

The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
Established 1947

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January 1999

Editor: Peter Macumber

Phil Harrington, Tim Puckett

Set for Peach State Star Gaze VI

April 15-18

by Ken Poshedly

If you enjoyed last September's meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club, you're sure to want to enjoy a second helping of *Star Ware* author and astronomical humorist Phil Harrington when he appears at this year's *Peach State Star Gaze*. The event will be held Thursday through Sunday, April 15-18, 1999, at Indian Springs State Park's Camp McIntosh near Jackson, Georgia, south of Atlanta.

Phil's talk with accompanying slides showed how he himself got started in the hobby, along with the pitfalls of cloudy skies, less-than-optimal transportation to far-away observing sites and all the rest. Look for more on Phil's PSSG presentation in next month's *Focal Point* newsletter.

If astrophotography — especially the deep sky variety — is more to your liking, we're glad to bring back for a return appearance Tim Puckett, one-half of the team which discovered the now-famous supernova in the spiral galaxy M-51 (The Whirlpool) on April 1, 1994. (The other half of the team, Jerry Armstrong, is also an AAC member.) Tim's talk will be on astrophotography of various types.

We'll also have on hand a nice supply of doorprizes donated by companies from across the United States, plus we've got some nice extra touches this year, like a Friday-night cookout, Saturday-morning pancake breakfast organized by the AAC's own "**Ladies of the Night ... Sky**". The group will also have handmade, fragrant soap baskets for purchase at the event.

Begun as a means to raise funds for an additional dark sky observing site for the AAC in 1994 with only 50 persons, last year's PSSG drew over 200 beginner and amateur astronomers from across the southeastern United States, making it one of the largest such weekend gatherings. Here you'll have three April days and nights to view through large and small telescopes, share observing and astrophotography techniques, attend workshops, participate in talks by other amateurs, and much more. Bring your unneeded astronomical gadgets to sell or swap.

Only an hour's drive southeast of Atlanta, Camp McIntosh offers comfortable lodging in the beautiful foliage of Georgia's spring woods and dark skies of central Georgia. Camp McIntosh is a group camp

adjacent to and operated by Indian Springs State Park and has its own gated entrance. And the timing is right for steady skies with the humid weather of summer still months away.

The site includes the following:

- * Two observing fields. The larger field features a wide, low horizon (-44 degree horizon when viewing towards the south from the north end). The smaller field is closer to electrical power for those who **MUST** have it. Campers also have access to the men's and women's bunkhouses for bathroom/shower facilities, as appropriate.

- * A general meeting building for indoor workshops and casual conversation. Electrical power to either observing field is available via standard outlets from this building.

- * The dining hall which features a fully-equipped kitchen with cooking and wash-up facilities for those who wish to prepare their own meals. This is also the location of the Saturday afternoon talks by Phil Harrington and Tim Puckett.

Lodging Options

As in the past, there are three levels of lodging: semi-private rooms (VERY limited quantity); dormitory-style bunkhouses (men's and women's separate); camping (tent or camper vehicle on the observing field).

Tee-shirts

Good events are worth remembering. That's why we offer a different *Peach State Star Gaze* tee-shirt each year. Place your order early for one or more of this year's offering (shown here and designed by the Atlanta Astronomy Club's own Jonathan Corey). Each year's full-color design is totally different from the year before! All shirts are 50/50 cotton/polyester for virtually no shrinkage and are available in sizes from XX Large and smaller. See the registration form for specific sizes. While extra shirts are usually available in various sizes at the event, order yours by March 31 to guarantee it.

Registration

Registration materials are expected to be in the mail by the end of January. For more information or to volunteer to assist at the PSSG, contact Ken Poshedly at 770-979-9842.

From the Oval Office

by Philip Sacco

Happy New Year to everyone, and I hope it was a joyous and safe one for everyone.

I would like to take a minute to say "Welcome" to all our new members of the last month: Clayton Newman, Jim Creek, Ron Collins, Bi Roubolo Vona, Kirk, Cathy, Kali, & Keegan Vining, Ephraim Lanford, Matthew & Ayn Busby, Richard M Watson, Michael Dean, Bob & Family Barnett, Frank Ztabi, Frank Manning, Katherine Sarbell

The past few months have been very active for the club, and I see no letting up, I am happy to say.

