

The Focal Point

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The Atlanta Astronomy Club
Established 1947
December 2015

Editor: Tom Faber

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December Meeting & Holiday Potluck

(Note Time & Location Change!)

Our Holiday Potluck Dinner and meeting will be on Saturday December 12th starting at 6:00PM. The location is in the Lower Level Atrium of the Math & Science Building, Emory University. The address is 400 Doman Drive, Decatur. Parking is free at the parking deck behind the Math & Science Building. Access is on Oxford Road next to the Barnes & Noble Book Store. You will need to push the button and get a ticket but when you leave you won't need to pay. Enter the lower level of the building from the parking deck. The Atrium will be the large open area.

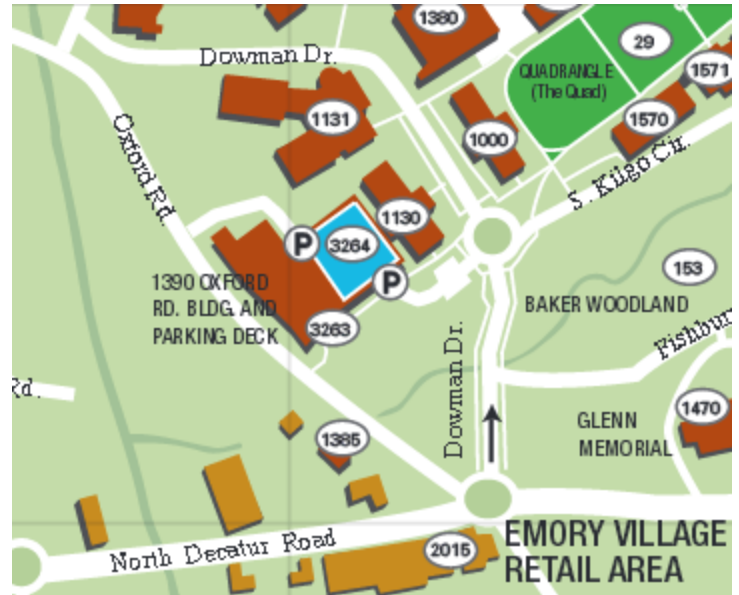
Please try to get there by 6:00PM so we can get everything set up for the dinner so we can start eating at 6:30PM. The AAC will provide turkey, ham, soft drinks, and coffee. Please bring a side dish or desert. Family favorites and ethnic dishes are especially welcome. In order to make sure we don't wind up with a lot of the same side dishes and desserts please contact Sharon and let her know what you are bringing. You can contact her at treasurer@atlantaastronomy.org

After we are finished eating we will adjourn to the Planetarium upstairs for our program. Please join us for this annual event. We have a lot of very good cooks in our club.



The Talk

Jerry Armstrong will be our speaker after the dinner. The topic for Jerry's talk was not available at deadline time. After Jerry's talk there will be a question and answer period followed by announcements of upcoming club events by the AAC officers. I hope to see you all there!!!



The Math & Science Building is number 1131. Parking is available in the parking deck off of Oxford Rd.

From the President's Desk

By Mark Banks, AAC President

At our last board meeting the Board of Directors made several decisions that you should know about.

*In order to make the best use of the clubs resources we have decided to decommission the Villa Rica Observatory site. Factors in this decision were tree growth nearby, increasing light pollution, lack of use and cost of maintenance. We will relocate the telescopes to another more suitable site.

*We have decided to have our elections done via the Internet. This will allow a more inclusive participation of all members regardless of meeting attendance on Election Day.

* Our meetings starting in January 2016 will be moved to the 3rd Saturday each month. This will more closely match the lunar cycle for optimal observing times.

If you have any questions or comments about the board's actions or any other club issues please contact me at president@atlantaastronomy.org



