



The Sonora Astronomical Society's SONORAN STARRY NIGHTS

FEBRUARY 2026

February Meeting Details

DATE: Saturday, February 21st, 2026
MEETING TIME: 2:30 PM (2:00 access)
PLACE: Sahuarita Library & Zoom
MEETING SCHEDULE:
(2:15 PM ZOOM Waiting Room Available)
2:30 Meeting Intro and Welcome
2:40 Featured Presentation Followed
by Club Activities/Business

Next Member Star Parties

DATE: Thursday, February 19th, 2026
TIME: 6:00 PM *NEW LOCATION*
PLACE: Madera Canyon Parking Lot
(300 ft past 9 mile marker, Madera Canyon Rd)

- LOOKING AHEAD -
THE FOLLOWING STAR PARTY WILL BE:
DATE: Thursday, March 19th, 2026
TIME: 6:15 PM
PLACE: Madera Canyon Parking Lot

NOTE: If you have a telescope that you don't know how to use, or are looking to buy a telescope and want to compare different telescopes, join us at a star party and we can give you some help.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEXT CLUB MEETING

DATE: Saturday March 21st, 2026
LOCATION: Sahuarita Library & Zoom
TIME: 2:30 PM (in person + Zoom)
Speaker: T B A
Subject: T B A

February Presentation

Speaker: Speaker and topic will be announced at the meeting.

Subject: The presentation will be an interesting astronomy-based video followed by a round table discussion.

Abstract: .

Biography:

WHAT'S NEXT?

NASA has several outreach activities. The YouTube channel holds many interesting current and past videos to watch.

NASA's Night Sky Network has a live YouTube Webinar each month (and a video that can be viewed if you missed the live presentation) featuring an interesting array of subjects.

The **February 17th, 6PM PST (7PM MST)** presentation will be:

A Storm of Stars, with Shane Larson,

Viewing of and details on this presentation are on YouTube by clicking:

<https://www.youtube.com/@NASANightSkyNetwork>

Then look for the presentation (should be first shown).

SONORAN STARRY NIGHTS

PRESIDENTS NOTES

Greetings everyone,

Our February meeting will take place on February 21st at the Sahuarita library (670 Sahuarita Rd). There is parking behind the library. The meeting room is just to the left as you enter the front door. The meeting will officially start at 2:30pm this month with ZOOM login available by 2:15pm. If anyone has any suggestions for meeting presentations or knows someone we can bring in for a presentation, please let me know.

No one came to our January club star party.

There are no public star parties this month.

We no longer have access to Canoa Preserve Park for our club star parties. We are now using our new site which is on the way up to Madera Canyon. There is a map to our new site available on our website. Our December club star party is scheduled for the 18th. Again, check our website for details. If you have any questions about the site, let me know.

Stay safe,

John Dwyer
President

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MEMBER EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

Have a telescope or other astronomy equipment for sale? Contact John Dwyer with your item(s) to get them listed here.

The SAS website has a good one-page article from Sky & Telescope that can help get you started. Copy and paste this link:

<https://sonoraastronomicalsociety.org/newsletters/>

Basic monthly star charts are now available. Look on the website Home page yellow banner.

The website also has a list of suggestions of Planetarium Apps for your phone, several FREE!

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THE FEBRUARY SKY

SKY HIGHLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY

The evening night sky still has a few good planets this month. **Saturn** is getting low in the west at sunset as it approaches the Sun. Late next month it will reach solar conjunction. **Neptune** approaches to less than a degree behind Saturn by mid-month. It will also reach conjunction with the Sun next month. **Mars**, now in the morning sky, is basically too close to the Sun for viewing. **Jupiter** is well positioned for viewing and will be visible most of the evening. **Uranus** is high in the southwestern sky at sunset and will be visible through the first half of the evening. **Venus**, now in the evening sky, will become barely visible about mid-month. At the end of the month, it will slide past Mercury. **Mercury** now moves into the evening sky and will reach Greatest Eastern Elongation (18°) from the Sun on the 19th. However, it will still be pretty low in the western sky.

The visibility of comets is very slim this month. Comet 24P/Schaumasse is still barely under 10th magnitude located in Virgo. Comet C/2024 E1 (Weirzchos), at about 7th magnitude, is a little too low in the south now, but will be getting higher eventually. However, it will also be getting dimmer. A wonderful comet C/2025 A6 (Lemmon) is only visible in the southern hemisphere. That is about it.

On March 3rd there will be a total lunar eclipse visible from our area. This will be any early morning event. Penumbral stage begins at 1:44am, total eclipse starts at 4:04am, with maximum eclipse at 4:33am. Totality ends at 5:02am.