We have an active viewing schedule shaping up at our new observing site, the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Management Area, and I hope to see many more great activities develop out there in the coming months.

With the elections of the next years officers coming up quickly, I am pleased to announce the Nominating Committee has been formed and consists of Rich Jakiel, Chrissy Mondell, and Phil Bracken. I would encourage all of you to consider your participation in the AAC, and if you have any questions about filling any of the positions in the coming year, contact one of these individuals or myself. I know you will enjoy the experience and the many new friends you will make.

Fund Raisers:

The club has a couple of piers available for sale to any of you wanting to have a permanent set up for a scope. I believe we still have piers both with and without wedges available. The club will mount and align your pier for you as part of the deal. Contact Gil Shillcutt for more information

The **Ladies of the Night ... Sky** may still have some soap baskets for sale. The soaps are hand milled, blended with a variety of herbs. They made many a pretty Christmas present. Contact Chrissy Mondell for more information.

Tickets are on sale for \$2 for the Raffle Scope. It is a Meade 4500 4 1/2" Newtonian on a German Equatorial mount. It is an excellent starter scope. It will be raffled off at the Peach State Star Gaze, and you do not have to be present to win. Contact Philip Sacco for tickets or come to any observing session or meeting to see and use the scope.

Geoff Powers has a beautiful Moon shot which he is raffling off also. Contact Geoff or come to the meeting on the 15th to see it.

If you would like to contribute to the New Telescope Fund and get your name added to the contributor's plaque, contact Phil Bracken.

First Edition AAC coffee mugs are now available for order. They will be \$8 in advance or at a general membership meeting, and \$10 at observing sessions including all the coffee you can drink. Contact Philip Sacco for your order.

1999 Calendars are available, and will be for sale at the meeting on

the 15th. They are \$10.

Limited Edition publications of 'Celestial Harvest' are on order. Contact Bruce Lane for details.

Like I said, there is a lot going on in the club, and I hope that you will avail yourself of some of these excellent opportunities to support a good cause.

Nominations

Hi all, I hope everyone had a great Christmas and a wonderful New Year to come. Speaking of the New Year, **Elections** are right around the corner. Chrissy Mondell, Phil Bracken and Rich Jakiel are on the Nominating committee for this year, So if anyone is interested in running for any of the club offices, please let us know. The six club offices and three of the board positions are up for re-election. Our club has had quite an eventful year and I'm sure that another will follow, So please let us know if there are any interested parties at all. My e-mail is the same as Phil's (ppsacco@mindspring.com) just put attention Chrissy and I'll get it, or feel free to call me at (404) 296-6332, Or get a hold of Phil or Rich. Both of there e-mail addresses are in the focal point. I'm trying to make this short and sweet to get this in before the deadline.

I just got back from vacation in New York for the holidays and my fingers are almost thawed! We had a great time and Phil even got me up on Skis, I had no trouble going down the slopes, it was that darn ski-lift that got me every time, so needless to say, my fingers aren't the only things that are recuperating from the trip. (Hee, hee). So hopefully we'll hear from ya's and get a good number of people involved in the club's activities this year. Thanks all! See ya soon!

Chrissy :o)

P.S. **Lady's of the Night...Sky**, get a hold of me and see what we can do about a meeting here pretty soon. Had a great time with it last year, let's keep it going!!!

DIRECTIONS TO CHARLES ELLIOTT WILDLIFE CENTER

Take I-20 east from Atlanta. Exit the interstate at exit number 47 which is Georgia 11.

Turn right at end of exit ramp and proceed in a southerly direction to Mansfield, Georgia.

After passing thru the town of Mansfield, continue south on Georgia 11 for another 3 miles. Turn left onto Marben Farms Road. Take Marben Farms Road past end of pavement. The road becomes a gravel road. Proceed on Marben Farms Road past the shooting range. You will come to a fork in the road. Take the left fork and proceed for about 1/4 mile. Look for a porta potty and cut field on left side of the road. Turn left onto small grass drive. Note that orange cones will mark the spot.

