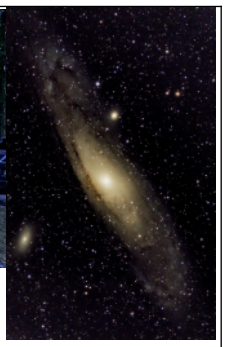






CAPE FEAR Skies

Monthly Newsletter
Cape Fear Astronomical Society
Serving Wilmington, NC and Surrounding Areas

February 2026

Elected Officers	
President	**Karl Adlon**
Vice President	**Hank Lyons**
Associate VP	**Alan Hilburn**
Secretary	**Jon Stewart-Taylor**
Treasurer	**Ben Steelman**
Appointed Officers	
Registered Agent	**Jon Stewart-Taylor**
Outreach Coordinator	**Jon Stewart-Taylor**
Program Coordinator	**Jon Stewart-Taylor**
ALCOR	**Hank Lyons**
Newsletter Editor	**Karl Adlon**
Webmaster	**Jon Stewart-Taylor**
Starfields Co-Chairs	**Hank Lyons & Karl Adlon**

Dues: Dues for 2026 are $25 for Individual and $32 for Family Membership. Students dues are $5 per year.
Mail to: CFAS, P.O. Box 7685, Wilmington, NC 28406
Or you can pay electronically by following this link:
https://www.capefearastro.org/payment.htm

Non-members can contact us at info@capefearastro.org

Our website is http://www.capefearastro.org/

Our Constitution is here: https://www.capefearastro.org/resources/constitution.htm

Next Meeting is Sunday, February 1 via Zoom

New President's First Message

by Karl Adlon

Welcome to 2026!

I was a little anxious about taking this position (President), but then I remembered "Don't Panic" from Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. I've been a member for almost 7 years and I believe we are a pretty congenial group, which makes being President easier.

When I was President in the club I previously belonged to, I eventually realized that "you couldn't get members to do what they didn't want to do."

I want to:

- Observe more
- Do more lunar and planetary imaging
- Dip my to back in the deep sky imaging pool
- Get to Starfields more (that won't be hard)
- Share what I can with club members and others
- Learn what I can

But I'm wondering: *what do you want to do*? In the past, we've sent out questionnaires on this topic and received very little response. So, no questionnaires – tell me or another Officer what you would like to get from your club. What do you want to learn? What do you have to share? This is what makes a club.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch: You know, you can always use groups.io to ask questions, ask for advise and/or share something.

See a separate article on my thoughts, wishes and ideas about CFAS 2026.

Upcoming Calendar of Events
DUES ARE DUE

FEBRUARY

01 Full Moon

Sunday, February 1

Via Zoom

Cape Fear Astro Monthly Meeting - 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Program: "Big Bangs - not including THE Big Bang"

by Karl Adlon

06 Club Observing @ Club Observatory – 5:30 PM
07 Club Observing @ Club Observatory – 5:30 PM
09 Last Quarter Moon
13 Club Observing @ Club Observatory – 5:30 PM
14 Club Observing @ Club Observatory – 5:30 PM
17 New Moon
17 Annular Solar eclipse, 9:38, (Africa & Europe)
19 Mercury at Greatest eastern elongation; 18 deg
24 First Quarter Moon
27 Club Observing @ Club Observatory – 5:30 PM
28 Club Observing @ Club Observatory – 5:30 PM

2026 Monthly Meeting Dates

March 8th in **Room 113**
April 12th
May 3rd (moved due to Mother's Day)
June 14th
July 13th
August 9th
September 13th
October 11th
November 8th
December 13th

or February and April, we're in 213 , which is supposed to be next door to 212 (duh). March is apparently 113, a conference room downstairs.

CFAS 2026

by Karl Adlon

Some Presidents have lofty goals, like “land a man on the Moon and return him safely to Earth by the end of the decade”.

Well, I’m an Engineer, and there’s a coffee mug that says that if you want to get an engineer’s attention, say “there’s got to be a better way to do this”. Of course, sometimes the Engineer sees it for him or her self.

I believe we have some stumbling blocks with respect to the Constitution.

Among these are having Elections at the Holiday Party, obtaining a Quorum, a ban on voting by proxy, documenting things it says the Secretary does that are actually otherwise agreed to by consensus (like Appointed Officers vs Constitution) and others.

One of my ideas (based on another club) is that Elections should be moved to the January Meeting. This same club’s Constitution says the quorum for the Election is whoever attends the January Meeting. No need to meet a percentage. If it’s important to a membe rthey will participate in the meeting.

I have some ideas about the Quorum for other voting.

