



SCORPIUS

The Journal of the
Astronomical Society of Frankston Inc.
P.O. Box 596, Frankston, Victoria 3199

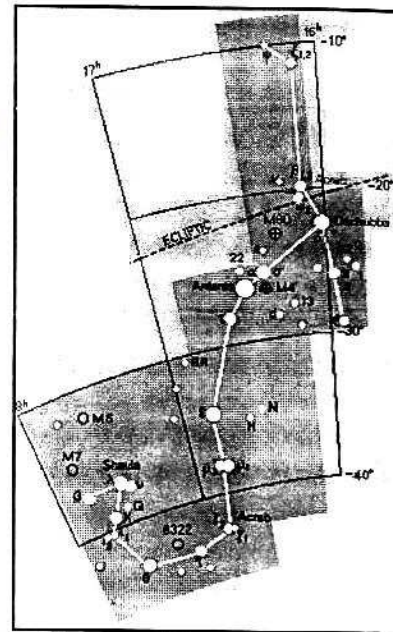
Reg. No. A268

Volume IX, No. 1 2000

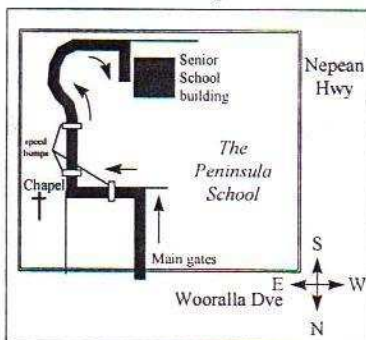
(Jan - Feb)

The Astronomical Society of Frankston was founded in 1969 with the aim of fostering the study of Astronomy by amateurs and promoting the hobby of amateur Astronomy to the general public. The Society holds a General Meeting each month for the exchange of ideas and information. Regular observing nights, both private and public are arranged to observe currently available celestial objects. For decades the Society has provided *Astronomy on the Move* educational presentations and observing nights for schools and community groups exclusively in the Peninsula and surrounding regions to Moorabbin, Dandenong & Tooradin.

Meeting Venue: Peninsula School, Wooralla Drive, Mt. Eliza (Melways map 105/F5) in the Senior School at 8pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month except December.
Internet: <http://www.peninsula.starway.net.au/~aggro/index.html>
Email: aggro@peninsula.starway.net.au



Visitors are always welcome!



Annual Membership

Full Member	\$30
Pensioner	\$25
Student	\$20
Family	\$40
Family Pensioners	\$35
Newsletter Only	\$15

President & Acting Editor

Ian Porter (03) 9776 5898

Vice President & Loan Instruments

Richard Pollard (0419) 100 802

Treasurer

Bob Heale (03) 9787 1748

Secretary

Roger Giller (03) 9702 2685

Committee of Management

John Cleverdon, Don Leggett, Peter Lowe,
Peter Skilton, Sally Zetter

All phone calls before 8:30pm please.

General Meetings:

Wed 17th FEB 2000 AT The
BRIARS visitors centre...

Session 1: Ian Porter – Floundering
into space – 1999 in space
Session 2: Loan telescope outside if
weather is clear.

Viewing Nights:

Members Only:

Sat Feb 5/12, Mar 4/11 all at *The
Briars*, Nepean Hwy, Mt. Martha
(Melways 151/E1).

If weather forecast for the Saturday looks bad, the Friday before may be used instead. New attendees must always confirm with Ian Porter on 5985 4203 before attending. Remember for security reasons you can only attend on planned Members' Nights, unless by prior arrangement with Ian who will liaise with *The Briars* accordingly. Last person out must switch on the shed security light.

Public, School & Community Groups Viewing/slide nights:

If you can assist, please contact the Secretary.

- The once-a-month basic public viewing nights at *The Briars* will continue on the first Friday of each

month. The next nights are on Fri 4th Feb and Fri 3rd Mar, all at 8pm. Assistants are required.

- No others notified as yet

Phenomenal Events:

- Predictions for asteroid occultations of background stars are available, as are predictions for eclipses of Jupiter's moons for 1999/2000. If you have a small telescope and are interested in making these observations for NASA please contact the Editor for instructions.

Social Events

- Unfortunately, *Blue Planet* at the giant IMAX cinema in Carlton has finished its run, so a group trip is now excluded. Early next year we'll plan a trip to the newly opened digital Planetarium at Science Works in Spotswood and you'll be able to judge for yourselves whether it is better than the old planetarium.
- NACAA 2000. The 19th National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers is to be held in Perth over Easter (Apr 21-24) next year, and the 2nd circular has now been

issued, calling for registration and papers. For more information, see any Committee member for details.