If you have any solar viewing equipment, the Sun is extremely active now as it has officially reached maximum. As it is getting a little cooler now, break out the solar equipment and take a peek.

FEBRUARY MOON/SUN TIMES

DATE	M-Rise	M-Set	M-Phase	Sun-set	Star Party
Sun 02/01	17:58	7:17	Full	17:58	
Mon 02/02	19:06	7:54		17:59	
Tue 02/03	20:10	8:26		18:00	
Wed 02/04	21:11	8:54		18:01	
Thu 02/05	22:09	9:21		18:02	
Fri 02/06	23:07	9:48		18:03	
Sat 02/07	-----	10:15		18:03	
Sun 02/08	0:05	10:45		18:04	
Mon 02/09	1:04	11:19	3rd Qtr	18:05	
Tue 02/10	2:02	11:58		18:06	
Wed 02/11	2:59	12:43		18:07	
Thu 02/12	3:54	13:34		18:08	
Fri 02/13	4:44	14:31		18:09	
Sat 02/14	5:29	15:31		18:10	
Sun 02/15	6:09	16:34		18:10	
Mon 02/16	6:44	17:37		18:11	
Tue 02/17	7:15	18:40	New	18:12	
Wed 02/18	7:44	19:43		18:13	
Thu 02/19	8:13	20:46		18:14	S.A.S. SP
Fri 02/20	8:42	21:51		18:15	
Sat 02/21	9:13	22:58		18:15	SAS Meeting
Sun 02/22	9:48	-----		18:16	
Mon 02/23	10:29	0:08		18:17	
Tue 02/24	11:18	1:19	1st Qtr	18:18	
Wed 02/25	12:16	2:28		18:19	
Thu 02/26	13:21	3:31		18:19	
Fri 02/27	14:30	4:26		18:20	
Sat 02/28	15:40	5:12		18:21	
					(S)=Solar