AAC Forms Alliance with BSA

The Atlanta Astronomy Club and the Atlanta Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America have agreed to work together for the benefit of both organizations. The Boy Scouts operate two camps, one near Covington and one near Blue Ridge, both of which would make excellent dark-site observatories. The Woodruff site is in one of the darkest places in the State, and is about a two-hour drive from Metro Atlanta. The Burt Adams Scout Reservation is located less than ten miles from the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Area observing site, and the Boy Scouts hope to be able to send summer campers over there for instruction in astronomy.

This alliance between the Boy Scouts and the Atlanta Astronomy Club, in addition to providing the AAC with potential observatory sites, will also provide an opportunity for the club to introduce astronomy to the more than 50,000 scouts of the Atlanta Area Council.

Boy Scout troops and districts are looking for knowledgeable Club members to serve as merit badge counselors. You can sign up to become a merit badge counselor simply by filling out an application, for which there is no cost.

Several AAC members recently attended the annual Boy Scout Show at the World Congress Center on November 18. This show was attended by more than 60,000 people, many of whom stopped by to admire the telescopes provided by Club members. The Scouts provided the exhibit space to the Astronomy Club gratis, and the Club put on an interesting show, despite the very short notice involved. Next year, we hope to have a much more organized and informative display at the Scout Show.

John Lentini, who is an AAC member as well as an adult leader with Troop 1011 at Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in Marietta, will be coordinating the AAC's Scout-related activities. Anyone who would like to participate in this exciting new initiative should contact John at 770-984-0175 or e-mail him at johnlentini@yahoo.com.

OBSERVING CHAIRMAN REMARKS

By Keith Burns

As a tradition for the past few months, I have written a little recap of the previous month. I've decided not to comment on December. After all there, is not much to talk about. I hope that this technique will improve our weather situation. All of us are learning to have patience (Lots of it).

January is the start of the dead season for meteor shower activity. The Quadrantids meteor shower is the only major meteor shower that occurs this time of year. By the time you get this newsletter and read this article the shower will be long gone. Now is the time to check out the planet Saturn in the evening sky. Look for the planet at the zenith. Saturn is the one planet that amazes everyone. It is the first planet I viewed through a telescope. This past New Year's eve I set up the rainmaker scope out on the back deck and showed every-

one Saturn, Jupiter, and the Moon. All the ooooo's came when everyone looked at Saturn in the scope. After looking at the planets, it is time to move onto the faint fuzzes. There are many deep sky objects in the winter milky way. The spiral arm of our galaxy runs through the constellations of Auriga, Orion, Monoceros, and Canis Major. For those of you diehards that stay up late and observe till dawn, the spring constellations are high up in the sky by early morning. Leo, Coma Berenices, and Virgo. This is the area known as the realm of galaxies. Galaxies are everywhere to be found.

Here is an update on the Walter Barber Observatory projects. We will soon have a dome building for the Mak telescope. Ralph Bowman has used his talents to design and construct the dome. He even went out to the observatory and modified the Mak platform so the dome will fit on it. It is just a matter of getting the building out to the observatory and installed it on the platform. Ralph donated the steel piers to us earlier this year. Currently the annex building project is on hold until the weather improves. If you want to help with that project, contact Smitty Smith (at 770-583-2200) for information. The club has a 12-inch DOB sitting out at the observatory. It is ready to use. We still have to seal the wood on the scope. Thanks to Tracy Wilson for building the scope.

Observing events for January and February:

Jan. 16th Deep Sky session to be held at CEWC. Note that the location has changed from the Dove pond field to a spot along Marben Farms Road. The start time is dusk.

Jan. 23rd Orientation is scheduled for the Walter Barber Observatory. The start time is 5PM.

Jan. 29th Blue Moon public program. This is a public event to be held at the Charles Elliot Wildlife Center visitor's center. The program is about lunar observing. There will be a slide show in the classroom follow by a star gaze in the parking lot. It starts at 8PM.

Feb.13th Deep sky session to be held at Jim Wyrosdick's up in Dalonega. Starts at dusk.

Feb. 20th Orientation is scheduled for at the Walter Barber Observatory. The start time is 5PM.

