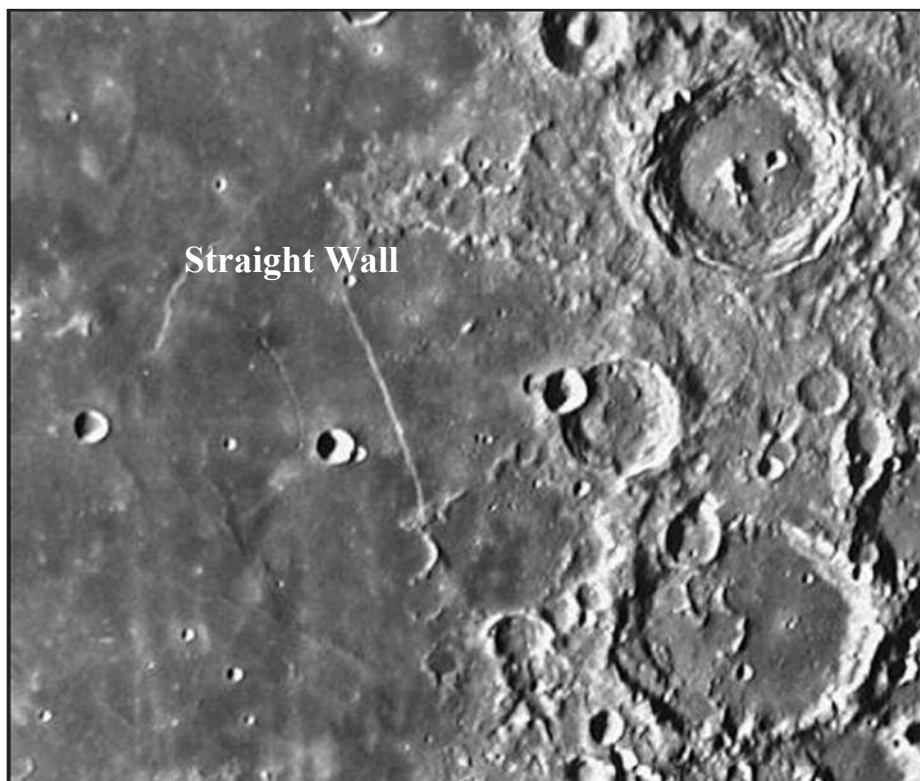


# The Night Sky Naturalist

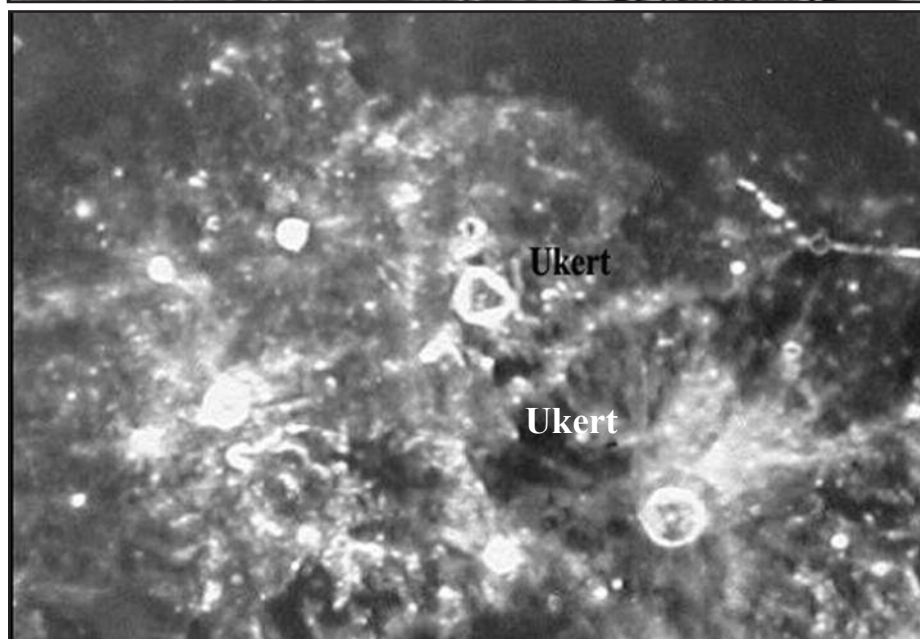
## More Fun on the Moon

by Bob Vickers



ones to get you started.

First, one of the easiest features to see is the STRAIGHT WALL, also called Rupes Recta. It is a long scarp along a lunar fault line located on the eastern side of Mare Nubium. It runs 120 kilometers north-northwest by south-southeast just east of the crater Birt. When viewed a little before the third quarter Moon, it is easily visible as a long, bright streak where sunlight shines against the scarp. An arc segment of an apparent flooded crater rim at the south-southeast end gives the appearance of the handle of a sword with the Straight Wall as its long, slightly curving blade. This resemblance was first noticed by 17th century astronomer Christian Huygens.