- Equinox dinner at the Baxter Tavern Friday 24th March. Details at the next meeting or ring Ian Porter in early march.

YOUR SOCIETY

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new Society members:

Vicky and Paul Florey
Carmel Goodfellow
Ken & Annette Lucas
Lynne & Richard Pearson

The ASF is one of the largest astronomy groups in Australasia. Membership is currently at 162. Please feel free to say hello at general meetings. Specialised badges, windcheaters, T-shirts, books & posters are available at meetings. Society name tags are free to new members who attend meetings. Members are able to borrow library books and are entitled to attend special viewing nights at *The Briars* where you can discover the secrets and glories of the night sky.

HELP NEEDED

Articles, features, book reviews, member observations and points of general interest for this journal are always welcome. New contributors are encouraged. For example do a bit of reading and pass on some information, but remember not to plagiarise. Hand written material is fine; computer text files are perfect. The editor will even correct any mistakes you might make, so don't be bashful.



EDITOR NEEDED!

As you may have noticed on the front page, I am only the acting editor of the newsletter. We are looking for someone to take on the role on permanent basis. If you would like to take on the task, please contact Ian Porter.

RECENT MEETINGS

- The 1999 Annual General Meeting was full of surprises. The meeting venue had disappeared. Yes, that's right, disappeared. Surprised members

on 10th Nov turned up to the Peninsula School to find our room and, indeed, the whole building, a construction zone completely stripped of everything including even carpets and fitted cupboards. After waiting until 8:15pm, most of the members present went down to the smaller capacity Visitors' Centre at *The Briars*, where the meeting was then conducted by Peter Skilton. Some members kindly stayed behind to direct later arrivals on to the new venue. Our apologies for very late arrivals. The 37 members who lasted out to the meeting saw the former Committee replaced by a new line-up, including a new Ordinary Committee member, Sally Zetter, and new Public Officer, Renato Alessio. After the AGM and the tea break, the incoming President, Ian Porter, chaired the meeting. David Girling gave a presentation on the Leonids meteor storm expected later in the month, and Peter Skilton talked on the rare transit of Mercury across the face of the Sun, expected the day before the Leonids in the morning. Meeting closed at 10:30pm. Following this, members Greg and Val Walton kindly assembled their home-built 18 inch Dobsonian telescope for some quick viewing in the car park for those who wished to remain.

AURORA NETWORK

Last edition reported that we were setting up a network of people keen to be told when an aurora was visible in our night skies. Because this phenomenon cannot be predicted well in advance, your only real chance of seeing it is either by luck or by someone else telling you when one is occurring. On the peninsula and surrounding regions, the southern lights are readily seen by eye, and are due to increase substantially in number in the next 12 months as our Sun enters its active phase. If you are interested in finding out more about this network for members, please

contact Roger Giller on (03) 9702 2685 who is co-ordinating it.