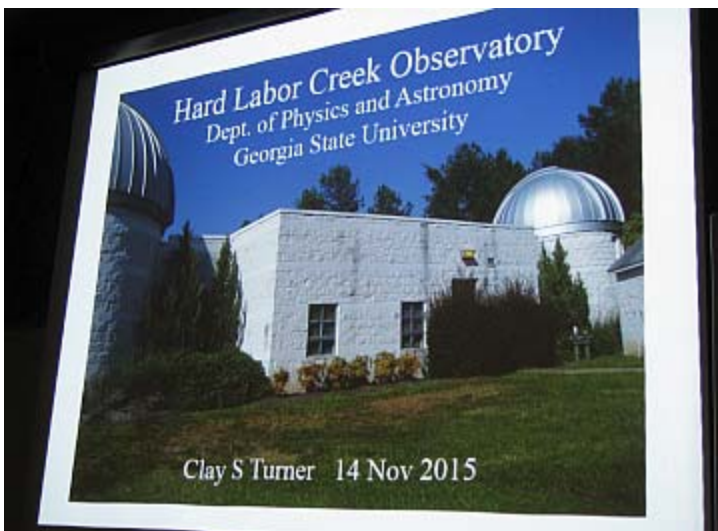
November AAC General Meeting Report

Photos by Tom Faber.

This month's general meeting was on Saturday, November 14th starting at 3PM at the Fernbank Science Center. There were about 45 members and guests present for the meeting.

Our speaker was Clay Turner of Georgia State University (photo middle). Clay is the site manager for Georgia State's Hard Labor Creek Observatory in Hard Labor Creek State Park near Rutledge, GA. Clay's research areas are active galactic nuclei and astronomical instrumentation. Clay talked about his experience at getting everything functioning at HLCO including collimation techniques, star testing, mount alignment, periodic error correction, autoguiding, adaptive optics, telescope controllers, mirror seeing, dome seeing, cameras and calibration etc.

After the talk, there were club announcements about upcoming club events and activities.



The Next Charlie Elliott Meeting

The next meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter will be held on Saturday, December 12, 2015 at 3:30 pm in the Campbell Building on Murder Creek Church Road (33.456415, -83.728357). This will be our holiday potluck and our first-ever gift exchange (details below)! Please sign up to bring food &/or help on our Perfect Potluck page.

At sunset we will head over to Jon Wood Astronomy Field (33.468865, -83.735319) for a night of observing, weather permitting. All are welcome. Bring your scopes, binoculars, or just bring yourself – we enjoy sharing the night sky with our guests! Be sure to arrive before 10 pm, as that is when the security gate on Elliott Trail locks to new entry.

On the field after the meeting, Van will continue with his Beginner's Astrophotography field training with Mounts and Polar Alignment as the topic. With a little weather luck, he hopes to have some of our newly minted astrophotographers imaging while tracking! Should be fun!! Important details and pre-reading are posted under the Astrophotography tab above (ceastronomy.org/blog/astrophotography).

Timeline:

3:30-5:30 pm Potluck, meeting, and festivities in Campbell Building

6:00-whenever Observing on Jon Wood Field

~6:00-8:00 pm Polar Alignment Workshop on Jon Wood Field

Gift swap info: Bring a wrapped or bagged astronomy-related gift.

Anyone who brings a gift will take home a gift. Items should have a resale value limit of \$25. Used items are fine but should be in working condition. Look through your astro & imaging gear – we all have filters, finders, USB hubs and other “stuff” we once spent good money on, but which are now gathering dust. Look forward to the joy on someone else's face when they receive your treasure!

Minutes and Handouts: The minutes, handouts, and presentations from past meetings of Charlie Elliott Astronomy are available for download on our Past Events web page, <http://ceastronomy.org/blog/events>. Monthly sky maps are available from skymaps.com.

2016 Meeting Schedule: January 9, February 6, March 12 (potluck), April 9, May 7, June 4 (potluck), July 9, August 6, September 10 (potluck), October 29, November 19, December 10 (potluck)

The November Charlie Elliott Meeting

By Valorie Whalen, Charlie Elliott Chapter Recording Secretary

The November monthly meeting for the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held in the Dining Hall Facility at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Management property in Mansfield, Georgia on November 14. There were twenty members and guests in attendance.

Jack Fitzmier, Chapter Director, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. He presented one Astronomical League program pin and certificate for completion of the Messier program to Valorie Whalen. Jack also mentioned that the meeting dates for the 2016 will be placed on the website soon, and that our next meeting will be held in the Campbell Aquatic Building. The December meeting will also be a quarterly potluck meeting.

Daniel Herron, Observing Director of the AAC, presented a plaque to Theo Ramakers in recognition of his continued involvement of outreach to schools and other groups. Van Macatee, Co-Chair for the Astrophotography Committee, gave a summary of the photography workshop that will begin after the meeting. He will be hosting a series of photography workshops each meeting on the Jon Wood Observing Field.

