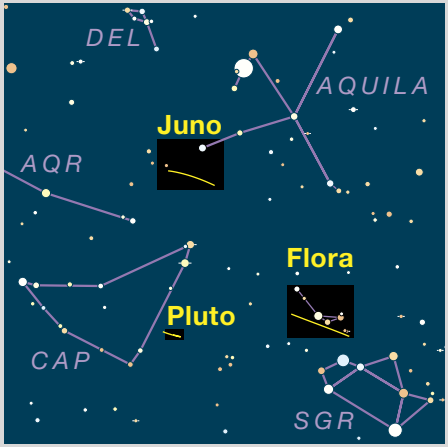
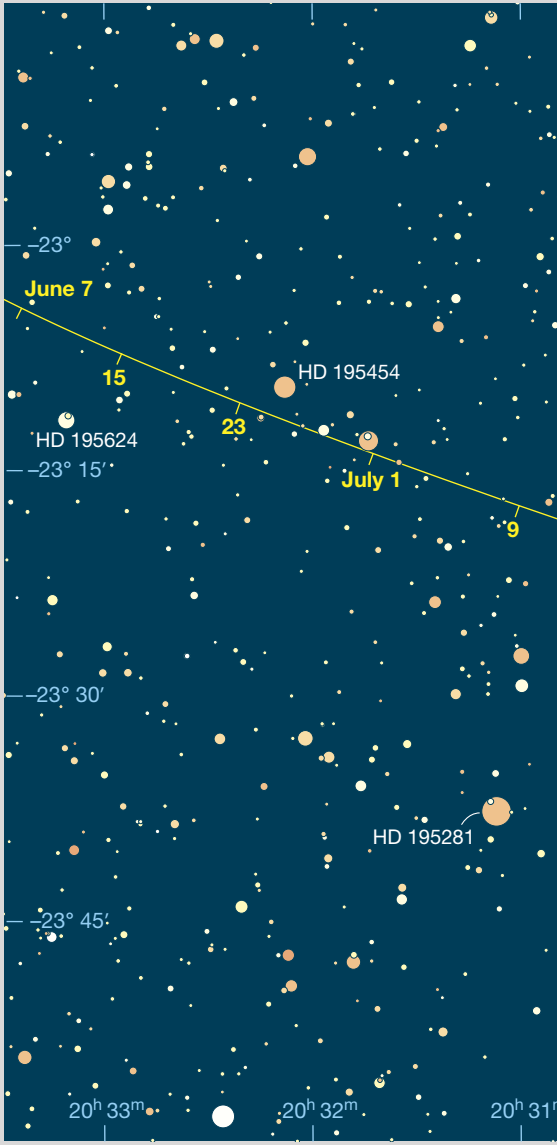
Article courtesy of SKY & TELESCOPE

Pluto in 2026

IN RECENT YEARS, Pluto has exchanged the dense star fields of Sagittarius for the wide-open spaces of western Capricornus. For visual observers that's a good thing — a less crowded field makes targets easier to find. Every little bit will help when **Pluto reaches opposition on July 27th at magnitude 14.5**. Although the ecliptic bends northward in the region of Capricornus, Pluto's 17° orbital tilt will carry it southward until 2030. Stuck in the sky's basement and fading, it will only become more difficult to view from the Northern Hemisphere. Pluto reaches its greatest distance south of the ecliptic in the late 2080s before heading back north towards the plane of the solar system. At the same time, Pluto's light is fading as it heads toward aphelion in 2113. But an 8-inch under rural skies should still catch it, as will a smart telescope in the city. Happy hunting!

