Preferences

The following preferences are available:

Constellations

Names: toggles on or off the standardized constellation names

Outlines: toggles on or off the outlines of the constellations

Asterisms: Toggles on or off several of the common asterisms, which are "informal" constellations such as the Summer Triangle or the Big Dipper.

Figures: Displays the mythological figures for each of the constellations

Solar system

Names: toggles on or off the names of the planets

Large Sun/Moon Images: when on (the default) the images for the sun and moon are 5 times normal size. The sun and moon are surprisingly quite small when compared to the entire sky, so are actually hard to see if depicted their real size.

Show Only Naked-eye Planets: Turns off Uranus, Neptune and Pluto from both the main and What's Up displays. Why you might ask? Because a user saw Neptune near the moon on the display, but was wondering why he couldn't see it for real in the sky. So he asked for this filter. Now that's tech support!

I Believe Pluto is Still a Planet: If you are a traditionalist (as I am), toggling on will put little Pluto back into its rightful honor as a full-blown planet. If you are a dues paying member of the IAU and think that Pluto doesn't deserve the same status as Mars or say, Mercury (Mercury? Bah!), then you can turn this off.

Jump to the Planets: Instead of flying to your targets in *Spaceflight Mode*, this will take you immediately to your selected target.

Chase Planet: Normally in Spaceflight Mode, your eyepoint is fixed in space and you'll see the objects move by you. Select this if you would prefer to move along with your target

Illuminate Dark Side: Makes the dark side of the planets brighter and easier to see. Turn off for a more realistic view.

Meteor Showers: Toggles on and off the *radiant* of the year's major meteor showers. The radiant is the apparent location that the meteors originate from.

Air Glow: Toggles on or off the sun's illumination of the sky.

Stars

Stars: Opens up a preference window to let you select how the stars are to be displayed.

Galaxies and all that stuff

Deep Sky Wonders: Toggles on or off over 200 of the most common deep-sky objects, from both the "Messier Catalog" or the "Caldwell Catalog." The former compiled was by the 18th century astronomer Charles Messier, this contains most of the best-known objects in the sky such as the Great Nebula in Orion ("M42"), or the Andromeda Galaxy ("M31"). The Caldwell Catalog was compiled by Sir Patrick Moore to cover the many objects that Messier missed, including many from the Southern skies.

These objects are color coded: orange for galaxies, blue for "planetary nebula," red for "diffuse nebula," green for open star clusters and purple for globular clusters.

Deep Sky Wonders -IDs: Toggles on or off the catalog identifiers of the objects.

Deep Sky Wonders -Names: Turns on or off the common names that many of the objects have such as "The Dumbbell Nebula" or "The Butterfly Cluster."

Other Cool Stuff: Toggles on or off other objects of interest such as the galactic center or the Cygnus X-1 pulsar. You will find the full list in the "others" search dialog.

Enhanced Milky Way: Normally the Milky Way as it stands is quite lovely, but if it is not lovely enough, well, go ahead and select this.

Markers

Celestial Equator: Toggles on or off the boundary between the northern and southern skies.

Ecliptic: Toggles on or off a line showing the plane of the solar system. You will find the planets located here.

Meridian: Toggles on or off the line that separates the eastern and western skies, going from north to south.

Sky Grid: Toggles on or off an altitude/azimuth grid that is 15˚ on a side.

Extras

Real-time SETI: SETI, or "Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence" is carried out by the SETI Institute located in Sunnyvale, California. One of the main tools for their research is the Allen Telescope Array, located near Mt. Lassen in Northern California. This will show you where the antennas are pointing in real-time if they are currently active.

For more info, go here.

Direction Pointers: Turns on extra indicators to help you visualize your general look-angle a little better. Along the right side of the screen is a scale that goes from an altitude of -90 degrees (straight down) up to +90 degrees (directly overhead). Along the bottom of the screen is a scale showing the compass direction you are currently looking at. If you have the compass turned on, a second set of arrows will appear if you select an object to center. You can now find that object in the sky by merely aligning the dark arrows with the light arrows. Feature not available in *Spaceflight Mode.*

The bars next to the arrows show the field-of-view of the windows frame. The smaller the field, the smaller the bars will be.

HUD: The "HUD" (heads-up display) overlays additional graphics when in spaceflight mode. When flying to the different planets (instead of jumping) you will see a distance indicator along the right side of the centering circles.

Centered Crosshairs: Turns on crosshairs that highlight the center of the screen. Added as a user request.

Sound-FX: Turns on an assorted set of annoying, but sometimes charming, beeps and boops.

Restore Last Position: Restores your last used azimuth/elevation at startup.

Slew When Centering an Object: This will slide the view from one object to another instead of jumping. This gives you a better perspective on the heavens. Note that slew is turned off if you are using the compass to center an object.

Auto-zoom While Slewing: Automatically zoom into the object you are centering when Slew (above) is checked.

Augmented Reality: This will overlay Distant Suns with your device's video (if it has a camera). It can be used to help see where things will be before the sky gets completely dark**.** Use a field-of-view of about 35˚, which will approximate the camera's own field. Note that you will not likely see any stars in the video stream as the sky gets darker as the camera is not nearly sensitive enough.

Display

Fastscroll: Turns off some of the more CPU intensive details when scrolling the display to increase performance.

Ground: Turns on or off a simple translucent layer for elevations below the horizon.

Night Vision: Turns the interface red to preserve your "night vision." Astronomers typically use red lights so their eyes can stay adapted to the night. You will need to restart Distant Suns for the new coloring to completely take effect.

Show Astronomy News: Shows current space and astronomy news in the toolbar for the iPad, or the top of the screen on the iPhone/iPod. Touching the displays will give you further information.

Show Home Blinkie: when on and in spaceflight mode, a flashing cursor will highlight your home location on the earth

Show Lens-flare: Toggles on and off a cool looking lens-flare around the sun

Lens-flare: Permits you to select one of several different styles of lens-flare.

Time

Now: Resets the time to the present, updated every minute.

Set Date/Time: Lets you set the date and time of your display. When not set to the current time, the clock stops updating. In the date/time dialog you will see the Julian Date. This is simply the absolute date in days from January 1, 4713 BC. It helps remove the ambiguities inflicted by the different calendars over the

centuries. Three presets are provided to let you more quickly set some common times.

Perpetual Motion: When on, the date and time spinners will not slow down and stop (“damping”).

System

Use Compass: toggles on/off the compass if your device has one. When on, you can hold the phone up to any part of the sky and it will automatically display the scene. If you want to identify something, bringing up Point-and-Identify, will temporarily turn off the compass so you can manually drag the sky around. Double-tapping again will return you to compass mode. (When compass is on, and you choose an object to center, you will be shown two aim arrows along the az/elevation meters. Aiming the sky so the blue arrows merge with the purple ones, will center the object. The desired object will also have an additional blue crosshair over it. *Note that sometimes the compass may go wacky, which means it needs to be calibrated. That can be done by slowly moving the device around in a small figure 8 for a few seconds.*

Use Metric: Displays distances in metric values.

Set Nearest City: If your iPhone or iPod cannot get a fix on your location you can select it based on the nearest large city from this list.

Set Lat/Long: If you want to be more accurate than the above and know your exact latitude and longitude you can set it here.

Use GPS: When on, Distant Suns will attempt to use the standard location services at startup. On the statusbar on the main screen, a "*" in front of the date will indicate this setting

Twitter: Lets you tweet to your friends how smart you were to get this program.