

**March 2010**  
 10:00 p.m. on March 1  
 10:00 p.m. on March 15  
 9:00 p.m. on April 1

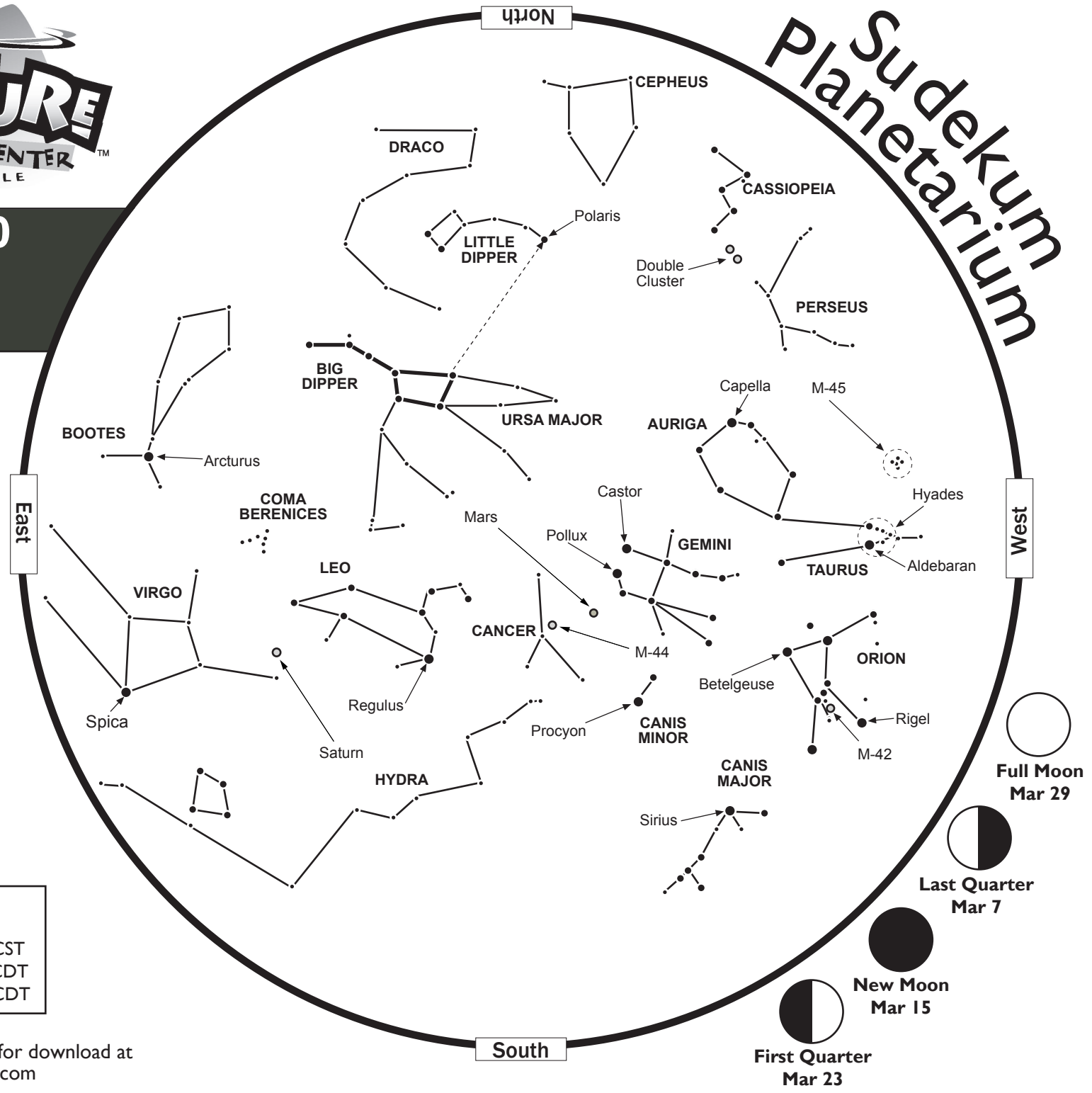
**To use this chart:** hold the chart in front of you and turn it so the direction you are facing is at the bottom of the chart.

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

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

- M-42: The Great Orion Nebula
- M-44: The Beehive star cluster
- M-45: The Pleiades star cluster
- The Double Cluster in Perseus

From Nashville:		
	Sunrise	Sunset
Mar. 1	6:17 AM CST	5:42 PM CST
Mar. 15	6:58 AM CDT	6:55 PM CDT
Apr. 1	6:33 AM CDT	7:09 PM CDT



# THE NEW SUDEKUM PLANETARIUM

JUDITH PAYNE TURNER THEATER

## March 2010

### If the Sky is Clear . . .

Mother Nature has not been kind to astronomers this winter, so any clear evening is worthy of our attention. You can actually find a constellation and a planet or two in the time it takes to get from the car into the house.