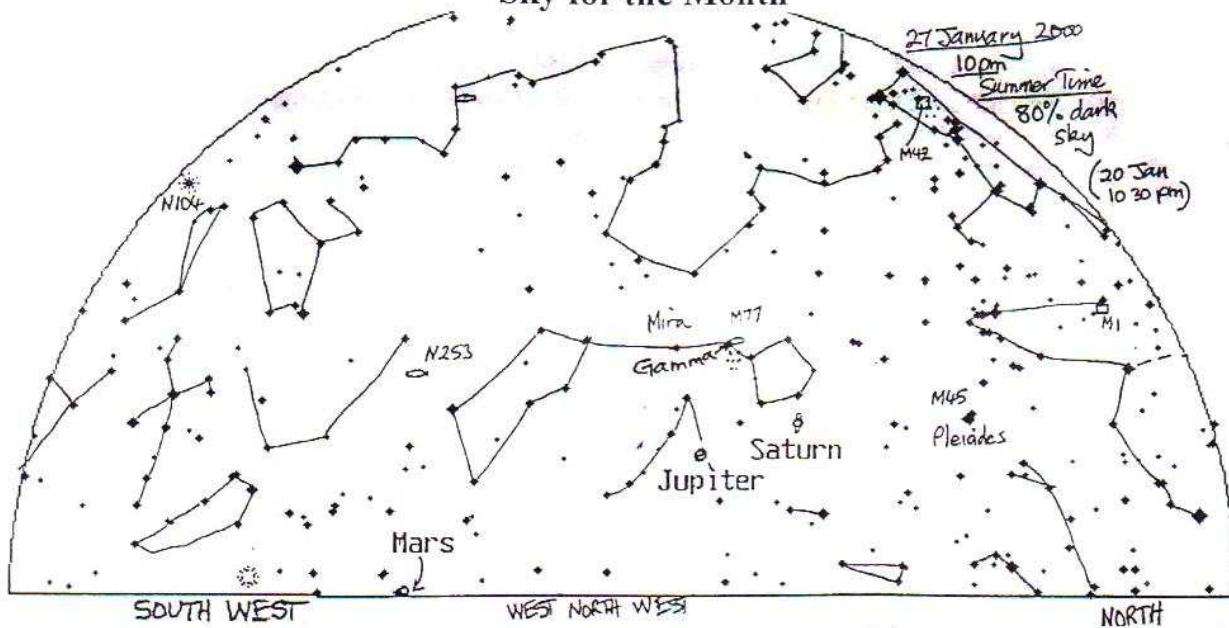
SECRETARY'S JOTTINGS

- Thomas Mitchell Primary in Endeavour Hills was visited on 12th Nov, where about 170 senior pupils, siblings, parents and teachers attended, all eager to learn about the sky as an adjunct to their curriculum. Richard Pollard gave the presentation in the school hall (difficult because of the acoustics), before most of the assembly moved out to the basketball courts to the ten telescopes awaiting them. Good views were had of Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, the Moon and the odd satellite.
- On the 10th Jan we presented a viewing night as part of the Coastal action groups summer program. With about 30 people in attendance the initial light cloud cleared and an excellent night was had by all.
- Again we were blessed by late clearing cloud on the 14th of Jan for our January public night, held one week later than usual. We were overrun with telescopes, with everyone attending getting a good look at the objects on display.
- Continuing thanks to all who participated in the school and public nights, particularly to Richard and Bob, who shoulder the bulk of the organisation for these nights.

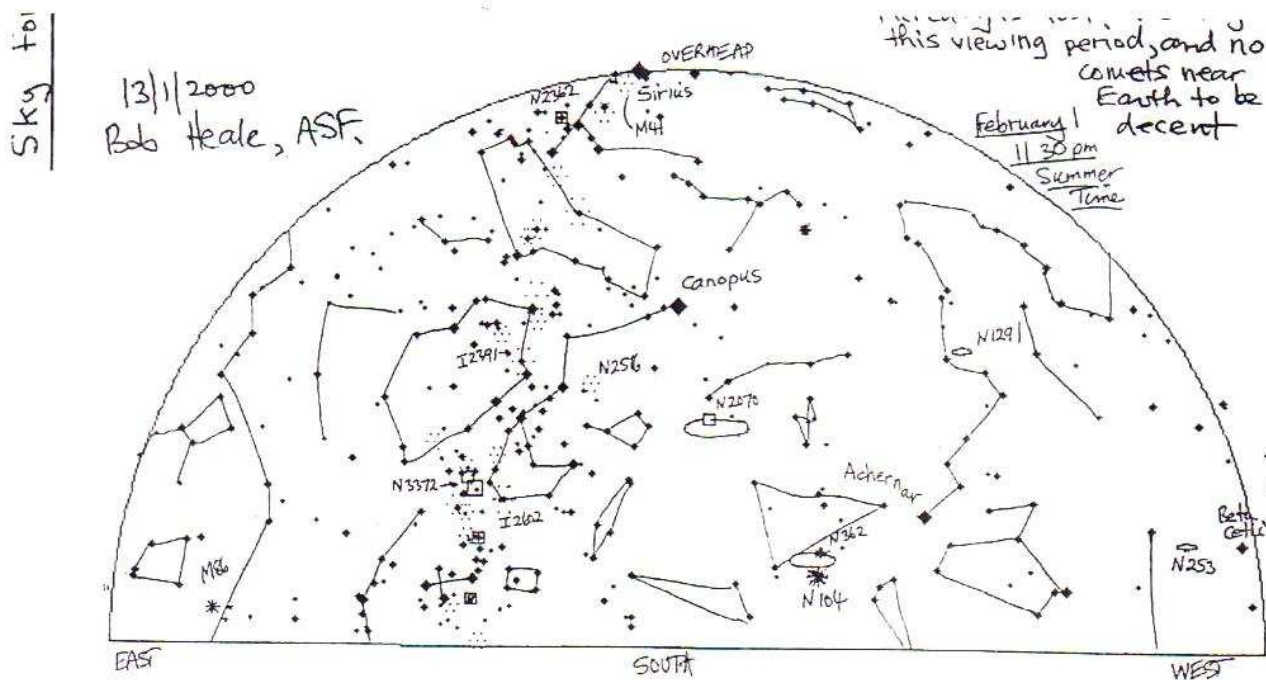
LIBRARY MATTERS

- Library Notes - Members Jason and Sally Zetter have very kindly donated a brand new copy of the brilliant book *The Planets* to the Library, for which we thank them. This book is based on the recent BBC television programme that was broadcast on the ABC recently and will be much appreciated.
- David Huby continues to be a great supporter of the library, donating a set of "Steven Hawkings Universe" videos, and some CD software. Thanks again David!

