

Get ready for the Green Corn Moon

For generations there has been speculation that the Earth may have more than one moon orbiting it.

Many claims have been made that a second moon has been spotted, but all have proven false. Even large pieces of orbiting debris from Soviet rockets initially have been mistaken for miniature moons.

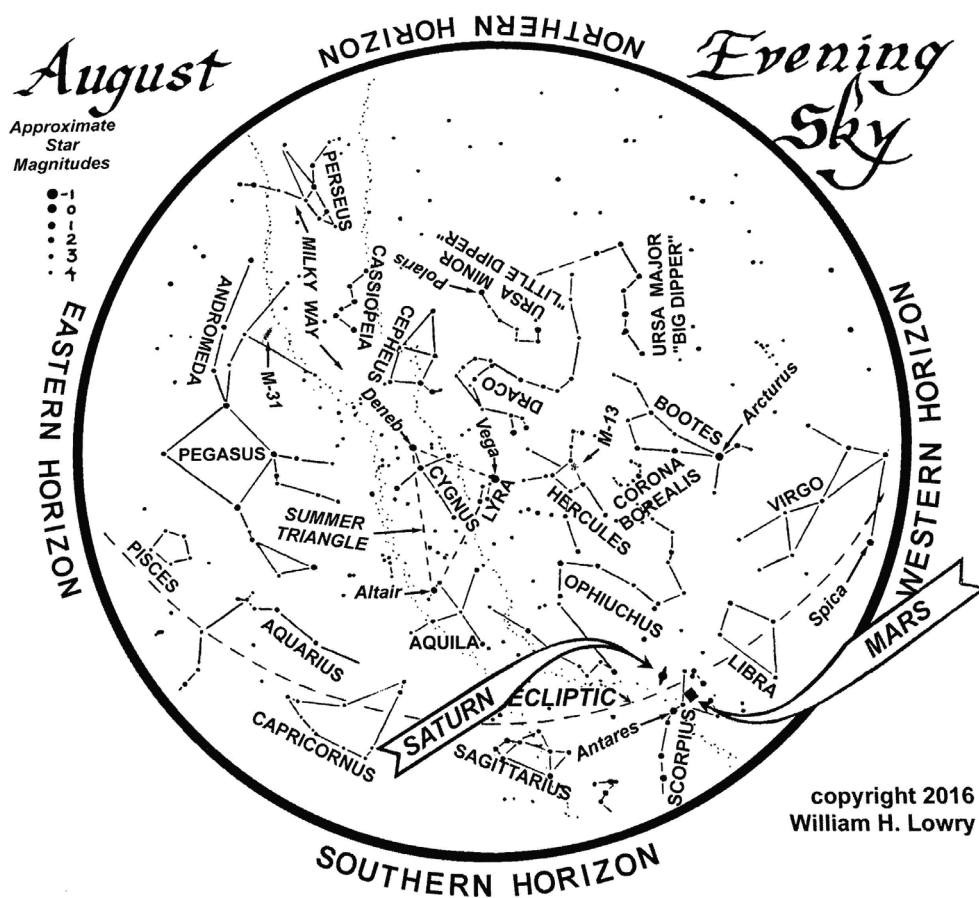
This past April an asteroid named 2016HO3, between 40 and 300 meters in length, has been found in an orbit about the Earth, which qualifies it as a quasi-moon, if not a true mini-moon. It probably has been in Earth's orbit for one century and likely has several more centuries to go before it returns to its journey through space. Its orbit is too distant for Earth's gravity to permanently capture it orbiting as it does between 38 and 100 times the Earth-Moon distance.

"The relatively permanent orbit of 2016HO3 about the Earth gives it the status of a quasi-moon," Paul Chodas of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory said.

This discovery raises questions as to 2016HO3's origin. Did it somehow spall or split off of the true moon, or was it merely a passer-by that ventured too close to Earth and has been temporarily trapped for a time by gravity?

Focus on the planets

Three evening planets are so intertwined this month



that they can be discussed together. Venus, Mercury and Jupiter form, from lower right to upper left, a diagonal line on the western horizon a half-hour after sunset as August opens. The crescent moon passes by Mercury on Aug. 4 and by Jupiter the following night. On Aug. 23 Mercury occupies the left base point and Venus the right base point of a triangle with Jupiter making up the apex. The big night is Aug. 27, when Venus and Jupiter are less than 0.1 degree apart, the closest conjunction of major planets for the year. And if this

were not enough, along with Mercury all three planets fit within the field of a single eyepiece.