Marie Lott, Program Chair, introduced our featured speaker, Daniel

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Herron, who gave a wonderful talk on the International Space Station. His talk included information about the history and construction of the Space Station, the cooperation and contributions of several different nations toward the completion of the facility, and several statistics and facts about cost and future of the station. We were treated to a video of Chris Hadfield, Canadian Astronaut and former ISS Mission Commander. He conducted "outreach" from space by taking questions from school children and filming the answers. This particular video included how water behaves in a low-gravity environment, by wringing out a soaked hand-towel.

David Whalen, Observing Director, treated us to another energetic "All of the Above", which gives a run-down of what you can expect to see in the sky in the coming weeks. It included current weather conditions for the Jon Wood Astronomy Field, relative location of each of the planets, along with the sun and moon, and each of their respective rise and set times. He included H-alpha photos of the Sun as of 11/14/15. Also discussed were several deep-sky targets in the categories of "Relaxing", "Intriguing", "Taxing" and a Challenge Object. The full list of targets for the month of November is available on the website.

After the meeting, we were joined on the observing field by several members of the Atlanta Astronomy Club for their monthly dark-sky observing session. Van Macatee also gave the first in his series of photography workshops. Attendance on the observing field was approximately 49 members and guests.

Upcoming CE Meeting: December 12th at 3:30 p.m. in the Campbell Aquatic Building. This will be our quarterly potluck dinner and holiday gathering.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

By Alan Coffelt, AAC Recording Secretary

14 April 2015 - Meeting called to order at 3:20 p.m. by Chairperson Sharon Carruthers.

Members present: Mark Banks, David Lumpkin, Jamie Anderson, Rich Jakiel, Sharon Carruthers, Alan Coffelt. Members absent: Steve Phillips, Tom Faber, Daniel Harron, Brigitte Fessele.

Approval of minutes:

Minutes from the previous board meeting were approved.

Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees:

President (Mark Banks):

Renewal of PSSG Contract with DAV

Current contract ends after the 2016 event. Before negotiating a new contract, we need to find someone who can review the current contract that has legal training or experience so that the new contract is properly written. Perhaps Dan Llewellyn would be willing? Mark would like this to be a simple contract to rent the facilities without any complicated formulas, etc. Discussion about possible terms (possible flat fee). Consider a year-to-year renewal instead of a 10-year agreement. Motion from Mark Banks to appoint Dan Llewellyn (if he is willing) to negotiate the new contract for the PSSG; Motion seconded; Vote: 6 in favor, 0 opposed; Resolved: Motion carried. A signed copy of the current contract has not yet been located. Board members indicated they would like to see a copy of the current contract, and Sharon said she could provide that for the next BOD meeting.

Villa Rica Observatory

Roll-off roof repairs have been completed. Club house still needs to be pressure washed and painted. Tables and benches are in bad shape and need to be removed. 20" building needs a few other items replaced that have deteriorated (some plywood and a couple 2x4s).

VR discussion, key points:

* 20" needs to be collimated, which is difficult and might want to try getting Dan Llewellyn out there to try this. Trees near and on the property have grown high enough to block views from much of the site. Possibly work with Ken Poshedly to contact the Barbers (owners) to get permission to have trees removed from the adjacent property. Dave Lumpkin suggested taking Ken out to VR to see what he thinks. Several other key items on the property are in disrepair. How many members actively use the VR location? Is Phil Johnson still using it? Given the anticipated expenses for tree removal and other repairs, diminished value as a dark-sky site (with growing light pollution), maintenance costs, and challenges getting volunteer time to maintain the site, should we reconsider keeping the site? What is the long-term plan for VR? Could we move the 20" telescope to a better location, and would it be worth it, given the collimation problems it has? Would Woodruff be a good location, or would DAV be a better place? Any major changes at VR may need input and possibly a vote by club members. Should we consider charging the Boy Scouts (like Georgia Tech does) to provide a program and fund support for the VR site, or new site for the 20" telescope? Dave Lumpkin will investigate how this is done at GT and report back. If we consider a plan to eventually shut down the VR site, what could be salvaged and used at another location, assuming it is cost effective? Motion from Mark Banks to form a committee to evaluate the Walter F. Barber Jr. Memorial Observatory (Villa Rica). Committee Head: David Lumpkin. Members: Richard Jakiel and Alan Coffelt. Motion seconded; Vote: 6 in favor, 0 opposed; Resolved: Motion carried.

