

The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
Established 1947
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Editor: Kat Sarbell

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December Christmas Pot Luck Dinner

By Keith "Kosmic Kow" Burns and Sharon Carruthers, AAC Treasurer

Our Holiday Pot Luck Dinner (the December General Meeting) will be on SATURDAY DECEMBER 15th from 5 PM - 10 PM in the Atrium of the Math and Science Building, Emory University (across the street from White Hall). We will supply the turkey, hams and drinks. We ask that attendees bring a covered dish that will feed from 8-10 people. Please, contact me (Sharon Carruthers) at Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org or phone at 404-843-9610 (work #) if you plan to attend, the number of attendees in your party (EVERYONE is WELCOME!!) & what dish you plan to bring. Some Suggestions: Appetizers: chips, pretzels & dip; veggies & dip; cheese & crackers. Sides: Salads (greens, pasta, jellied); green bean casserole; sweet potato casserole; peas; corn; potatoes. Desserts: pies; cookies; cake; squares. Don't let my suggestions limit you. I especially like family favorites & ethnic dishes that you serve your family on the holidays!

After we finish eating, the second part of the evening is a special program to be given in the Planetarium upstairs by Keith Burns with technical help by Alex Langoussis. The program title is, "Mars: Exploration in Pictures



Mars by Rich Jakiel.

Rich took this image on November 21st at 07:22UT with a 12" LX200 at f/24 and a DMK 21AF04.AS from his observatory at Douglasville, GA. Image data: 3600 frames at 30 fps - RGB. Seeing - Very Good 8(10), Transparency - 5(10), Mars' Diameter=14.18", CM=269, P=0.948.

and Music." (*Editor's Note: Mars is at opposition on the 24th*). There will be a few surprises. Yes, some will border on crowd abuse but that is all part of the fun. I hope to see many faces at dinner and after the dinner show in the Planetarium. If time permits and the crowd can take it after what I throw at them, Alex has offered to do a brief planetarium show on what is visible in the December sky. Just don't tell him I said that.

Come for an evening of food, socializing, entertainment, a little education, and a chance to get away from the stores for once during this holiday season. We could use a bit of help setting up chairs and tables at 5 PM and breaking down at the end of the evening. Won't take long. I promise. It's amazing what a group of people can do in just a few minutes.

Upcoming Meetings and Speakers

Dr Richard Schmude will speak at the January meeting on Jan 18th. Dr Chris DePree will speak on Feb 15th. There will be information next month on the programs these speakers will present.

Important Notice - The AAC Board has decided that effective immediately the dues for new and renewing members who receive the MAILED version of the *Focal Point* will increase by \$5.00 per year. This is due to increased printing and mailing costs for the printed *Focal Point*. The dues will remain the same for members who receive the on-line newsletter.

The Astronomical League

As a member of the **Atlanta Astronomy Club** you are automatically also a member of the **Astronomical League**, a nation wide affiliation of astronomy clubs. Membership in the AL provides a number of benefits for you. They include:

- * You will receive *The Reflector*, the AL's quarterly newsletter.
- * You can use the Book Service, through which you can buy astronomy-related books at a 10% discount.
- * You can participate in the Astronomical League's Observing Clubs. The Observing Clubs offer encouragement and certificates of accomplishment for demonstrating observing skills with a variety of instruments and objects. These include the Messier Club, Binocular Messier Club, the Herschel 400 Club, the Deep Sky Binocular Club, and many others.

To learn more about the Astronomical League and its benefits for you, visit <http://www.astroleague.org>

November Meeting Minutes

A Proposal For Changing General Meeting Dates

By Keith Burns

History so far. Discussed on board list for several weeks in first few weeks of November. Posted to the other lists on November 15th, 2007. Presented to the membership for information purposes providing information and getting feedback at the November meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club on Nov 16th, 2007. Those in attendance approved the idea even though a vote was not taken.



Club president Peter Macumber (left) turns the meeting over to Keith Burns (right), who begins the discussion concerning the proposed new meeting schedule for the club.

What will this involve?

1. Schedule the general membership meetings for the 2-week period time of the month when the moon is in 1st quarter or full moon phase.
2. We will NOT schedule any Friday night meetings during the 3rd quarter or new moon phase time of the lunar month.
3. The meetings will still be scheduled for Friday night like we always do. Just not always on the 3rd Friday.
4. The holiday exemption rule still applies. If a holiday falls during the time the meeting would normally fall, then we schedule the meeting to avoid conflict with the holiday.

Why Change the meeting nights to 1st quarter or full moon?

