



The Monthly Newsletter of the Von Braun Astronomical Society

## VBAS Highlights for August

### Public Programs for August

Our next member's meeting will be held on Friday, August 21st at 7 PM. VBAS Member Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month at 7 PM; they're open to the public and are free.

Regular planetarium programs are held on Saturdays at 7:30 PM. This month, we discuss meteors and meteor showers in a show called *Yes, the Sky is Falling*, with shows on August 1st, 8th, 22nd, and 29th. On the 15th, we will give a seasonal sky tour. Admission to planetarium shows is free for VBAS Members, \$5.00 for Adults, \$3.00 for Students, and free for children under 6. Observation of the night sky through various telescopes normally follows each planetarium program, weather permitting.

### Custom-Made Telescope for Sale

Former VBAS member Tom Ingram would like to sell his telescope. See page 3 for details.

### Stellar Events for August

Doug Horacek reports on this month's astronomical events on page 5.

### Copernicus 500th Anniversary Stamp

Gert Schmitz has submitted a scan of a stamp from his collection. The stamp, shown on page 5, commemorates the 500th anniversary of the birth of heliocentric astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus.

### Dark Sky Photo Contest

Dark Sky Representative Richard Norman pointed out that the International Earth and Sky Photo Contest on Dark Skies Importance is open to anyone of any age, anywhere around the world. See [www.darkskiesawareness.org/photo-contest.php](http://www.darkskiesawareness.org/photo-contest.php) for details.

Steve Sloan  
Via Stellaris Editor  
[steve@sloan3d.com](mailto:steve@sloan3d.com)



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## VBAS Calendar of Events

*Saturday, August 1st, 8th, 22nd, & 29th, 2009, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Yes, the Sky is Falling***

*Location: VBAS*

Join us for a family-friendly program as we explore meteors and meteor showers. August is the month of the most watched meteor shower, the Perseids. Come and find out the source of meteors and the best way to view meteor showers. Plus, you will have the opportunity to touch and feel real meteorites. This program will be interesting and fun for all ages. Weather permitting, we will be viewing the night sky afterwards through powerful telescopes, too.



*Fireball, Smoke Trail, Meteor Storm (Credit & Copyright: Jerry Lodriguss)*

*Tuesday, August 11th, 2009, 11 PM - 2 AM*

### **Perseid Meteor Shower Evening**

*Location: Hays Nature Preserve*

VBAS has been invited to the Hays Nature Preserve observing session for the Perseid Meteor Shower, so bring your telescope setups and put on a great show for the public. Contact Doug Horacek 772-6788 for more information.

*Saturday, August 15th, 2009, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Seasonal Star Tour***

*Location: VBAS*

Join us for a relaxing evening at VBAS. We'll show you which constellations are visible this time of year, and teach you how to find them. We'll also learn about the fascinating and

beautiful deep sky objects that can be found, along with a mix of mythology. Weather permitting, we'll be viewing the night sky afterwards through one of VBAS's powerful telescopes, too.

*Friday, August 21st, 2009, 7 PM*

### **Regular Monthly Meeting**

*Location: VBAS*

After a short pizza social and marketplace swap meet we'll discuss pertinent society business before moving on to our program. Stay tuned to the website for the latest program information.

*Friday, August 14th, 2009, 7:30 PM - 10 PM*

### **Youth and Adult Observing Night**

*Location: VBAS*

*Presented by David Lofts and Doug Horacek*

Observing night will start at 7:30 PM for adults and 8 PM for youth. David will give a planetarium show, and the adults will be there with their telescopes. Call David Lofts at 726-0275 or Doug Horacek 772-6788 for more information.

*Saturday, September 5th, 12th, & 26th, 2009, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Discovering New Worlds***

*Location: VBAS*

Join us for a family-friendly program as we discover new worlds. This program will be interesting and fun for all ages. Weather permitting, we will be viewing the night sky afterwards through powerful telescopes, too.

*Friday, September 18th, 2009, 7 PM*

### **Regular Monthly Meeting**

*Location: VBAS*

*Saturday, September 19th, 2009, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Seasonal Star Tour***

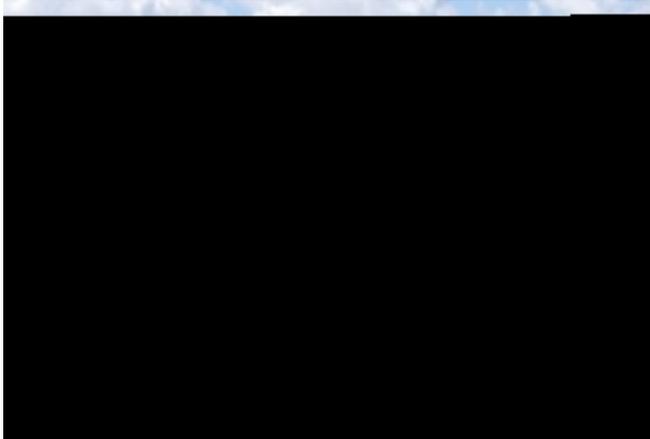
*Location: VBAS*

*Friday, October 9th - Sunday, October 11th, 2009*

### **Greenbank Radio Telescope Trip**

*Location: West Virginia*

You're invited on a trip with Michael Cowger to see the world's largest movable radio telescope and to tour the National Radio Astronomy Observatory's Greenbank Facilities, which include several radio telescopes, in the mountains of West Virginia during the Fall colors! The group, including family members, will travel by bus on Friday, October 9th to a Star Party at nearby Snowshoe Resort's Rimfire Lodge, then tour the Greenbank facilities on Saturday, followed by dinner and a ride on the Cass Scenic Railroad, then another Star Party before returning on Sunday.



