

# THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



With Glenn Dawes

Keep watch for fireballs with long-lasting trains during this month's Moon-free Alpha Centaurids

## When to use this chart

- 1 Feb 00:00 AEDT (31 Jan, 13:00 UT)
- 15 Feb 23:00 AEDT (12:00 UT)
- 28 Feb 22:00 AEDT (11:00 UT)

The chart accurately matches the sky on the dates and times shown for Sydney, Australia. The sky is different at other times as the stars crossing it set four minutes earlier each night.

## JANUARY HIGHLIGHTS

The Alpha Centaurids meteor shower is active 28 January–21 February and ideal for Southern Hemisphere observers. The maximum rate of 6 meteors per hour is expected just before dawn on the 8th. The radiant, near the Southern Pointers, will be quite high in the early hours, with morning leading up to the peak mostly Moon-free (first quarter on 5th). This shower can produce yellow/blue fireballs, often reaching negative magnitudes, with trains lasting from seconds to minutes!

## STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS

The upside-down hunter of Orion is prominent in the northwest evening sky, with the first-magnitude blue 'foot' star, Rigel, above (south) and his red 'armpit' star, Betelgeuse, below (north). Following Orion faithfully are his two hunting dogs: Canis Major (Greater Dog), best known for the brightest star, Sirius, high in the north; and Canis Minor (Lesser Dog) to the lower right, recognised by the star Procyon. These stars form an equilateral triangle with Betelgeuse.

## THE PLANETS

February is the last chance to glimpse Saturn and Venus, low in the western twilight, before they go into solar conjunction. Find the crescent Moon near Saturn on the 1st and Venus the following night. As twilight closes, Uranus is low in

the northwest, near the Pleiades, followed by Jupiter in Taurus, brilliantly outshining nearby Aldebaran. The evening planetary parade continues, with Mars due north around 22:00, brighter and redder than the adjacent Gemini twins, Castor and Pollux.

## DEEP-SKY OBJECTS

The constellation of Volans is sandwiched between the Milky Way and the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC). The naked-eye star Gamma (γ) Volantis (RA 7h 08.5m, dec. -70° 32') is a brilliant double with mag. -3.8 and -5.6 components, distinctively yellow and white respectively, 14 arcseconds apart. About a binocular field away (5.5° to the east-northeast) lies another impressive double, Epsilon (ε) Volantis. It's composed

of mag. +4.4 and +7.9 stars, blue and yellow respectively, a snug 7 arcseconds apart.

Between Gamma and Epsilon is the mag. +10.6 Meat Hook Galaxy, NGC 2442 (RA 7h 36.3m, dec. -69° 35'). A 200mm scope reveals a distinct centre bar (1 x 3 arcminutes) and a stellar nucleus pointing to a 1-arcminute-wide patch. Although it looks detached, it's part of a bright narrow arm of NGC 2442, called NGC 2443.

## Chart key

GALAXY	DIFFUSE NEBULOSITY	ASTEROID TRACK	STAR BRIGHTNESS: ● MAG. 0 & BRIGHTER ● MAG. +1 ● MAG. +2 ● MAG. +3 ● MAG. +4 & FAINTER
OPEN CLUSTER	DOUBLE STAR	METEOR RADIANT	
GLOBULAR CLUSTER	VARIABLE STAR	QUASAR	
PLANETARY NEBULA	COMET TRACK	PLANET	

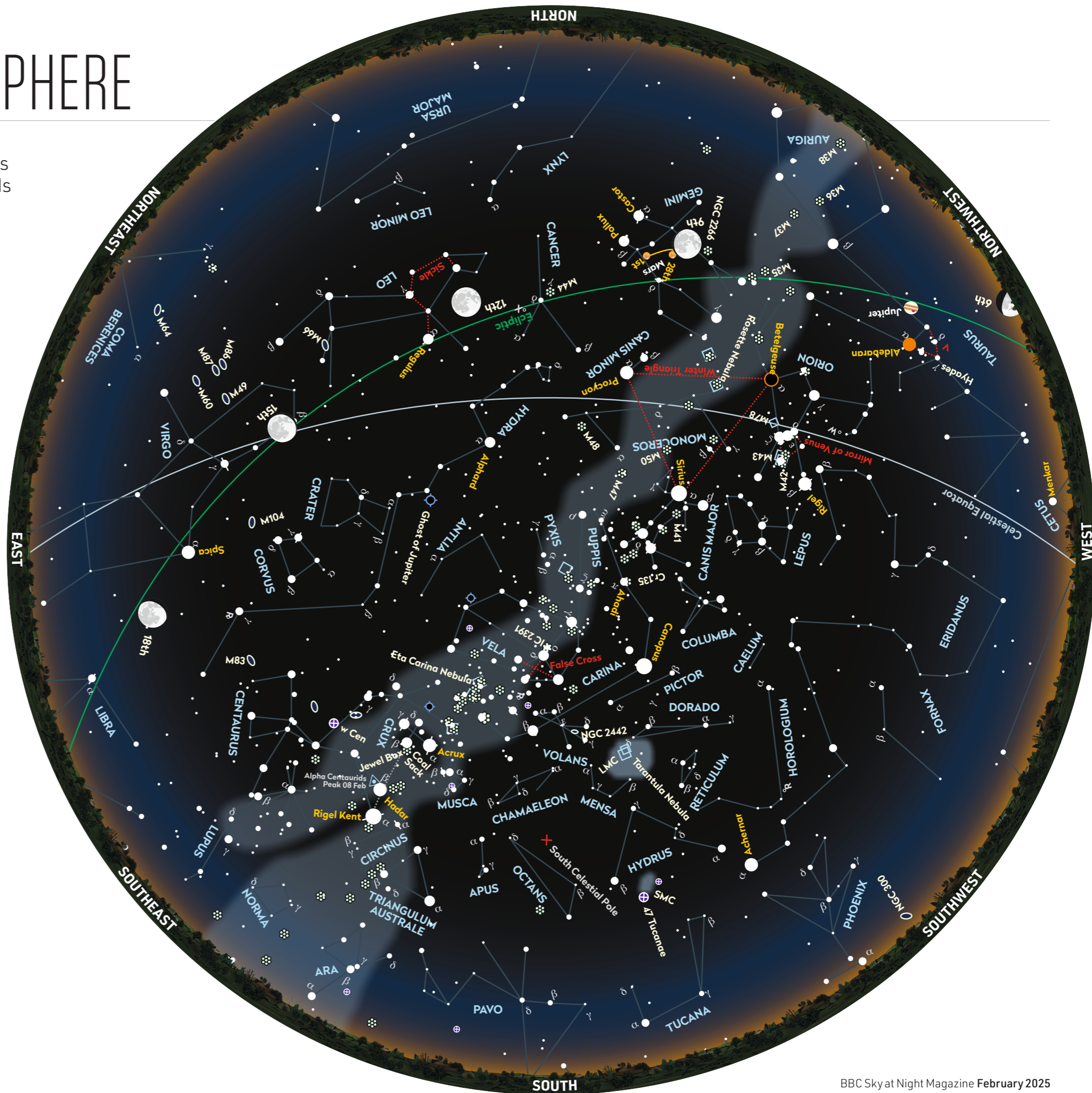


CHART: PETE LAWRENCE