* Red Top Mountain State Park as a potential location for an observatory. Determined to not be viable as there isn't a suitable location within the park. Mark is investigating possible alternatives in Cherokee County.

* All telescopes donated to the AAC have been donated to various programs.

* For the past year, information about our programs have been sent to the head science teacher in all the metro counties so they could forward it to all of their science teachers so they could invite interested high school science students to our meetings. There has been almost no response, so this will be discontinued. Instead, Mark will try contacting teachers who teach astronomy directly, and send information and the newsletter to those who are interested.

* The Fernbank Science Center as the club's meeting location. There is often not enough parking available. If the problem continues, we may need to find another location for the meetings. Another advantage to a different location would be that we can move the meeting time to later in the evening and possibly have observing after the meeting. The Atlanta Freethought Society location might be a good alternative. AFS charges to use the facility, however. Discussion: Finding meeting locations has been difficult in the past. Are there any other locations we might be able to use? Do libraries that have later hours that would be suitable for club meetings? Any churches that might be affordable? We will evaluate changing locations later in the year.

* We need a public relations person to write up press releases, etc. for the club.

Program Chair (Rich Jakiel): Working on getting upcoming speakers. AAC had a favorable review from the Anachrocon 2015 Science Track.

Treasurer (Sharon Carruthers): Sharon reviewed the treasurer's report and recapped expenses, membership income, and account balances. Dark Sky Fund is currently at \$5600. Discussion about Dark Sky Funds and possible uses for VR and DAV. Discussion about membership and possible ways to increase. Would having observing after the general meeting help, like what CE does? Motion from Sharon Carruthers to

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approve the treasurer's report. Motion seconded; Vote: 6 in favor, 0 opposed; Resolved: Motion carried.

Correspondence Secretary (Tom Faber): Not present

Observing Chair (Daniel Harron): Not present

Unfinished Business:

Sharon will get a plaque for Rich to present to Theo Ramakers with a lifetime AAC membership for all his public outreach work.

New Business:

Sharon is looking at an alternative liability insurance company with the Non-profit Insurance Agency. Applied and was approved as a non-profit. Assigned to a local agent. Insurance is due May 10 if we want to make a change (currently with Foremost). Bill has not yet arrived. Discussion about coverages and amounts. Recommendation to use the company with the lower rate.

Next BOD meeting is scheduled for 3 months from now. Date, location, and time to be worked out after elections.

Meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m. by Chairperson Sharon Carruthers



The 2015 Peach State Star Gaze - Part 2

Photos by Tom Faber unless noted otherwise

The 22nd annual Peach State Star Gaze was held from Sunday, October 11th to Sunday, October 18th. We had pretty much clear skies the whole week and temperatures were warm in the daytime and cool at night which gave us many hours for observing and imaging. We had a number of interesting talks on Friday, and Saturday. Friday evening the Peach State treated attendees to cake and ice cream at the pavilion, and Saturday saw many of attendees win door prizes at the drawing after the talks. And Micki's Kitchen was back serving breakfasts, sandwiches, snacks, and dinners during the day and plenty of hot coffee, hot chocolate, and brownies at night to keep us observers warm and awake!

