



**March 2021**

**Volume XXI Number 3**

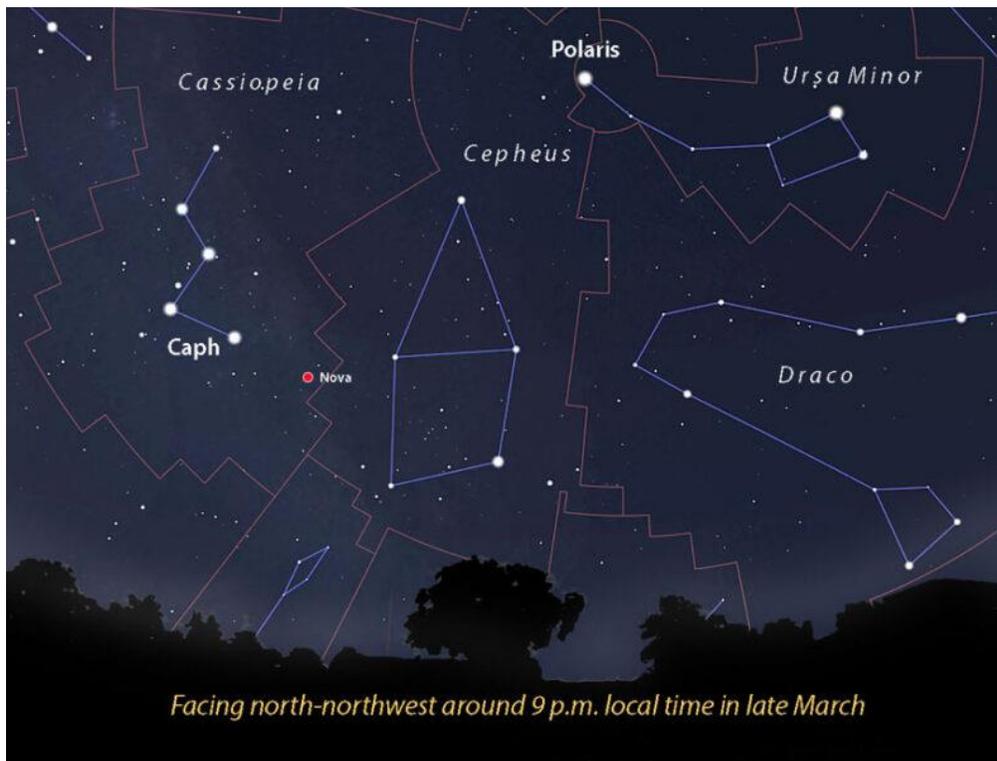
**Observe - Learn – Share**

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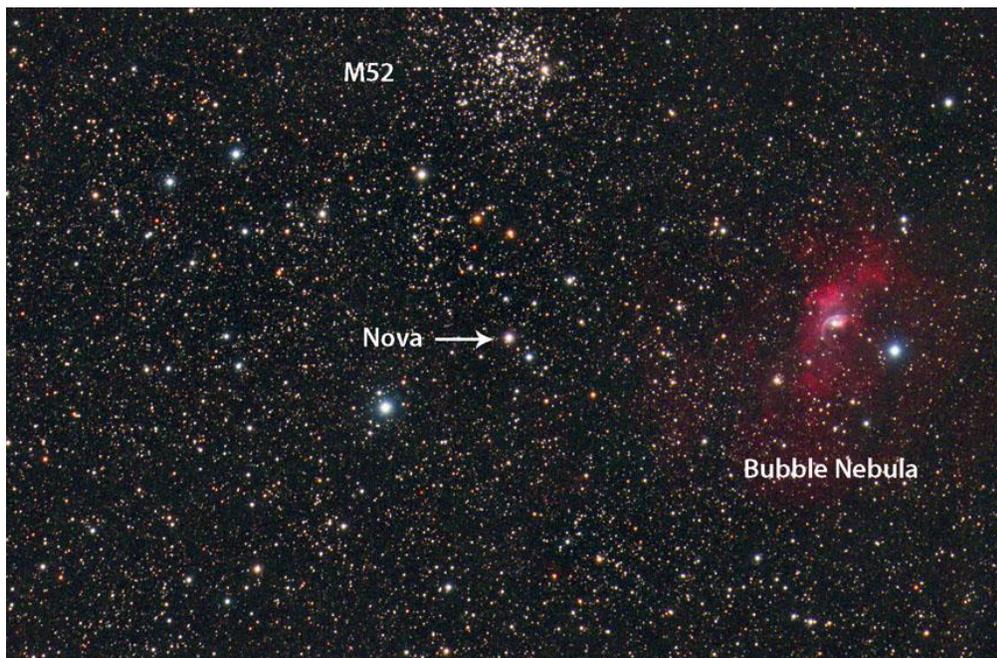
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## Nova in Cassiopeia (from Sky and Telescope)

