



# August 2006

10:00 p.m. on August 1  
 9:00 p.m. on August 15  
 8:00 p.m. on September 1

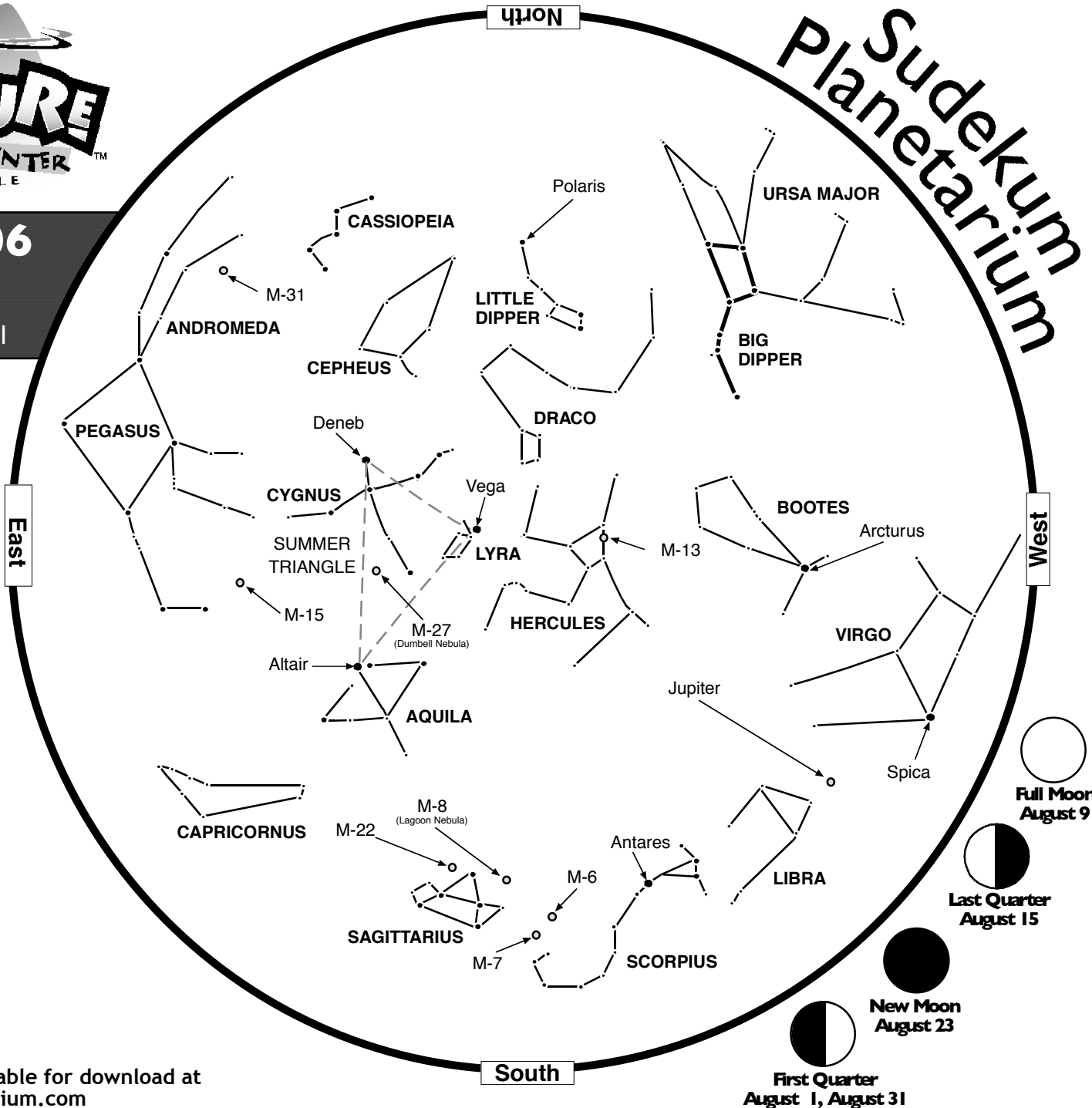
**To use this chart:** hold the chart in front of you and turn it so the direction you are facing is at the bottom of the chart.

