

Astronomy Club of Asheville

February 2026 Highlight

Close Encounter of the Moon with the Pleiades Star Cluster

On the night of February 23rd, the First Quarter Moon will pass across the top of the Pleiades star cluster – moving from west to east (right to left).

Here in the Asheville area, this close encounter will occur about 15° above the W-NW horizon in the constellation Taurus – the Bull. You will need to use binoculars or a small telescope at low power to fully appreciate the view of the star cluster. The conjunction will begin about 9:00 p.m. on February 23rd and continue for 4 hours until about 1:00 a.m. on February 24th. The Moon appears to sit atop the Pleiades just before midnight on February 23rd.

The Moon orbits eastward, about 13° along the “ecliptic” (the path across the sky that the Sun, Moon, and the planets appear to follow) from one day to the next, or about $\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ per hour. Because the Pleiades star cluster is located along that ecliptic path, it is often involved with lunar conjunctions and occultations.

The Pleiades star cluster – aka the “Seven Sisters” – is located some 440 light years behind the Moon. Enjoy the view!

