

# The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club  
Established 1947

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Editor: Peter Macumber

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## Garland Mountain Observatory

**By Mark Banks**

In the early spring of 1998 I was reading an article in the local newspaper that caught my attention. The article included a list of projects that the Cherokee County Economic Development Authority (C.B.D.A.) had an interest in. These projects were to enhance the local environment in order to attract high tech businesses to the area and improve science education in the local schools. One of the projects on the list was an observatory located in the mountains of north Cherokee County.

I called the director of file C.E.D.A., Mr. Kevin Johns, and we scheduled a meeting. Present at the meeting were members of the Astronomy Club, representatives of Reinhardt College, Cherokee County government officials, and several interested private citizens. After a very productive brain storming session, the observatory project was born.

Several weeks later an expedition by members of the club went to scout out several possibilities for the observatory site. These were identified by examination of topographic maps of the area. We determined that Garland Mountain was the best choice. It was remote and dark enough, but still reasonably accessible. The site is about a one-hour drive north of Atlanta and only 15 miles off of I-575.

Significant progress is being made with the new observatory. The land acquisition negotiations are going very well and we hope to have the site secured soon. A letter of intent is now being circulated among a number of private funding sources. We are also seeking possible state government funding as well as federal grant monies

The plans are being developed to place a multi-telescope facility on the mountain. Participants in the planing include Reinhardt College, various private and public schools, private citizens, and several agencies within the Cherokee County government.

Our plans include a 50-inch main telescope and several smaller scopes, possibly 24 inch or 16 inch. There will be pads setup around the site for club members to bring their own telescopes as well. The main building will include a large meeting room, workshop, computer room, kitchen, restrooms, and sleeping quarters.

Another item included in the overall plan will be a planetarium and science museum located on the campus of Reinhardt College. This will be linked to the mountain top observatory by computer and linked to the Internet for remote operation of the scopes worldwide.

The estimated price for this project is approximately 15 million dollars. This may sound like a lot, but the veteran fundraisers that we have consulted are very optimistic about getting the finding that we need. All of the feedback that we have received so far has been very positive. This project will take approximately two years to get up and running, but the effort will be well worth the end results.

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## A Short History of the Peach State Star Gaze

**By Ken Poshedly**

Registration materials for this year's Peach State Star Gaze VI are now in the mail and should be in your hands shortly. 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. This is a rain-or-shine event

The idea for an Atlanta Astronomy Club star party begun in the fall of 1993 when AAC officers and interested others met to begin formal discussions about establishing a second permanent observing site due to increasing light pollution at the club's Villa Rica site. While work could begin immediately on scouting out various potential sites, the club at that time had no financial source that could support development of the site and its equipment. After some discussion, I was asked about doing a star party.

Relying on my professional background in public relations, special event coordinating and journalism, plus my experience on the planning committees of several other star parties, I agreed. To prevent any confusion with this new event with any other already-established star party, the decision was made to christen it the "Peach State Star Gaze" and hold it in the spring rather than the autumn.

Thus was the humble beginning of an event that only five years later has broken the 200-person mark and helped put the Atlanta Astronomy Club on the amateur astronomy map. The first PSSG was held at the Future Farmers of America campground outside Covington in the spring of 1994 with only 50 persons. Within a few months, I heard about Indian Springs State Park and its group camp, Camp McIntosh. A visit to the site by myself and later with several other AAC members for a test observing session convinced us that this was the place to be - at least for awhile.

Since then, the PSSG has grown consistently, with 100 folks in 1995, 125 in 1996, 160 in 1997 and 213 last spring. And these are folks from across the southeastern United States plus elsewhere, like Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and even Canada!

A few weeks ago, I received an e-mail from a New Yorker asking which tour-group operator was handling arrangements for this event. (I wrote back "Aw shucks, take your pick.") We may now be close to the maximum number of people before the event becomes overcrowded. While the skies are reasonably dark, it seems most of those attending agree that they most enjoy the genuine friendliness and comradery of the event. The dyed-in-the-wool experts love to pass down their tips and tricks, while the newbies remain enamored that learning this hobby can be so much fun. And we want to keep it that way.

Whether it's the fun of being with others who can help you learn the hobby, or your own contributing to helping others, or the enjoyment of our Saturday afternoon talks, or the workshops, or the list of other things that people love about this event, please consider attending this year's Peach State Star Gaze. For more information, contact Ken Poshedly at 770-979-9842, or e-mail to [ken.poshedly@mindspring.com](mailto:ken.poshedly@mindspring.com).



