



# WESTMINSTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INC. (WASI)



## WASI Update



WASI Update—May 2026

Contact the Secretary at [secretary@westminsterastro.org](mailto:secretary@westminsterastro.org)

Our **membership meeting** will be **May 13** at Bear Branch Nature Center.

Our **guest speaker** will be Brad Tucker, who is an Astrophysicist/Cosmologist and Associate Professor at the Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Mt. Stromlo Observatory and the National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, at the Australian National University.

He's leading programs to understand why and how stars blow up, measure the growth of the Universe, and developing an ultraviolet space telescope. Brad is also studying light pollution by quantify its impacts on humans and society, as well as working with industry on solutions. He is also interested in how science fiction increases awareness, inspiration, and knowledge of these topics. He also uses machine learning and AI to gain insights into aspects of science communication research and discourse that are missed by other methods.

Brad frequently gives talks to school groups and the public about Astronomy and has regular segments on various radio and TV stations. He has also developed a series of Astronomy coins with the Royal Australian Mint, consulted on science fiction movies, and has been featured in TV specials. He is currently in the process of writing his first popular book and has developed an online Astronomy course.

**May 9** is our monthly planetarium show and **star party** at Bear Branch Nature Center. And the **member-only star party** there is **May 15-17**. The new moon is the 16th.

Want to be able to **run the planetarium**? It's fun and a big help. May's membership meeting will have a training session by Al Ansonge.

We're looking for a volunteer to demo the use of our **Lunt solar scope** at the July meeting. Please let the secretary ([secretary@westminsterastro.org](mailto:secretary@westminsterastro.org)) know if you're interested.

And we're looking for volunteers to present at the August through December membership meetings about, well, anything of astronomy interest. Maybe meteor showers, demos of your equipment, etc. The sky is the limit (so to speak). Email Laurie to volunteer: [treasurer@westminsterastro.org](mailto:treasurer@westminsterastro.org).

Did you have to take a required minimum distribution on investment accounts, or did your tax return have a nice surprise in terms of a refund? WASI is a 501 (c)(3) organization, so any gift is tax deductible. Contact [treasurer@westminsterastro.org](mailto:treasurer@westminsterastro.org) for more information.

# 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](mailto:president@westminsterastro.org).

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

<span>&lt;</span> <b>May 2026</b> <span>&gt;</span>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 07:58 PM Sunset	27	28	29	30	● 01	02
03 08:05 PM Sunset	04	05	06	07	08	● 09 07:00 PM Star Party & Planetarium
10 11:00 AM Observatory Tree 08:12 PM Sunset	11	12	13 07:00 PM Meeting - open to public	14	15 Members' Observing	16 ● Members' Observing 08:30 PM SD Star Party
17 Members' Observing 08:19 PM Sunset	18	19	20	21	22	23 06:00 PM Milkhouse Star Party 08:30 PM Catocin Creek Star Party
● 24 08:25 PM Sunset	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
● 31 08:31 PM Sunset	01	02	03	04	05	06

## More WASI News

We have the blessing from BBNC et al to move the tree planted last fall that endangers the observatory's northwest views. It's the larger tree at the end of the new walkway to the new pavilion.

We need helping hands and tools!

Please RSVP so we know we have enough help. This tree is the same kind that's grown on the island in the observatory parking lot so it will grow tall and wide. The roots should not have spread from the root ball just yet.

The first date, May 10, is Mother's day, and the second date, May 17, is a rain date. Meet in the observatory parking lot.

More info here: <https://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/club/wasi/events/125401/>

May is **dues renewal month**! While memberships are good through June 30, to meet the deadlines for everything, payment is needed in May. Those who are up for renewal in 2026 have gotten an email reminder. We take cash, check (can be through your online banking), and PayPal, and you can catch Laurie at an event or the May meeting. (PayPal link [here](#), and QR code below).

