

# Martian Chronicles

Volume 24 Issue 8

August 2006

## Attention!

The next MARS club meeting will be held at MOSI in the Saunders Planetarium on August the 11th from 7:30-9:00 PM.

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**STARCHART** 5  
(heavens-above.com)

**\*\*Your Article, Story, . . . could be here. This Newsletter is for all M.A.R.S. Club members. Please send your Newsletter contribution to [tanjad@mosi.org](mailto:tanjad@mosi.org) by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month \*\***

## Up Coming Club Events

### August 2006

**11<sup>th</sup> M.A.R.S.**  
7:30 PM Club meeting.

Program:  
"Totality: The Solar Eclipse Experience"  
Open to everyone.



### September 2006

**2<sup>nd</sup> SkyWatch** at MOSI Sundown to 10 PM

**30<sup>th</sup> SkyWatch** at MOSI Sundown to 10 PM

(Since SkyWatch is near the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Moon, there will be two in September, but none in October.)

**8<sup>th</sup> M.A.R.S. Club Meeting.** 7:30-9:00 PM in the Saunders Planetarium.



# **The Scope of Things**

## **Dennis Farr**

### **President M.A.R.S.**

#### **Why Belong to an Astronomy Club?**

One of the most common pieces of advice given to folks just starting out in amateur astronomy is to join a club. Since we are in a club, I wanted to go through the advantages I believe we have through our membership.

#### **Learning**

Typically, many of us get started in Astronomy by buying a telescope and trying to learn how to set it up. Then we begin to learn astronomy. The process should be in reverse, but of course, it usually isn't. There are probably people in the club who have equipment similar to yours and could give you advice on setup and operation.

Presentations at club meetings provide a form of formal training that might be found in a classroom environment. Our goal when scheduling presentations is to make them factual, informative and entertaining. Those who make presentations will tell you they learn a lot when they prepare them.

In our specific case, each M.A.R.S. meeting includes a planetarium show conducted by one of the MOSI staff.

Teaching is a part of learning. Many of you have already experienced the rudiments of teaching when someone finds out you are interested in astronomy. Ever hear the question "How far can you see with that thing?" It's a common question and one that can open the door to someone else getting interested in astronomy and learning about the universe around us. Also, please work up the courage to give a presentation on some facet of astronomy at a club meeting. As mentioned above, you will learn much more than you teach.

Have you done something creative with your equipment? I saw the most ingenious setup for moving equipment around this week. It was by a new club member. I hope to have him give a demonstration at a future meeting. What can you share with us?

#### **Social interaction**

Want to change the mood at a wedding reception in a hurry? Tell someone you just met you are an amateur astronomer. Let's face facts; the general population doesn't understand our interest in the cosmos. The club provides a place we can get together and can talk about what interests us without getting the raised eyebrow. When attending a club meeting or other activity focused on astronomy, you will know that you have people around you who share your enthusiasm for our search for Astronomy knowledge.

Spread the word about our club. We are adding new members every month.

And speaking of that, the club officers met and have decided to add a new position in the club: Membership Chairman. It would take some of the load off the treasurer who is now handling all membership activities. Please consider filling this position and helping the club.

# Computers, the Internet and Astronomy

There are other things to be seen in the night sky besides stars, DSO's, and killer rocks. A lot of man-made stuff is circling the earth on a regular basis and can be seen if you know where and when to look.

One program that does this is Orbitron. *Orbitron* is a satellite tracking system for radio amateur and observing purposes. It's also used by weather professionals, satellite communication users, astronomers, UFO hobbyist and even astrologers (sic).

The application shows the positions of satellites at any given moment (in real or simulated time). You enter your LAT/LONG and download real time data from pre-programmed sites with a data base of satellite information. It's FREE (Cardware) and it's probably one of the easiest and most powerful satellite trackers, according to opinions of thousands of users from all over the world. With this software, you can accurately predict when you can impress your friends by seeing the International Space Station.

Last month Tanja mentioned Iridium flares. They are sunlight reflected off a series of communication satellites known as Iridium satellites.

<http://www.heavens-above.com/> is a site that can predict when these flashes of light will be visible from your location. Heavens-above.com is also another satellite tracking website and predicts the location and time of the ISS, Hubble, Shuttle and other orbiting objects in our night sky. It is very easy to use since you don't need to know your Latitude and Longitude.