My wish is to, with others, review the Constitution, and, if agreed in following the Constitution, revise it before the next Election – September would be good.

If it would be useful, we could create a CFAS Protocol document to establish how we do things including, for example, what spending limits are before they need to be voted on by the board and/or Membership and, if those are established elsewhere, where that is. I have no deadlines to accomplish any of this – but I would like the Elections and Quorum addressed by September to make elections go more smoothly.

We can use the table of Officers in the newsletter to be one of the documentations for Appointed Officers.

I kind of rambled on here, so if anything needs clarification, feel free to ask me or bring it up at a Monthly Meeting.

Presentation Coordinator's Report

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

We're off to a good start for our presentations first quarter. Our next four presentations are:

- February: Karl Adlon will discuss "**Big Bangs - not including THE Big Bang**".
- March: Frank Rich will show a video on the astro imaging software Siril, and discuss practical considerations of using it.
- April: Dr. Barbara Becker will share one of her astronomical history topics. The topic will be either "**Johannes Kepler: Why Are the Heavens Such and Not Otherwise?"** or **"Practicing Invisible Astronomy: Celestial Mechanicians and the Discovery of Neptune"**. If you have a preference, please let me know ASAP.
- May: John Raymond will present **"The Cygnus Walk: An easy way to tour the Cygnus Milky Way with eyes, binoculars, and telescope."** John Raymond is past president of the Richmond Astronomical Society and author of the Mysteries of Lyra.

We still need presentations for June through November, so if you've got one in you, or know someone who might, please let me know.

Versatile Observing Chair or Small Table

by Damain Smith

This was a fun project and something that I use quite a bit. I was looking at adjustable astronomy chairs but they are expensive. Here is a design made from one 8 foot 1'' x 8'' board. It has 4 different seat heights and can also be used as a step up or small table.

The lengths of the board cuts may vary depending on the type of joint used but here is one way. Cut two 17 inch boards two 18 inch boards and one 19 1/4 inch board. If butt joints are used the last board will be a little longer.

I joined them with dado joints for strength but butt joints would work as well with some extra screws for strength.

This design gives seat heights of 19 1/4’’, 17’’, 12’’ and 8’’. Also it is a good step stool for shorter people to look through the eyepiece.




Observing chair

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

Fun little observing box you made, Damain!

I've been using the "Denver observing chair" for over 30 years. It uses one 2x4 (or 1x4 with a bit of modification) and a 1/4 sheet of plywood to make an "infinitely adjustable" chair which folds flat to store/transport. Won't work for the public to stand on, though.

https://www.denverastro.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ChuckCarlsonsDenverObsSeat.pdf

Above image from the website.

Always interesting to see the different ways people solve a problem.

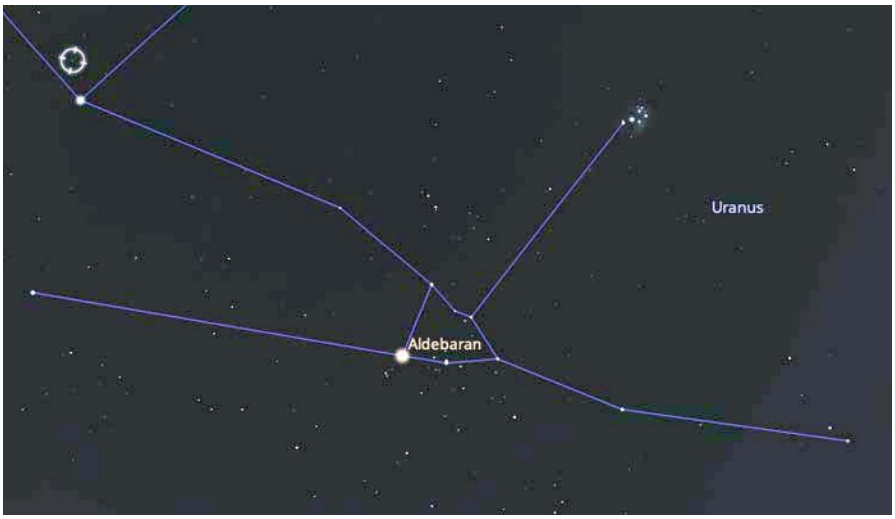
Taurus

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

Taurus the Bull is an ancient constellation, associated with the mythos of Zeus and Europa. It was included in the 48 Almagest constellations by Ptolemy. As you might suspect by the fact it represents an animal, Taurus is part of the Zodiac. The sun passes through it in May and June. The moon visits once a month, and all the planets spend some time in it once in a while. This can make for some interesting conjunctions with the bright open clusters.