Saturn and Mars put on a show of their own as they occupy the southwestern evening sky as evening falls. Mars can be distinguished by rusty color by binoculars while Saturn is still tilted at an optimum angle to display its ring system and moons. On Aug. 8, it should be possible to spot at least five of Saturn's moons, including Titan. On Aug. 23, Antares, Mars and Saturn form an ascending line on the southwestern horizon a half-hour

after sunset.

Neptune can be seen as a blue-gray disk in Aquarius and Uranus as a blue-green disk in Pisces shortly after midnight. Use the Sky and Telescope finder charts at skyandtelescope.com/urnep to find these two planets.

August events

- 1 Sunrise, 5:21 a.m.; sunset, 8:02 p.m. Today is Lammas, a cross-quarter day, marking the midpoint between the summer solstice and fall equinox.
- 2 New moon, 4:45 p.m.
- 4 A thin crescent moon nestles beside Mercury on

the western horizon a half-hour after sunset. Jupiter is far to the duos upper left while Venus, accompanied by Regulus, is to the lower right.

6 The moon lies within 0.5 degree of Jupiter tonight.

10 Moon in first quarter, 2:21 p.m. The moon is at apogee, or farthest distance from the Earth today. The sun is entering the constellation of Leo.

11 The moon passes by a triangle, whose base comprises Antares and Mars with Saturn at its apex.

12 Peak night for the Perseid meteor shower. The moon will set after 1 a.m. and should prove to be no problem during the predawn hours. Predictions range from 50 to 150 per hour of swift bright meteors.

18 Full moon, 5:27 a.m. The full moon of August is known as the Grain Moon or Green Corn Moon.

22 Moon at perigee or closest approach to Earth for the month.

23 Antares, Mars and Saturn form an ascending line on the southwestern horizon a half-hour after sunset.

25 Moon in last quarter, 11:41 p.m.

27 Venus and Jupiter are less than 0.5 degree apart low on the western horizon about 45 minutes after sunset. This is the closest approach of two major planets for the year.

31 Sunrise, 5:56 a.m.; sunset, 7:15 p.m.

Send astronomical queries to Clair Wood at cgme-wood@aol.com or care of the Bangor Daily News, Features Desk, P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, Maine 04402.

Things to Do Outdoors

BANGOR — Bangor Land Trust wildflower walk, 10 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 13, West Penjajawock Grasslands.

DEDHAM — Drawing from Nature Workshop with Gail VanWart, 1-3 p.m. Sundays, Aug. 7, 14, 21 and 28, Peaked Mountain Farm, 6 Ellerys Lane. Participants must bring their own art supplies. Images of finished artwork will be included as illustrations in new Peaked Mountain Farm and Native Pollinator Sanctuary Anthology. \$80 and includes copy of the anthology. Registration required. 249-5002 or peakedmtfarm@aol.com.

DEDHAM — Tyke hikes, 10-11 a.m. Saturdays, through August, Peaked Mountain Farm, 6 Ellerys Lane. Children must be accompanied by adult. Experience nature, do a craft, hear a story. Indoor activities if weather is inclement. \$3, free to children.

GRAND LAKE STREAM — Downeast Lakes Land Trust Medicinal Plant Walk and Workshop, 5-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 10. Meet at Grand Lake Stream school building, 5 p.m. Downeast Lakes Land Trust, 796-2100 or cbrown@downeastlakes.org.

GREENVILLE — Blue Ridge Hike and Bike Trail and maintenance day, 9-4:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 12. Meet at Greenville Consolidated School to car-pool to trailhead. Bring a lunch, water, work gloves and bug repellent. Volunteers encouraged to bring loppers, pruners and hand saws. Rain date Saturday, Aug. 13. Erica Kaufmann, erica@fsmaine.org.

FAIRFIELD — Hunter safety course, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, VFW Post 6924. Don Perrine, 238-0279.

OLD TOWN — Summer family day event "All About Fish" 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 13, Hironudo Wildlife Refuge, Hudson Road. Participants encouraged to bring fishing licenses and rods. Grilled hamburgers, hot dogs, fresh watermelon and lemonade available for purchase. Meet local game warden, fly fishermen and expert fly-tier; electrofishing and fly-tying demonstrations; war canoe family paddle; fishing instruction and demonstration. Cost \$10 per vehicle; free to members. hirundomaine.org or 394-2171.