Sky for the Month



View to the west – Early evening



View to the South – 11:30pm

Things to look for – Jupiter and Saturn disappearing into the western sky, last chance to catch them for a few months. Venus low in east in early morning.
Easy deep sky object – Galaxy M77 in top view above Gamma Cetus

What's gone up?

Space launches this Month

Date UT	Name	Launch Vehicle	Site	Mission	INTL. DES.
Jan 21 0103	DSCS III B-8	Atlas IIA	Canaveral SLC36A	Comsat	01A
Jan 25 0104	Galaxy 10R	Ariane 42L	Kourou ELA2	Comsat	02A
Jan 25 1645	Zhongxing-22	CZ-3A	Xichang LC2	Comsat	03A
Jan 27 0303	JAWSAT)	Minotaur	Vandenberg CLF	Tech.	04E
	ASUSAT)			Img/Com	04A
	OPAL)			Tech.	04B
	OCSE)			Calib.	04C
	Falconsat)			Science?	04D
	Artemis)			Science	
	STENSAT)			Comsat	
	MEMS 1)			Tech.	
	MEMS 2)			Tech.	

A slow start to the year, with a flurry of launches toward the end of the month. 3 "ordinary" communication satellite launches and an interesting multiple launch. The Minotaur launch vehicle is a hybrid design including left over ICBM stages, and commercial rocket stages. This is the vehicles first launch and it carried a bevy of micro-satellites, most built by University students in the USA.

Ian Porter

REVIEW OF ULTRA WIDE ANGLE EYEPIECES

9mm Nagler - Excellent eyepiece. However, it must be used with its rubber eyecup up, if you want to see the full 82 degree field. As far as I'm concerned, it's a bit too heavy to use comfortably in a 1.25 inch star diagonal - I just hate it when the thumbscrew comes loose and the diagonal and eyepiece flops around. However, the Nagler does have a groove where the star diagonal's

thumbscrew secures it. It is thus unlikely to ever fall out of the diagonal.

14mm Meade Ultra Wide - Excellent eyepiece. However, unlike the Nagler, it must be used with its rubber eyecup folded down, if you want to see the full 84 degree field. This eyepiece is way too heavy to use with a 1.25 inch star diagonal, and it doesn't have a groove like the Nagler's, to secure it into the diagonal. This eyepiece really does need a 2 inch diagonal.

Both the above worked very well with Barlows.