## Peach State Star Gaze from the Past

For more pictures from the past, visit

<http://www.mindspring.com/~rwhigham/pssg.htm>

## ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE OBSERVING CLUB SPOTLIGHT

### *Mooove over for the URBAN CLUB* *By Keith Burns*

Picture if you will, a lonely astronomer sitting on their observing stool. They are looking through the eyepiece of a telescope. The observing is taking place in their backyard located in an urban location. They are viewing faint fuzzes and not planets (or the moon). Near the telescope is a boom box playing the Joe Walsh song, "All Night Long." It may seem strange to have the Urban Cowboy soundtrack as star gazing music, but this is no ordinary amateur astronomer. This person is an urban astronomer. Dark skies of are nowhere to be found in this urban environment. So what astronomical league observing club gives you a list of faint fuzzes visible in this sky glow environment? The Urban Club is that list. You don't have to wear a cowboy hat or boots to do this list. Of course, you are welcome to if you want.

The creator of this list is Phil Harrington. Phil came up with the idea while writing the book "The Deep Sky: An Introduction." He realized that many deep sky objects are visible in light polluted skies but no one ever mentioned these objects. Phil produced a list of deep sky objects visible from the city. The idea was to get people to observe in an urban environment instead of driving long distances to find dark skies. In 1995 he sent a list of objects to John Wagoner of the Astronomical League. John deleted some items and added new ones. He then had the list beta tested by amateur astronomers. Limiting magnitude of the skies went from four down to one. After the testing was complete, the Astronomical League officially released the new club in March of 1998. Less than a month later, Philip Sacco submitted his list and got certificate number one.

The Urban Club observing list consists of open clusters, globular clusters, galaxies, planetary nebulas, double stars, and a variable star. There are one hundred objects on the list. Ninety of the objects are star clusters, nebulas, and galaxies. The other ten objects on the list consist of binary and variable stars. All the objects are easy to see. This list requires that the Milky Way in the location you are viewing in be not visible to the naked eye. Instruments you can use to observe this list include your eyes, binoculars, and/or a telescope. There

is no restriction on the size of the telescope. Larger aperture telescopes fair better in making the dimmer objects easier to see. Setting circles on a telescope whether they are analog or digital are acceptable.

Be sure to log your observations. The log sheet should include object name, date, time, power (magnification), seeing conditions, and observing notes. Submit your observations to the club-observing chairman (this year it is Keith Burns). If you have got any questions call me (at 770-426-1797) or email me (at [Keith\\_B@Bellsouth.net](mailto:Keith_B@Bellsouth.net)). I have copies of the Urban club list. The list is also available on the Internet at the astronomical league web site ([www.astroleague.org](http://www.astroleague.org)). You can also contact the John Wagoner who is the astronomical league Urban Club coordinator. You can email him (at [info@corvus.com](mailto:info@corvus.com)), or call him (at 1-214-422-1886). Besides phone or computer, you can write John (at John Wagoner, A.L. Urban Club Coordinator, 1409 Sequoia Drive, Plano, TX 75023). Before I forget, you can also talk to Philip Sacco about the list. He is looking for other people to join him on the completion list.

Here are several helpful tips on observing the Urban List. First I would not recommend setting up your scope under a street light. Find a dark area shielded from light in the yard. Second it is best to observe near the new moon phase. You can also observe when the moon is not up. Of course, this means observing at some weird hours. Third, do your observing after ten at night. This allows the air to settle down. Forth, it is best to do your observing after either a rainstorm or cold front passage. There is less dust in the air to reflect light. Finally, the best place to observe is near the meridian as this is usually the darkest part of the sky and the cleanest.

The Urban list is for those of you who don't have time to drive looking for dark skies. You can observe during the week for an hour or two in the evening or on the weekend. After viewing the night sky, the drive back home is short. Drive? What drive? No one ever complains about that fact. Excuse me while I go and put on my boots and hat. You know you need those items to do the list. I'm talking about cowboy boots and hat.

## From the Oval Orifice

By Philip Sacco

Welcome to all our new members from the previous month: Will Hedrick, Ruth Clemens, G.W. & Mary Ann Davis, Tony Martinez, Bill Baker, Larry LeDuc, Paul Di Bono, Terry Boyle, Julie Bettendorff, Nicholas Bain, David & Liz Furcy/Burkhalter, Stephen & Dianne Nelson, David Green, John & Nancy Martinez and Adair & Anita Reddoch

This is a great time to become involved with the AAC as we are coming into the more temperate time of year for viewing (not that it has been that harsh a winter, or even very clear for that matter...!).

Two very important events are coming up in the next couple of months, and I want to take just a minute to mention them.

**ELECTIONS:** Election will be held at the general membership meeting in May and you will have to be present to be counted. Running for a position in the AAC is a great experience, and it is a great way to meet new people, and have an effect on the happenings of the club. Remember this is YOUR club, and it is and does what YOU want it to. We will have three Board positions to be filled. They are two year positions, and a great way to make a difference by your involvement. All the officer positions will likewise be vacated, and I encourage each of you to consider running for one. How do you do that?

