



WESTMINSTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INC. (WASI)



WASI Update



WASI Update—September 2026

Contact the Secretary at secretary@westminsterastro.org

Our **membership meeting** will be **September 9** at Bear Branch Nature Center.

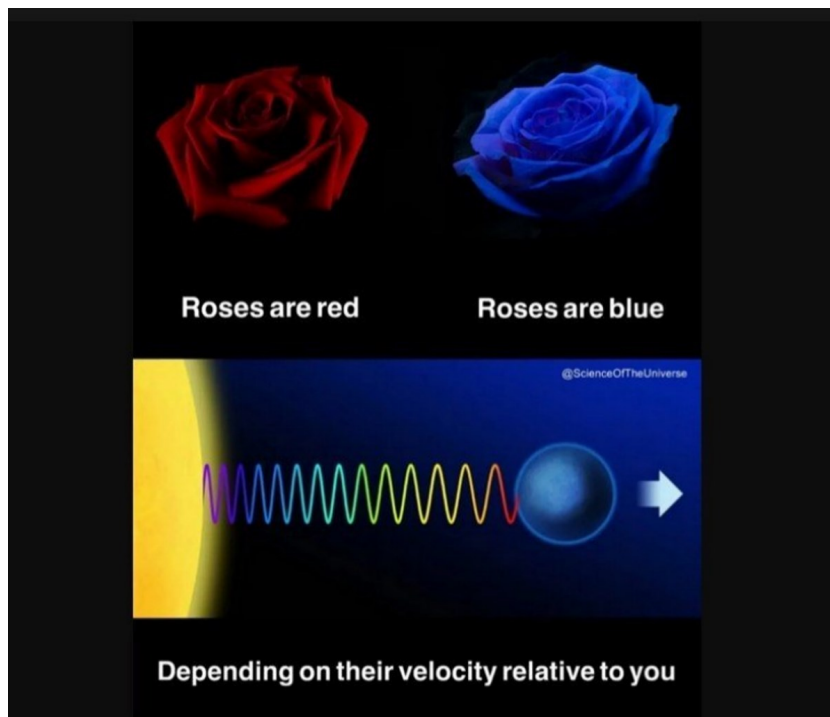
Lou Mayo is our speaker. There are a handful of fundamental questions that remain to be answered. The answers to these questions, besides generating more questions, have the power to change every element of society, our belief systems, and our sense of who we are. Among these sits the question “Are we alone?”. Is the Earth the only life sustaining planet in the universe? Is extraterrestrial life possible? Is it probable? Could it be intelligent? The information needed to answer these questions span the fields of physics, chemistry, biology, and, of course, astronomy. The answer to this ultimate of questions is terrifying, either way.

In this presentation, we will explore the current state of knowledge surrounding life on Earth and what it may tell us about physical conditions necessary for extraterrestrial life. We will survey the solar system for possible life sustaining environments and look further out at extrasolar planets and planetary systems.

September 12 is our monthly planetarium show and **star party** at Bear Branch Nature Center. And the **member-only star party** there is **September 11-13**. The new moon is the **11th**.

Bear Branch is holding the yearly Monarch Fest on **September 12**. WASI will open the planetarium and observatory. It's from 10 to 2. The nature center will release their Monarchs for their long journey south to Mexico. (For a great read about these creatures, check out *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver. While fiction, it's chock full of interesting Monarch tidbits).

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.

< September 2026 >						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 07:43 PM Sunset	31	01	02	03	04	05 08:00 PM Cunningham Falls Night 02:00 PM Cunningham Falls Day
06 05:00 PM Officers' Meeting 07:33 PM Sunset	07 Labor Day	08	09 07:00 PM Meeting - open to public	10	11 Members' Observing	12 07:00 PM Star Party & Planetarium Members' Observing 10:00 AM Monarch Fest
13 Members' Observing 07:20 PM Sunset	14	15	16	17	18	19 06:00 PM IOMN 26 06:00 PM Milkhouse Star Party 08:30 PM SOLDIERS DELIGHT ASTRO
20 07:09 PM Sunset	21	22	23	24	25	26 05:00 PM AFNM 07:00 PM Catocin Creek Star Party
27 06:58 PM Sunset	28	29	30	01	02	03

Smart Scopes for Use

Dwarf Lab has partnered with WASI for long term loan of a Dwarf 3 and Dwarf Mini smart scope with this caveat: *provide pictures of people using it and pictures taken with it.* Here are the details:

Preference/priority on use is for outreach events (if, for example, you are hosting a family event, please be sure to post on NSN for club 'credit,' and you can mark it as private)

To **borrow a scope**, contact WASI Loaner Scope Librarian, Curt Roelle: roelle1@yahoo.com

*****Send pictures** to Curt roelle1@yahoo.com and Laurie Ansong treasurer@westminsterastro.org; we'll get them to the right places (*and we'll make sure to edit faces as needed*)***

Use of these scopes *requires* **downloading an app** on your smart phone: <https://www.dwarflab.com/us/pages/dwarflab-app-firmware-download>

NOTE: we are **explicitly NOT promoting** a specific product, scope, or manufacturer. We have established a clear understanding with Dwarf of this stance. We have received a large number of brochures, stickers, magnets and a few branded ball caps from Dwarf that can we laid out with handouts for the public and members' use.

If there are **Dwarf experts in the club** to help with usage questions, please **self-identify**.

Information, specs and 'how-tos' on: (*both can be used for daytime terrestrial & night sky*)

Dwarf Mini: <https://www.dwarflab.com/us/pages/dwarf-mini-smart-telescope>

Dwarf 3: <https://www.dwarflab.com/us/pages/astronomy-with-dwarf-3-smart-telescope>

*****UPDATE:** Our "payment due" for getting to use these scopes is providing Dwarflab with pictures (they'll presumably choose from for marketing). Turns out from talking to other clubs at ALCON, they've been making this offer to many other clubs too. Curt, Skip and Laurie continue to get requests for these pictures.

Need a release for anyone recognizable in your pictures? Please download and use one from groups.io and submit with your photos: <https://westminsterastro.groups.io/g/main/files/Downloadables>

ALCON 2026, Cincinnati Update

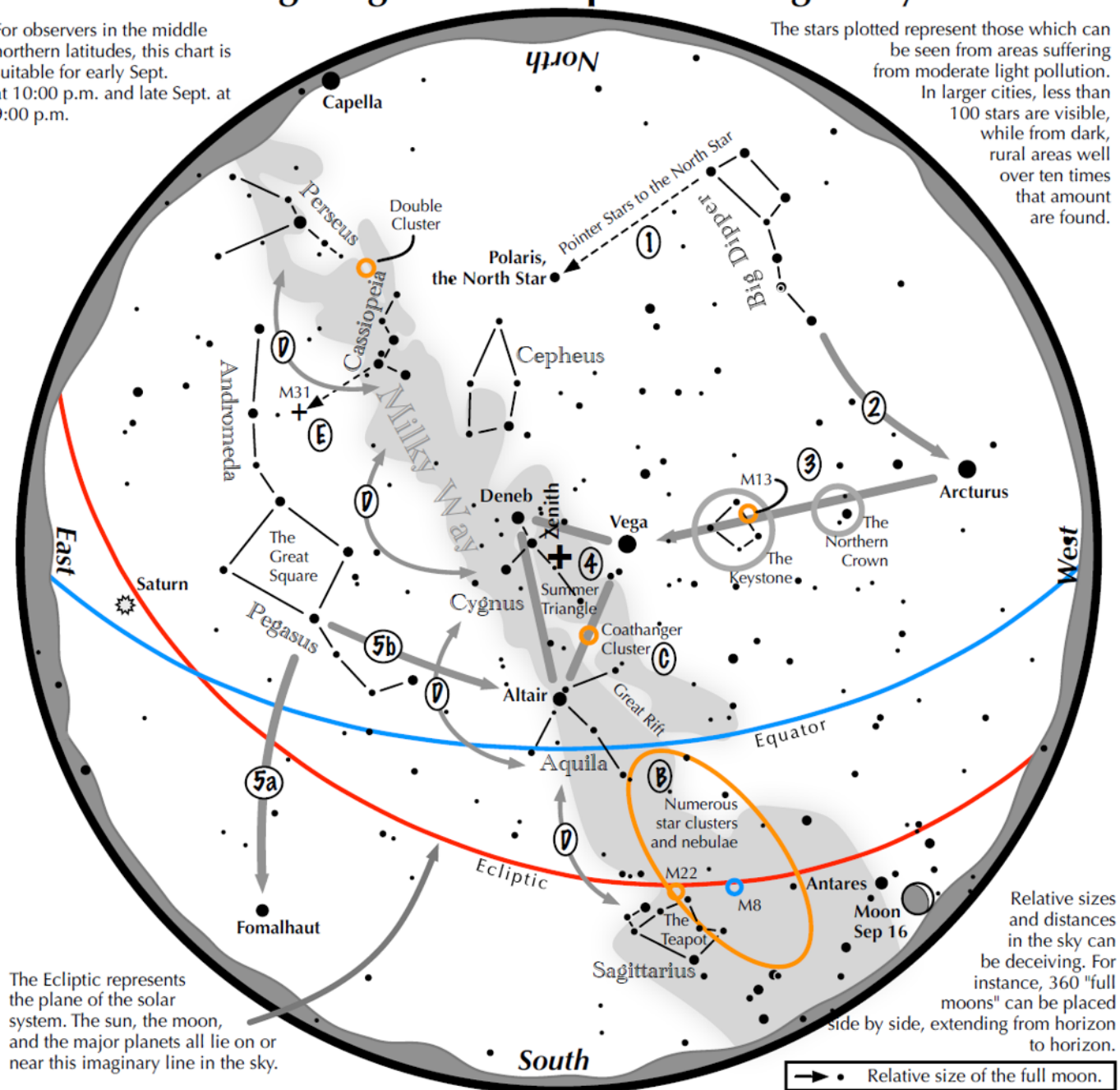
A more complete 'event report' will be featured in the next quarterly newsletter. Some highlights include:

- WASI member Matt Orsie received his "Master Observer" program plaque. He earned it >20 years ago, but since awardees must attend and pick up the plaque in person at an ALCON, this is where he finally received it.
- There's a new observing program on Exoplanets.
- The 'For Your Eyes Only' program <https://www.astroleague.org/for-your-eyes-only-observing-award/> now also receives a pin. No telescope is needed to complete this one, and you can choose 8 of 14 programs to do to complete this observing level.
- Advanced Herschel and Observing programs now also earn pins.

Navigating the mid September Night Sky 2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for early Sept. at 10:00 p.m. and late Sept. at 9:00 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 September 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 intersects Arcturus, the brightest star in the September evening sky.
- 3 Nearly overhead shines a star of similar brightness as Arcturus, 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.
- 4 The stars of the summer triangle, Vega, Altair, and Deneb, shine overhead.
- 5 The westernmost two stars of the Great Square, which lies high in the east, point south to Fomalhaut. The southernmost two stars point west to Altair.

Binocular Highlights

- A: On the western side of the Keystone glows the Great Hercules Cluster.
- B: Between the bright stars Antares and Altair, hides an area containing many star clusters and nebulae.
- C: 40% of the way between Altair and Vega, twinkles the "Coathanger," a group of stars outlining a coathanger.
- D: Sweep along the Milky Way for an astounding number of faint glows and dark bays, including the Great Rift.
- E: The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval.

Astronomical League www.astroleague.org/outreach; duplication is allowed and encouraged for all free distribution.



If you can catch only one celestial event in the morning this September, see one of these two.



September 6:

Celestial Parallelogram of Castor, Pollux, Mars, and the Moon

September 24:

Mars aligns with Castor and Pollux forming the Triplets of Gemini

Look in the east 90 minutes before sunrise on Sep. 6.

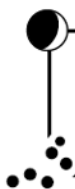
- The twin stars of Gemini – Castor and Pollux – along with Mars and the crescent moon, full with earthshine, form an attractive parallelogram.
- Jupiter peeks above the eastern horizon.

Again, look in the east 90 minutes before sunrise on Sep. 24.

- Mars aligns with Castor and Pollux, forming the Triplets of Gemini. Its brightness equals that of Pollux.



Galileo Observing Program Activity



All you need are 10x50 binoculars on a steady mount –
and clear and reasonably dark skies!



Observe (and draw) ...

- ★ the Pleiades star cluster visible from late fall through early spring,
- ★ the changing phases of Venus,
- ★ craters and surface markings on the moon,
- ★ the Beehive star cluster (M44) in winter through mid spring,
- ★ sunspots (*must use proper full-aperture solar filters*),
- ★ the changing positions of Jupiter's Galilean moons,
- ★ Jupiter's Galilean moons in eclipse,
- ★ a comet and track its path across the heavens,
- ★ the stars of the Orion's Head Nebula (Lambda Orionis),
- ★ the non-starlike quality of Saturn,
- ★ and identify Neptune,

Optional ...

- ★ aurora,
- ★ supernova.

for all the details of this wonderful program, please visit:

<https://www.astroleague.org/galileo-observing-program/>