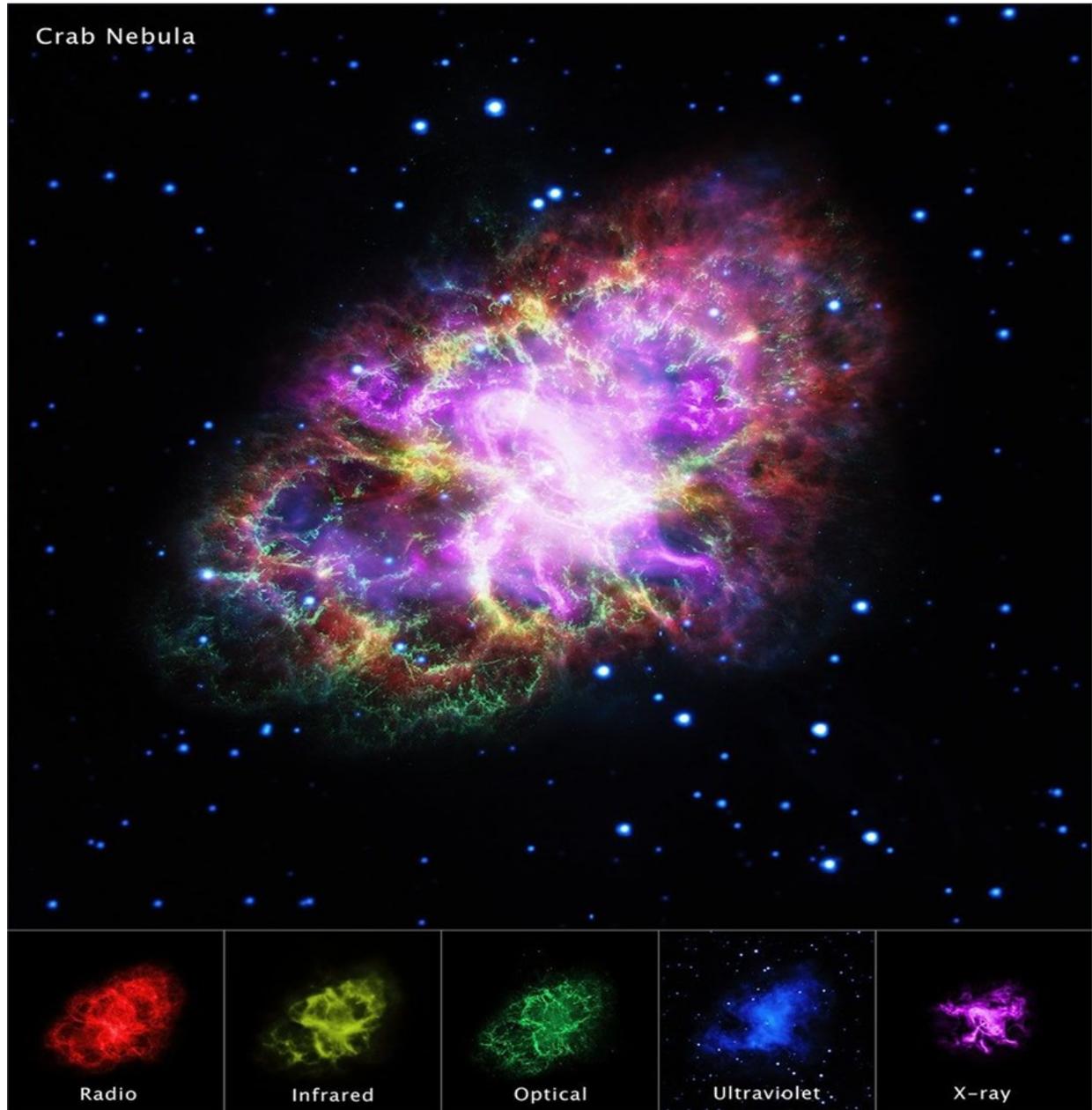
SONORAN STARRY NIGHTS

THE STARGAZER'S CORNER:



This article made available by NASA

Betelgeuse and the Crab Nebula: Stellar Death and Rebirth



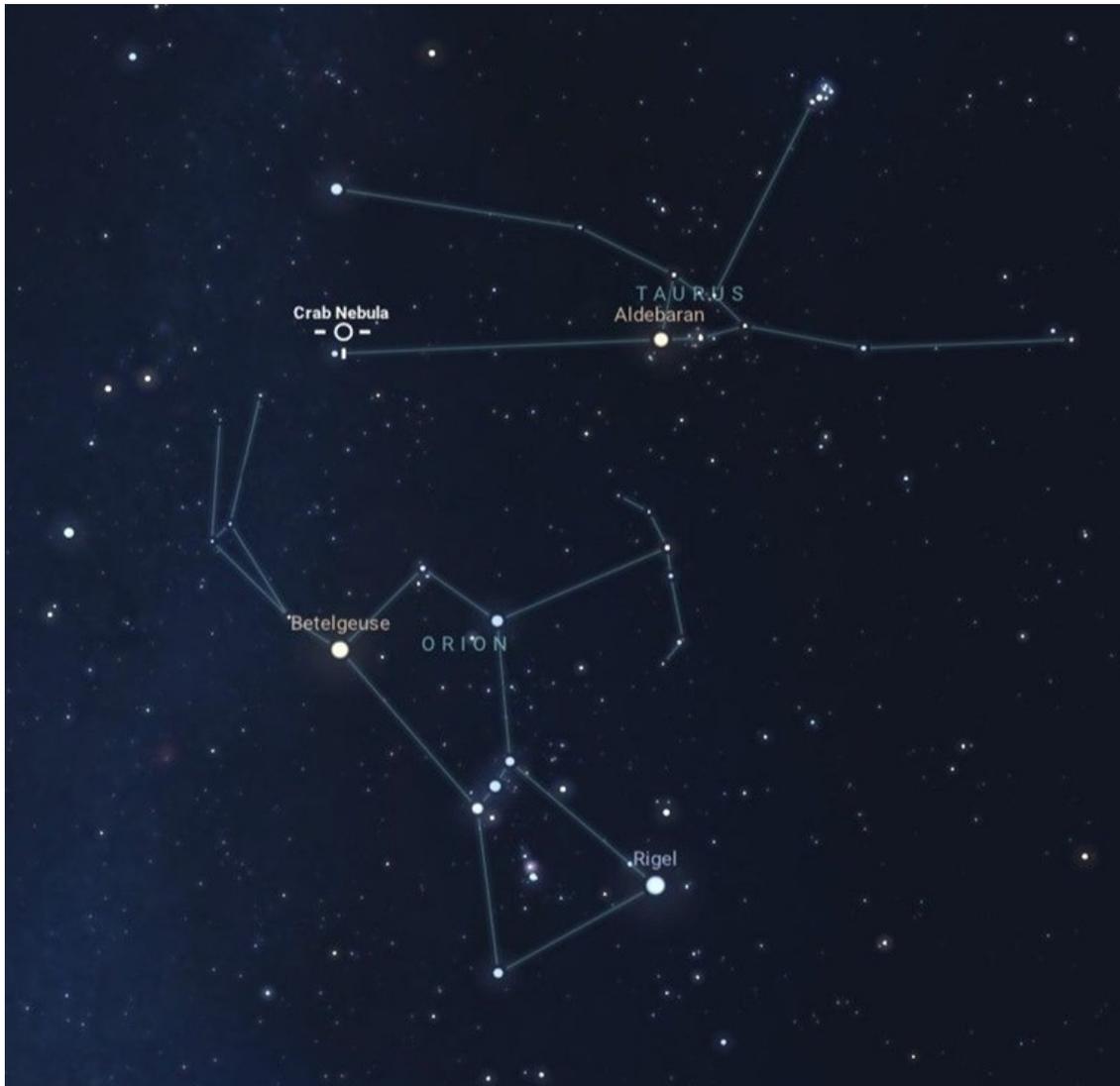
This highly detailed image of the Crab Nebula was assembled by combining data from five telescopes spanning nearly the entire breadth of the electromagnetic spectrum: The Very Large Array (radio) in red; Spitzer Space Telescope (infrared) in yellow; Hubble Space Telescope (visible) in green; XMM-Newton (ultraviolet) in blue; and Chandra X-ray Observatory (X-ray) in purple.