1. Our hobby does in fact involve many folks going out observing.
2. This keeps the dark time of the month free for observing.
3. Less people are out observing during the 1st quarter and full moon phase.
4. This will encourage more people to attend the meetings as a result.
5. We will also be able to get more amateur and professional astronomers to come speak at the meetings.

What about?

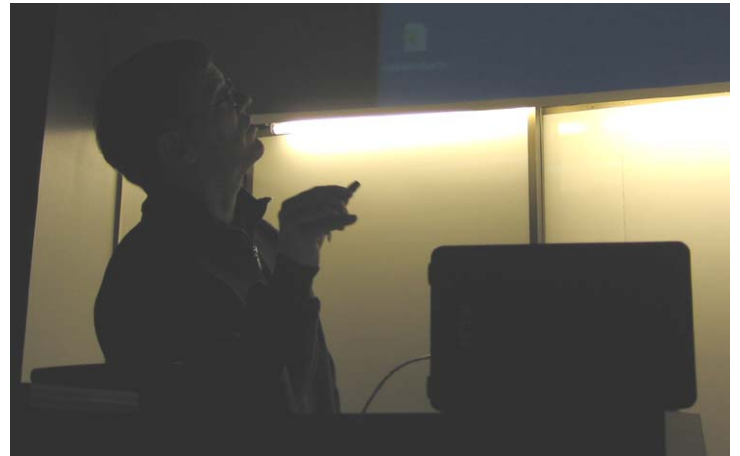
1. The calendar can be posted a year or so in advance. All the dates set way in advance.
2. We can advertise this information by: mentioning it at the meetings, post the dates in our club newsletters, on the AAC listserves, and on the club website. So you will have plenty of notice of when the meetings are.
3. The dates run in a repeat pattern as you will see in the calendar dates for 2008, 2009, and 2010 posted below. In other words, 4 months of 3rd Fridays followed by 3 months of 2nd Fridays and so on.

New General Meeting Calendar

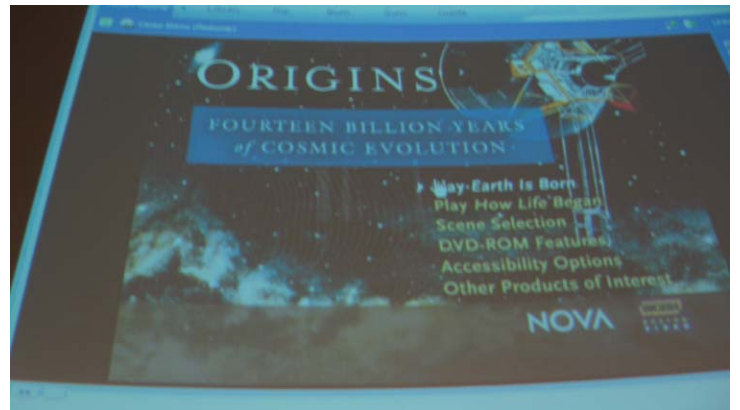
2008: Jan. 18th on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st Quarter. Feb. 15th on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st Quarter. March 21st on 3rd Friday. Full moon. April 18th on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st Quarter. May 16th on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st Quarter. June 20th on 3rd Friday. Full moon. July 18th on 3rd Friday. Full moon. Aug 15th on 3rd Friday. Full moon. Sept 19th on 3rd Friday. Past full moon. Oct. 17th on 3rd Friday. Past full moon. Nov. 14th on 2nd Friday. Full moon. Dec. 12th - 13th on 2nd Friday or Saturday. Full moon.

2009: Jan 16th on 3rd Friday. Past full moon. Feb 13th on 2nd Friday. Just past full moon. March 13th on 2nd Friday. Full moon. April 10th on 2nd Friday. Full moon. May 8th on 2nd Friday. Full moon. June 12th on 2nd Friday. Past full moon. July 10th on 2nd Friday. Past full moon. Aug 7th on 1st Friday. Full moon. Sept 11th on 2nd Friday. 3rd quart. Conflict with Labor Day weekend. Oct. 9th on 2nd Friday. Past full moon. Nov. 6th on 1st Friday. Past full moon. Dec. 4th- 5th on 1st Friday or Saturday.

2010: Jan. 22nd On 4th Friday. 1st quarter. Feb. 26th on 4th Friday. Full moon. March 26th on 4th Friday. Just past 1st quarter. April 23rd on 4th Friday. Just past 1st quarter. May 21st on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st quarter. June 18th on 3rd Friday. 1st quarter. July 23rd on 4th Friday. Just past 1st quarter. Aug 20th on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st quarter. Sept. 17th on 3rd Friday. Just past 1st quarter. Oct. 15th on 3rd Friday. 1st quarter. Nov. 19th on 3rd Friday. Full moon. Dec. 10th- 11th on 2nd Friday or Saturday.



