



December 2006

10:00 p.m. on December 1
 9:00 p.m. on December 15
 8:00 p.m. on January 1

Saturn rises in the east around 10:00 pm near the beginning of the month and about 8:00 pm by the beginning of January. Allow an hour or two after planet-rise for Saturn to appear higher above your local horizon.

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**

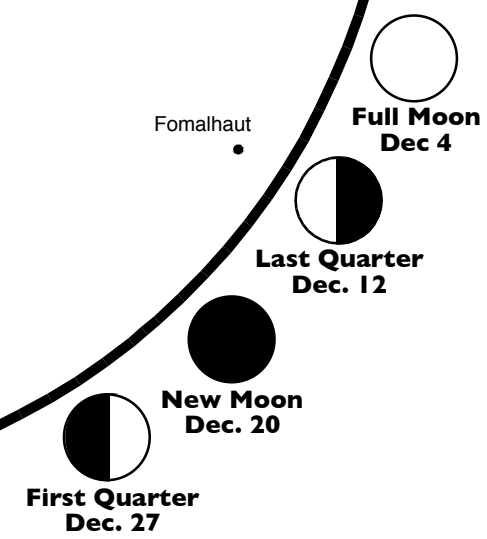
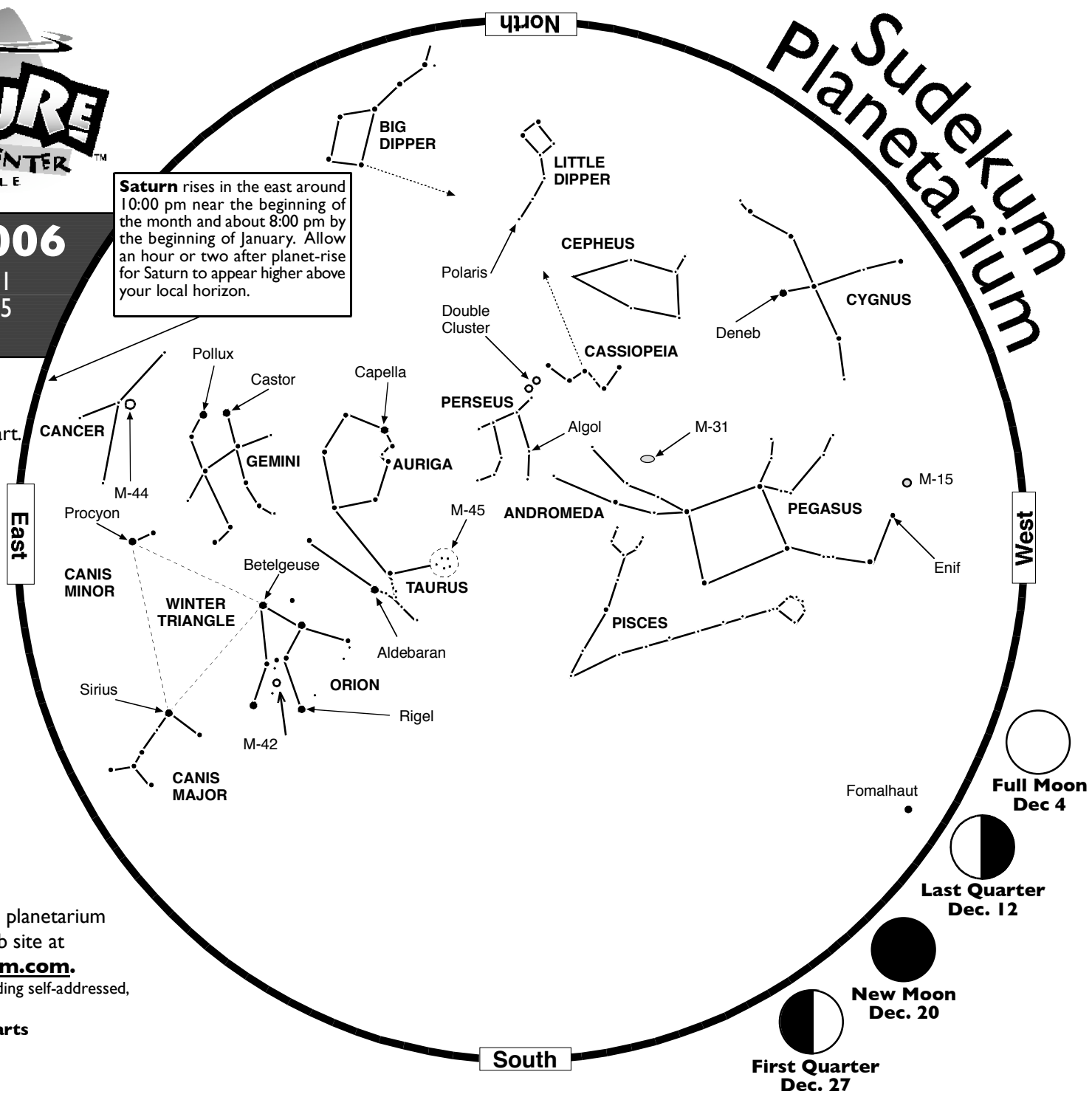
Scan the sky with binoculars: the darker the sky, the better.

