

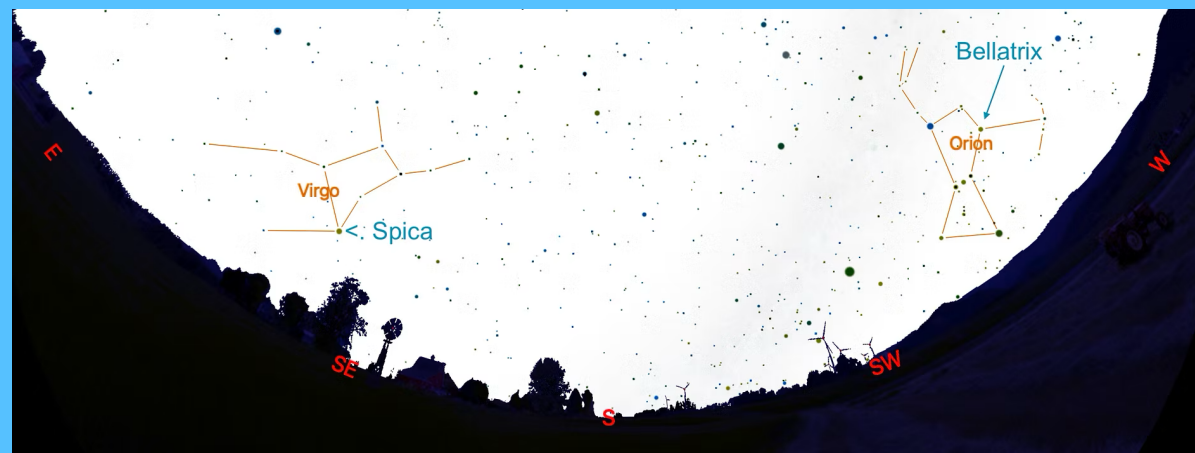
Anniversary Stars

An Anniversary Star is a visible star at nearly the same distance as the number of years being celebrated. Discovery can begin with a single star, but first you have to look up. Pair a signature star with a milestone event to inspire exploration of the night sky.

1 Declare the Anniversary Star.

United States Semiquincentennial Star

The star Spica in the constellation Virgo is the *United States Semiquincentennial Star*. When the founders were signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, light left Spica. Traveling at 186,000 miles per second, those photons are just now striking our eyes in 2026, for Spica is about 250 light years away (LYA).



From the Big Dipper, “follow the arc to Arcturus, then speed on to Spica.” In summer, Spica appears low after sunset toward the southwest horizon. In winter, substitute Bellatrix (~252 LYA) in Orion for Spica.

<https://www.nightwise.org/usa250>

2 Explore related content.

“A New Constellation”

In that first year of Independence, the Second Continental Congress declared that stars will represent one of the republic's greatest ideals—statehood—on the US flag. Flag Day on June 14 commemorates that early resolution, which extols “thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation.”



We can honor the remarkable stars that inspire the flag by lessening our impact on the night sky. Practice the Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting to mitigate light pollution.

<https://darksky.org/resources/guides-and-how-tos/lighting-principles/>

A “New” Star

A stellar eruption every 80 years in the constellation Corona Borealis yields a “new” star—a recurring nova—that is visible to the naked eye. It last blew up in 1946. Capture the apparition with your cell phone camera.



T CrB, under the left curve of the Northern Crown, is a dense white dwarf star cannibalizing an adjacent red giant star. Upon eruption it may be as bright as the second-magnitude stars Izar, Alphecca (Gemma), and Polaris.

<https://www.nightwise.org/nova-in-corona-borealis>

3 Do it again!

Find anniversaries for sponsors, donors, businesses, people, municipalities, historic events, whimsical causes, etc. Then partner with them to promote astronomy featuring their respective Anniversary Stars.

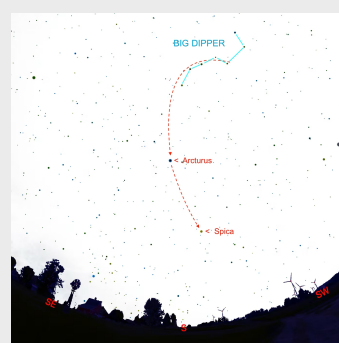
Examples, links, and star lists at
nightwise.org/single-post/astro250



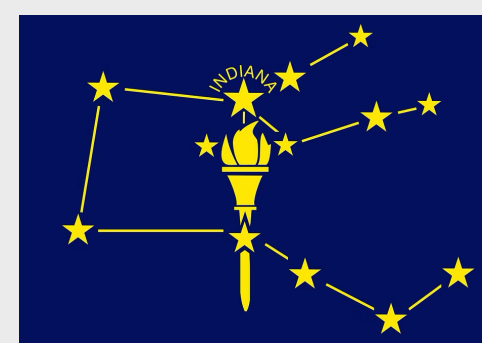
Chuck Bueter
bueter@nightwise.org

Click images for sample Anniversary Star events.

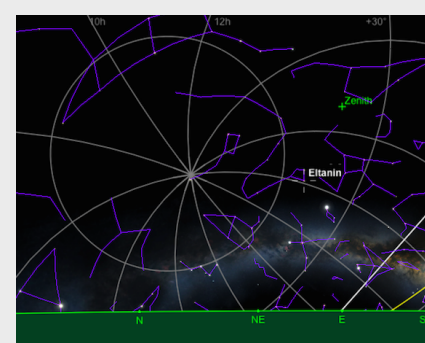
250 - Spica



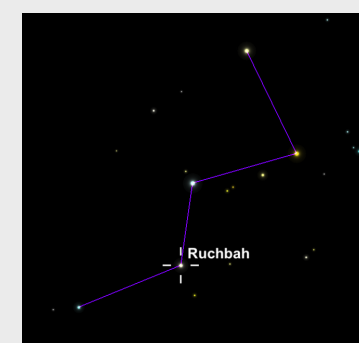
200 - Scheat



150 - Eltanin



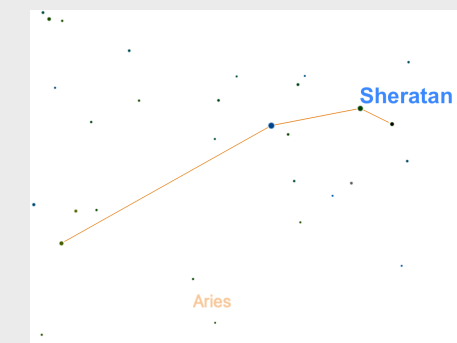
100 - Ruchbah



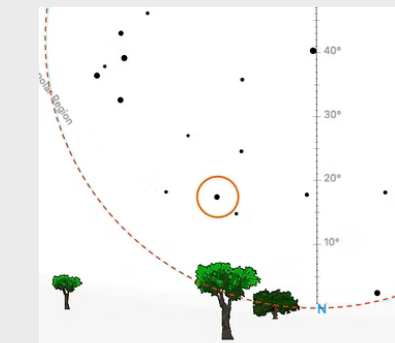
65 - Aldebaran



60 - Sheratan



50 - Alderaman



25 - Vega