Call Chrissy Mondell, Rich Jakiel, or Phil Bracken. They comprise the 'Nominating Committee', and their phone numbers and e-mail addresses can be found on the back page of your Focal Point. You can call me at 404-296-6332 if you would like more information or encouragement.

The Nominating Committee has the charge of screening all nominees for eligibility, and will announce all candidates' names for publication in the April 'Focal Point'. Come to the next few meetings to hear what the current candidates have to say. If you don't get your name in before the April Focal Point comes out, you will have the opportunity to have a floor nomination in April and May before the elections. I will point out that floor nominations are a hard way to win an election, so please get your name in the Hat soon! (This gives everybody a chance to get to know who you are...)

**Peach State Star Gaze:** Our annual fundraiser, the PSSG, will be held April 15-19 at Camp McIntosh in Jackson, Ga. This is a great time, and the activities offer something for everyone. If you don't own a telescope, trust me, that is not a requirement, and you will have a great time just wandering around and looking through everyone else's scope and meeting some spectacular people. There will be sky tours, constellation walks, clinics, and three guest speakers on Saturday.

The **drawing** for the **Meade 4500 Raffle Scope** will be held on Saturday afternoon. Tickets are on sale for **\$2**. They will be on sale before then at all meetings and viewing sessions, so get yours today!

How about everyone with gear they want to sell or trade making it down there and help put on a Swap Table? I know I have lots of flashlights and incidental gear I never use I'd love to get rid of...

**APRIL General Membership Meeting:** Please note that due to the fact that most everyone will already be down at the PSSG at the regular time of our monthly meeting, I am scheduling the April meeting to be held at the PSSG on Friday night the 17<sup>th</sup>. Start time will be 7:30pm. We will not have a speaker that night as we are having three guest speakers the next day. The meeting will cover current club activities, the 24" scope update, and an Orientation for the PSSG. It will be a short meeting, no longer than 1hr so that everyone can get out on the field for an early start of night viewing. I do encourage everyone

to make this meeting as we will be giving an in depth outline of the PSSG activities, and we have a very special presentation for everyone to enjoy.

**Aliens have landed:** I know a few of you will remember the alien invasion we had at the PSSG last year...WELLLLLL...They have come back and LANDED their CRAFT at the Observatory in Villa Rica! Come out and see for yourself! Plans have been made to convert it in some way to make it useful, come on out and see what we have done with it!

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## Bradley Notes

Pluto has defied easy categorization since Clyde Tombaugh discovered it in 1930. At the time, the only boxes that astronomers had to drop it in were planet, comet or asteroid. Planet seemed the most fitting category. But Pluto does not follow the apparent rules that apply to the other planets. The terrestrial planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars) are small and rocky, located close to the Sun. The outer planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune) are massive balls of gas. Pluto is small and icy, similar in size and composition to the moons of the outer planets, yet it is (usually) the most distant planet from the Sun with a highly elliptical orbit. The ambiguous nature of Pluto is obvious in any introductory astronomy text. Descriptions of Pluto and its moon Charon are often found in the chapters on Jovian moons, the rings of the outer planets, or solar system debris. Although it has been called a planet for almost 70 years, many astronomers never felt right about the designation.

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) is considering reclassifying Pluto and no longer calling it a planet. If this change occurs, Pluto would simply become one of the icy objects known to exist beyond the orbit of Neptune, poetically called Trans-Neptunian Objects or TNOs.

Why is this happening now? Because astronomers recently have discovered that there are many objects similar to Pluto in the outer parts of the solar system. The first TNO was discovered in 1992, and there are now 84 catalogued objects. None of these icy objects are quite as large as Pluto, but it seems that Pluto is simply the largest and closest of a class of icy objects that orbit the sun at great distance. It would be catalogued as TNO-1. Maybe we should ask Pluto. It might prefer to be the biggest and best TNO rather than the runt of the planetary litter.

Set your calendars for the spring: February 12 is the first Open House of the Spring semester on Photography and Astronomy; March 23 will be the Vernal Equinox Concert at the Bradley Observatory, and the April Open House will be a lecture by Anneila Sargent of Caltech. Hope to see you all soon, and for the latest updates, check out

[http://www.agnesscott.edu/aca/depts\\_prog/info/physics\\_astronomy/bradley/building.html](http://www.agnesscott.edu/aca/depts_prog/info/physics_astronomy/bradley/building.html)

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## February Observing Events

13 TH DSS at Jim Wyrosdick's. Starts at Dusk.

20 TH Orientation at Villa Rica, Walter Barber Observatory. Starts at 5 P.M.

26 TH Public star gaze and program with Mansfield Elementary School. Location is either at the school or at the visitors' center of Charles Elliot Wildlife Management Area. Final location to confirmed soon. Starts at 7 P.M.

