



STARRY TRAILS

AUGUST 2026

August has always been my favorite month for stargazing, and this August is full of phenomenal events! First, we will have two eclipses! On August 12 we will observe a very partial solar eclipse. Less than 10% of the Sun will be shadowed by the Moon (Illustration 1). The eclipse begins at 1:11 pm, maximum at 1:41 pm and 2:12 pm partial eclipse ends. This will be a great time to pull out your solar glasses. Remember to never look directly at the Sun without filter glasses or telescope filter. Following the solar eclipse, we will enjoy a partial lunar eclipse on August 27-28. 90% of the Moon will be shadowed by Earth (Illustration 2). The timeline for that evening partial eclipse begins at 10:33 pm, maximum eclipse at 12:12 am, and partial eclipse ends at 1:51 am. Any type of lunar eclipse is safe to watch with your human eyes. No safe filter glasses are needed. Bring along binoculars or a telescope too! Venus continues its dazzling show in the western sky after sunset. Venus and the crescent Moon make a lovely pairing from August 15-17.

Ahhh! The sounds of summer! Take a few minutes and listen! I love to hear the summer sounds when I head out for my favorite stargazing month. There are so many delights to see with your eyes and binoculars! As you are gazing at the night sky, the sounds of a summer night fill the air! Are you ready for our hike? Grab your Starry Trail map, bug spray, binoculars, light jacket and lawn chair or blanket. Don't forget the Perseid Meteor Shower peaks on August 12. This year we will enjoy a moonless night!

Our hike begins around 9:30pm in the western sky. As you journey up you will see a brilliant yellow, orange star, Arcturus. Above Arcturus you will see a semi-circle of stars. It looks almost like a necklace, but it is the Northern Crown or Corona Borealis. I think it looks like a smiley face! Right overhead, or up from Corona, will be a keystone shape in the stars. This is the body of Hercules, the bravest and strongest hero (Illustration 3)! Binocular time! Take your binoculars and scan around the part of Hercules facing Corona. Do you see a small fuzzy object? This is the finest Globular Star Cluster (M13) in the northern skies!

Return to Arcturus and turn left. There you will see a red-orange star, Antares, the heart of Scorpio. To the left of Antares is the constellation, Sagittarius, which looks more like a teapot (Illustration 4). Between Scorpio and Sagittarius is the best part of the sky to scan with your binoculars and telescope! It is rich with deep sky wonders! Grab your binoculars and look!

Turn to the opposite part of the sky or north. The Big Dipper is beginning to swing down through the sky. Take the two stars at the end of the cup and draw an imaginary line to the next bright star. You have reached the North Star! The North Star, or Polaris, is at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. Also, down and to the right of the Little Dipper is Queen Cassiopeia, the W-shaped constellation (Illustration 5).

Trek to the right and you will be facing east. When looking up, you will see a very bright star, which is Vega. Journey down and to the left and you will come to Deneb. Now go right and you have reached Altair. When you connect these three bright stars you have made the Summer Triangle. Great job! Running through the Summer Triangle is the Milky Way, our galaxy! Pop open that lawn chair or lay out on your blanket. Take your binoculars and scan through that part of the sky from north to south. See all of those stars?! Even if you cannot view the Milky Way, due to light pollution, you can still see so many stars with your binoculars!

Here is a challenge: scan to the left and up of Altair. Do you see the group of stars that resemble an upside-down coat hanger? Cool! Head back to Deneb. Imagine this to be the tail of Cygnus, the Swan. To the right will be three stars in a line. These would be the outstretched wings. You should also be able to see the long neck and head of the swan extending from the wings. The head of the swan would be directly below Vega. This star is Albireo, which is a beautiful double star through a telescope! If you look just below the Summer Triangle, you will see a group of stars that look like a kite. This is the constellation, Delphinus, the Dolphin (Illustration 6).

Now just relax and look up. August is the best month to see a shooting star. Anytime around the 12th you may be lucky enough to see a few shooting stars. Give it a try and make a wish!

Wow! What an unbelievable month of stargazing! Next month... Saturn returns and signs of Autumn.

Highlights

Aug 3 – The Moon passes north of Saturn around midnight.

Aug 5 – Last Quarter Moon.

Aug 9 – The Moon passes north of Mars before sunrise.

Aug 12 – **Very Partial Solar Eclipse beginning at 1:11 pm. Solar filter glasses are a must!!**

Aug 12 – New Moon.

Aug 12 – Peak of the Perseid Meteor Shower! Moonless night.

Aug 16 – The crescent Moon passes south of Venus after sunset.

Aug 19 – First Quarter Moon.

Aug 27 - 28 – **Partial Lunar Eclipse. Begins at 10:23 pm & maximum at 12:12 am. Safe to view!**

Aug 28 – Full Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Corn Moon or the Full Grain Moon.

Aug 31 – Moon passes south of Saturn around midnight.

Brightest Stars: **West** – Arcturus, Spica. **East to Overhead** – Vega, Deneb, Altair. **South** – Antares.

Binocular Highlights: The Moon, Hercules Globular Star Cluster M13, Milky Way Deep Sky Objects to the left of Antares in Scorpio thru the Summer Triangle, the Coat Hanger.

Telescope Highlights: The Moon, Venus, Albireo, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M51, M39, M92, M13, M57, M81, M82, M10, M11, M12, M27, M15, M16, M17, M20, M21, M22, M23 and M25.

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Night Sky Illustrations created by Suzie Dills using Starry Night Backyard & Stellarium.

Illustrations courtesy of Cassandra Dills.