- **Globular Star Cluster:**
M-15 in Pegasus
- **Open Star Clusters:**
M-44 - The Beehive
M-45 - The Pleiades
"Double Cluster" between Perseus and Cassiopeias
The Hyades form the face of Taurus
- **A Spiral Galaxy:**
M-31 in Andromeda
- **A Nebula:**
M-42 - the Orion Nebula

Monthly star charts, feature articles, and planetarium show schedules are available on our web site at www.SudekumPlanetarium.com.

You may also receive monthly star charts by sending self-addressed, stamped envelopes (one per flyer) to:

Sudekum Planetarium Star Charts
 800 Fort Negley Blvd.
 Nashville, TN 37203-4899





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Time's Running Out!

Yes, the news you've heard is true - In January 2007, the Sudekum Planetarium will close so that it can be torn down. Obviously, the planetarium staff is sad about this, but the reason the building needs to be demolished is so construction can begin on a new, state-of-the-art Sudekum Planetarium and Sky and Space Wing to be filled with exciting exhibits. **Our last day of public operation is January 7.**

The planetarium staff is very excited about the future. But in the meantime, we'll be seventeen months without our dome sweet dome. Fortunately the planetarium *staff* won't be demolished. Monthly star charts, the web site, ASTROLINE, and regular star parties with the Barnard-Seyfert Astronomical Society will continue. Behind the scenes we'll also be developing exhibits and new planetarium programs. No doubt about it, we'll be staying busy. Stay tuned and visit our web site for more details about upcoming events and our expansion!

Seeing the Light

If you're a regular visitor to Adventure Science Center, you've surely noticed the changes to our parking lot. To make way for the new planetarium, we've reconfigured the entrance and added new spaces. What you might not notice at first glance are the new lights illuminating the parking lot. These are "full cutoff" lights - the kind we frequently mention in *Skies Over Nashville* and other programs. Full cutoff lights shine their light downward instead of up into the sky. This provides more even and energy efficient lighting of the ground and reduces the amount of light pollution. After all, light spilled up into the sky is just wasted electricity!

However, just because we have these new fancy lights, don't expect the night sky over our parking lot to be breathtakingly dark. The glow from the rest of the city still washes out all but the brightest stars and the planets. But for those of us familiar with the old lights, the difference is striking. On a hazy evening, you can plainly see where the light is shining and - and more importantly - where it's not. Compare them to the "cobra head" street lights along the road, and you'll clearly see the difference. What's more, the parking lot itself is now *better* illuminated than it was before. To learn more about light pollution, visit Sky and Telescope Magazine's web site, which has a collection of articles at <http://tinyurl.com/yzdrqj>

Planetarium Show Marathon

To celebrate the countless programs that have been presented in the current dome since 1974, we are planning a **Planetarium Marathon** on our last two days of public operation, **January 6 and 7, 2007**. Imagine 32 hours of non-stop planetarium excitement including favorites such as **Rusty Rocket's Last Blast**, **Hubble: Images of the Infinite**, and others. Intermixed will be some oldies but goodies and even a few classic laser shows. Details are still being worked out, so check our web site for updates.

Return of the Rings

It's been a long time since we've seen any planets in the evening sky. This month, ringed planet **Saturn** comes back into view for observers, rising just north of east about 10 PM at the beginning of the month, and 8 PM by the beginning of the new year. As usual, unless you have a completely flat horizon, you'll have to wait an hour or two for the planet to rise above your local scenery. If you look at Saturn with binoculars, you won't see much more than a slightly oval shape, due to the rings. However, a telescope can provide a more breathtaking view.

No other planets will be easily visible this month except for **Jupiter**, which will rise in the east just before sunrise around the end of the month. It'll be several months before it too is visible to evening observers.

Is Pluto A Planet?

Dr. David Weintraub of Vanderbilt University has just published a book exploring that very question. Obviously, with the International Astronomical Union's decision to demote Pluto, there has been an explosion of interest in the definition of a "planet" and a "dwarf planet". Along the way to defining planethood, Weintraub touches upon major astronomical discoveries ranging from Uranus, Neptune, and Ceres to the Kuiper Belt and beyond.

Dr. Weintraub will present a talk on Pluto and discuss his book and his opinion on the matter at a presentation coming soon to the Adventure Science Center. At this time we haven't set a date, but keep an eye on our web site for more details as they become available.

Twelve, Eleven, Nine, Eight...

How many planets are there? If you missed our new planetarium show **Nine Planets and Counting**, it's coming back for a limited time, starting December 26 and running through January 7. We'll explore all the possible planets in the Solar System (however many that may be) and find out why counting the number of planets isn't as easy as it sounds. Check our web site for show times.

Star Parties

The next FREE public star party is Friday, **December 15, 2006**, from 8:00 to 10:00 PM at the Special Events Field at Edwin Warner Park. We'll be watching for the Geminid meteor shower on a good, dark, moonless night. Visit our web site for more details, tips for attending star parties, and a list of future events.

For information about programs and events at the Sudekum Planetarium at the Adventure Science Center, visit www.SudekumPlanetarium.com.

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