Larry Wallace comments on the proposed new meeting schedule.



After this short business meeting the 35 members and guests present watched a program from the PBS series *Origins*.

Meeting photos by Tom Faber.



The Peach State Star Gaze 2007 Photo Gallery - Part Two!

This year, the Peach State returned to Georgia. It was held for the first time on Grier's Field at the Deer Lick Astronomy Village near Sharon, Georgia. The skies were dark and starry and crowned with the spectacular arch of the Milky Way. And you can't beat 6 and a half clear nights out of seven! PSSG Chair and club president Peter Macumber (below right) and co-chair Joanne Cirincione (below left) planned a successful event with speakers and prize drawings. The staff members and volunteers helped the week's happenings run smoothly.

Top: The club's 24" Dobsonian stands in front of the many campsites at the Peach State. Photo by Larry Wallace.



Photo of Joanne by Tom Faber; photo of Peter by Frank Marchese.



Micki's Kitchen and the shady awning was a great place for snacking and socializing. Photo by Frank Marchese.



Above: The new AAC clubhouse and observing pad are on the northwest corner of the property. The club's scope was set up on the gravel circle every night for observing. Photo by Larry Wallace.

Left: Staff and volunteers enjoy breakfast from Micki's Kitchen before setting up for the Peach State. From left to right: Joanne Cirincione, John Ritger, Mark Banks, Ray Major, Peter Macumber, Sharon Carruthers, and Holly Ritger. Photo by Tom Faber.



Left: PSSG guests check out an extensive meteorite collection. Photo by Frank Marchese.

Left: Here Joanne Cirincione helps set up the check-in station in the DAV office. Photo by Tom Faber.



Vendors kept the visitors to the Peach State busy with shopping and browsing. Photo by Frank Marchese.

Staff and volunteers seek relief from the hot sun under the cafe awning. Photo by Tom Faber.



Just about everyone set up scopes to enjoy the night skies at DAV. Photo by Frank Marchese.

Peter Macumber (left, standing) gets ready to start the prize giveaway. Photo by Frank Marchese.



A BBQ dinner for the staff and volunteers was held at Chris Hetledge's cabin on the DAV property. Harold Champ (in front of the truck with back to the camera) smoked the ribs and chicken, which were all eaten up. At the table arranging the food and plasticware are Joanne Cirincione, Sharon Carruthers, and Larry Wallace. Photo by Frank Marchese.



Tom Faber adjusts the club's scope while he observes. Photo by Frank Marchese.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

By Richard Jakiel, recording secretary

The meeting on May 13 began at 5 PM at the Bradford Map store location with 9 BOD (and 1 AAC) members in attendance.

Old Business:

1) PSSG 2007 (at DAV site) - Peter Macumber mentioned the need for a new keynote speaker and the possibility of an 'imaging theme'. The DAV bathroom (shower/toilet) facility should be installed by the PSSG.

2) Treasurer's Report - Sharon Carruthers reports that the finances are in good order.

Related items: AAC Hotline (once conducted by former AAC member Phil Sacco). Motion: Since it is no longer being utilized and is costly, it should be terminated. (Motion carries by a 9-0 vote.)

Subscriptions to S&T - Motion: Since it no longer needs to go through the treasurer, instead this can be done directly by the membership. (Motion carries by 9-0 vote.)

3) Zombie Party (Dan Herron) - A total of 840 dollars was made; this is to be split between the AAC and DAV. Pricing for next year to be \$15/day and that guests (of DAV) should also pay. Motion carries by an 8-0 vote.

4) DAV Build-out Plans (info sheets by Larry Wallace) - The location is to be prioritized along the lines of building a bunkhouse/clubhouse (using nearby power), plus the shed and observing pad(s) for the 24-inch.

Motion: The DAV build-out is to be allocated ~ 6000 dollars, prioritized along these lines. (Vote carries 9-0).

5) Focal Point (printed version) and AAC dues structure: Due to rising costs, those wanting the printed version of the FP will be charged an additional 5 dollars to be implemented next March (time of membership renewals). Vote: 9-0.

New Business:

With the slow decline of AAC membership, plus the difficulty of maintaining the current high number (12) of officers + BOD members it has been proposed to reduce the BOD from 6 to 4. One position will be eliminated in the 2008 elections, the second in 2009. However to accomplish this change it has been noted that a Bylaw change will be needed.