Contact Michael Cowger for additional details at [mcowger@bellsouth.net](mailto:mcowger@bellsouth.net), and visit the related links below:

Observatory: [www.gb.nrao.edu](http://www.gb.nrao.edu)

Lodging: [www.rimfirelodge.com](http://www.rimfirelodge.com)

Dinner/Train: [www.cassrailroad.com](http://www.cassrailroad.com)

*Friday October 16 - Saturday October 17, 2009*

### **Sixth Annual Volunteer State Star Party**

*Location: Meriwether Lewis Observatory  
Dark Sky Site, Summertown, Tennessee*

*Presented by Eric Johnson*

VBAS member Eric Johnson is opening up his dark sky site in Southern Tennessee for a weekend of observing, good food, and plenty of hospitality. The site is in Lewis County, Tennessee, between Hohenwald and Summertown. This is a very dark sky site. Primitive camping and facilities are on site. It is free to all astronomers near and far. Don't forget your scope. RSVP Eric Johnson at [ejohnso4@yahoo.com](mailto:ejohnso4@yahoo.com).

...And as always, for the most up-to-date information about VBAS events, be sure to check the web site at [vbas.org](http://vbas.org).

#### **Custom-Made Telescope Package For Sale**

I am a former member of VBAS. I have a 10 inch "custom made" excellent reflector to sell. Enhanced mirror, and about \$300 worth of Celestron FMC eyepieces also. I've moved into the city --- no dark sky here! I'm going to have to sell it. I've got about \$800 tied up in it, but will sell for \$250.

Please get back and let me know if you, and/or any VBAS members are interested.

Thanks for your time reading.

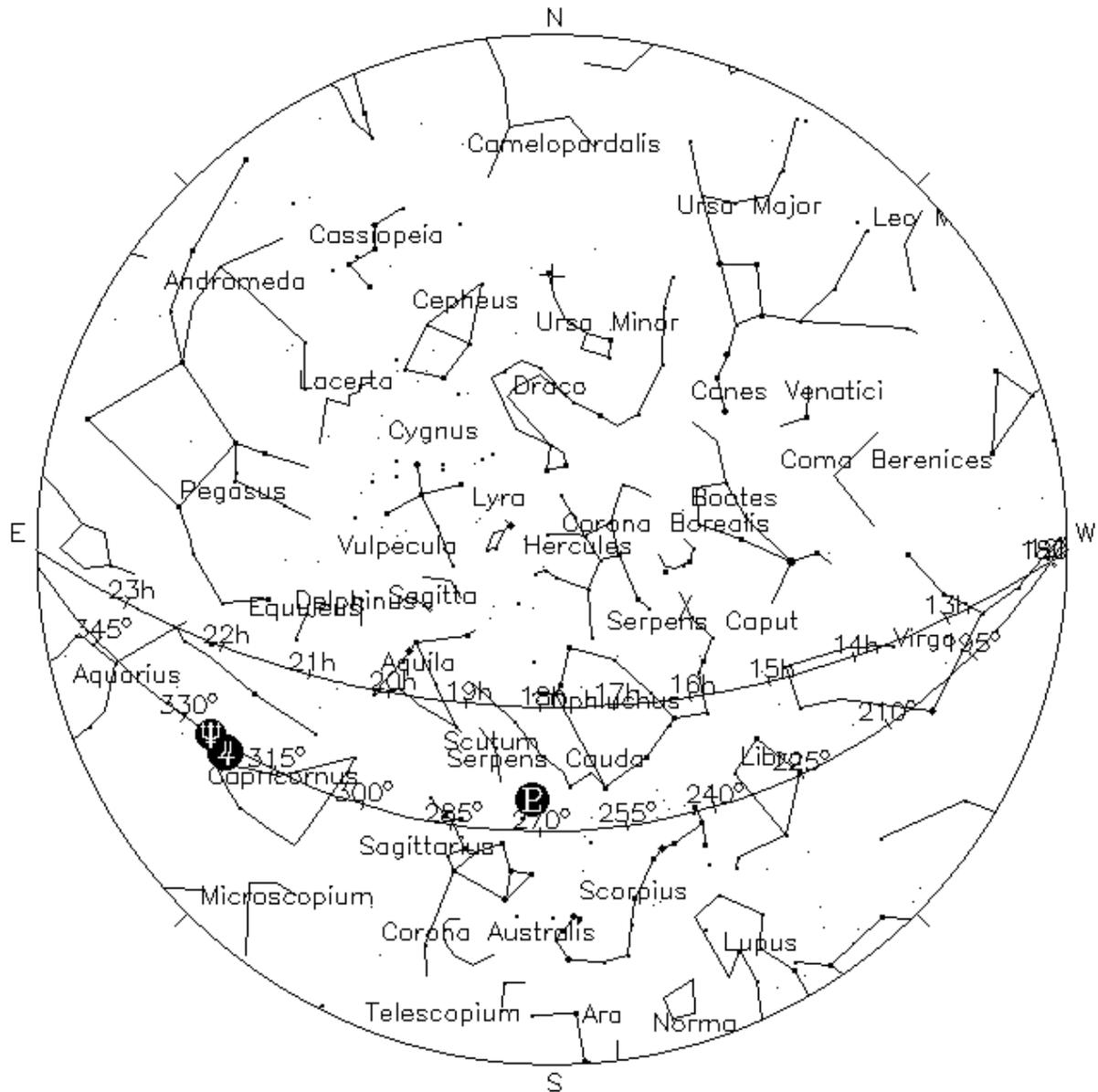
Sincerely,  
Tom L. Ingram  
300 Lincoln Ave North  
Fayetteville, TN 37334  
(931) 438-4852