The stars of the constellation make quite a good stick-figure representation representation of the head, shoulders, and foreleg of a bovine. Notice the planet Uranus is a temporary visitor this year.

Image generated by Stellarium



Taurus is facing off against Orion, backing across the sky away from the Hunter. One of the Bull's horns reaches all the way to Auriga, tipped with the bright star El Nath. The other horn stretches towards Orion's "club", and we'll revisit that one a little later. Above and to the east are Perseus, Aries, and Cetus, while below Taurus the river Eridanus flows, starting at Orion's knee, and winding down below the horizon and into the deep southern sky.

There are many deep sky objects. Possibly the best known is M45, the Pleiades or Seven Sisters (though most of us can only spot six with unaided eyes). It is one of the nearest and youngest open or galactic clusters, Binoculars will expand the cluster into two to three dozen stars, and in dark conditions may reveal the blue reflection nebula.

M45 *Image at right by Jon Stewart-Taylor*

An even larger and nearer open cluster is the "face" of the bull: The "V" shaped Hyades, with the constellation's brightest star Aldebaran. Most people think Aldebaran (α Tau) is the Eye of the Bull. The Hyades are also a wonderful binocular target.

Image at left generated by Stellarium

NGC 1547 *(at left)* and NGC 1817 *(at right)* are both open clusters, but are very small. Together, they compare to a pair of "eyes"

as above. They're detectable in binoculars, but will fill a one-degree eyepiece in even a small telescope at about 40 power.

Both side images by Jon Stewart-Taylor

Above image by SDSS.

The last object I'll discuss is very famous in its own right, but much harder to find. It's about a degree from the "dimmer" horn, near ζ Tau. This is M1 (also NGC 1952), the remnant of a supernova recorded in 1054 by people in South America, Japan, and Arabia. Called the "Crab" nebula due to the leg-like filaments early observers saw in their eyepieces. You can detect the object in large enough binoculars, but you need at least 40 power to expand it beyond starlike. Visually even medium scopes give basically a gray eraser smudge. With a big enough scope, or in astrophotos, the supernova remnant becomes much more interesting.

Crop of image by Jon Stewart-Taylor: 11 minutes with Seestar S50.

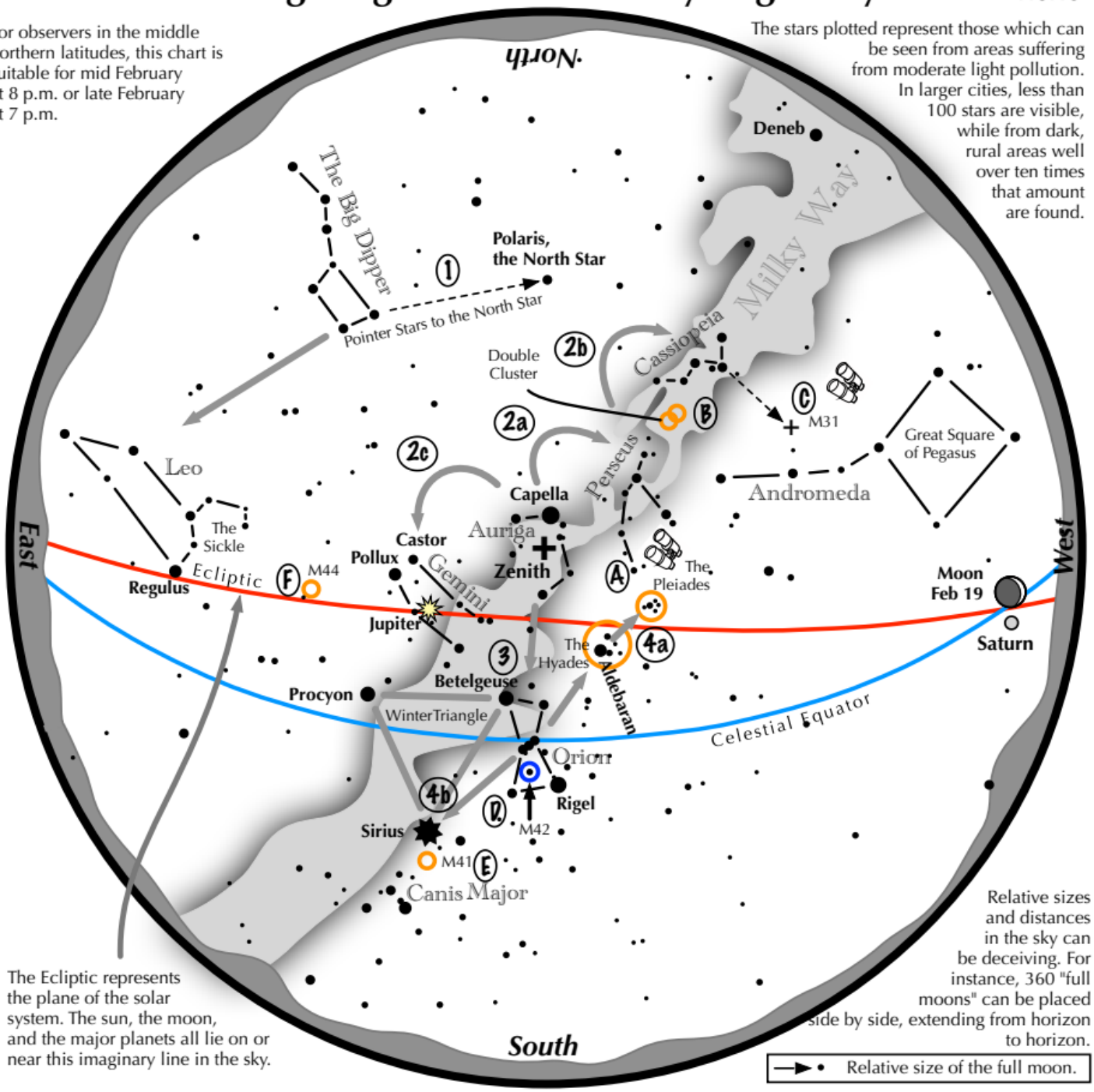
There are more (but dimmer, starting at about 9th magnitude) clusters, nebulae, and especially galaxies (most 10th or dimmer).

