



# February 2007

10:00 p.m. on February 1  
 9:00 p.m. on February 15  
 8:00 p.m. on March 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.

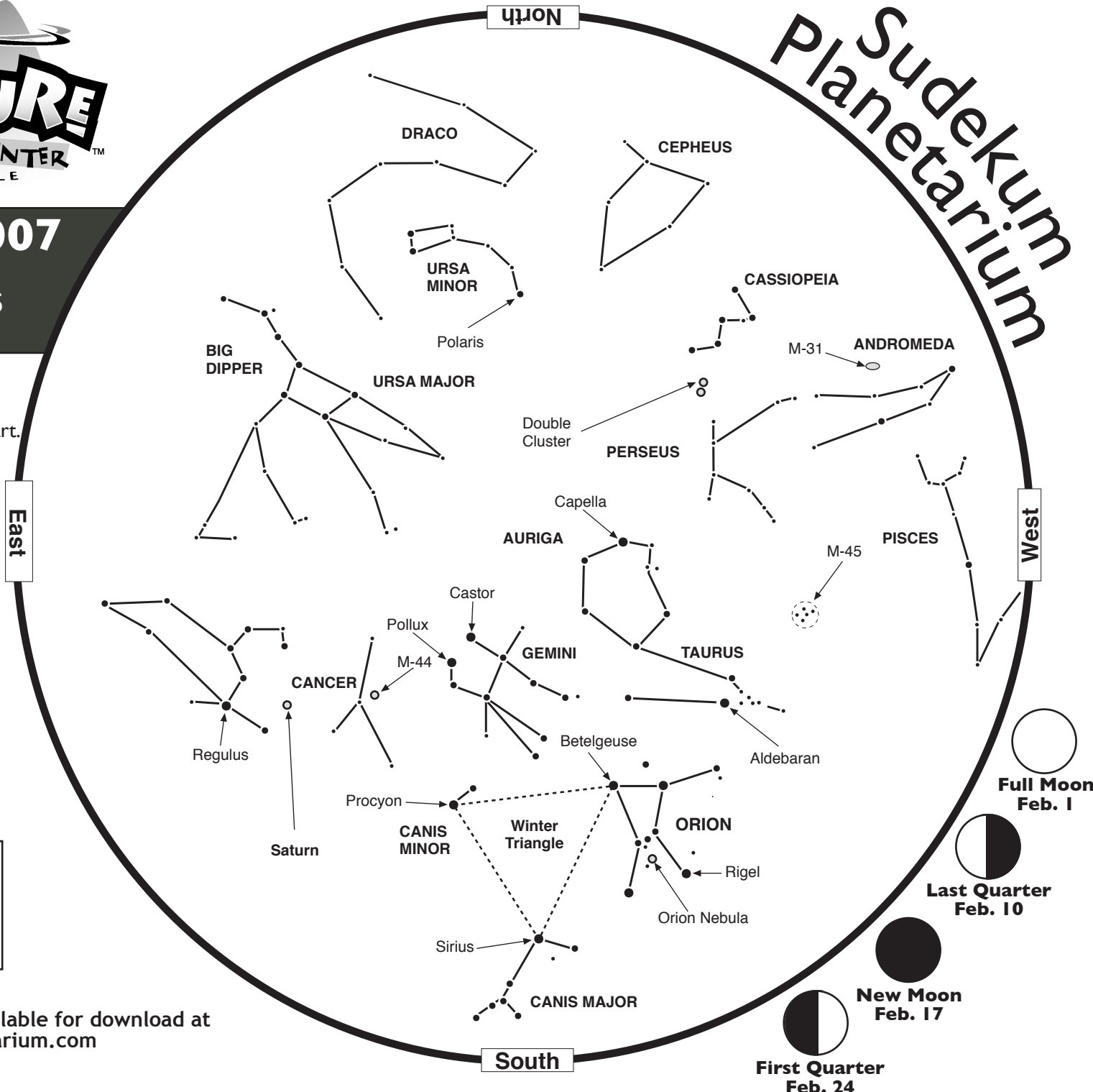
- **Bright Stars**
- **Medium Bright Stars**
- **Faint Stars**

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

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

From Nashville:	Sunrise	Sunset
February 1	6:48 AM	5:13 PM
February 15	6:35 AM	5:28 PM
March 1	6:18 AM	5:42 PM

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



Sudekum Planetarium

East

West

North

South

Full Moon  
Feb. 1

Last Quarter  
Feb. 10

New Moon  
Feb. 17

First Quarter  
Feb. 24



## February 2007

### February Skies

This is a great month to start watching for the bright planet **Venus**, which returned to the early evening skies last month. Look for a brilliant point of light in the west as the sky begins to darken after sunset. You might not see it at first, but as the sky gets darker, you won't be able to miss it. Venus really stands out - in fact, it's the brightest object in the night sky except for the Moon.