- **Bright Stars**
- **Medium Bright Stars**
- **Faint Stars**

**Scan the sky with binoculars:**  
 the darker the sky, the better.

- M-13: The Hercules open star cluster
- M-15: A globular cluster in Pegasus
- M-31: The Andromeda Galaxy
- M-57: The Ring Nebula in Lyra

From Nashville:	Sunrise	Sunset
August 1	5:54 AM	7:52 PM
August 15	6:05 AM	7:37 PM
September 1	6:19 AM	7:15 PM



FREE monthly star charts are available for download at [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com)



**August 2006**

## Mars is (NOT) About To Be Spectacular!

Perhaps by now you've gotten that email. The one that claims that in August, **Mars** will look as big as the full moon. This is a good time to remind everyone not to believe everything they read on the Internet.

As it happens, this is a really **bad** time to look for Mars, and it won't get any better this year. Mars is nearly on the opposite side of the Sun from us, meaning that it's in the sky during the daytime, invisible to our eyes. Even if bright sunlight were not a factor, Mars is now so very far away from Earth, it would look unimpressive even in the best ground-based telescopes.

So what's with the email? It's another appearance of a message that has been making the rounds every August since 2003. In August 2003, Mars made a close approach to Earth - the closest, in fact, in 60,000 years. It was very bright and a great telescopic target. Despite what the email claims, however, Mars wasn't close enough to look any bigger than a point of light to the unaided eye.

What's more, the email never specifies the year of the event. All it says is "August." So the email gets passed around year after year, making the same dubious claim every time.

When will Mars make another close approach to Earth? It happens about every 26 months. The last **opposition** was in early November of last year, and the next one won't be until the end of December 2007.

## Planets to See

There's only really one good planet to see in the evening skies this month - the planet **Jupiter** - low in the southwestern sky. Right now it's the brightest point of light in the evening sky - you can't miss it!

## Planets to Count

How many planets are there in our solar system? Nine, right? Or is it eight? Maybe it's ten, or twelve, or more. And just what **IS** a planet, anyway? We explore that question in our new original show **Nine Planets And Counting**, offered daily in the Sudekum Planetarium. Check our web site for a complete schedule.

## If It's August, It's Time for a Star Party

Mark your calendars! On **Saturday, August 12, 2006, from 8:30 to 10:30 PM** at the **Special Events Field at Edwin Warner Park**, the Sudekum Planetarium, Barnard-Seyfert Astronomical Society (BSAS), and Warner Park Nature Center will host the **19th Annual FREE Summer Star Party and Perseid Meteor Watch**. Telescopes will be set up at the Special Events field off Vaughn Road and Old Hickory Blvd. Members of BSAS will provide views of the night sky and tips on getting started in astronomy.

To make reservations, call 615-352-6299. This helps us know how many people to expect. For more information, go to the Planetarium web page at [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com).

Of course, all star parties are **weather permitting**, which means they might be canceled if it's raining or just overcast. After consulting with local weather experts, a 'go, no-go' decision is usually made about 4:00 PM on the day of the

event. To make sure the event is still on, call the Nature Center at the number above, AstroLine at 615-401-5092, or check the Planetarium website for an update.

## So, You Wanna See Some Meteors

The Perseids are considered to be one of the two best meteor showers of the year. That's why there is usually a star party scheduled for this particular weekend. It's also a nice, family-friendly way to bid farewell to summer vacation or kick off the start of school. Unfortunately this year, a big, bright moon will rise just as the star party ends putting a damper on watching for meteors late into the night. Even though we normally suggest watching between midnight and dawn, there is always the possibility that a few meteors will be visible between 8:30 and 10:30 PM. All you have to do is keep looking up.

(. . . insert whining, nasal voice here. . .)

## "But It's Too HOT For a Star Party!"

No, we understand. The weather **IS** pretty unpleasant out there, even after dark. Fortunately, there are several star parties planned for cooler seasons to come:

- **September 20-24, 2006**, Tennessee Star Party at the TAG Youth Camp in Lynchburg, TN. Go to <http://home.comcast.net/~tnsp06/> for details.
- **Saturday, September 30, 2006**, 8:00 to 10:00 PM at the Visitors Center at Longhunter State Park; to see Jupiter and a pretty crescent Moon
- **Friday, November 17, 2006**, 8:00 to 10:00 PM at the Visitors Center at Longhunter State Park; watch for Leonid meteors with no Moon
- **Friday, December 15, 2006**, 8:00 to 10:00 PM at the Special Events Field at Edwin Warner Park; observe Saturn and Geminid meteors

*For information about programs and events at the Sudekum Planetarium and Adventure Science Center, visit [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com)*

*For current night sky information, call AstroLine at 615-401-5092.*