## Astronomy and Flight-Space History August 2006

- Aug 01 - **UPDATED** [Jul 29] [Cassini](#), [Orbital Trim Maneuver #69 \(OTM-69\)](#)
- Aug 06 - 5th Anniversary (2001), [Galileo](#), Io 31 Flyby
- Aug 06 - 45th Anniversary (1961), [Vostok 2](#) Launch (Gherman Titov - 2nd Man in Space)
- Aug 06 - 825th Anniversary (1181), [Discovery of Supernova Cassiopeia](#)
- Aug 07 - [30th Anniversary \(1976\)](#), [Viking 2](#), Mars Orbit Insertion
- Aug 08 - 5th Anniversary (2001), [Genesis](#) Launch (Solar Particle Sample Return)
- Aug 09 - 30th Anniversary (1976), [Luna 24](#) Launch (USSR Moon Sample Return)
- Aug 10 - [Neptune](#) at Opposition
- Aug 10 - 40th Anniversary (1966), [Lunar Orbiter 1](#) Launch
- Aug 12 - [Perseids Meteor Shower](#) Peak
- Aug 19 - [Orville Wright's](#) 135th Birthday (1871)
- Aug 19 - [John Flamsteed's](#) 360th Birthday (1646)
- Aug 20 - [Mercury](#) Passes 0.5 Degrees From [Saturn](#)
- Aug 24 - 40th Anniversary (1966), [Luna 11](#) Launch (USSR Moon Orbiter)
- Aug 25 - [Northern Iota Aquarids Meteor Shower](#) Peak
- Aug 26 - [Venus](#) Passes 0.1 Degrees From [Saturn](#)
- Aug 26 - 25th Anniversary (1981), [Voyager 2](#), Saturn Flyby
- Aug 27 - **UPDATED** [Jul 29] [STS-115 Launch](#), [Space Shuttle Atlantis](#), [MEPSI 3A & 3B](#), ([International Space Station 12A](#))
- Aug 31 - **UPDATED** [Jul 29] [STEREO Delta 2 Launch](#)

# StarHopping For Beginners: August 2006

**Tanja Diederich**

Every year I eagerly await the Perseid Meteor Shower. We will have this treat on August 12 between midnight and sun up, but unfortunately, we have the Moon in the sky this year. However, we may be lucky enough to catch an Earth Grazer in the Northeast early in the evening Friday (probably during our meeting).

Comet Swift-Tuttle produces the debris trail that the Earth plows through giving us the chance to see the beautiful Perseid Meteor Shower as this debris rams our atmosphere at approximately 37 miles per second. [http://www.space.com/spacewatch/050805\\_perseid\\_guide.html](http://www.space.com/spacewatch/050805_perseid_guide.html)