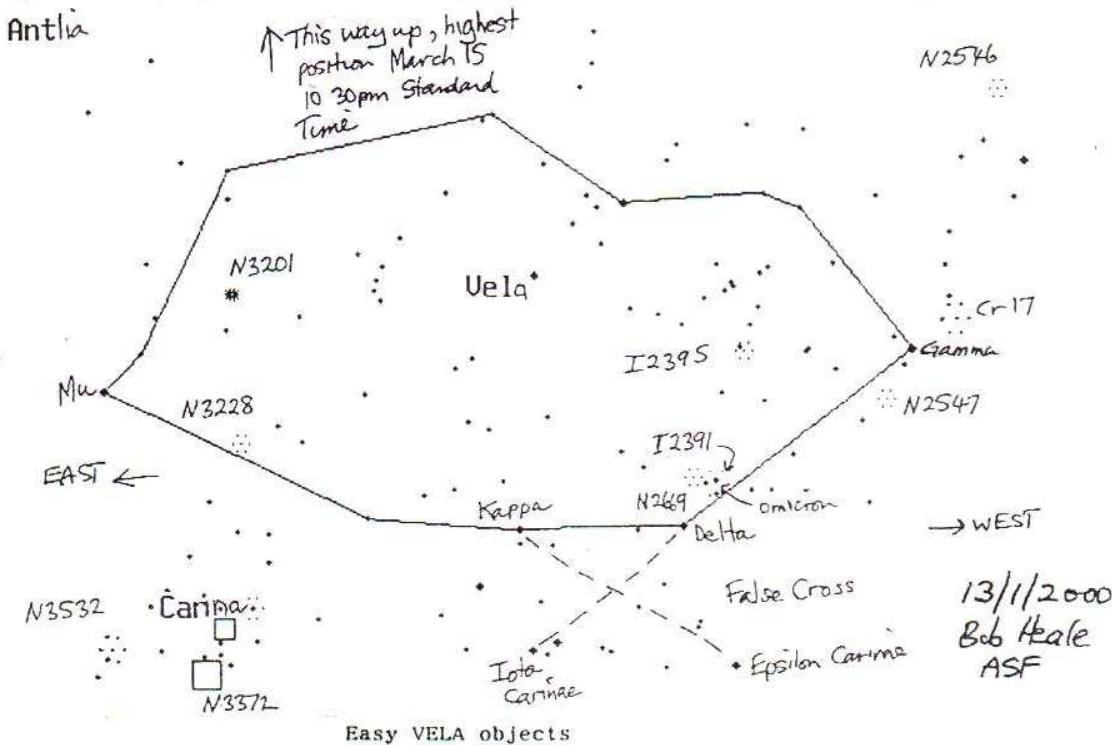
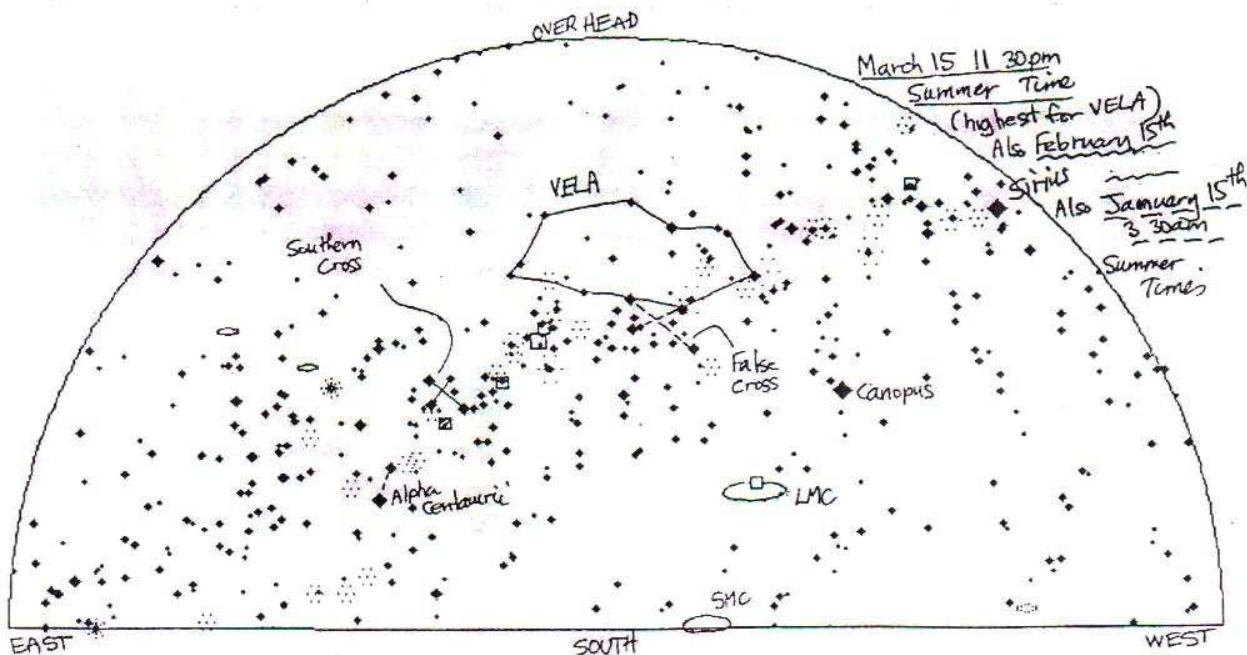
16mm Widescan - Excellent eyepiece in a small 80mm refractor. Poor to good eyepiece in a C8. Absolutely awful eyepiece in a 14 inch Dob. This modified Erfle design does deliver an 82 degree field. The distortions at the edges are barely noticeable in a small refractor. They are worse in the C8,

such that views of open clusters can only be classed as poor, but other object types are still good. This eyepiece doesn't come to focus in many reflectors, including my own. When I made an adaptor to make it work, the view in my Dob was appalling, with 60% of the field unusable.