Credits: NASA, ESA, G. Dubner (IAFE, CONICET-University of Buenos Aires) et al.; A. Loll et al.; T. Temim et al.; F. Seward et al.; VLA/NRAO/AUI/NSF; Chandra/CXC; Spitzer/JPL-Caltech; XMM-Newton/ESA; and Hubble/STScI

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THE STARGAZER'S CORNER (CONTINUED):

What happens when a star dies? In 2019, **Betelgeuse** dimmed in brightness, sparking speculation that it may soon explode as a supernova. While it likely won't explode quite yet, we can preview its fate by observing the nearby **Crab Nebula**.



A view of the constellations Orion and Taurus, along with notable features: Betelgeuse in Orion, and Aldebaran and the Crab Nebula in Taurus. Stellarium Web

Betelgeuse is easy to find as the red-hued shoulder star of Orion. A variable star, Betelgeuse, usually competes with the brilliant blue-white Rigel for the position of the brightest star in Orion. Betelgeuse is a young star, estimated to be a few million years old, but due to its giant size, it leads a fast and furious life. This massive star, known as a supergiant, exhausted the hydrogen fuel in its core and began to fuse helium instead, which caused the outer layers of the star to cool and swell dramatically in size. Betelgeuse is one of the few stars for which we have any detailed surface observations, due to its vast size – somewhere between the diameters of the orbits of Mars and Jupiter – and its relatively close distance of about 642 light-years. Betelgeuse is also a “runaway star,” with its remarkable speed possibly triggered by a merger with a smaller companion star. If that is the case, Betelgeuse may actually have millions of years left! So, Betelgeuse may not explode soon after all, or it might explode tomorrow! We have much more to learn about this intriguing star.

(Continued next page)



This image of the Crab Nebula combines data from five different telescopes: The Very Large Array (radio) in red; Spitzer Space Telescope (infrared) in yellow; Hubble Space Telescope (visible) in green; XMM-Newton (ultraviolet) in blue; and Chandra X-ray Observatory (X-ray) in purple. It is known as the expanding gaseous remnant from a star that self-detonated as a supernova, briefly shining as brightly as 400 million suns.

NASA, ESA, G. Dubner (IAFE, CONICET-University of Buenos Aires) et al.; A. Loll et al.; T. Temim et al.; F. Seward et al.; VLA/NRAO/AUI/NSF; Chandra/CXC; Spitzer/JPL-Caltech; XMM-Newton/ESA; and Hubble/STScI

To see this photo in animation, see:

<https://science.nasa.gov/solar-system/skywatching/night-sky-network/betelgeuse-and-the-crab-nebula/>

The **Crab Nebula** (M1) is relatively close to Betelgeuse in the sky, in the nearby constellation of Taurus. Its ghostly, spidery gas clouds result from a massive explosion; a supernova observed by astronomers in 1054! A backyard telescope allows you to see some details. Still, only advanced telescopes reveal the rapidly spinning neutron star found in its center: the last stellar remnant from that cataclysmic event. These gas clouds were created during the giant star's violent demise and expand ever outward to enrich the universe with heavy elements like silicon, iron, and nickel. These element-rich clouds are like a cosmic fertilizer, making rocky planets like our own Earth possible. Supernovae also send out powerful shock waves that help trigger star formation. In fact, if it weren't for a long-ago supernova, our solar system – along with all of us – wouldn't exist! You can learn much more about the Crab Nebula in a video from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope:

bit.ly/CrabNebulaVisual

Want to know more about the life cycle of stars? Explore stellar evolution with “The Lives of Stars” activity and handout at bit.ly/starlifeanddeath, part of our SUPERNOVA! toolkit.