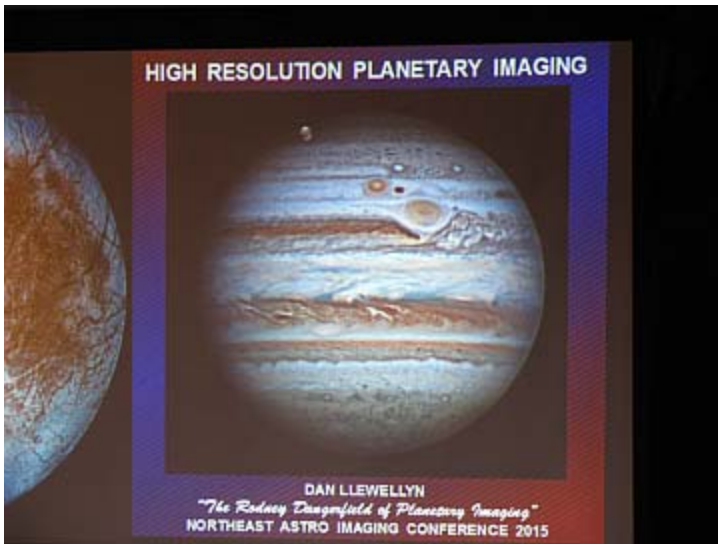
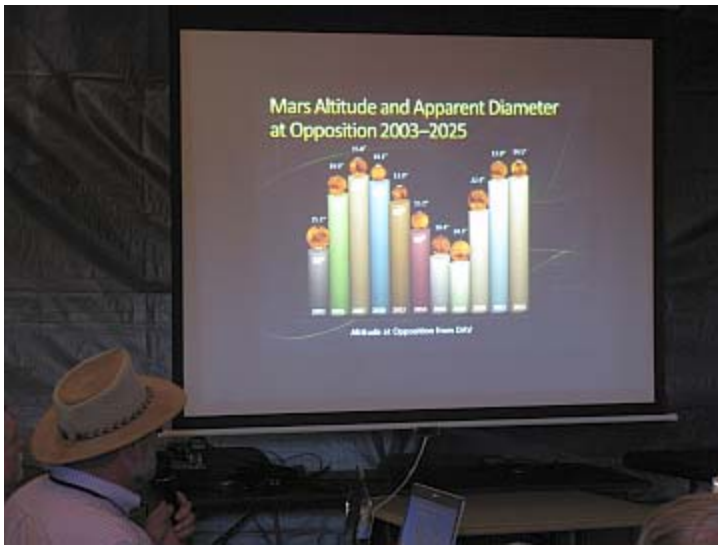
Here are more photos from the 2015 PSSG including some of the speakers and door prize winners.

We all had a great time and look forward to seeing everyone at the 2016 PSSG!

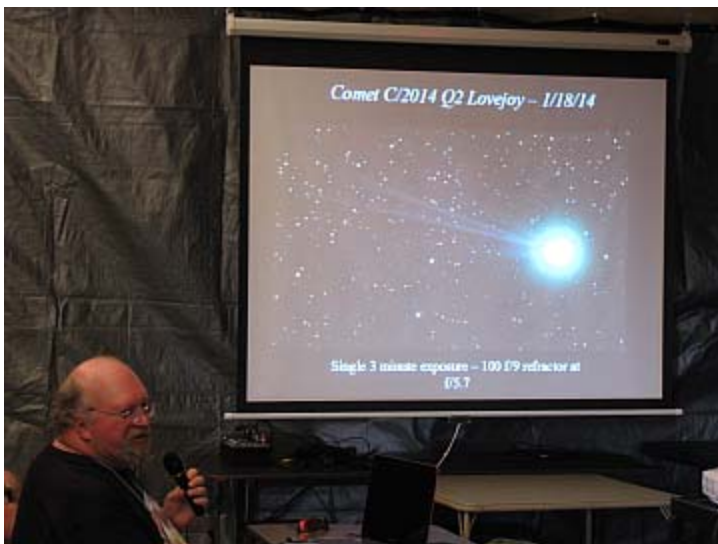


The moon, Saturn, and Scorpius sink toward the horizon Friday evening.

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The ice cream & cake social on the pavilion Friday evening.

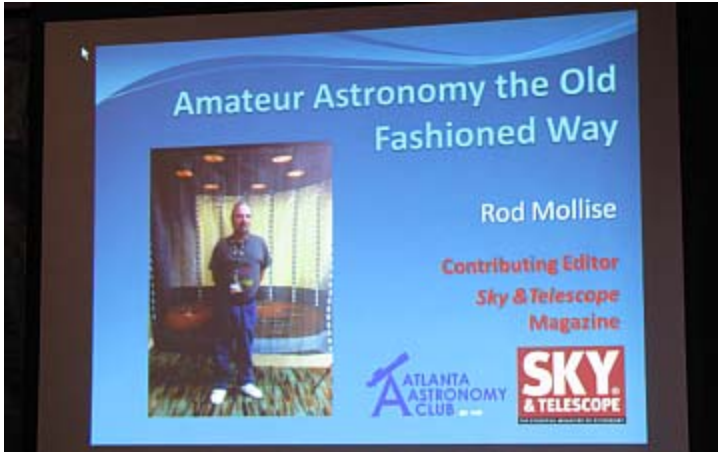


Images above - some of the Friday afternoon talks.