Email: [tomtlingram@bellsouth.net](mailto:tomtlingram@bellsouth.net)

# The Night Sky for August, 2009

Here is the view at 9 PM in mid August, 2009, at 34° N Latitude, 86° W Longitude. Jupiter (the "4" symbol) will be in the eastern sky near Capricorn. Neptune (the three-pronged trident symbol) will be near Jupiter, and visible through a telescope.

Map courtesy of John Walker and YourSky (<http://www.fourmilab.to/yoursky/>).



## Stellar Events for August

by Doug Horacek

On 3 August 2009, Jupiter will be very close to 45 Capricorni, a 6th magnitude star in Capricornus. On the 14th for you early risers, the Moon will be just past third quarter, and will pass in front of the Pleiades cluster at 3 AM CDT. On the morning of the 16th, the crescent Moon will be between Mars and Venus. On the 17th of August, Saturn will be 3° to the upper right of Mercury during the evening at dusk. Also on the 14th of August, all evening, Jupiter will reach opposition at the western tip of Capricornus as it continues its westward retrograde motion in the sky. On the 17th of August, Neptune reaches opposition and is also in retrograde motion in Capricornus. On the 27th, the Moon will pass in front of Antares again. (See the website in Sky and Telescope.) The disappearance will be during the day. On the 29th of August for you early

risers, again Mars will be less than 1° away from M35 and NGC 2158, the upper left of Mars (just north). The peak of the major Perseid meteor shower is at 1 PM CDT. Therefore, either Tuesday evening or Wednesday evening will be a good evening to see the peak. On Tuesday evening, the Moon will be 70% waning gibbous but farther from the radiant point and other deep sky objects, making it the better night for viewing. On Wednesday evening, the Moon will be 60% waning gibbous, but it will be closer to the radiant point and the desired deep sky objects. The associated comet is Swift-Tuttle. The Kappa Cygnids is the minor shower this month. It will have many less meteors at its peak on 17 August 2009. It is associated with the breakup of minor planet 2008 ED69.

## Copernicus 500th Anniversary Stamp

*Gert Schmitz submitted this scan of a stamp from his collection. The stamp was commissioned to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Nicolaus Copernicus in 1473. Copernicus formulated heliocentric (sun-centered) cosmology, laying the groundwork for Galileo, Kepler, and the rest of modern astronomy.*



### Contributions to Via Stellaris

We welcome contributions to our newsletter that may be of interest to the astronomical community. Contributions are best sent by email to Steve Sloan at [steve@sloan3d.com](mailto:steve@sloan3d.com). If you don't have access to email, you can send articles in either Word or ASCII format to Steve at 2110 Vilaret Dr, Huntsville, AL 35803.

### Membership and Renewal

The VBAS currently has four categories of membership. All four include free admission to the planetarium shows; subscription to this newsletter; membership in the Astronomical League; and use of VBAS library and equipment. The four categories of membership, and the dues for each, are: REGULAR at \$24.00 per year, FAMILY at \$36.00 per year, STUDENT (must be full-time student) at \$12.00 per year, and LIFE at \$500.00. Newsletter Only is also available for \$12.00 per year. Membership renewal occurs for all members annually on March 1st.

All VBAS memberships came up for renewal on March 1, 2009. If you have questions regarding membership, please contact a VBAS officer.

Please send your renewal to the Membership Secretary at VBAS, P.O. Box 1142, Huntsville, AL 35807. Make checks payable to the Von Braun Astronomical Society. If your mailing or email address changes, please report the new address promptly to the Membership Secretary to avoid missing issues of *Via Stellaris*.

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*Steve Sloan, Via Stellaris editor*