Originally posted by Dave Prosper: February 2020

Last Updated by Kat Troche: December 2025

SONORAN STARRY NIGHTS

S.A.S. CLUB OFFICERS

OFFICE/POSITION	NAME	PHONE NO.
Chairman of the Board	Open	
President	John Dwyer	(520) 393-3680
Secretary	Michael Moraghan	(520) 399-3352
Treasurer	John McGee	(520) 207-6188
Star party Coordinator	Open	(520) 303-6920
Newsletter Editor	Joe Castor	(620) 584-4454
Webmaster	Joe Castor	(620) 584-4454
ALCOR* (Currently Inactive)	Inactive	(520) 396-3576
NSN** Representative	Open	(520) 303-6920
Past President Emeritus	Open	
*Astronomical League		
**Night Sky Network		

WHY JOIN SAS

1. SAS Family Membership Fee is only \$25.00 per year.
2. SAS monthly newsletter "The Sonoran Starry Nights."
3. Top-quality astronomy lectures by local astronomers!
4. SAS Discount for Astronomy Magazine \$34.00 for 1yr or \$60.00 for 2 yr renewed through our treasurer.
5. SAS Discount subscription rate for Sky & Telescope Magazine — self-renewed.
6. RASC Observer's Handbook at a discount, \$30.00.
7. SAS T-Shirts for sale for \$10.00—M, L, XL.
8. Member of International Dark-sky Association (IDA).
9. SAS Discount for Astronomy 2020 Calendar \$10.00
10. SAS monthly Member Star Parties.
11. SAS Telescope and astronomy book loan programs.
12. SAS outreach to astronomy education in schools.
13. SAS fellowship with other amateur astronomers!

CLUB DUES

Dues (family or individual) are \$25 annually, payable each year in the month you initially joined the club. You will receive a reminder in the monthly newsletter e-mail of your due date. You can either pay at the club meeting or mail it to the club's address (S.A.S., P.O. Box 1081, Green Valley, AZ, 85622).

SAS WEBSITE

If you want to keep up-to-date with club activities, such as star parties, etc., check out our website (and Calendar) at:

[HTTPS://sonoraastronomicalsociety.org](https://sonoraastronomicalsociety.org)

SAS STATISTICS & FINANCES

Lifetime Members: 1
 Individual & Family Members: 101
Total Membership: 102

Bank Balance as of Dec 31 \$ 1,408.96
 Deposits / (D/Ws): \$ 125.00 / (\$ -0.00)
Bank Balance as of Jan 31: \$1,533.96

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LOCAL ASTRO-IMAGING GROUP: Sonoran Desert Astro Imagers (SDAI), Larry Phillips, Coordinator

Are you interested in Astrophotography or are you currently involved in imaging the skies? If so, you are invited to join the Sonoran Desert Astro Imagers group. Our meetings focus on improving our skills, helping each other, workshops, and field trips. We meet on Thursdays at 9 AM. The meetings are on Zoom, except once-a-month we get together in-person at the Quail Creek Conference Center. Email notifications are sent to members before each meeting.

Please send your Name and E-mail address to my address below and we'll include you in the emailing notices of monthly meetings; "the when and where meeting notice." Do you have any questions? If so, call me (Larry Phillips) at (520) 777-8027 or email to lp41astro@cox.net. Clear Skies! Larry Phillips

ABOUT THE ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE



While SAS is no longer an active member of the Astronomical League, a SAS member may join the Astronomical League as an at-large member. What are the advantages to joining the AL?

1. You can receive various observing awards by joining an "observing club" and observing the required number of objects. There are all levels of clubs from beginner to advanced, viewing constellations to deep-sky objects and using either your naked eyes, binoculars, or a telescope. Contact our ALCOR rep Burley Packwood for details.

2. You can get a 10% discount on books purchased through the AL Book Service.

3. You will receive the AL's quarterly "Reflector" magazine which keeps you up to date on all the AL activities.

More info at www.astroleague.org

SAS IS A MEMBER OF IDA



SAS is proud to be a member of the International Dark-Sky Association, supporting the reduction in light pollution around the U.S. and the world.

More info at www.darksky.org

SAS NON-PROFIT STATUS

The Sonora Astronomical Society is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit charitable organization! SAS has a CERTIFICATE OF GOOD STANDING from the State of Arizona Corporation Commission!

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

To renew your Sky and Telescope Magazine at the Club Rate, you can go directly to their website, or to order it new, or to order or renew Astronomy Magazine, contact the Club Treasurer.

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