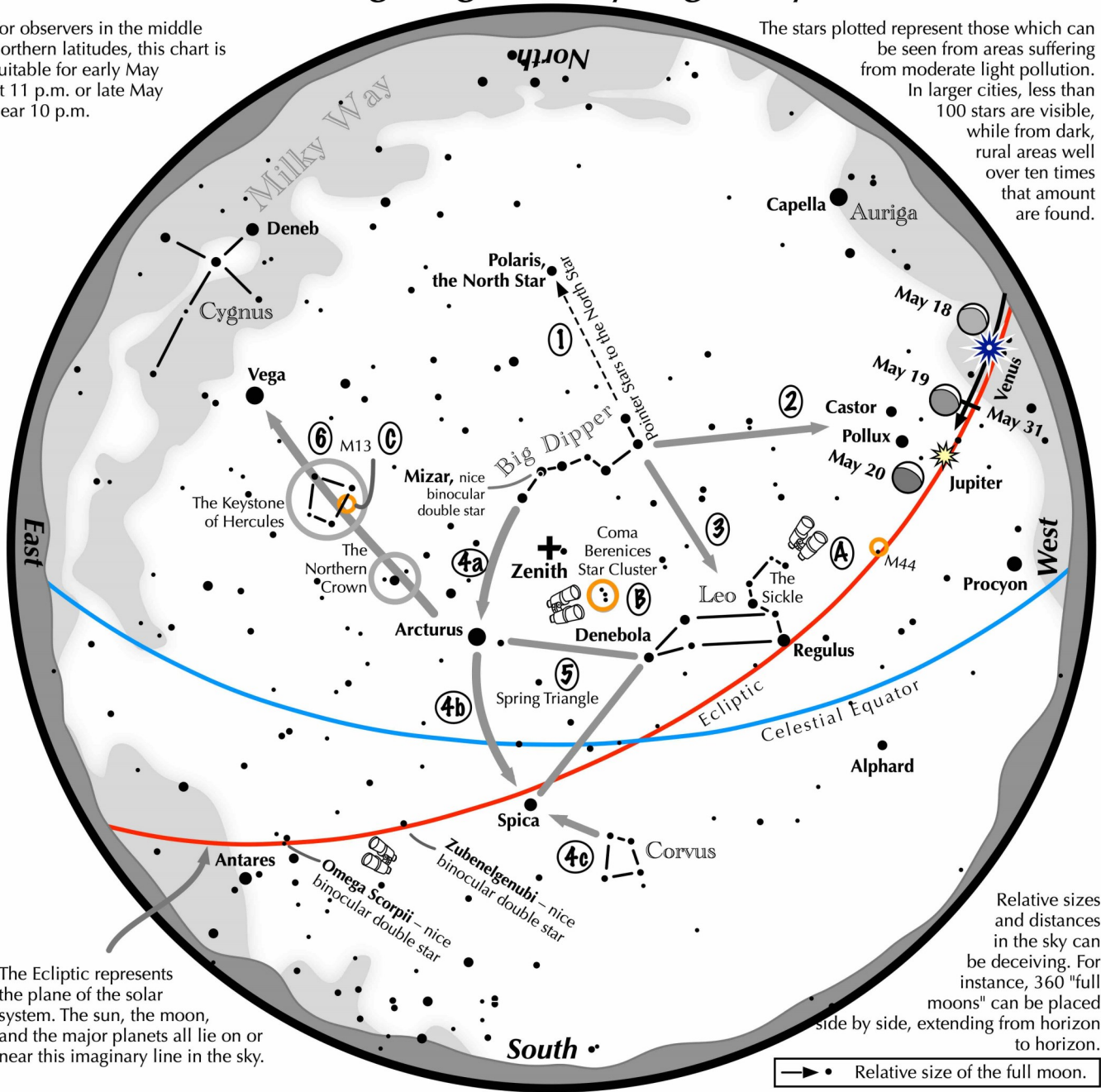


# Navigating the May Night Sky

2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early May at 11 p.m. or late May 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.



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.

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

- 1 Extend a line northward from the two stars at the tip of the Big Dipper's bowl. It passes by Polaris, the North Star.
- 2 Through the two diagonal stars of the Dipper's bowl, draw a line pointing to the twin stars of Castor and Pollux in Gemini.
- 3 Directly below the Dipper's bowl reclines the constellation Leo with its primary star, Regulus.
- 4 Follow the arc of the Dipper's handle. It first intersects Arcturus, then continues to Spica. Confirm Spica by noting that two moderately bright stars just to its southwest form a straight line with it.
- 5 Arcturus, Spica, and Denebola form the Spring Triangle, a large equilateral triangle.
- 6 Draw a line from Arcturus to Vega. One-third of the way sits "The Northern Crown." Two-thirds of the way hides the "Keystone of Hercules." A dark sky is needed to see these two dim stellar configurations.

### Binocular Highlights

**A:** M44, a star cluster barely visible to the naked eye, lies to the southeast of Pollux. **B:** Look near the zenith for the loose star cluster of Coma Berenices. **C:** M13, a round glow from a cluster of over 500,000 stars.



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## If you can see only one celestial event this month, see this one.

### The crescent moon passing Venus then Jupiter

Look to the west-northwest 60 minutes after sunset on May 18, 19, and 20.

- On the first evening, the crescent moon full with earthshine glows immediately next to brilliant Venus.
- The next evening finds a somewhat thicker crescent moon sitting midway between Venus and Jupiter.
- On May 20, the moon lies above Jupiter and in a line with Castor and Pollux.
- The bright stars Capella and Procyon act as boundaries helping frame the scene.

**End your day with this magical scene!**

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