Navigating the mid February Night Sky

2026

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid February at 8 p.m. or late February at 7 p.m.

The stars plotted represent those which can be seen from areas suffering from moderate light pollution. In larger cities, less than 100 stars are visible, while from dark, rural areas well over ten times that amount are found.



The Ecliptic represents the plane of the solar system. The sun, the moon, and the major planets all lie on or near this imaginary line in the sky.

Relative sizes and distances in the sky can be deceiving. For instance, 360 "full moons" can be placed side by side, extending from horizon to horizon.

→• Relative size of the full moon.

Navigating the February night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

1. Above the northeast horizon rises the Big Dipper. Draw a line from its two end bowl stars upwards to the North Star.
2. Face south. Overhead twinkles the bright star Capella in Auriga. Jump northwestward along the Milky Way first to Perseus, then to the "W" of Cassiopeia. Next jump southeastward from Capella to the twin stars of Castor and Pollux in Gemini.
3. Directly south of Capella stands the constellation of Orion with its three Belt stars, its bright red star Betelgeuse, and its bright blue-white star Rigel.
4. Use Orion's three Belt stars to point northwest to the red star Aldebaran and the Hyades star cluster, then to the Pleiades star cluster. Travel southeast from the Belt stars to the brightest star in the night sky, Sirius, a member of the Winter Triangle.

Binocular Highlights

A: Examine the stars of two naked eye star clusters, the Pleiades and the Hyades.
B: Between the "W" of Cassiopeia and Perseus lies the Double Cluster.
C: The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval.
D: M42 in Orion is a star forming nebula. **E:** Look south of Sirius for the star cluster M41. **F:** M44, a star cluster barely visible to the naked eye, lies southeast of Pollux.

Astronomical League *www.astroleague.org/outreach; duplication is allowed and encouraged for all free distribution.*

Get to Know
YOUR Astronomical League

The Astronomical League (Astroleague or AL) is one of the largest amateur astronomical organizations in the world. The organization serves to encourage an interest in astronomy (especially amateur astronomy) and promote the science of astronomy by:

- ✓ *fostering astronomical education;*
- ✓ *providing incentives for astronomical observation and research;*
- ✓ *assisting communication among amateur astronomical societies.*

CFAS is one of over 300 member societies affiliated with the Astroleague. Your membership in CFAS allows you take full advantage of this relationship so periodically review the AL links below to see how the Astroleague can support your astronomical interests and endeavors.

Astroleague Home Page	www.astroleague.org
Astroleague YouTube Channel	https://www.youtube.com/channel/...
AL Observing Programs *(Alphabetical Listing)*	https://www.astroleague.org/alphabeticobserving/
Night Sky Tools	https://www.astroleague.org/navigating-the-night-sky-guides/
Current and Past Issues of *Reflector Magazine*	https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/
AL Related News, Information and Reminders	Information: Click HERE for the Astroleague News Page and be sure to check the Astroleague Home Page weekly for new and important posts. Contact Hank Lyon, hlyon8448@gmail.com, for any changes to your Reflector delivery preferences (US Mail, Email or Both).