I am working with the Von Braun club to do another joint observing session with them sometime this spring.

CECW and CEWMA are both used to refer to the Charles Elliott Wildlife Center.

Bradley refers to the Bradley Observatory at Agnes Scott College

Blue moons

By Mike Rupe and Philip Sacco

More than you ever wanted to know about lunar chronology and terminology

In 1999 January and March will each enjoy two full moons, and February will have none at all. This happens far more rarely than once in a blue moon, as the second full moon in a month is called. According to the Blue Moon page [28], blue moons are governed (to a first order) by the 19-year Metonic cycle of lunar phases. Over one Metonic cycle there are 235 lunar months (236 full moons) and 228 calendar months. So “once in a blue moon” amounts to about 8 times in 228, or 3.5 per cent. This amounts to about once ever 2.5 years. (228 calendar months differ from 235 lunar months by about 2 hours). Then there are leap years to consider. Plumb exhaustive details at [29] and [30]; calculate blue moons for any year at [31].) February last lacked a full moon two Metonic cycles ago, in 1961, and will miss one again on the next cycle in 2018. The last time a moonless February was surrounded by blue moons in January and March was in 1915.

Jim Jensen has on several occasions asked me about the names of the various Full Moons for each month.

He wasn't satisfied with the answers I have given him in the past sooooo... Here you go Jim.... How about we conclude with an enumeration of the common names for the year's full moons, synthesized from a variety of sources [32], [33], and [34].

For budding Lunatics and those interest we have hopefully sparked, you may want to check out these source pages on the web for more info...

[28] <http://www.obliquity.com/astro/bluemoon.html>

[29] <http://www.obliquity.com/astro/blue2.html>

[30] <http://www.obliquity.com/astro/blue3.html>

[31] <http://www.obliquity.com/cgi-bin/bluemoon.cgi>

[32] <http://www.cnn.com/TECH/space/9901/02/rare.moons.ap/>

[33] <http://milkyway.iol.it/psc/fullmoons.html>

[34] <http://soiroom.hyperchat.com/moons/moonpage.html>

	Algonquin/ Colonial	English/ Medieval	neo-Pagan	Other
Jan	Old	Wolf	Ice	Moon After Yule
Feb	Hunger	Storm	Snow	
Mar	Crust	Chaste	Death	Sap; Crow; Lenten
Apr	Pink	Seed	Awakening	Grass; Egg
May	Flower	Hare	Grass	Planting; Milk
Jun	Rose	Dyan	Planting	Strawberry; Flower
Jul	Buck	Mead	Rose	Hay; Thunder
Aug	Sturgeon	Corn	Lightening	Grain; Dog Days
Sep	Harvest	Barley	Harvest	Fruit
Oct	Hunter's	Blood	Blood	
Nov	Beaver	Snow	Tree	Frosty
Dec	Cold	Oak	Long Night	Moon Before Yule

Lunar Observing Challenge #7

by Lunatic #82

Now that we had a nice introduction to the Moon, here is your seventh installment of the Lunatic Challenge for those of you who have been 'bitten'....

If you haven't been keeping up with the Challenge, #1 has some very important information about the challenge such as the list of Lunar Domes- the primary target for us dirt hunters, and the goodies you will be entitled to upon completion of the 12 step program. The Lunatic Challenge includes all the targets required for the completion of the Astronomical League's Lunar Club, and completion of the challenge will entitle you to membership in the Lunar Club with National recognition, a very nice framed wall certificate and a Lapel pin. Completing the Challenge will also win you a signed and numbered limited edition (a series of only 10) of the Reformed Calendar based on the Lunar Cycle.

I will be happy to supply anyone interested in the list with #1 and any others you may have missed if you are a recent member to the club.

I will put a plug in here for the ELECTRONIC *Focal Point* available for free from Peter Macumber. If you get the *Focal Point* electronically, you will find it is in color, includes more articles, and will soon carry advertisements. It will also save the club a considerable amount of money yearly for each member receiving the electronic version.

And now the challenge:

Naked Eye Targets:

1. Name the month and year of the first and last manned moon landings.
2. In what month and year was the first UN-manned landing on the moon?
3. In general, what is the size in miles of the smallest feature on the moon observable with an amateur telescope with a resolution of 1 arc second?