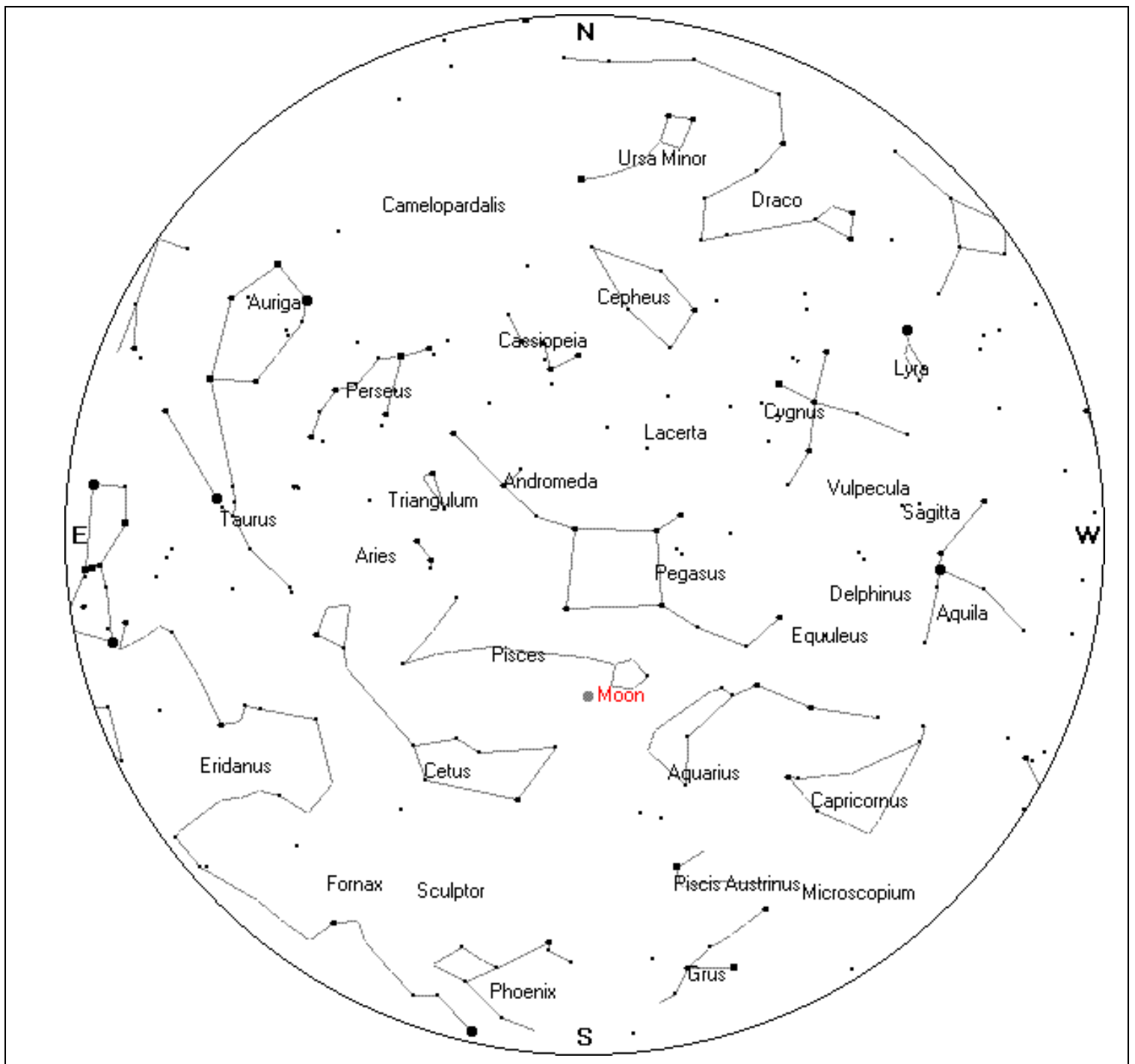
A few simple meteor shower watching hints:

- 1.) Look after 2 A.M.
- 2.) Lay down on a lawn chair or blanket and make yourself comfortable.
- 3.) Bring a drink and a snack, so you are not tempted to go back in the house and ruin your dark adaptation.
- 4.) Allow your eyes a minimum of 20 minutes to dark adapt.
- 5.) Scan the sky with your telescope or binoculars while you wait for the shower.

Remember that even though meteor showers are named for the specific constellations that they appear to radiate from, you do not need to look at that constellation to see the shower. Indeed, you may miss a lot of meteors if you look at one part of the sky.

Jupiter will shine brightly in the evening sky throughout August. As you know Mars will be setting soon, and we have been blighted again by the barrage of "Mars Spectacular" email hoax again. Please continue to educate people about Mars' two-year cycle. The Earth and Mars are far away from each other, and Mars is insignificant in our sky at this time. Happy StarHopping! ☺

Star Chart is for Tampa, August 12 at 4 AM.



<http://www.heavens-above.com/skychart.asp?Y=2006&M=8&D=12&H=4&N=8&Lat=27.947&Lng=-82.459&Loc=Tampa&TZ=EST&SL=on&SN=on&BW=1&SZ=600>

## NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSEUM ASTRONOMY RESOURCE SOCIETY ASTRONOMY CLUB

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**M.A.R.S Club's Website**  
**[www.marsastro.org](http://www.marsastro.org)**

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and \$20.00 for families. Dues can be paid to any club officer  
at a meeting or event or mailed to the Club Membership/  
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## 2006 M.A.R.S. Club Officers

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