The constellation Sagittarius the Archer ranks 15th in size and 35th in overall brightness (the number of visible stars per unit area) out of the sky’s 88 star patterns. But many observers would rank it at the top of the heap with regard to fascinating deep-sky treats. You’ll find no fewer than 15 Messier objects here — four more than in any other star figure. And that’s just the beginning. You also will find many standouts from the NGC, IC, and Barnard catalogs. Here are 40 of my favorites.

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