Next, is a simple but curious crater called UKERT. First brought to my attention by WKAA member Alan Dudenhofer, it is a small 24 kilometer wide crater located in the rough highland area just south of Sinus Medii. Viewed near full Moon it displays a bright rim and a dark floor which has a very even equilateral triangle appearance with one vertex of the triangle pointing to the north-northwest. All three vertices appear a little rounded to me. Was this triangle created by an alien civilization as some colossal but inscrutable feat of engineering? Or, maybe it is the lunar equivalent of crop circles, per-haps meant to convey some urgent message or warning that we are too dumb to understand. Whatever it is, it does look a little odd.

Near the western limb of the Moon, in the middle of Oceanus Procellarum, lies the brilliant white crater Aristarchus. It is on the eastern corner of a diamond shaped plateau apparently formed by volcanic activity about 3.6 billion years ago. Just west of Aristarchus is a 30 km wide dome with a volcanic crater which is probably the source of the raised plateau. A prominent 160 km long and 9-10 km wide rille called

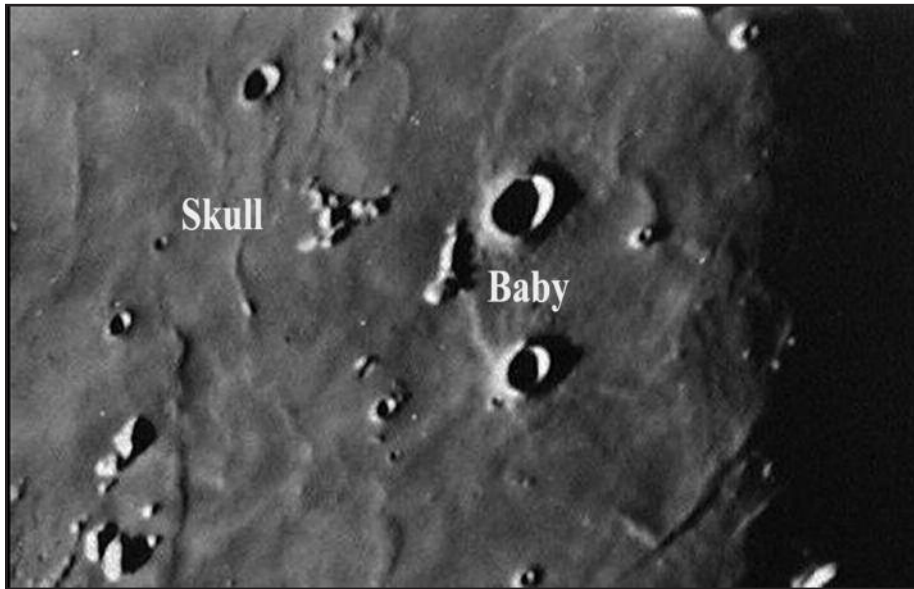
All Photos Courtesy of NASA

In a previous issue I wrote an article called Fun on the Moon in which I described various naked eye lunar features that took on the appearance of

faces or animals under certain conditions. This is a continuation of that article, except this time you will need a telescope and a good Moon map. There are many odd and interesting features on the Moon but here are a few cool



SCHRÖTER'S VALLEY extends from the volcano and curves, snakelike, to the northwest and finally to the south. In fact, it is so snakelike that a widening of the rille near the volcanic crater is called the Cobra Head. View this feature a day or so before full Moon, just after the Sun has risen on the Aristarchus Plateau, and there are plenty of nice shadows to delineate the topography.



A little more difficult are "THE BABY" (named by lunar scientist Gerard Kuiper) and "THE SKULL" (named by lunar scientist Ewen Whitaker). These are both small, isolated mountains near the western edge of Mare Imbrium. The Baby, with its large round head, lies just west of the 25 km crater Delisle and is also called Mount Delisle. It looks a little like Sweet Pea in the old Popeye cartoons and is crawling along toward the south, arms outstretched in front and gown trailing behind. It is best viewed a couple of days before a new Moon during the waning crescent phase so that lighting is at a low angle from the west. Just a little to the northwest of The Baby is The Skull. This is another small cluster of low isolated peaks in a triangular shape that looks a little like a cow skull you might run across in the desert. Since these peaks are a little lower they require a low sun angle to make the shadows visible. View when the lunar terminator (the line between day and night on the Moon) is nearby.



The last and most difficult feature is the VALENTINE DOME, so called because of its irregular oval or heart shape. A very low, 30 km wide volcanic dome, it lies in the northwest corner of Mare Serenitatis, close to the Caucasus Mountains and just east of a small isolated peak at the end of the range. There is a small hill just to its southeast and two or three more hills visible on the south edge of the dome. The surrounding mare is pretty flat and the dome itself is only about 100 meters high so you will need very low angle lighting to detect it. View just before first quarter when the terminator is just to the west and the sun is just rising over the dome. Happy hunting, and may you have lots of fun on the Moon! Feel free to let me know how you fare. Contact me at [cosmosbob@hotmail.com](mailto:cosmosbob@hotmail.com).