NORTHPORT — Coastal Mountains Nature Program's Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms Walk, 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, Aug. 6, McLellan-Poor Preserve. Meet at the preserve entrance on Herrick Road, just south of the Little River Road in Northport. coastalmountains.org, 236-7091 or info@coastalmountains.org.

RANGELEY — Rangeley Region Guides and Sportsmen's Association Outdoor Sporting Heritage Day, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 9, Oquossoc Clubhouse. Celebration of Maine's hunting and fishing, Maine guides' fly casting competition, game meals, exhibits, children's activities, dog demonstrations. Free.

WINTER HARBOR — Schoodic District of Acadia National Park's Schoodic Peninsula shoreline cleanup, 9 a.m.-noon, Monday, Aug. 8. Volunteers will meet national park staff at Frazer Point picnic area, just off Schoodic Loop Road. Wear sturdy shoes, long pants and hat. Bring personal water bottle. Light snack and extra water provided. Bring gloves if you have them. If weather is inclement, event will be canceled.



A white-tailed deer looks out over Route 9 last year.

Deer

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deer populations are receiving the bulk of the extra permits.

"I think people need to stop and take a look at where those increases are going to occur," Ravana said. "Over 90 percent of the proposed increase in allocation — it hasn't been approved by the [DIF&W] advisory committee or the commissioner yet — is going to occur in districts where we are already above goal in our deer population, or where we are approaching goal."

The any-deer proposal is working its way through the wildlife department's rule-making process, and it won't become official until the advisory council makes a recommendation to Commissioner Chandler Woodcock and he either approves or disapproves of that proposal. That decision should happen in August.

For those interested in applying for permits in districts where any-deer permits will likely be higher than they were a year ago, the best bets are wildlife management districts 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 29, Ravana said. In addition, a limited number of any-deer permits are scheduled to be allocated for wildlife management districts 7, 12 and 13 — areas that have had bucks only hunting in recent years.

If the proposal passes, any-deer permits would be available in 18 of the state's 29 wildlife management districts. An added benefit in those districts: Hunters taking part in Youth Deer Day would be permitted to shoot a deer of either sex on that day only. Youth hunters in districts where no any-deer permits are allotted must spend Youth Deer Day — Oct. 22 — looking for bucks.

"We wanted to provide some opportunity [in areas that had previously not had any-deer permits] because when we give a token number of permits, that not only

allows a few hunters to have the choice of harvesting a doe, but it also opens the door for youth hunters," Ravana said.

Ravana said that the wildlife department monitors winter weather conditions at 27 locations around the state, measuring temperature, snow depth, and how far into that snow deer sink when walking. Those numbers are combined and help establish a winter severity index that helps biologists estimate the percentage of deer likely to die during any given winter.

The most recent winter was warm, and deer fared well, leading to more deer on the landscape. Consequently, any-deer permits were raised.

"This past year was the second-mildest winter going back to the 1950s, for deer," Ravana said. "We were looking at over-winter mortality rates from 4 to 7 percent, which is very small. That's a minimal impact to the population. Combining that with the biological data that we collect in the fall from harvest, along with roadkill data throughout the year, and looking at population trajectories, it all said that we should [increase] our allocation of permits."

In recent years, that "trajectory" has been on an upward track after devastating winters in 2008 and 2009, which is thought to have killed about 30 percent of the state's deer herd each of those years.

Although the 2014 and 2015 winters also were severe, they did not take the same kind of toll on the herd, Ravana said. Add in a mild winter in 2015-16, and the herd has essentially averaged to its long-term average of more than 200,000 animals, he added.

That's a huge increase in just eight years: After the 2008 winter, state biologists estimated the herd had dropped to just 140,000 animals.

"It was the second-lowest estimate in [history] going back to the 1950s," Ravana said.

Exotic

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"You would be amazed at how many parrots are out there," Margaret said. "There are an awful lot of birds in Maine."

Some of the parrots were rescued from bad situations, but the vast majority of the parrots at Siesta Sanctuary came from good homes, where they were beloved pets.

"People's lives change," Margaret said. "The biggest source of parrots for us is older people, who have had a beloved pet for 30 years and now have to go into a nursing home or a condo that doesn't allow birds, and they're just beside themselves on what they're going to do with their birds."

Parrots are long-lived animals. Macaw parrots and cockatoos often live to be 70 to 80 years old, meaning they often outlive their owners.

"We have these horrible dramas in here, when people are dropping their birds off and crying," she said. "I feel very committed to those people, to honor their request. They gave me their beloved pet, and I will do the best I can to keep it going and give them a permanent home."