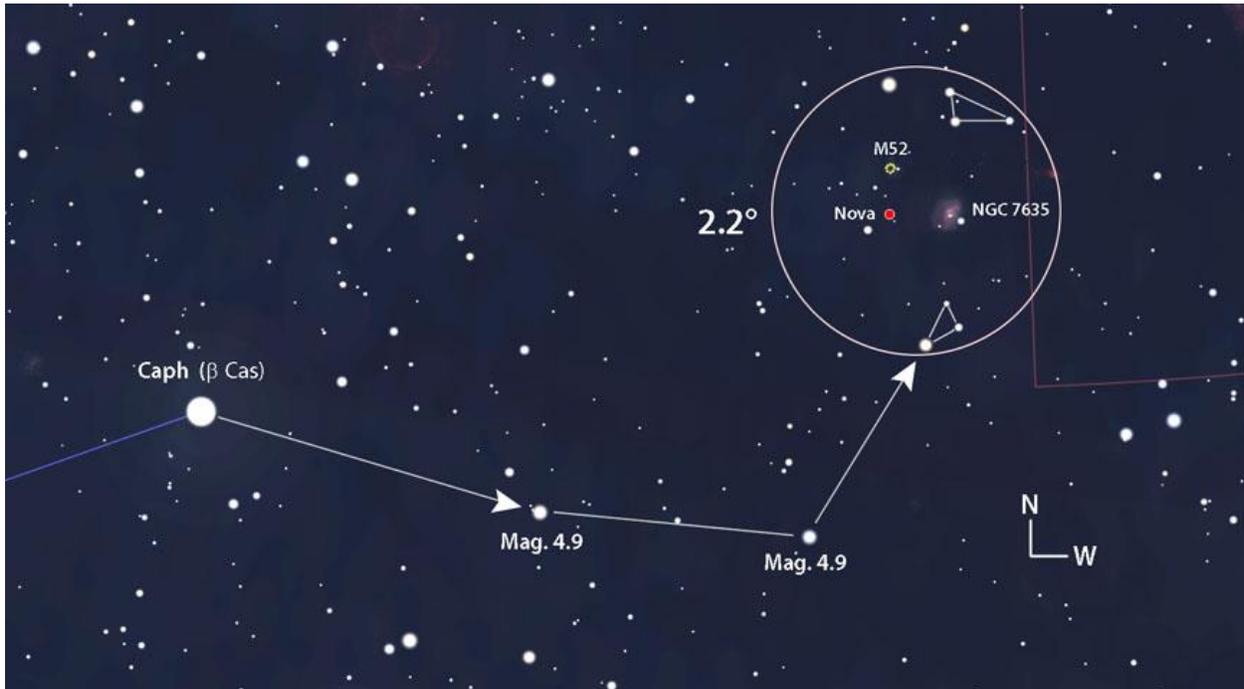
March 18, a new nova was discovered in Cassiopeia (between Cassiopeia and Cepheus).



It should be visible in small backyard telescopes:



The new object is located at right ascension  $23^{\text{h}} 24^{\text{m}} 48^{\text{s}}$ , declination  $+61^{\circ} 11' 15''$ . That's about  $6^{\circ}$  northwest of 2nd-magnitude Caph ( $\beta$  Cas) and  $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  south of the bright open cluster M52, or if you prefer,  $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  east of the Bubble Nebula (NGC 7635). Either way, it's an easy star-hop from Caph, as shown in the finder chart below. And because Cassiopeia is circumpolar from mid-northern latitudes, the nova is visible all night long. Try to catch it when it's highest, either right at nightfall or just before dawn.