## Notes from a new guy.

### By Richard Blackburn

After two months of bad weather, I finally got to get out under the stars with the club.

The dark sky observing session at Charles Elliot Wildlife Management Area on Saturday 16 January 1999 was fabulous (until about 1 to 1:30 AM when the clouds rolled in)! It was my first dark sky session with the club. The previous two were weathered out. I arrived at the observing field at 5:30 PM, and proceeded to the end of the line out in the field. After setting up my scope ( a 10" Meade DOB ), I walked around to see everyone else's telescopes and to meet some of the people I had not already meet.

There was a good turn out, and I had a really good time. I located 21 of the Messier objects (Thanks to all the people that helped me by looking through my lens and verifying that I had actually located the item I was looking for). I enjoyed walking around and talking to everyone and looking through their scopes. It is impressive to see what difference a couple of inches of aperture can make.

How nice everyone was and how welcome everyone made me feel impressed me. I look forward to spending more time under the stars with the club.

The orientation on Saturday 23 January 1999 was a little damp. I showed up at 4pm while it was drizzling. It took about 8 of us to place the new dome over the Mak mount. It looks and works great! I think everyone should thank Ralph Bowman when you see him for doing such a great job.

After placing the dome, we had the orientation session. Phil led the session with help from Art Zorka and Gil Shillcutt. There were three of us taking the session. Phil addressed all the issues of using the site. Unfortunately the cloud cover never really cleared, and we did not get to look through the big scopes out there. Now that I have been lead through the orientation, I look forward to see yall out there!

After the orientation was over, we stood around under the clouds and talked until about 8:30pm. At that time people started out for dinner, but I headed home thinking the clouds would not move at any time soon ( it appears I was correct ).

I would like to personally thank everyone that showed up in the rain to help set up the new dome, run the orientation, and talk about the stars!

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## Raffle Scope: Meade 4500

A drawing for a Meade 4500 telescope will be held at the PSSG. This is a great starter scope for someone interested in getting into Astronomy. It is a 4 1/2" Newtonian on a German Equatorial Mount. It has an all metal mount and Aluminum tripod with extending legs, accessory tray, finder scope, and a 25mm eyepiece. Tickets are available at any General Membership Meeting or viewing session of the AAC. They are \$2 each. Ticket sales have been very slow, so your chances of winning this \$600 are very good if you get your tickets now. Check with Philip Sacco or Mark Banks for tickets.

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## March Observing Events

20 TH DSS at Talluah Gore/Ladies of the Night...Sky program?? As of this printing I don't have verification on the location or a time yet. This site may change to another location.

26 TH Public star gaze and program at Charles Elliot Wildlife Management Area.

27 TH Orientation and open house at Villa Rica, Walter Barber Observatory. Starts at 6 P.M.

## Board Meeting

A short board meeting is called for on the evening of our February 19, the night of the general membership meeting at Emory in our meeting room at 7PM.

Agenda:

- Follow up on Coffee mug order...plans for distribution and sale.
- New application forms and membership dues structure.
- By laws review will be called for, so please look at our current by laws and bring any suggestions or comments with you. We will have a brief question as to a rewrite pending comments and membership input.

Philip Sacco

President, Atlanta Astronomy Club

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## Ladies of the Night ... Sky

Hi all,

With Spring right around the corner, I'd like to see if we could do some networking amongst our members to see if anyone has access to a "Bobcat" or other large machinery that can be used to finish up the Villa Rica site project. The trees are down thanks to a lot of hard work from the club members last year. It would be great, to be able to level that area and do a few other things around the site to finish it off, once and for all. (Besides we need someplace to place our new restroom facility. Through the efforts of the "Ladies of the Night ... Sky", this should become a reality this year. The area in question would be a great area for parking, to keep the field more open, and much more convenient for visitors for our orientations every Month.

Another Idea, and mind you these are only ideas, I would like to see some bushes placed along the border, This would help with any traffic lights that might be obtrusive and also would create a border around the property to help secure it. Anyone who's "weeding out" some overgrown bushes, berry bushes would be good, I think. Let me know.

The annex should be started in spring to help with making the site a little more convenient in the "buggy times of the year" and it looks like that project could use some help also. Anyway, just some food for thought... We have a large club so why not see if anyone can help? (Besides we really do have a nice time, doing it Believe it or not... The Villa Rica site has taken a major facelift already, just needs a little more TLC to finish it off and make it quite a comfortable facility...

Anyone interested in helping with any of these projects please contact Chrissy, e-mail address <[Chrissy@nightsky.org](mailto:Chrissy@nightsky.org)>. or Keith Burns <[keith\\_b@bellsouth.net](mailto:keith_b@bellsouth.net)>.