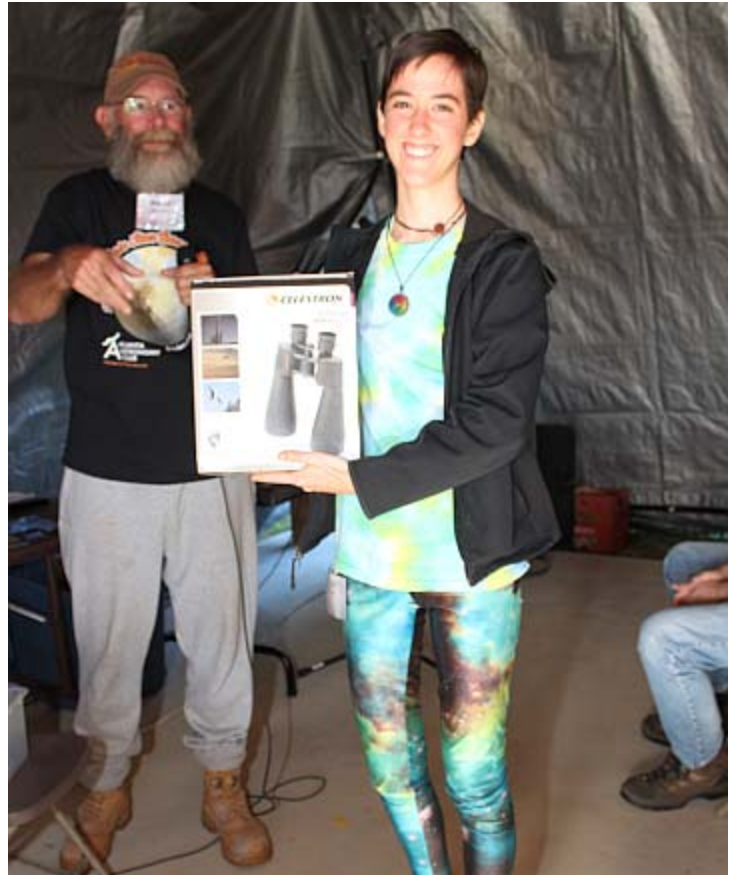


Ann Lockhart helps Frank Marchese adjust his scope & camera for a night of astrophotography.

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Above: Our keynote speaker Rod Mollise



Our youngest PSSG attendee - and door prize winner!

Door Prize winner photos by Frank Marchese



Atlanta Astronomy Club Online

While this newsletter is the official information source for the Atlanta Astronomy Club, it is only up to date the day it is posted. So if you want more up to date information, go to our club's website. The website contains pictures, directions, membership applications, events updates and other information. <http://www.atlantaastronomy.org> You can also follow the AAC on Facebook by joining the AAC group, and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/atlastro>.

AAC Officers and Contacts

- President:** Mark Banks President@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Program Chair:** Richard Jakiel Programs@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Observing Chair:** Daniel Herron Observing@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Corresponding Secretary:** Tom Faber
Focalpoint@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Treasurer:** Sharon Carruthers Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Recording Secretary:** Alan Coffelt,
Secretary@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Board Chair:** Sharon Carruthers Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Board:** Brigitte Fessele, Contact info TBA
- Board:** David Lumpkin, Contact info TBA
- Board:** Steve Phillips sandsphillips@att.net
- ALCor:** Jamie Anderson, jameia@bellsouth.net
- Elliott Chapter Co-Directors:** Jack Fitzmier
director@ceastronomy.org
- Elliott Observing Supervisor:** David Whalen
observing@ceastronomy.org
- Elliott Recording Secretary:** Valorie Whalen
secretary@ceastronomy.org
- Elliott Chapter ALCor:** Jack Fitzmier
- Elliott Coordinator:** Alesia Rast Alesia_Rast@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
- Elliott Webmaster:** Larry Owens webmaster@CEastronomy.org
- Elliott Outreach Coordinator:** Position Open
outreach@ceastronomy.org
- Georgia Astronomy in State Parks:** Sharon Carruthers
Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- PSSG Chairman:** Peter Macumber pmacumber@nightsky.org
- PSSG Co-Chair:** Open
- Sidewalk Astronomy:** Brad Isley
sidewalkastronomy@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- Light Trespass:** Ken Edwards, Contact info TBA
- Woodruff Observ. Coordinator:** Sharon Carruthers
Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org
- AAC Webmaster:** Daniel Herron
Observing@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Be sure to mark your calendars for the 2016 Peach State Star Gaze to be held September 25 - October 2, 2016!