## Messier Marathon 2021

March and April are the time of year when it is possible to see all 110 of the Messier Objects in one night. It is called a Messier Marathon. Unfortunately, the March night was washed out by clouds, so our only other opportunity is April 10. Some of the objects are rather faint and moonlight will make them difficult to see. So, the Marathons are only done on the weekends of the new moon.

There are different difficulty levels, so there is a challenge for observers of different experience levels. The purists will do the observing with a manual telescope (no go-to telescopes or even setting circles). Those less driven can opt to use a go-to telescope to help find them more quickly. We hope you will give it a try.

Of course, you can take a more rewarding approach and spread it out over the course of a year, taking advantage of those objects that are available in the evening hours at that time of year. The Messier Objects are among the best objects to view in even a modest telescope. The Astronomical League offers its members (all of you) a couple Messier-based Observing Programs. There is the Messier certification (observe them manually), and there is also a Binocular Messier Observing Program. Information on these programs is available on the Astronomical League website:

<https://www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/AlphabeticObservingClubs.html>

Are you up for a marathon?

## **Sky Puppies Observing Program**

- Aaron Clevenson – AL-Cor

Do you have a child, grandchild, or friend that is 10 years old or younger? Do they have a budding interest in astronomy? There is an Astronomical League (AL) Observing Program designed with them in mind, and there is no cost! It is called Sky Puppies and is available to members and non-members of the AL. There is a manual, certificate, and pin. There is also a workbook edition designed for teaching classes of youth.

The manual has many activities and information to help introduce young people to the skies. Information is shared on:

- What constellations are and why we have them.
- A myth from Native Americans about the Big Dipper.
- An introduction to stars, the Sun, and the Milky Way Galaxy.
- Star charts.
- A brief introduction to how we explore the universe from Earth.

Activities include:

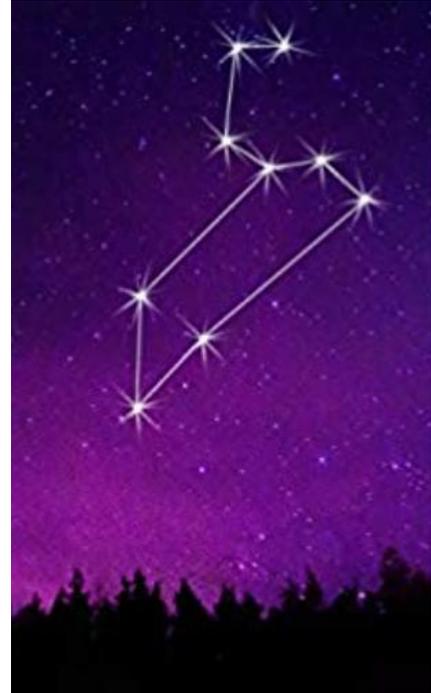
- A connect the dots activity to help learn some common constellations.
- A letter scramble activity to introduce star names.
- A planet hopping activity.
- A cosmic crossword puzzle.
- A word-find puzzle of bright stars.

There is also a cut-out homemade planisphere.

To get one or more copies, please send an email to Aaron Clevenson, the NHAC AL-Cor at [aaron@clevenson.org](mailto:aaron@clevenson.org). Tell me how many copies you need and provide a postal address to ship them to.

## Constellation of the Month

This month's featured constellation is Leo, the lion. Leo is one of the constellations that actually looks like the object it is portraying. It can be found rising in the east after sunset. Leo was the Nemean Lion which was killed by Heracles (Hercules) as the first of his 12 tasks. Heracles had to take on and defeat the lion with his bare hands since it was immune to weapons.