Thanks to all,

Chrissy :o)

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## NightSky.Org

The Focal Point is available in color online in PDF format. The free Adobe(R) Reader allows you to view, navigate, and print PDF files across all major computing platforms. PDF stands for Portable Document Format. The reader, Adobe Acrobat, can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com>. This is a *free* product. More information is available at the ADOBE web site.

Visit **NightSky.Org/AAC** on the web. In a private sub-web, the past year of Focal Points can be found. Check it out. If it works for you, send me an e-mail and I will sending you a copy snail-mail. It will also save the club a dollar. The Focal-Point web can be entered by using the Username or AAC and as password of polaris. These names a case sensitive! Type AAC in capitals, type polaris in lower case.

## Blue Moon Program

**By Richard Blackburn**

The Blue Moon program held Friday 29 Jan 1999 at the Charlie Elliot Wildlife Area was an overwhelming success. This, even though it was overcast and an announcement had been made at both schools that due to the weather there would be no telescopes set up for viewing the moon. There were approximately 262 people that showed up to hear the presentation. Kimberly, who was working at the registration desk, said there were some people who didn't sign in.

Phil, our illustrious leader, did at least five presentations of the slide show/talk about the moon. He did an excellent job, and is to be commended! Thanks Phil! He managed to answer everyone's questions, and was still going strong at 10PM when the last slide show ended.

Phil, Richard, Keith, Phil, Gil, to name just a few, were present from the club. The members set up their telescopes for the public to look at. There was even a brief (very brief) period where the moon peered out of the clouds and a few people got to look at it through the telescopes. Phil did an excellent job talking to everyone and answering questions about the telescopes. *Visit the web site to see some of the pictures, and see how many members you can name!*

The plans are to do another of these in March, and possibly add one in February. I encourage everyone to come out and help. Speaking for myself, and I think everyone else... "A good time was had by all!"

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## Sidewalk Astronomy Report

**By Mark Banks**

### Stargazing

On Wednesday, January 27, we did a stargaze for the Dean Rusk Middle School, Canton, Georgia. This was our third try after being rained out on previous attempts. We had a great night with clear skies and about 150 people came out to stargaze. We had four telescopes set up. The students and their parents were very impressed. I am sure that we will get some new members as a result of our efforts.

We are now approaching our peak season for star party requests. If anyone would like to participate, please give me a call. (404-257-2766) We need volunteers in all geographic locations so we can cover all requests without having anyone driving long distances. If you do not have a scope or would rather not haul yours around, we still need people to come and talk or answer questions.

### Slide Show

I am in the process of putting together a slide show that can be used when visiting a school during the daytime or when a stargaze night gets rained out. I have a set of slides from the Planetary Society that is primarily our solar system. What I need to get from club members are slides of deep sky objects, comets, super novae, photos of various club functions, and amateur equipment. If you have my slides that fit into these categories please let me know. I want to put together a slide show that will promote the hobby of astronomy as well as the club.

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## 1999 Astronomy Calendars

A few calendars are left! At \$10, this is a real bargain. A couple copies of the Explore the Universe Annual have not been picked. Send me an e-mail or give me a call. First come, first served.

## Your Title

**By Your Name**

Write an article, review a book. Send in your observing notes from a session. See your name in print.

## Lunatic Observing Challenge #8

### by Lunatic #82

Hello All, and welcome to the great winter skies of February! I hope you have a copy of the #1 challenge on hand as getting the primary goal of the challenge...as many Lunar Domes as possible, is explained in the #1 challenge. Check with Keith Burns or Philip Sacco for a copy. If you are new to the club and don't know what this is all about, the Lunatic Observing Challenge incorporates the Astronomical League's 'Lunar Observing Club', and expands upon it. It is being dispensed as a monthly list for a complete year program. Completion of the list entitles you to the AL's Lunar Award, the Lunar Pin, and a signed limited edition original issue 'Reformed Calendar' based on the Lunar phases.

I hope you enjoy it!

And now for the Challenge:

### Naked Eye Targets:

1. How did the Bay of Rainbows become a bay?
2. What is considered to be the first large impact basin on the earth side of the moon?
3. Name the two youngest large prominent craters on the moon.

### Pickerings Naked Eye Challenge:

Can you see the slightly shaded area near the walled plain Sacrobosco? (This is a rated 10 of 12 challenge....)

### Binocular Targets:

1. Crater Piccolomini
2. Crater Cassini
3. Crater Autolycus
4. Crater Albategnius
5. Crater Mitchell

### Telescope Targets:

1. Craters Hesiodus and Hesiodus A - What is unique about these two craters?
2. Crater Regiomontanus - What unique about the central peak?
3. Crater Timocharis- What happened to the central peak in this crater?
4. Challenge: Crater Wargentini - What makes this crater different from most other craters on the moon?

Good Luck and don't forget the Lunar Domes.....a fairly good listing of them is available in Challenge #1.