The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc., one of the South's largest and oldest astronomical society, meets at 3:00 P.M. on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Fernbank Science Center in Decatur, or occasionally at other locations or times. Membership fees are \$30 for a family or single person membership. College Students membership fee is \$15. These fees are for a one year membership.

Magazine subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* or *Astronomy* can be purchased through the club for a reduced rate. The fees are \$33 for *Sky & Telescope* and \$34 for *Astronomy*. Renewal forms will be sent to you by the magazines. Send the renewal form along with your check to the Atlanta Astronomy Club treasurer.

The Club address: Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc., P.O. Box 76155, Atlanta, GA 30358-1155. AAC Web Page: <http://www.AtlantaAstronomy.org>. Send suggestions, comments, or ideas about the website to webmaster@AtlantaAstronomy.org. Also send information on upcoming observing events, meetings, and other events to the webmaster.

Calendar by Tom Faber (Times EDT/EST unless noted)

AAC Events are listed in **BOLD**

- Dec 3rd, Thursday: Moon Last Quarter. Moon near Mars.
- Dec 7th, Monday: Moon occults Venus - disappears 12:32PM, reappears 1:57PM.
- Dec 8th, Tuesday: Earliest Sunset in Atlanta: ~5:27PM EST.
- Dec 11th, Friday: New Moon.
- Dec 12th, Saturday: **AAC meeting & Holiday Potluck at Emory University Math & Science Bldg 6:00PM. CE Chapter meeting & Potluck at 3:30PM.**
- Dec 18th, Friday: Moon First Quarter.
- Dec 21st, Monday: Solstice 11:48PM.
- Dec 25th, Friday: Full Moon.
- Jan 2nd, Saturday: Moon Last Quarter. Earth at Perihelion.
- Jan 3rd, Sunday: Quadrantid Meteors.
- Jan 4th, Monday: Latest Sunrise in Atlanta: ~7:42 AM.
- Jan 6th, Wednesday: Pluto conjunction with Sun. Moon near Venus.
- Jan 9th, Saturday: New Moon. Venus & Saturn <0.5° apart. **CE Chapter Meeting.**
- Jan 14th, Thursday: Mercury at inferior conjunction.
- Jan 16th, Saturday: Moon First Quarter. **AAC Mtg at Fernbank Science Center 3:00PM.**
- Jan 23th, Saturday: Full Moon.
- Jan 31st, Sunday: Moon Last Quarter.
- Feb 6th, Saturday: **CE Chapter Meeting.**
- Feb 8th, Monday: New Moon.
- Feb 15th, Monday: Moon First Quarter.
- Feb 20th, Saturday: **AAC Mtg at Fernbank Science Center 3:00PM.**
- Feb 22nd, Monday: Full Moon.

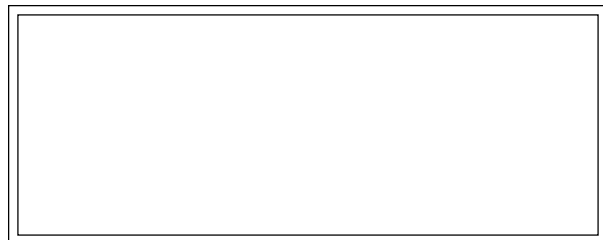
For more event listings see the calendar at www.atlantaastronomy.org

Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserv

Subscribe to the Atlanta Astronomy Club Mailing List: The name of the list is: AstroAtlanta. The address for messages is: AstroAtlanta@yahoogroups.com . To add a subscription, send a message to: AstroAtlanta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com .

Focal Point Deadline and Submission Information

Please send articles, pictures, and drawings in electronic format on anything astronomy, space, or sky related to Tom Faber at focalpoint@atlantaastronomy.org. Please send images separate from articles, not embedded in them. Articles are preferred as plain text files but Word documents or PDFs are okay. You can submit articles anytime up to the deadline. **The deadline for January is Wednesday, December 30. Submissions after the deadline will go in the following issue.**



FIRST CLASS



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We're here to help! Here's how to reach us:

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.



The Focal Point

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