



HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

## Week 7

# Nearby Nature – Astronomy

Monday 4/27

This past weekend, the [North Carolina Science Festival](#) celebrated the 2020 NC [#StatewideStarParty](#). In celebration, our [#NearbyNature](#) this week will focus on the night sky! Follow the instructions in the image, and let us know what you spot in the night sky! ○

**Nearby Nature**

HIGHLANDS  
BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

On a night when the sky is clear,  
dress for the weather. Head  
outside and lay down on a blanket.  
Look up at the sky for two to three  
minutes to let your eyes adjust.  
What do you see? Can you spot:  
The moon, Bright stars, Dim stars,  
Satellites, Airplanes, Meteors,  
The Milky Way?

Find more info. on the Statewide Star Party here: <https://www.ncsciencefestival.org/starparty>

## Tuesday 4/28

Throughout history, humanity has imagined shapes made out of the stars in the night sky. We call these constellations and often use them to tell which part of the night sky we're looking at. For today's #NearbyNature, look at the chart of this month's visible constellations from the [Morehead Planetarium & Science Center](https://moreheadplanetarium.org/.../04/aprmay20starchart.pdf): <https://moreheadplanetarium.org/.../04/aprmay20starchart.pdf>

Then, make delicious constellation cookies with constellations from the chart, or make up your own! The cookie recipe and instructions below are courtesy of the [Astronomical Society of the Pacific](#). 🍪🌠



### Family ASTRO Chocolate Chip Constellations (pan cookies)

2 1/4 cups all purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup butter, softened  
3/4 cup sugar  
3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 eggs  
2 cups (one 12-oz. package) semi-sweet chocolate morsels  
1 cup chopped nuts (optional)

- ★ Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
- ★ In small bowl, combine flour, baking soda and salt; set aside. In large bowl, combine butter, sugar, brown sugar and vanilla extract; beat until creamy. Beat in eggs. Gradually add flour mixture. Stir in nuts and chocolate morsels, reserve 1/2 cup to make constellations.
- ★ Spread into greased 15 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 1-inch baking pan. Smooth top so no chocolate morsels show. Arrange 1/2 cup of reserved chocolate morsels to make constellations of the season (Follow the templates below).
- ★ Bake at 375 degrees F for 20-25 minutes. Cool; cut into 2" squares or divide by constellation for giant cookies.



Additionally, check out this activity from the [Asheville Museum of Science](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWIFgqbOWQc&feature=youtu.be) to make your own constellation tube!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWIFgqbOWQc&feature=youtu.be>

## Wednesday 4/29

While it might be tempting to think of stars as fireflies that got stuck up in the sky, as Timon suggests in *The Lion King*, Pumba had it right: each one is just like our sun, a burning ball of gas, simply set billions of miles away. Today for our [#NearbyNature](#), follow [these steps](#) from [NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration](#) to create your own unique star! You can also change the colors to represent blue supergiants, red giants, and brown dwarves - all different kinds of stars. ☀️🌟

## Thursday 4/30

As you're observing the night sky, you may notice that the moon is just a sliver that falls over the horizon close to sunset. If you look for it over time, you will notice that it grows and shrinks. Astronomers call this waxing (growing) and waning (shrinking). For today's [#NearbyNature](#), follow this [Kids in Parks](#) activity to map how the moon changes over the next week: [https://www.kidsinparks.com/.../TRACKtivity.moon\\_.journal.201...](https://www.kidsinparks.com/.../TRACKtivity.moon_.journal.201...)

Share your Moon Journal with us when you've finished it:)

## Friday 5/1

How many stars have you seen this week? A handful, or dozens? The number of stars you see is dependent not only on weather but also on how much man-made light, or light pollution, is in your area. For our final [#NearbyNature](#) this week, submit an observation to [Globe at Night](#). By measuring the brightness of your night sky and submitting observations, you can help us understand how much light pollution you're affected by - and how many stars you are missing because of it. Click here to get started: <https://www.globeatnight.org/>

For an explanation about what light pollution is, and its impacts, check out this video by [National Geographic](#): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FXJUP6\\_O1w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FXJUP6_O1w)