## Ladies of the Night ... Sky

### By Sharon Carruthers

Greetings to the Ladies (and Gents!) of Astronomy. We are heading into a very busy and exciting time for the AAC. The Peach State, our new scope, public viewing at CEWC (which has taken off like a California brushfire!) and our first public talk for the Ladies at Tallulah Falls.

1) The Ladies have been invited to Tallulah Falls to talk about "Women in Astronomy" on **MARCH 20<sup>th</sup>**. Keith Burns is trying to set up a Dark Sky event for that weekend for the Club. I have some wonderful material from the Pacific Ast Society; but if you have any info or experience in public speaking on this topic, PLEASE get in touch with me.

2) PSSG Pancake Breakfast - was such a success last year that we are doing a re-run. All willing and available hands, MALE and FEMALE, are called to K.P. duty Saturday morning.

3) PSSG Kids' "Celestial Scavenger Hunt" - if you like working with kids, talk to me about staging an astronomy related activity for the 12 or so children who we expect will show up at the PSSG. I am looking for ideas.

4) Soap, Soap, Soap - We would like to sell some of our soap at the PSSG. We will be getting together to make soap & set some future goals at my house on the Monday before the General Meeting: **Monday Feb 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. 3401 Velvet Creek Dr., Marietta, ph. 770-319-8970**

FUTURE GOALS - to set up training sessions on scope use (especially the new 24" Tectron, when it comes. Art Russell has (bravely) volunteered to train us.) This would get us off the sidelines in using our own equipment and enable us to take a lead in training new members. Got any more ideas? Come out to the meeting!

### The Big Dob is Coming!! The Big Dob is Coming!!

We have ordered our new scope - a 24" Tectron complete with Telrad & SkyCommander, to arrive May 1<sup>st</sup>. It will cost about \$7,000 (including ladder and eyepieces, etc.). Half of the cost will come from the Dark Sky Fund and half from donations & fundraising.. We need to raise \$2,000 - \$2,500. (But the more we raise, the less we need to take from our Dark Sky Fund.) Phil Bracken has offered to match the largest single donation up to \$500. So far our fundraising has brought in \$735:

Personal Donations	\$460
Telescope Raffle	\$150
J.Armstrong Sketch Raffle	\$125

Coffee mugs are on order; with the proceeds dedicated to the Big Dob fund.

If only 1/3 of our 300 Club members donated \$25 we could raise \$2,500 for less than an evening at a bad astronomy movie like "Deep Impact" or "Armageddon"! (And why go to the Outback when you could donate \$50 to the AAC and have a bowl of Harold & Claudia Champ's chicken noodle soup at some Dark Sky event!). Donors at the levels of \$25 (Lunar); \$100 (Solar); \$250 (Galactic) or \$500 (SuperNova) will receive a certificate and have their names engraved on a plaque at the William Calder Observatory.

For information contact:

Sharon Carruthers 770-319-8970 [macumber@bellsouth.net](mailto:macumber@bellsouth.net)

Phil Bracken 770-941-6517 [philb@mindspring.com](mailto:philb@mindspring.com)

Karen Simmons 404-292-6447 [info2000@mindspring.com](mailto:info2000@mindspring.com)

## February Observing Notes

Directions to the February deep sky sessions are in this focal point. The location for the DSS is Jim Wyrosdick's place up in Dalonega. The DSS occurs Saturday, February 13.

Here are a few rules that anyone attending a DSS should follow. 1) Rule one is no white light(s) on the observing field. Use only red lights. One exception is if everyone is packing up and leaving. Another exception is if there is a medical emergency. 2) Second for those who plan to leave early, park your car on the edge of the observing field with your headlights facing away from the observing field. 3) Third when you are leaving, please honk your car horn. This is to let everyone know that you are turning your lights on. This allows people to shield their eyes and/or finish an exposure if they are doing astro photography. 4) Fourth ask someone to guide you out.

When you are at a club event, please wear your name badge. Because of the large number of people in this club now, the badges are a way for everyone to know who you are. With a few exceptions, most people cannot remember 300 or more names. The club is making every member a new name badge. This is a one-man operation so it may be a while before some members get theirs. Please be patient. Peter Macumber is making the badges and may have already made yours. Next time you see him, please ask him if he has your name badge. *(As of this past week, I have all badges printed and laminated, unless you joined in the past couple of weeks. I always carry them in my van, just ask. Peter)*

The Ladies of the Night...Sky has been asked to do a talk on women in astronomy. The officials up at Tallulah Gorge have invited them to do this talk on March 20 TH. This happens to be the same night as the deep sky session. So as a way to support their cause, we are scheduling the DSS in the area. Ladies of the Night...Sky will do their talk at the camp and then join the rest of the AAC members afterward for a night of observing. Right now (Jan. 31) there isn't confirmation of the exact location yet. I will keep you informed of the final location. I hope we don't have to hold the DSS elsewhere.