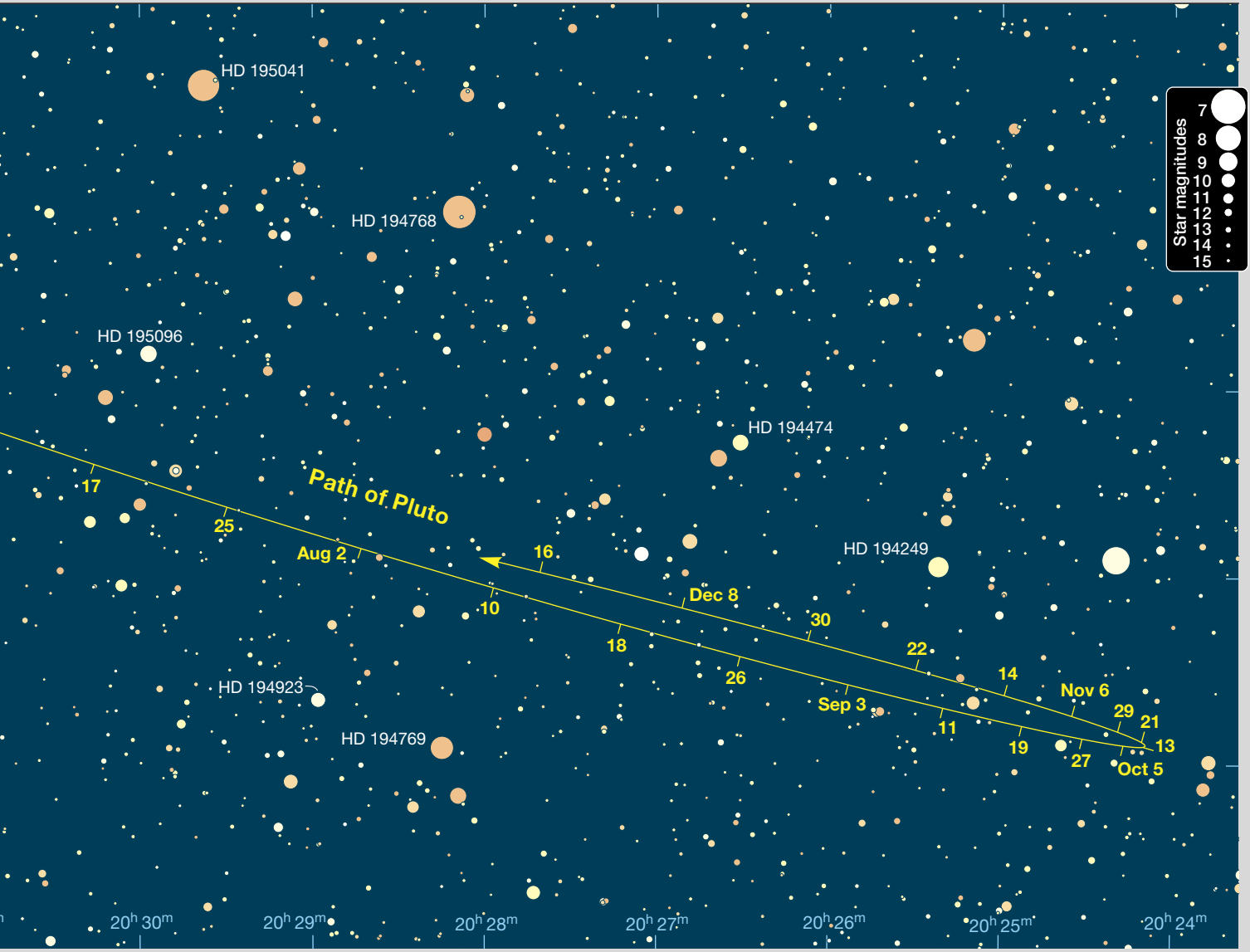




▲▶ Pluto *(left)* is a kaleidoscope of color in this high-resolution image captured by NASA's New Horizons spacecraft on July 14, 2015. It combines blue, red, and infrared photos taken by the Ralph/Multispectral Visual Imaging Camera. Each hue identifies distinct landforms and compositions that illuminate the dwarf planet's complicated geological and climatological history that scientists are just beginning to understand. In the constellation chart *(above)*, the larger Pluto chart at right is marked as a black rectangle, as are the charts for Juno and Flora, asteroids currently in the same region of the sky.

PLUTO: NASA / JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY APPLIED PHYSICS LABORATORY / SOUTHWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE / ZLDOYLE

On the next page, there is a continuation of the larger chart (above on the right).


HD 195041
HD 194768
HD 195096
HD 194474
HD 194249
HD 194923
HD 194769
Path of Pluto
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Aug 2
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Dec 8
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22
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Nov 6
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21
13
Oct 5
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19
11
Sep 3
26
18
Star magnitudes
7
8
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20h 30m
20h 29m
20h 28m
20h 27m
20h 26m
20h 25m
20h 24m