The Widescan does have some redeeming features. It is lightweight, and can be used in star diagonals. Barlows improve its images considerably. It does not suffer from the kidney bean problem of the Nagler and Ultra wide (the kidney bean problem occurs when one's pupil does not receive all the light from the eyepiece). Because it is so light, I have used it in a variety of configurations with barlows and a focal reducer. It has wound up being the eyepiece that I've played around with the most.

Renato Alessio

Constellation of the Month – Vela

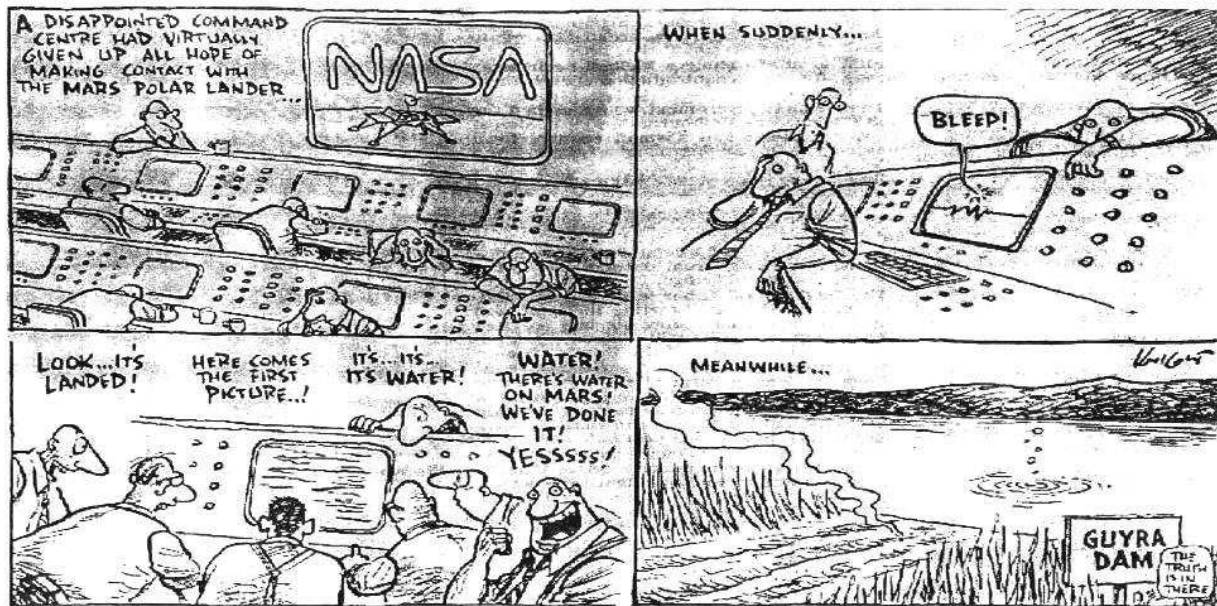


Easy VELA objects

As you can see, the Milky Way galactic plane, identified by the open star clusters (each made up of 7 dots in a regular hexagon arrangement on the chart), runs through the southern edge of VELA. So VELA contains many fine open clusters, double stars and, for experienced amateurs bright planetary nebula. Magnitude 2 blue-white Gamma is the constellations brightest star, and, is a quadruple star, although the easiest component is a white magnitude 4 star at 41"

separation, so visible in 7x50 binoculars or better. The other two companions are magnitudes 8 and 9 at 60" and 93" respectively. Magnitude 2 Delta is a double with a companion of magnitude 5 at 2.6" need a telescope at 81X. Mu is two solar type stars at 2.5" separation and widening, needing 90X. Open cluster N2547 may be visible to unaided eye, is south of Gamma consisting of 80 stars, looking like a curved cross on its side, a dazzling starry array. Open cluster I 2391, an easy eye object, visible as a hazy spot, including the magnitude 4 star Omicron; binoculars reveal a large

lustrous gathering of 2 dozen stars. Open cluster I2395 appears as a small tight swarm of stardust, may be visible to the eye. N2669 is 1 degree east of Omicron and I 2391 and is a moderate bright glow surrounded by 6 stars in trapezoidal shape. All 3 together are magnificent. N 3228 is a bright galactic open cluster. N3201 is the only globular star cluster in VELA, it having a loose structure and identifiable with binoculars, requiring moderate apertures. **Bob Heale**



Herald Sun

If **undeliverable**, please return to
 Astronomical Society of Frankston Inc.,
 PO Box 596, Frankston, Victoria 3199.