Pickerings Naked Eye Challenge:

Can you see?

- 1) The light area around the crater Lubiniezky? This is a rated 8 challenge....
- 2) The notch in the Mare Tranquillitatis/Plinius regions (rated 6)? See this month's #5 telescopic object...this is the second time you have been to this area since you first visited Mare Tranquillitatis.

Binocular Targets:

1. Sinus Roris - Bay of...
2. Crater Arzachel - How do you pronounce this?
3. Crater Bullialdus
4. Hipparchus
5. Challenge: Crater Clavius - What is the best phase of the moon to observe this crater?

Telescope Targets:

1. Rima Hyginus - Can you see this at Full moon?
2. Cassini A and B
3. Crater Manilius
4. Crater Fabricius
5. Crater Plinius
6. Challenge: Crater Stadius

Needless to say, I am the "Keeper of the Key" to all the locations of objects on the list, and the choice references to find them listed in ... so if you have any questions ... give me a call.

The Big DOB is Coming!

The Big DOB is Coming!

The AAC has approved the purchase of a 24-inch Tectron complete with Telrad and SkyCom from Tom Clark for \$6,000. (Which is \$1500 below the regular price of this scope with these extras) We sent in an initial deposit of \$2,000. Half the remaining \$4,000 (plus monies to pay for lenses, ladder and storage facilities) will come from the Dark Sky Account; the remaining \$2,500 must be raised by May 1, 1999 to complete the purchase. The fundraising committee is seeking outside donations, but that will take time. In the meantime, member donations are needed to secure the final payment. All contributors will receive a Certificate and have their names engraved on a commemorative plaque, which will be displayed in the William Calder Observatory (whenever and wherever it is built)

The contribution levels are as follows:

\$25 Lunar Donor

\$100 Solar Donor

\$250 Galactic Donor

\$500 Super Nova Donor

Phil Bracken has committed to match \$100 donations up to \$500. If anyone is willing to take him up on his challenge, your donation will go a long way to helping us reach our goal.

An Editorial Note from Your Treasurer

This is the first really big do-or-die commitment the AAC has entered into since starting the PSSG six years ago .It is the first step towards the Dark Sky Observatory that we all want so badly that we can taste it! I would like to see everyone get behind the fundraising effort; not just through personal donations but also to help the Fundraising Committee find sources outside the Club as well. For information contact Karen Simmons - 404-292-6447 info2000@mindspring.com; Sharon Carruthers 770-319-8970 macumber@bellsouth.net; Phil Bracken 770-941-6517 or philb@mindspring.com; any of the club officers. Or mail it to the AAC address in the *Focal Point*.

CEWMA Blue Moon

We will begin our new monthly series of instructional viewing classes at the CEWMA on January 29th with a Blue Moon Session. It will begin at 7pm with the viewing of the planets followed at 8 by a talk in the visitor center on the Blue Moon.