The eight-inch Mak telescope finally has a dome now. It will be named in honor of its maker Ralph Bowman. Ralph said he got the design idea from an article in Sky and Telescope. This is the first building on the site that really looks like a dome. Of course, now we need a few more eyepieces to go with this great planetary scope. It has an 8.8-mm eyepiece. I'm asking for donations of eyepieces. These eyepieces are for this scope only. We also need an eyepiece case built for this scope. The Mak is no longer stored in the main observatory. Remember that any donations are tax deductible since we are a nonprofit organization.

I'm looking for people who are interested in helping me out with the observing chairman's duties. This job has gotten too big for one person to handle. We have decided that it is time to have one person for each observatory other than the observing chairman. This person is known as the supervisor. The supervisor runs all activities at the observatory and reports to the observing chairman (whoever that is). This is a great way for anyone interested in running for observing chairman to get some experience. Right now, Walter Barber is our only observatory but that situation could change in the next year or two. I'm also looking for several people who can do checkouts on the observatory. These positions are for you experienced members who know how to use the 20-inch, 8 inch and 10 inch club scopes. I have one person who has volunteered to do it but I need several more people. If you are interested in helping, please call me (at 770-426-1797) or email me (at [Keith\\_B@Bellsouth.net](mailto:Keith_B@Bellsouth.net)). These jobs are very important and don't require a lot of your time either.

I was going to feature some planets and deep sky stuff to look at but it has to be clear for that to happen. If you know of a weekend that will have clear skies, please let the rest of us know. For those times when it is clear, look for these planets up in the sky in February. Mercury is visible in the western horizon at evening twilight. Venus sets at 8 P.M. Mars rises to the east at 11 P.M. Look for Mars in the constellation Virgo. Jupiter sets around 8 P.M. and Saturn

sets at 11 P.M. Jupiter is in the constellation of Aquarius and Saturn is in the constellation of Pisces.

The moon phases fall on the following dates. Last quarter occurs on February 8. New moon is on February 16. First quarter occurs on February 22.

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## Directions to Milkyway (Jim Wyrosdick's residence)

Take GA 400 north to end of divided road. Turn left onto GA 60. Proceed for 5 miles to first traffic light. Turn right onto US 19/Ga 60 and proceed to and through next traffic light. Continue on for another 2 ½ miles. Turn left onto Business 60 south. There is a country Cupboard convenience store on the left. Proceed on Bus 60 for a ½ mile to Martin Head Circle Road. It is just behind a small apartment building called North Side Apartments. Turn right onto Martin Head Circle. Proceed for 4/10 th of a mile. Turn left onto Duffy Grizzle Road. Proceed for 1 mile to Fred Ash Road. Turn right onto Fred Ash Road. Proceed for ½ a mile to Milkyway. Turn left onto Milkyway and proceed down drive, which is between two rows of pine trees. Pull around left side of Barn. If you have equipment, through the gate and onto the horse rink on left after passing barn. If you don't have equipment, park in grassy area on left, after passing the barn.

### Alternative route for those coming from Cherokee and Cobb counties.

Take I-575 north to Exit 10(GA 20 Cumming). Exit interstate to the right after passing under bridge. Turn left at end of exit ramp. Take GA 20 east to Cumming. Upon reaching downtown Cumming, proceed on GA 20 for another 2 miles to GA 400. Take GA 400 north. Then follow above directions.

### Alternative routes for those coming from Gwinnett and DeKalb counties.

Take GA 120 east from I-85 to GA 141. Turn right onto GA 141 and take it north to GA 400. Take GA 400 north. Then follow above directions.

Take I-985 north to GA 20(Exit 1). Turn left onto GA 20 and take it to GA 400. Then take GA 400 north. Then follow above directions.

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## Directions to Sharon Carruthers' place: 3401 Velvet Creek Dr., Marietta

**From I75** - exit west on Windy Hill, and drive until it ends at Austell Rd., Turn south (left) down Austell Rd. to Amy Lane (may be Brown's Line on the map!), this is the first set of lights below Pair Rd.; turn right onto Amy Lane. The first street you come to on the right is Velvet Creek Drive, in the Hidden Creek sub-division. It is the first house on the left, with two white pillars on a brickfront house.

**From I285** - exit at South Cobb Dr.; proceed north up South Cobb to the East West Connector. Go west on the connector until you reach Austell Rd. Approximately two miles north on Austell Rd is Amy Lane on the left.

**From I20** -exit at Thornton Rd and proceed north. Just past the mall with Krogers is Maxham Rd. Go north on Maxham. Maxham becomes Austell Rd. Approximately eight miles north of Thornton Rd is Amy Lane.

Call if further help is needed!