Summer (July-August) Meetings: Generally, the summer months of July and August have a lower than average attendance and there is a difficulty in finding decent speakers. It has been suggested that the attendance of this summer (2007) (and perhaps past records) will be closely monitored and at the findings brought up at the next (Fall) BOD meeting.

(Keith Burns will review the attendance of the AAC general meetings and conduct an informal poll along the lines of keeping or reducing the number of meetings during the summer months).

AAC Membership: There has been a long general decline in membership since the peak in the late 1990's. A question posed to the BOD - what can be done to increase membership?

- Meetings (and speaker program) has maintained generally high standards and are considered a major "plus".

- Observing Program - several sites (VR, CEWC, Woodruff and DAV) are in use. Perhaps more could be done along the lines of new member orientations and getting the general membership to attend to local events.

- Sidewalk Astronomy events

- Promotion of Event(s) - more could be done along these lines.

The BOD has proposed that a "Membership Chair" needs to be appointed to address the further promotion of events and increase member participation.

GASP at Red Top Mountain

On November 3rd the GASP volunteers presented an astronomy program for the campers and visitors at Red Top Mountain State Park. While Sharon Carruthers gave a beginners astronomy talk other club members set up telescopes for over 75 guests to view Jupiter, Comet Holmes, and many other objects. Members assisting in addition to Sharon were Keith Burns, Peter Macumber, Kat Sarbell, Tom Faber, Daniel and Misty Herron, Holly and John Ritger, and several others. Photos by Tom Faber.



Volunteers set up telescopes behind the Red Top lodge.



Kat Sarbell sets up her Astroscan. She was soon surrounded by kids wanting to see Comet Holmes.



Keith Burns observes with his scope in twilight before the visitors arrive.

Charlie Elliott Chapter Meeting Minutes

by Clevis Jones, CE Recording Secretary

(Minutes have been edited for space constraints.)

ATTENDANCE: Twenty-seven guests and members attended the November 3rd meeting at the Charlie Elliott Visitor's Center.

BUSINESS: Director, Larry Owens, opened the meeting by reminding everyone of Mars close approach the night of December 18-19 with opposition the night of December 24th. He gave the status of our telescope "baby-sitting" program.

The 2008 schedule for the CE Meetings is: Jan. 19, Feb. 9, Mar. 8, Apr. 5, May 17 (JAKE'S DAY & Election of Officers), Jun. 7, Jul. 26, Aug. 30, Sep. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 29, Dec. 27.

The feature presentation was "MARS" by Dr. Richard Schmude, Jr. "What's Up Tonight" was given by Steve Bieger, and "Current Events" were reported by Clevis Jones. Additional images and reports were added by Jon Wood, Jim Honeycutt, Theo Ramakers, Larry Owens, and Angela Poore.

OBSERVING SESSION: What can I say, a perfect night of viewing with lots of telescopes and people: about 50 members, guests and students!

Charlie Elliot Meeting Dates and Programs

December 15, 3:00 p.m. - the winter schedule. POT LUCK with Feature Presentation by Larry Owens, "Planetary Imaging Workshop" - everyone welcome, bring your images!

Place: Charlie Elliott Visitor's Center

January meeting: TBD

For Meeting updates, Directions, Links, & Live broadcasts: Please check the CEastronomy website for the most current information see <http://www.CEastronomy.org>

Bradley Observatory Open House Series 2007-2008

Amateur Astronomy - Unlike nuclear physics or space flight, astronomy is a scientific discipline to which those without advanced degrees in the subject can and do make significant contributions. An amateur is defined as "a person who engages in a study for pleasure rather than for financial benefit or professional reasons." This year, we will hear from and about a number of "amateur" astronomers, and the contributions that they have made, and are making to our understanding of the universe. All lectures will be held at 8PM at Bradley Observatory on the Agnes Scott College campus. Afterwards there will be a planetarium show and observing with the 30-inch Beck Telescope (weather permitting).

December 14, 2007: "The Stonehenge Observatory" - Dan Reichert (UNC Chapel Hill).

February 8, 2008: "Comets and the Meteor Shower Connection" - Amy Lovell (Agnes Scott College).

March 7, 2008: "How to Make a Telescope" - Ed Abin (Fernbank Science Center).

March 21, 2008: W. A. Calder Spring Equinox Concert and Open House.

April 11, 2008: "NASA's Dawn Mission: Exploring the Asteroid Frontier" - Lucy A. McFadden (University of Maryland).

