

Greg Smith – editor

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Program: Meeting Cancelled

**Meeting: April 15, 2020
Cancelled**

“Safe” at Home

We amateur astronomers are in a pickle. We love to share the night sky with all we can, but then we do love to be alone with our scope ferreting out the familiar sights of the night sky, and those elusive gems that we have not seen yet. We are now forced to have only one choice, observe alone. This is fun but not as much fun as sharing with the rest of the community.

I have used some of our clear nights to do some observing, mainly to refamiliarize myself with my go-to scope. This was very good for me as it had been last summer since I had the time to use it.

I do have an embarrassing story to pass along. The last time I used my go-to scope I could not get it to find any stars. I had just updated the operating system for the scope and now it was not working. I was really upset and disappointed. Now when setting up the scope, the scope worked perfectly. I realized I had forgotten to take the lens cap off the built-in camera that allows the scope to automatically find alignment stars that last time. I even have a label on the scope that says, “**remove lens cap**”. What a dummy!

I did have a few opportunities to go out and view with binoculars the friendly familiar sights of the winter sky, and to keep an eye on the changes that went on with Betelgeuse. I could even see the new brightness that has returned to our famous star. I hope that by the middle of April we will get some more clear skies to go back outside and look for a couple of unobserved objects.

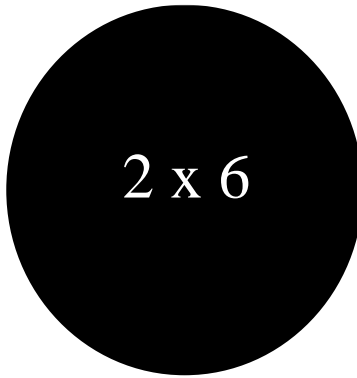
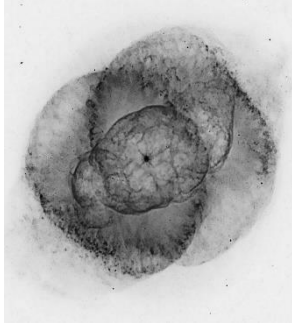
But what are we to do with this time “safe” at home and basically only TV to entertain us? Just how many days can you binge watch anything? Sure, you can lookup YouTube astronomy videos, but did we not do that at the end of last year, when we were stuck on those rainy nights of winter.

How about making lists of objects we want to see? It will help take our minds off all the bad news that surrounds us. This list making is a project that can give us a positive goal. I have a goal to observe at least two of the Messier galaxies in Leo this spring. I also want to do this with galaxies M51 and M109 in Ursa Major. My go-to scope should really help me to do this (if I remember to take the lens cap off). I could get it done in one nights observing.

Even as I write this article my attitude is improving, I have hope for the days ahead. Will I try to add my camera to my go-to scope? It’s something I have not done yet as I am still trying to get comfortable with this scope. Making a goal of it will force me to concentrate on something other than the onslaught of dismal news.

I realize most of us are retired and are at home most of the time anyway, but we are confined to our home more than usual. Lets’ make the most of the time.

*Every Day is a Star Filled Day,
Every Night is a Starry Night*



Mizar and Alcor, famous double star

Posted by [Bruce McClure](#) in Astronomy Essentials | Brightest Stars | **March 25, 2020**

Mizar and its fainter companion star Alcor are easy to spot in the Big Dipper's handle.

Mizar and Alcor are one of the most famous double stars in the sky. You'll spot Mizar first, as the middle star of the Big Dipper's handle. Look closely, and you'll see Alcor right next to Mizar.

Mizar and Alcor appear so closely linked in our sky's dome that they're often said to be a test of eyesight. But in fact, even people with less than perfect eyesight can see the two stars, especially if they're looking in a dark clear sky. This pair of stars in the Big Dipper's handle is famously called "the horse and rider." If you can't see fainter Alcor with the unaided eye, use binoculars to see Mizar's nearby companion.

At this time of year, the Big Dipper is in the northeast. The famous star Mizar is second to the end of the Dipper's handle. Look closely, and you'll see Alcor right next to Mizar.

Located in the handle of the Big Dipper, Mizar (brighter) and Alcor (fainter) are one of the most famous visual double stars in the sky

Mizar is perhaps the Big Dipper's most famous star, glorified in the annals of astronomy many times over. Apart from Alcor, Mizar in itself became known a double star in 1650. In fact, it was the first double star to be seen through a telescope.

Few, if any, astronomers back then even dreamed that double stars were anything other than chance alignments of physically unrelated stars. Yet, in 1889, an instrument called a spectroscope revealed that Mizar's brighter telescopic component consisted of two stars – making Mizar the first binary star ever discovered by spectroscopic means.

At a later date, Mizar's dimmer telescopic component also showed itself to be a spectroscopic binary, meaning that Mizar consists of two sets of binaries – making it a quadruple star.

As for Alcor, it was long believed that Mizar and Alcor were not gravitationally bound and did not form a true binary star system. In 2009, though, two groups of astronomers independently reported that Alcor actually is itself a binary, consisting of Alcor A and Alcor B. Astronomers now believe that the Alcor binary system is gravitationally bound to the Mizar quadruple system – making six stars in all, where we see only two with the eye.

Thus, Mizar and Alcor not only test eyesight, but the limits of our technological vision as well.

Bottom line: Famous double stars Mizar and Alcor are easy to find in the handle of the Big Dipper. Mizar is really four stars, and Alcor is really two stars. So, what we see as two stars are really six in one!

Minutes of the March Meeting

Meeting Cancelled Due to COVID - 19 Shutdown

☞ April 2020 Meeting ☞

DATE: **Wednesday April 15**

TIME **Cancelled**

PLACE:

PROGRAM: -

Drinks
Snacks

Remember: Earth Day?
Saturday May16, 2020 ?

Friends of Galileo Club Officers

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Next Month's Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for items in next month's newsletter is:

**Wednesday: seven days
before next meeting.**

**Please feel free to send in your
thoughts and experiences about
your astronomical adventure.**

Submit your material by E-mail to:

grlyth@msn.com

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