



Figure 9. The small North Polar Cap can be seen on the bottom of the image. Syrtis Major is to the left of the central meridian, with the desert region of Aeria to its right. The albedo feature Sinus Sabaeus is near the center of the following limb with the Edom region just to its north. This is where the flashes were observed in June 2001.

*Mars Globe Data*

South at top, with view as seen in a simply inverting telescope.

Date: August 27, 2003

C.M. = 315 degrees at 23:04 U.T.

Ls: 249 degrees

De: -19.0 degrees

Ds: -23.7 degrees

Dia.: 25.1"

Visual magn. : -2.9

Dec.: -15.7 degrees

R.A.: 22:38.8



## Solis Lacus, the "Eye of Mars"

Central latitude: 28.0 south.

Central longitude: 90.9 west.

An area of great interest to observers due to its great variability and a tendency for dust clouds is an albedo feature called Solis Lacus (Lake of the Sun). Also known as the "Eye of Mars" because it sometimes seems to resemble an eye, this changeable and elongated area was first observed and drawn by Jacques Philippe Maraldi in 1704, though it was originally named by Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli. Solis Lacus is roughly 500 miles long and 300 miles wide. The records are not complete, but it appeared to remain as originally observed until 1926 when the longer axis was found to be north-south. Later that year, Eugène Michael Antoniadi observed it as three separate patches of dark

features, with the central one divided by a dusky bridge. It then turned back to more normal appearances. In the Mars 1939 apparition, Solis Lacus again changed; for instance, it once was observed to be made up of a number of small dark spots contained in a generally dusky area.

The Great Dust Storm of October 1973 started in the Solis Lacus region and grew rapidly to enshroud the entire planet. These kinds of global dust storms are quite rare, with only five reported in 1956 and later. The dust storms that happen here and at other places in the southern Martian hemisphere are larger and more dramatic when they occur during southern summer.

One great dust cloud that started in Solis Lacus soon after the close approach in September 1988, was on Thanksgiving Day in 1988. This Great Thanksgiving Dust Storm, as it now known, developed along the northern edge of Solis Lacus and in the weeks that followed, it covered about 70 percent of the southern hemisphere.

Solis Lacus can not only change its shape, but can also appear lighter at times. Use a red filter to best notice any brightening. You never know when you might be first to observe a new dust cloud.