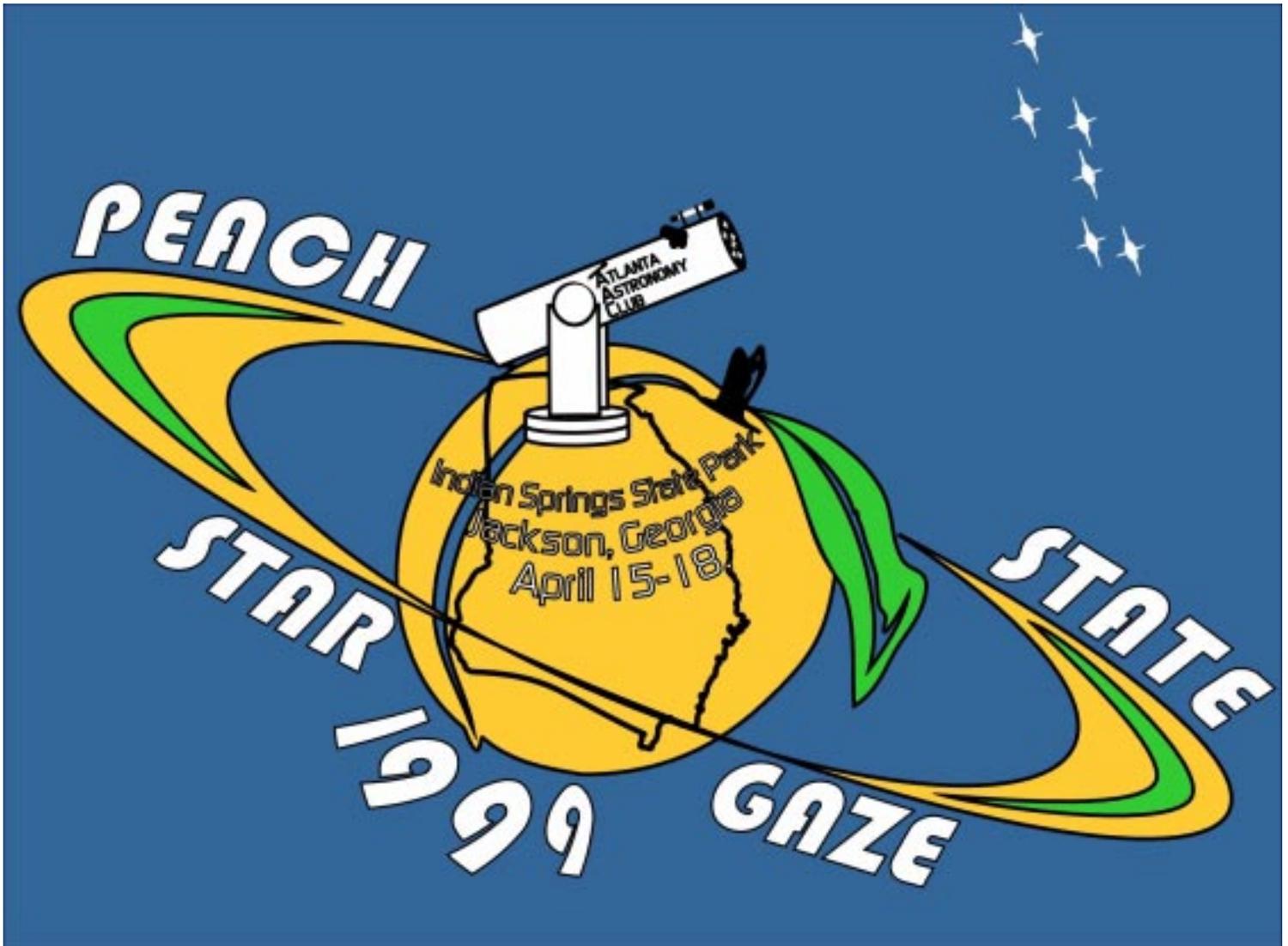
After the presentation, we will again adjourn outside to view the January Blue Moon. There will be two Blue Moons in this last year of the Millenium, and even rarer than that ... well ... you'll just have to come to the presentation to find out what is even more peculiar than having two Blue Moons in a year!

We have been told that two elementary schools, several state politicians and several news reporters will be in attendance, so we will need to have good participation from our membership. This is a great way for our new members to get comfortable talking about what we do, and have some fun with the public. Our more experienced members know how much fun these sessions are, and being that they will be there, it is also another good reason for our newer members to attend. You can learn A LOT from the other members in attendance.

Anyone with good slides of the moon (they don't have to be ones you have taken yourself) are asked to contact me to help round out the carousel.

I hope you will all plan on coming out, getting to know the new site area, and meet the staff out there. If you plan on attending, please try to arrive by 6:30 to set up for the planet viewing. We will be setting up in the visitor parking lot.