Just 30 minutes after sunset, before the sky gets dark, look very low in the west for the brilliant planet **Venus**. Even keen observers will need a clear horizon free of trees or buildings that can block the view.

On the evening of **March 17<sup>th</sup>**, a VERY thin, two day old, **crescent Moon** will lie above and to the right of Venus. On the **18<sup>th</sup>**, the slightly thicker Moon will stand almost directly above this 'evening star'. If you still cannot see Venus because your view is blocked, wait a few weeks, and Venus will rise higher in the sky each night, making it easier to spot.

**Orion the hunter** dominates the southern sky with bright stars that stand out, even in somewhat light-polluted skies. Once you have found him, Orion provides a good reference point for locating nearby constellations: **Canis Major the big dog**, **Canis Minor the little dog**, **Taurus the bull**, and **Gemini the twins**.

Just east of Gemini is a pale orange 'star' better known as the planet **Mars**. Mars was quite bright in January and February, but as Earth passes Mars in its orbit and the distance between the two planets increases, Mars is getting fainter with each passing night.

Rising in the east after sunset, a pale yellow star lies just below the tail of **Leo the lion**. This is the planet **Saturn**, returning to our evening sky where it will gladly show off its pretty rings in telescopes (especially at local star parties).

Now turn toward the north. The stars here are not as bright as Orion's, but the seven stars of the **Big Dipper** stand out. The dipper appears to be turned over, dumping its contents on the northern horizon.

To find the **Little Dipper**, draw an imaginary line from the two stars on the outside of the bowl of the Big Dipper until you reach a star of similar brightness. This is **Polaris**, also known as the **North Star**. Unfortunately, the stars of the Little Dipper are not nearly as bright as the Big Dipper, making this star picture a real challenge to see unless your sky is clear and very dark.

Spring is the best time to look for the Dippers because they are at their highest in the sky just after sunset. May your springtime skies be clear!

## Citizen Science

Every year, people around the world are invited to report how dark their sky is. This year's **GLOBE at Night** event runs from **March 3 to 16**, and you can participate!

All you need to do is compare a map of the constellation Orion to what you see in the real sky. Submit your observations online, and in a few weeks, GLOBE at Night will release a map of light-pollution levels worldwide. Visit [globeatnight.org](http://globeatnight.org) for their Orion star chart and more information.

This year, there will also be a FREE public star party on **Saturday, March 27**, as part of the international initiative known as **Earth Hour**. From 8:30 to 9:30 pm local time, cities and individuals around the world are encouraged to turn off outdoor and nonessential lighting to demonstrate their commitment to energy conservation.

Adventure Science Center has a great view of the Nashville skyline so we can watch the city lights wink out across downtown while looking at the sky through telescopes during a star party.

With less light pollution from the city, will we be able to see more stars? Join us and find out. Don't forget to turn out your lights before leaving home! To learn more about Earth Hour, visit [myearthhour.org](http://myearthhour.org).

Does this mean we should get rid of all our lights? No! We need good lighting to see where

we're going and for safety at night. Good lighting doesn't spill light up into the sky. Bad lighting is a waste of electricity and ruins our view of the stars.

Learn about using light responsibly and how light pollution affects more than just astronomers by visiting [darkskysociety.org](http://darkskysociety.org) and [www.need-less.org.uk](http://www.need-less.org.uk)

## Update on Mars

On **Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 pm, Sudekum Planetarium Director Kris McCall will present an extended version of **Mars Update** at the monthly meeting of the **Barnard-Seyfert Astronomical Society**. Admission is free, and the program should end about 9:15 pm.

Mars Update begins with an overview of how our views on Mars have changed over the years - from H.G. Wells and Percival Lowell to the Mars Exploration Rovers Spirit and Opportunity. We'll take a quick look at where to find Mars in the current night sky and then move on to the current status of various spacecraft working at Mars, what they've discovered, and what other spacecraft have been or will be doing on Mars.

For more information about BSAS, visit [bsasnashville.com](http://bsasnashville.com).

## Upcoming Star Parties

**FREE** public star parties are scheduled for **Saturday, March 20** from 8:00 to 10:00 pm at the Special Events field at Warner Park and both **Saturday, March 27** and **Saturday, April 17** from 8:00 to 10:00 pm at Adventure Science Center.

The **Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society** will set up telescopes to provide views of the winter night sky, Saturn, and Mars. Odds are it will be cold, so dress warmly!

If the weather is cloudy, the star party will be cancelled. If the weather is questionable, **AstroLine** at **(615) 401-5092** or check [SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://SudekumPlanetarium.com) before traveling. On our web site, you'll also find driving directions and a list of useful star party tips.