## News from NASA

- As many of you are aware, the Perseverance Lander on Mars has a helicopter. They are preparing for first flight. For information on this and the Perseverance Rover, check out NASA's website:

<https://www.nasa.gov/perseverance>

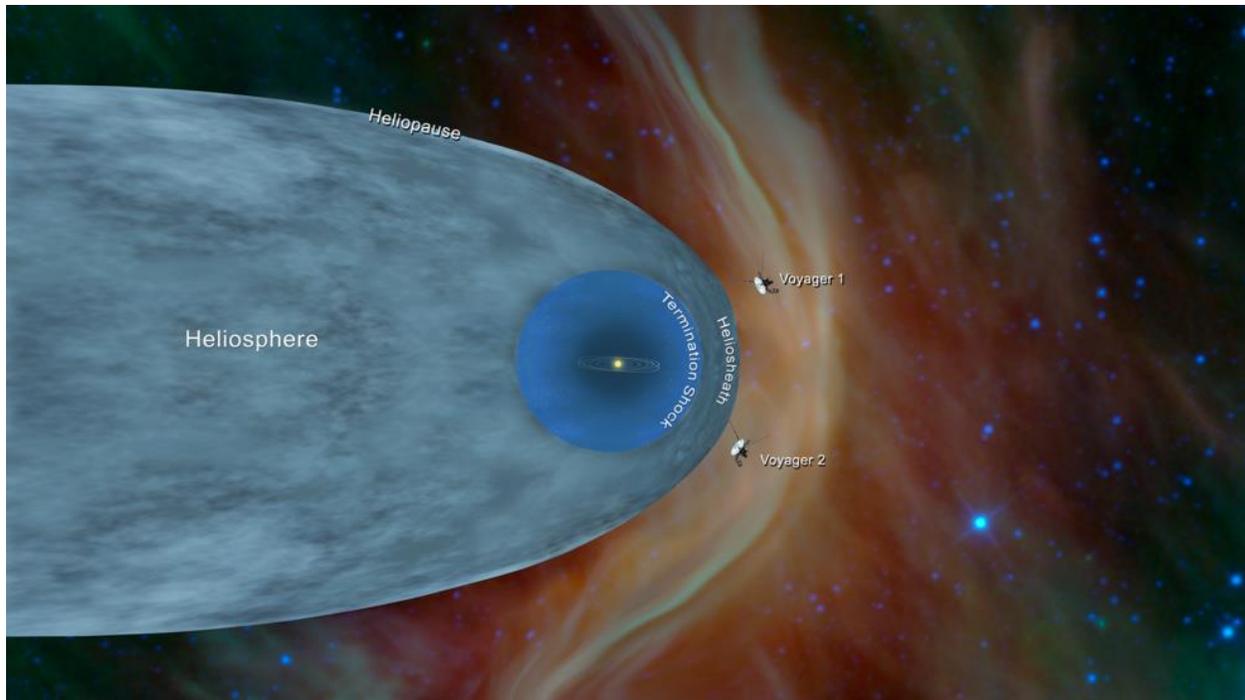
- The James Webb Space Telescope has completed functional tests in preparation for launch. It is scheduled for launch later in 2021.

[https://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/webb/main/index.html](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/webb/main/index.html)

- Activities continue on the International Space Station. Who would have thought that parking spots would be an issue at the Station. But apparently, they are. The crew just had to relocate one of the Soyuz spacecraft to a different parking port to open up the Earth-facing port for the upcoming Soyuz arrival (MS-18). Apparently, this is not uncommon. It has had to be done 19 times since August 2019. For more information and the latest news:

<https://blogs.nasa.gov/spacestation/2021/03/19/three-crewmates-complete-short-station-trip-in-soyuz-crew-ship/>

- And my favorite mission of all time, Voyager... "To Boldly Go Where No-One Has Gone Before!" Wow is the only word that can describe this mission. Launched when I was young, and it is likely to outlast me. A picture truly is worth 1000 words:



<https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-s-voyager-2-probe-enters-interstellar-space>

## **Insperty Observatory**

Although COVID-19 is wreaking havoc with astronomical observing, outreach does continue. The Insperty Observatory still has Public Nights on the first Friday of each month. Reservations are required. For more information check out the Observatory's website at:

[www.humbleisd.net/observatory](http://www.humbleisd.net/observatory)

We would love to have you join us as a member of the public or join us as a volunteer.

## **Contributions Encouraged**

If you have a story to share, or if you hear some astronomy news, we would like to include it here. We will also include images.

Please send contributions to Aaron Clevenson at [aaron@clevenson.org](mailto:aaron@clevenson.org)

## **North Houston Astronomy Club website**

[www.astronomyclub.org](http://www.astronomyclub.org)