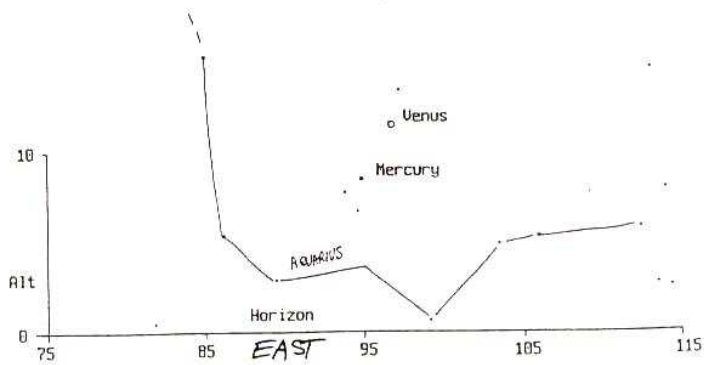
Below - Working Bee at MPAS the Briars site 27 February 2000



Kindly reproduced by the efforts of Ken Bryant, and collated/posted by Sally Zetter.

SKY FOR THE MONTH 16th FEBRUARY - 14th MARCH 2000 (inclusive)

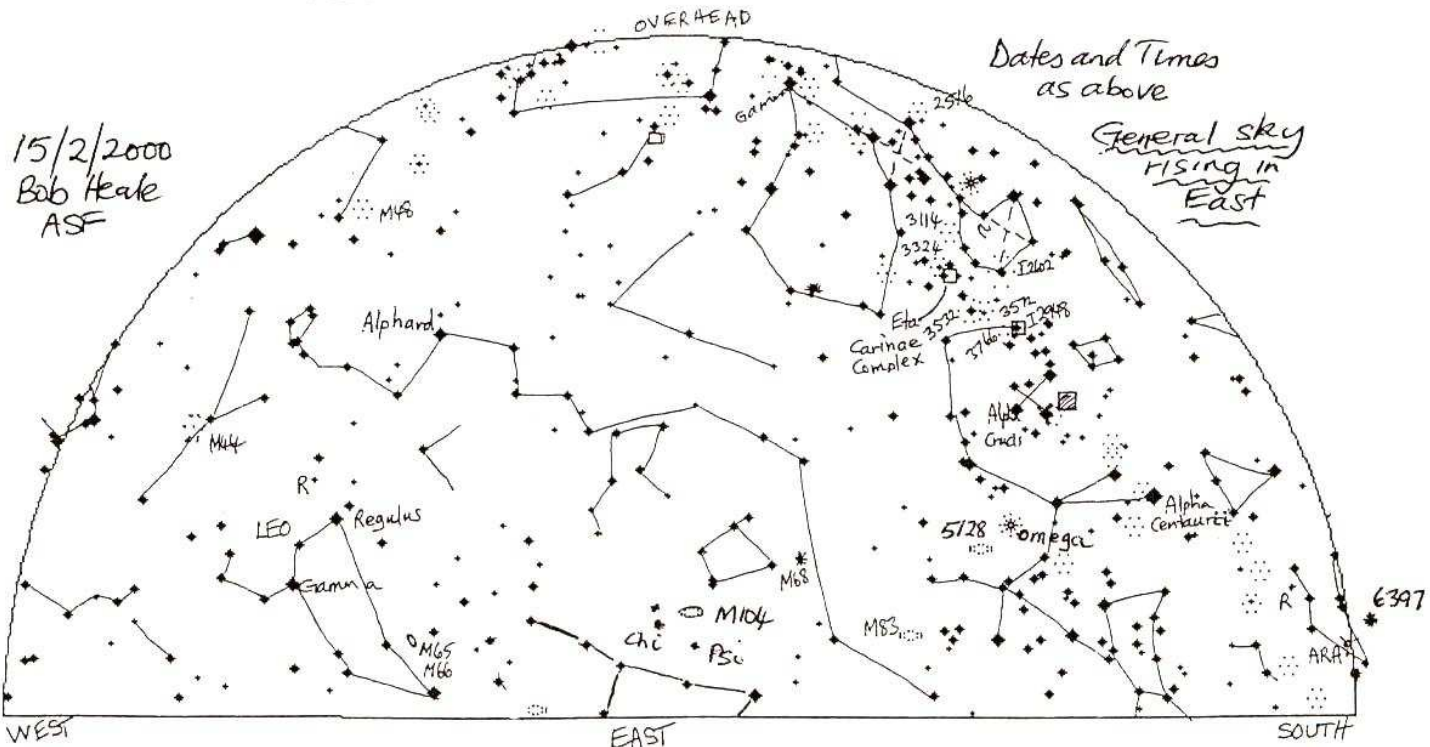
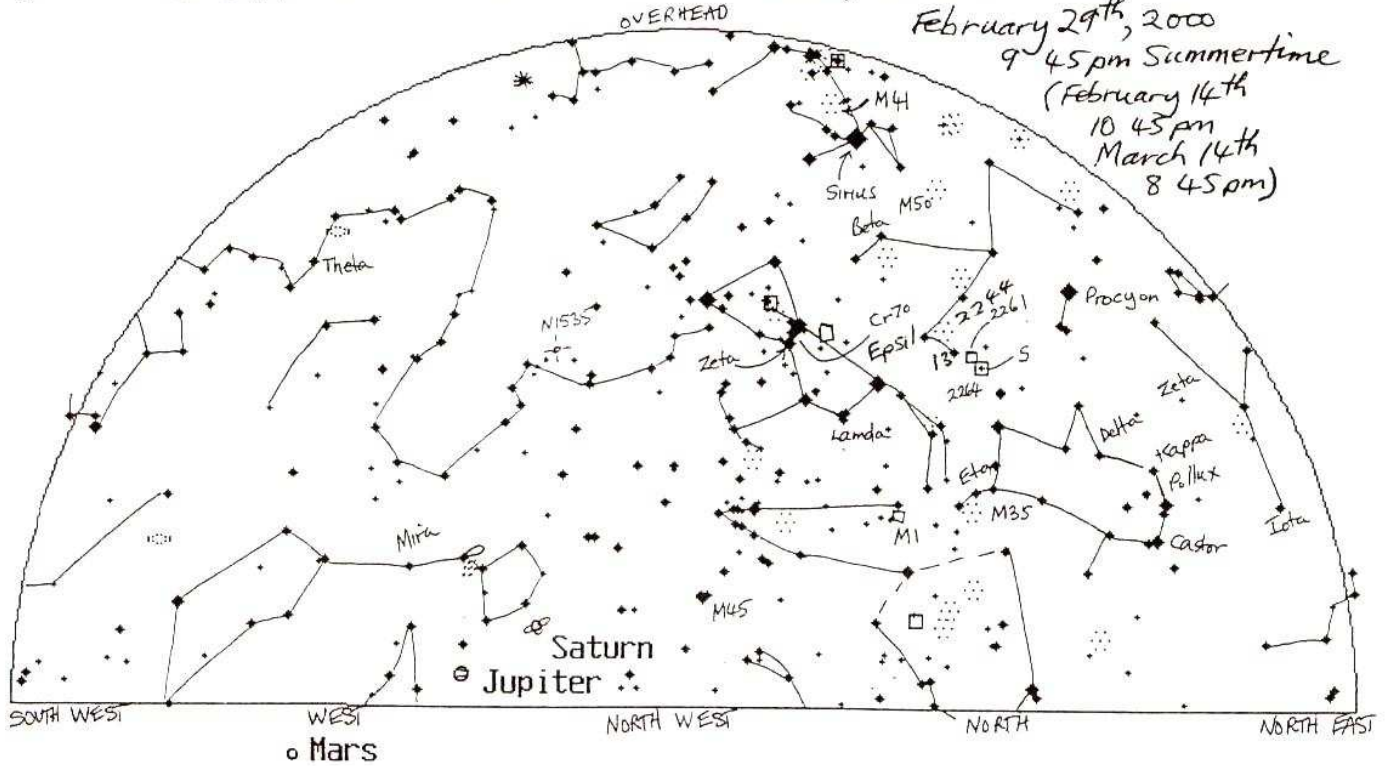
6 22 am 2/3 Dark Sky 14th March 2000 Summer Time
 © Bob Heale 18/4/99
 All objects no fainter than 4 1 X Sky View



No comets visible brighter than about magnitude 12.
 All labelled sky objects on charts visible to the unaided eye or any optical aid from 7X50 or 10X50 binoculars to a 4" newt. reflector

On 22/2 and 23/2, Neptune (magnitude 8) will be less than 1° from brighter Venus (magnitude -4) Go for it! Early morning sky on 4/3, Uranus (magnitude 5-9) is within 0-3° of Venus, with thin crescent Moon 2° above pair - A better proposition than Neptune/Janus Near full Moon passes (in front?) of Beehive cluster, M44 of CANCER Feb 17/18.

February 29th, 2000
 9 45 pm Summertime
 (February 14th
 10 45 pm
 March 14th
 8 45 pm)



15/2/2000
 Bob Heale
 ASF

Dates and Times
 as above
 General sky
 rising in
 East