

July's Featured Variable: R Scuti in Scutum the Shield

I bet you have seen a star twinkling —the air surrounding Earth makes it look like the star is sparkling! Even if we went to outer space, we could see many stars change brightness.

"Variable stars" continuously dim, brighten, and dim. Some complete this pattern in under a second, while others take years.

One variable star YOU can see this month is R Scuti in the constellation Scutum the Shield. At its brightest, it is easy to see. Even at its dimmest, you can see it in binoculars. It lies a degree (about 2 diameters of the full Moon) northwest of stars called the "Wild Duck Cluster," named because they form a "V" like a flock of flying ducks.

R Scuti is the brightest of a class of variable stars called RV Tauri stars, which are named after the prototype (first star), RV Tauri, to be determined of the class. Such stars are a group of yellow supergiant stars that are likely near their end. They may provide information about the evolution of stars. Visually, they have alternating patterns of deep and shallow minima (periods of minimum brightnesses). R Scuti has about 144 days between deep minima, and every fourth or fifth minimum is exceptionally faint for reasons that are not well understood.

Time

Magnitude

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Star Finder Chart for R Scuti

You can estimate a star's brightness (magnitude), but first note: in star comparison and finder charts like below or on www.aavso.org/featured-variables:

- brighter stars are indicated by larger dots
- the *brighter* the star, the *lower* the magnitude number
- any magnitudes given are to the nearest tenth—but *without* a decimal point, which could be confused as a star. So, 42 = magnitude 4.2

Find two comparison stars close to your given variable star's brightness—one brighter and one dimmer. Then observe in the night sky: is the variable's brightness half-way between the two comparisons'? A quarter? Really close? Apply that fraction to the difference between the two magnitudes and you estimated the star's brightness for that time!

This finder chart will help you find R Scuti in the night sky.

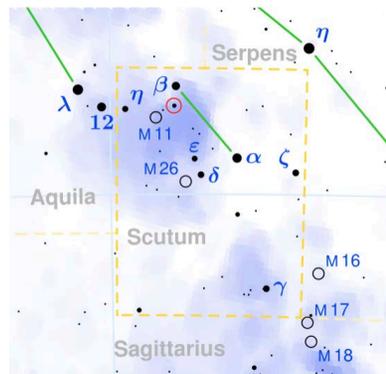


Image credit: Torsten Bronger derivative work: Kxx (talk) - Scutum_constellation_map.png, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10886497>



to enable anyone, anywhere, to participate in scientific discovery through variable star astronomy

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About the AAVSO

The American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) is an international nonprofit organization of citizen and professional astronomers collecting data on stars that change in brightness (variable stars) to increase our understanding of the universe.

AAVSO Open-Source Databases

AAVSO International Database (AID): The largest and most comprehensive digital variable star database in the world, with over 50 million variable star observations—a free resource for the entire scientific community

Variable Star Index (VSX): a collection of up-to-the-minute data on over 200,000,000 specific variable stars

Spectroscopy Database (AVSPec): spectroscopic observations of stars

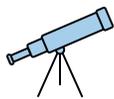
Solar Database: Sudden Ionospheric Disturbance (SID) Database, and data relating to sunspot observations

Exoplanet Database: long-term follow-up information on planets orbiting other stars

Community



Explore



Education



Connect with the AAVSO

Who are AAVSO Members?

- ★ A **citizen scientist**—contributes to science by acquiring data on variable objects and submitting them to our databases, or other activities, such as data mining.
- ★ An **educator or mentor**—teaches observing skills to fellow AAVSO observers, through instructing AAVSO CHOICE courses or being a mentor.
- ★ A **student**—is learning how to find a star, set up a telescope, observe, submit data, or is increasing their astronomy knowledge
- ★ A **professional astronomer**— uses AAVSO data and services to advance their research

Discover the benefits of membership and join us!

[aavso.org/membership](https://www.aavso.org/membership)

Benefits include being able to participate in our mentor program: beginners are paired with an experienced observer for guidance and techniques: [aavso.org/mentor-program](https://www.aavso.org/mentor-program)

Interested in becoming an AAVSO ambassador?

Ambassadors are students or young professionals representing AAVSO through conducting astronomy education and outreach.

[aavso.org/ambassador-program](https://www.aavso.org/ambassador-program)

AAVSO can help YOU become a citizen astronomer!

AAVSO Tools for Beginner Observers:

Beginner Tutorials: aimed at those with absolutely no experience, these introduce variable star science basics and then provide "challenges" for you to apply the concepts: <https://www.aavso.org/tutorials>

AAVSO Online Forum: talk to peers for advice: <https://www.aavso.org/forum>

Observing Manuals: each one is dedicated to a type of observing, including visual, CCD, DSLR, Spectroscopy, Solar, and more: <https://www.aavso.org/observing-manuals>

CHOICE Courses: peer-taught informal online observing courses: <https://www.aavso.org/choice-astronomy>

Everyone is invited to join us for:

AAVSO 111th Annual Meeting & Workshop

Nov. 4 - 8, 2022 | Tucson, Arizona
[aavso.org/111](https://www.aavso.org/111)

AAVSO webinars

About three Saturdays per month
[aavso.org/participate](https://www.aavso.org/participate)

Let's connect and explore