Then there are many people who thought it would be fun to have a parrot as a pet, then realized parrot ownership isn't so easy.

"They're wild animals. You don't get them to just match the drapes," Margaret said. "They're loud and they're messy and they can bite."

Margaret's love for parrots began in 1956, when she was 6 years old and her parents took her to a cockatoo show at Busch Gardens in Florida.

"I thought those have to be the coolest creatures on the planet," Margaret said.

In the 1970s, Margaret met Fritz at Bates College. Both animal lovers, the two married and moved to Harmony to raise animals on 50 acres of farmland.

"She and I both wanted to move to the country and have animals, but the parrots were her idea," said Fritz, who nevertheless does half the work to take care of the birds, dicing up vegetables to make 80 salads every day to feed them.

Together, it takes about four hours per day to care for the birds. And in addition to the birds, the couple own four cats, two dogs, an emu named Moe, a turkey that has assumed the role of

mother for two peacocks, a variety of chickens, a guinea hen, a flock of "old lady" sheep, an old horse named Steve, a miniature horse, a donkey and a llama. Most are "retired" farm animals.

"They're all pets," Margaret said. "We don't expect them to do anything."

To fund the menagerie, Margaret has long worked as a diabetes educator, and Fritz is a site surveyor.

For the parrots alone, it costs about \$16,000 per year to feed and care for all 80 of them, the Buschmanns have calculated, and about three-quarters of that money comes from the couple's own pockets. There are a few people who donate to the sanctuary on a regular basis, Margaret said, and they have two volunteers that help them with parrot-related chores twice per week.

"I'm not looking for more birds," Margaret made clear.

"Any help that can be given is great. If someone wanted to just come out and spend a day here, we'd find things for them to do. ... And the birds would love the company."

MARGARET BUSCHMANN

The annual open house, which Siesta Sanctuary has hosted for the past four years, is one way for the Buschmanns to educate people about parrots, spread the word about their operation and possibly gain some support. The event is free, but the sanctuary will gratefully accept donations, which will go toward caring for the birds. They also are looking for volunteers.

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Siesta Sanctuary is at maximum capacity. In addition to the Big Parrot Room, the sanctuary consists of a Small Parrot Room, for smaller species of parrots, where two Congo African greys sat side by side on Tuesday.

"Maxwell!" one of the African greys hollered. "Maxwell!"

The parrot's name is Maxwell Dickerson, Margaret explained. He was owned by the late Ruby Dickerson of Athens, Maine, who taught the parrot to say his name and phone number, just in

case he ever got loose. When Ruby Dickerson passed away, Maxwell attended her funeral. He then found his second home at the sanctuary, where he became fast friends with another African grey parrot, Ebon.

Clinging to a cage nearby, a yellow-naped Amazon parrot named Bud — originally from a Calais home — squawked "Hello! Hello!" tilting his head from side to side.

"He can sing 'Jesus Loves Me,'" Margaret said with a chuckle.

Every bird comes with its own personality, tendencies and talents.

"We've not had a bird that went into a big depression for coming here," Margaret said. "Every single one of them decides it's a good place to be. Some even pair up and find a mate."

The sanctuary doesn't breed parrots. The birds that do pair up simply stay in the same cage and spend time together. Large parrots need certain conditions, including privacy, for breeding to take place, Margaret explained.

The sanctuary also doesn't sell parrots or attempt to find them new homes. The Buschmanns used to do that, but they've learned it's difficult to judge whether a person is truly committed to owning a parrot. Often, the parrots were returned to the sanctuary, and in several situations the person would turn around and try to sell the bird for hundreds of dollars.

"I know I'm going to do this until I croak," Margaret said. "I'm committed to it. I'm going to keep them here, and we'll do what we can for the birds."

Of course, Margaret understands that many of the parrots will outlive them, too. Now retired, she's working on a plan for what to do with her flock when she and her husband pass. No one in her family is interested in taking on the sanctuary, so she either needs to find someone with the same passion for parrots that she has, or she'll need to work with an organization to find them all good homes.

"My grandmother lived to 104, and my mother lived until 90, so I hopefully will have time to work through this," Margaret said. "I spend all this time, and I love these birds. I don't want to just suddenly close down and have these birds get [sold in] Uncle Henry's."

For information about the open house event, call Siesta Sanctuary at 683-6322 or visit siesta-sanctuary.org.