## Club Officers

Phil Sacco	President	404-296-6332
	<i>ppsacco@mindspring.com</i>	
Rich Jakiel	VP Program Chairman	
	<i>deepsky@mindspring.com</i>	
Keith Burns	VP Observing Chairman	770-427-1475
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Sharon Carruthers	Treasurer	770-319-8970
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Wm Bower	Recording Secretary	770-723-9891
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## Board of Directors

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Art Russell	Chairman of the Board	404-373-4119
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Gil Shillcutt	Amature Telescope Makers	404-467-1437
	<i>Gil.Shillcutt@choicpointinc.com</i>	
Tracy Wilson	A.T.M.	770-270-9402
	<i>tracy2@mindspring.com</i>	

## Standing Committees

Richard Blackburn	Membership	770-801-9759
	<i>rblackburn@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
*****	Club Graphics	***_***_****
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>	
Chrissy Mondel	Ladies of the Night ... Sky	404-296-6332
	<i>cbrissy@NightSky.Org</i>	

## AAC CALENDAR of EVENTS

February 05, Friday	ATM	Bradley
February 12, Friday	Bradley Open House	Bradley
February 13, Saturday	ATM Workshop	Bradley
February 13, Saturday	Deep Sky	Milkyway
February 19, Friday	General Meeting	Emory White Hall
February 20, Saturday	Orientation	Villa Rica
February 26, Friday	Public Stargaze	CEWC
February 27, Saturday	ATM Workshop	Bradley
March 05, Friday	ATM	Bradley
March 19, Friday	General Meeting	Emory White Hall
March 20, Saturday	Deep Sky	Talluah Gorge
March 26, Friday	Public Stargaze	CEWC
March 27, Saturday	Orientation	Villa Rica
April 10, Saturday	Orientation	Villa Rica
April 15, Thursday	Peach State	Indian Springs
April 16, Friday	Peach State	Indian Springs
April 17, Saturday	Peach State	Indian Springs
April 18, Sunday	Peach State	Indian Springs

## Focal Point

March's Focal Point will be published on March 1<sup>st</sup>, please submit your articles by February 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Atlanta Astronomy Club**  
**Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>**

**White Hall, Emory University**

**Refreshments from 7:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

Join other club members before the meeting for some light refreshments.

**General Meeting - 8:00 PM**

**Galaxy Morphology 1999**

**Dr. Ronald Buta, of the University of Alabama.**

A discussion of how modern technology has changed our views about the meanings of various aspects of galaxy morphology and structure, as well as how it has impacted our ability to detect galaxies where it was once hard to detect them.

View some really fine HST images plus some interesting ground-based images of galaxies in the IC 342/Maffei group, as well as a host of other galaxy types.

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**ATM 16" Mirror notes**

By Tracy Wilson, Amateur Optician and Telescope builder.

As most of you know the club has been busy with the grinding of a 16" full thickness mirror. We have worked very hard to generate the correct curve into the Pyrex glass. On Saturday we finished "hogging" out the mirror and thereby ending the #80 grit. It is now at F6. It has taken 14 to 16 hours of work er...fun and 6 or 7 pounds of grit. At the next session we will continue to grind, but with smaller sized grit (#120). If all goes to plan we can expect to have 1.5 hours per grit size until we finish fine grinding with 3 micron.

Sizes will include #120, #220, #320, 30 micron, 12 micron, and finally 3 micron at which point we will begin to polish, then figure the optical surface to within 2 millionths of an inch from ideal or better.

Many thanks go to all the people that take part in this. There is a core group that seems to always be there and always some new faces. All are welcome to join in the fun. See you on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 9:00 am in the basement of the Observatory at Agnes Scott.

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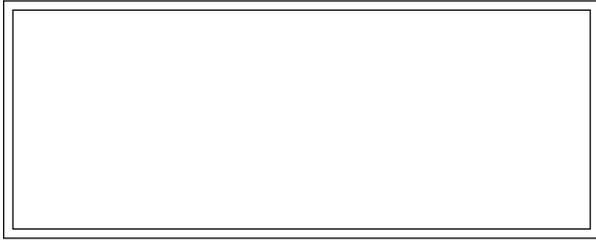
The Atlanta Astronomy Club Inc., the South's largest and oldest astronomical society, meets at 8:00 p.m. on the third Friday of each month at Emory University's White Hall or occasionally at other locations (check the hot line for details). Membership is open to all. Annual dues are \$25 (\$10 for students). Discounted subscriptions to Astronomy, and Sky & Telescope magazines are available.

**Hot Line: Timely information on the night sky and astronomy in the Atlanta area is available on a twenty-four hour basis on the**

**Atlanta Astronomy Club hot line: 770-621-2661.**

**Internet Home Page: <http://stlsipb.gtri.gatech.edu/astrotxt/atlaastro.html>**

**FIRST CLASS**



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

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