Each night Venus sets a little bit later. At the beginning of February, it sets just past 7:00 pm. But by the end of the month, it sets around 8:00 pm. Keep watching Venus throughout the spring - it will set later every night, all the way through the end of May.

If you have a low western horizon without trees or buildings in the way, try finding **Mercury** just below Venus. Mercury is usually hard to find, because it never appears very far away from the Sun in our sky. However during the first two weeks of February, it's just far enough away that you might be able to catch it low in the west after sunset. If you have trouble, try scanning that area of the sky with binoculars.

Once the sky is dark, don't forget to turn around to admire lovely **Saturn**, just slightly to the west of **Leo the lion**. Saturn is at its brightest this month, and closer to Earth than at any other time this year. This is an excellent time to observe its beautiful rings with a small telescope.

### Total Lunar Eclipse: March 3

On **March 3, 2007**, observers in many parts of the world will be treated to a **total lunar eclipse**. Lunar eclipses occur when the Earth casts a shadow on the Moon.

Observers in Europe and Africa will get to see the entire eclipse, from start to finish. But folks in North and South America will see the Moon rising while it's already in mid-eclipse. For us in the southeastern U.S., the Moon will be in total eclipse as it rises. But it won't be that way for long! As time passes, the Moon will gradually move out of Earth's shadow and return to full brightness.

**Saturday, March 3, 2007**  
(Times are Central Standard Time)

Moonrise in Nashville .....	5:40 pm
Total eclipse ends .....	5:57 pm
Partial eclipse ends .....	7:11 pm

Lunar eclipses are perfectly safe to view, and you won't need any special equipment. However, telescopes and binoculars can add to the fun. All you really need to enjoy a lunar eclipse are your eyes and some clear weather. You don't even have to watch the whole thing. Just go out and watch, even if it's just for a few minutes.

That said, you're invited to the next **FREE public star party** on the night of the eclipse. From 5:30 to 9:30 PM at the Special Events Field at Edwin Warner Park, members of the Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society will be there to provide telescopic views and to answer questions. You'll also get a great view of **Saturn** and other celestial highlights.

Please remember that star parties are weather dependant. If the weather is cloudy or worse, the star party will be called off. If the weather is iffy, visit our web site or call **AstroLine** at 615-401-5092 before driving.

The *next* lunar eclipse is early in the morning on August 28, 2007. In this case the eclipse starts with the Moon high in the sky, but *sets* during totality from Nashville. (Given the early morning time, there won't be a star party for that one!)

### The Moon Makes a Pass

Mark your calendar for the evening of **February 19** when a slim crescent Moon will appear five degrees above brilliant Venus. On the evening of the **23rd**, the Moon will lie very close to the **Pleiades star cluster** in **Taurus the bull**. That pair will look nice in your binoculars. These are great times when you can spot a constellation and a planet or the Moon in the time it takes to walk from the car into the house.

### Is Pluto A Planet?

Dr. David Weintraub of Vanderbilt University will present a talk on the planetary history of Pluto on **Astronomy Day, May 5, 2007**. Dr. Weintraub has recently published a book called "Is Pluto a Planet," exploring that very question. Obviously, with the International Astronomical Union's recent decision to demote Pluto, there has been a lot 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.

Stay tuned for more details about our annual Astronomy Day celebration.

### Construction Update

Well, the planetarium is gone. All that remains is a pile of rubble and twisted metal. Soon, even that will be gone. We're happy, though, because that means we're well on our way to begin construction of the new Sudekum Planetarium and Sky and Space Wing, to open in May 2008.

To learn more about this project, visit our web site. We'll also be posting images and the occasional video of the construction area so you can watch our progress.

*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.*