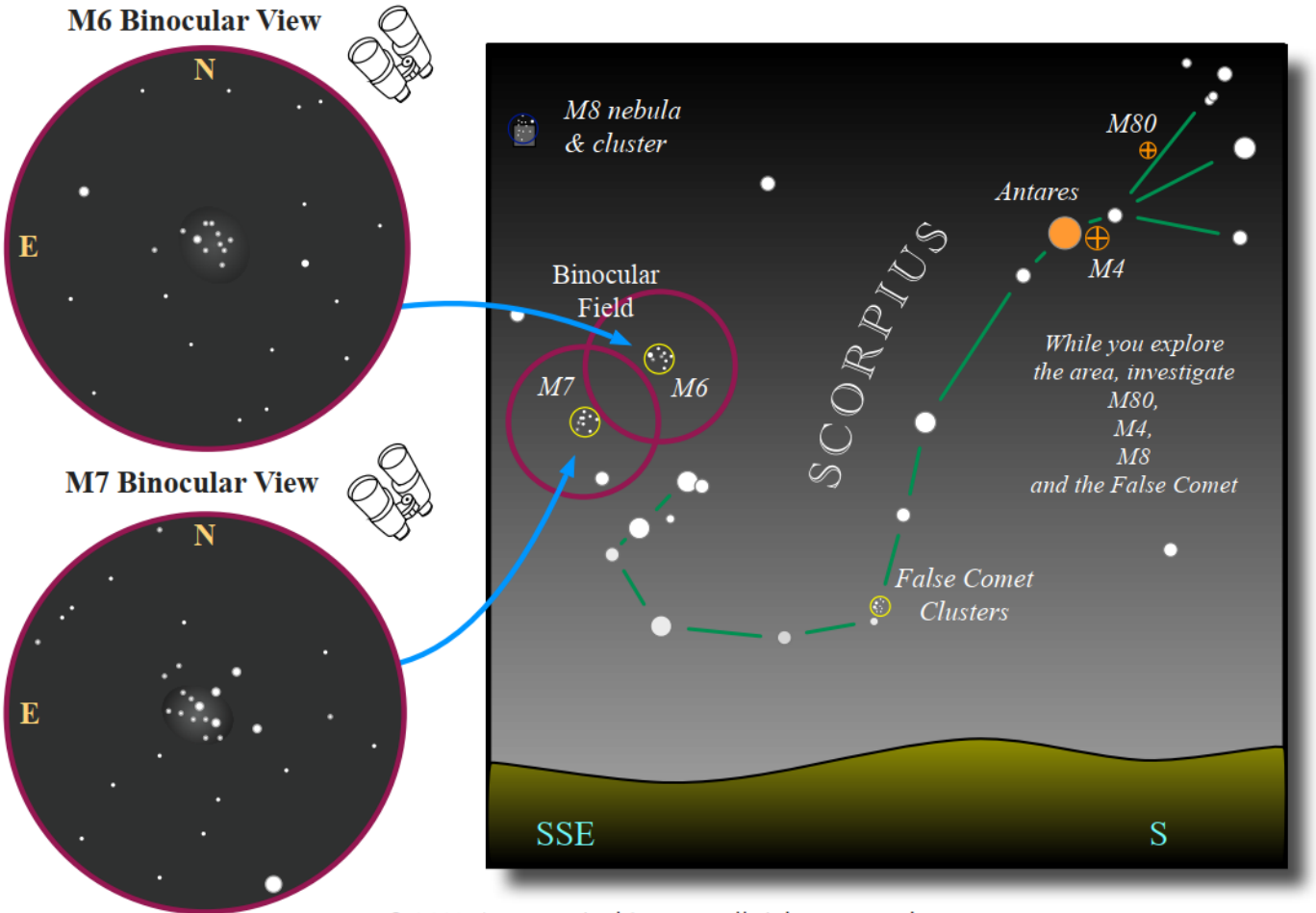
If you have recently begun your journey under the stars, why not whet your appetite by exploring southeastern Scorpius and its two wonderful open star clusters, M6 & M7. You will return to them year after year!

While they are visible to the unaided eye from a dark location, binoculars help greatly.

1. Identify Scorpius standing low in the south-southeast on an early summer evening. As summer progresses, it is ascends low in the south, then swings low in the southwest in the early fall.
2. From red Antares, direct your gaze southward down the scorpion's back, then turn eastward.
3. When its tail hooks northward, continue the length of that hook.
4. M6 and M7 should be plainly visible in the binocular field.

M6:
A faint hazy glow is seen by the unaided eye from a dark, clear site. Two dozen stellar lights can be discerned with 10x50 binoculars.
- Integrated Magnitude: 4.2
- Size: 33 minutes

M7:
A glittery glow is easily spotted off the scorpion's tail by the unaided eye. Binoculars reveal many faint stars.
- Integrated Magnitude: 3.3
- Size: 80 minutes



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If you can see only one celestial event in the evening this July, see this one.

The early evening western sky July 15 & 17, 2026

The thickening crescent moon passes Regulus and Venus.

Look to the west 45 minutes after sunset on July 15.

- The very thin crescent moon, almost lost in the bright twilight, lies just above the western horizon. Use binoculars to help pick it out in the bright sky.
- The next night, a thicker more easily seen crescent moon hangs in the west next to Regulus. Again, use binoculars – this time to pick out the star.
- The evening of Juy 17 finds the crescent moon glowing left of brilliant Venus.

End your day with this captivating scene!