*Color Graphic of P.S.S.G. 1999 - Tee-Shirt
at 60% reduction*



Club Officers

Phil Sacco	President	404-296-6332
	<i>pzsacco@mindspring.com</i>	
Rich Jakiel	VP Program Chairman	
	<i>deepsky@mindspring.com</i>	
Keith Burns	VP Observing Chairman	770-427-1475
	<i>keith_burns@mailexcite.com</i>	
Sharon Carruthers	Treasurer	770-319-8970
	<i>macumber@bellsouth.net</i>	
Peter Macumber	Corresponding Secretary	770-319-8970
	<i>macumber@bellsouth.net</i>	
Wm Bower	Recording Secretary	770-723-9891
	<i>wbower@emory.edu</i>	

Board of Directors

Phil Bracken	Dark-Site	770-941-6517
	<i>pphilb@mindspring.com</i>	
Tom Crowley		914-425-0645
	<i>tcrowley@mmfn.com</i>	
Don Hall		770-938-8139
	<i>donball@mindspring.com</i>	
Art Russell	Chairman of the Bored	404-373-4119
	<i>artrussell@mindspring.com</i>	
Gil Shillcutt	Amature Telescope Makers	404-467-1437
	<i>Gil.Shillcutt@choicepointinc.com</i>	
Tracy Wilson	A.T.M.	770-270-9402
	<i>tracy2@mindspring.com</i>	

Standing Committees

Lenny Abbey	Membership	404-634-1222
	<i>labbey@mindspring.com</i>	
Mark Banks	Sidewalk Astronomy	404-257-2766
Stephen Blalock	AAC Webmaster	770-948-9820
	<i>stephen.blalock@gtri.gatech.edu</i>	
Tom Buchanan	Light Polution	770-521-2136
Doug Chesser	Club Graphics	770-457-5743
	<i>chesser@mindspring.com</i>	
Lynn Crowley	Beginner's Contact and Socials	404-233-6886
Alex Langoussis	Publicity	770-429-8384
	<i>aleko@mindspring.com</i>	
Julie Moore	Hospitality and Refreshments	770-242-6735
Ken Poshedly	Peach State Star Gaze	770-979-9842
	<i>ken.poshedly@mindspring.com</i>	

AAC CALENDAR of EVENTS

January 15, Friday	General Meeting	Emory White Hall
January 16, Saturday	Deep Sky	CEWC
January 23, Saturday	Orientation	Villa Rica
January 30, Saturday	Blue Moon	CEWC
February 05, Friday	ATM	Bradley
February 13, Saturday	Deep Sky	???
February 20, Saturday	Orientation	Villa Rica
March 20, Saturday	Deep Sky	???
March 27, Saturday	Orientation	Villa Rica
April 09, Friday	Orientation	Villa Rica
April 15-18 Thursday - Sunday	Peach State	Indian Springs

Focal Point

The January Focal Point is here.

February Focal Point deadline is February 1st.

Please submit your articles before then.

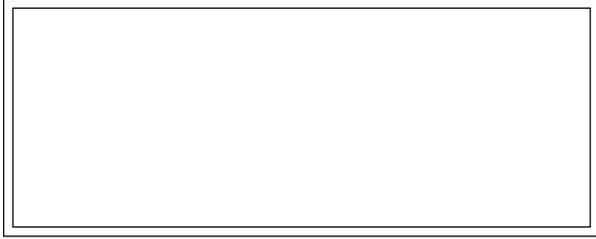
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Today we have 315 memberships. Over 40 people are receiving their *Focal Point* online!



Newletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

FIRST CLASS



FROM:
Peter Macumber

3401 Velvet Creek Drive
Marietta, GA 30008-7619

macumber@BellSouth.Net

[We're here to help! Here's how to reach us:](#)

Atlanta Astronomy Club

3595 Canton Road, Suite A9-305

Marietta, GA 30066

Atlanta Astronomy Club

Friday, January 15th

White Hall, Emory University

Refreshments from 7:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Join other club members before the meeting for some light refreshments and say hello. The 1999 Astronomy calanders will be available for sale.

General Meeting - 8:00 PM

Beyond Orion: Exploring Star Formation at Radio Frequencies

Christopher G. De Pree

This month's guest speaker is Chris De Pree, an Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Agnes Scott College. His office is located in the Bradley Observatory on the south side of the campus on a hill overlooking the soccer field. Chris teaches classes in both Physics and Astronomy, and involves undergraduate students in astronomical research. Chris researches massive star formation with the use of the Very Large Array of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory to make most of my observations.

Hot Line: 770-621-2661

Internet Home Page:

<http://stlsfb.gtri.gatech.edu/astroxt/atlastro.html>