May 9, 2008: Kevin Marvel (American Astronomical Society).

For additional information including directions to Bradley Observatory visit <http://bradley.agnesscott.edu>.

Georgia Astronomy in State Parks (GASP) Events

The GASP events for 2008 are being planned. Scheduled so far is:

March 29th - Tallulah Gorge State Park.

For more information about these events, contact Joanne Cirincione at Starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org.



The GASP volunteers at FDR State Park on Labor Day weekend 2004 - From left to right: Joanne Cirincione, Keith Burns, Harold and Claudia Champ with Ginger, Peter Macumber, Sharon Carruthers, Tom Faber, Kat Sarbell, and Holly and John Ritger. Photo by Holly Ritger.

Directions to White Hall at Emory

Our meetings are generally held in a classroom in White Hall. To get to White Hall, turn onto Dowman Drive from North Decatur Road at the five way intersection (across from Everybody's Pizza). White Hall is located across from the new Science & Math building. Parking is available along Dowman Drive on both sides of the road. **The parking lot on the left behind the Admissions Building may be closed.** Additional parking is available in two parking decks near White Hall. For maps to the decks see <http://map.emory.edu>. For more detailed directions to Emory University, visit www.atlantaastronomy.org or go to the Emory web site.

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 or times. Membership is open to all. Membership fees are **\$30 (\$35)** for a family or single person membership. College Students membership fee is **\$15 (\$20)**. These fees are for a one year membership (\$5 per year extra charge to receive the *Focal Point* mailed).

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.

AAC Officers and Contacts

President: Peter Macumber 770-941-4640
president@atlantaastronomy.org

Program Chair: Vacant programs@atlantaastronomy.org

Observing Chair: Daniel Herron 770-330-9679
observing@atlantaastronomy.org

Corresponding Secretary: Kat Sarbell 770-518-7061
focalpoint@atlantaastronomy.org

Treasurer: Sharon Carruthers Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Recording Secretary: Rich Jakiel
secretary@atlantaastronomy.org

Board: Tom Crowley 404-233-6886 crowleytj@hotmail.com

Board: Brad Isley - Contact Info TBA

Board: Larry Wallace - 770-888-3259 Larry@Wallace-Eng.com

Board: Marc Sandberg 404-531-4227 sandberg235@earthlink.net

Board: Gil Shillcutt - Contact Info TBA

Board: Mark Banks - Contact Info TBA

ALCOR: Art Zorka 404-633-8822 (H) 404-824-7106 (C)
star.myth@juno.com

Elliott Ch. Director: Larry Owens planetographer@comcast.com

Elliott Observing Supervisor: Steve Bieger - 770-457-9148
sbieger@bellsouth.net

Elliott Recording Secretary: Clevis Jones cjones@aaahawk.com

Elliott Coordinator: Alesia Rast Alesia_Rast@mail.dnr.state.ga.us

Elliott Webmaster: Larry Owens planetographer@comcast.net

The Telescope Workshop: Dan Llewellyn 404-735-9661 or 404-633-7562 zoser@mindspring.com

Georgia Astronomy in State Parks: Joanne Cirincione 404-824-4751
starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Light Trespass: Marc Sandberg 404-531-4227
sandberg235@earthlink.net

AL Observing Programs Assistance: Keith Burns 770-427-1475
Keith_B@bellsouth.net

PSG Chairman: Peter Macumber pmacumber@nightsky.org

Co-Chair: Joanne Cirincione starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Sidewalk Astronomy: Brad Isley
sidewalkastronomy@atlantaastronomy.com

Woodruff Observ. Coordinator: Sharon Carruthers
Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Webmaster Atlanta Astronomy: Peter Macumber 770-941-4640
pmacumber@nightsky.org

Atlanta Astronomy Club Website

While this newsletter is the official information source for the Atlanta Astronomy Club, it is only up to date the day it is printed. So if you want more up to date information, go to our club's website. The website contains pictures, directions, membership applications, events updates (when available) and other information. <http://www.atlantaastronomy.org>

Calendar by Tom Faber (All times EST unless noted)

- December 1st, Saturday: Moon Last Quarter.
December 7th, Friday: Earliest Sunset (~5:27 PM EST at Atlanta).
December 7th, Saturday: **DSO at location TBA - Contact Daniel Herron for details.**
December 9th, Sunday: New Moon.
December 14th, Friday: Bradley Obser. Open House, 8PM. See pg 6 for details. Geminid Meteors.
December 15th, Saturday: **AAC Meeting & Potluck Dinner, 6PM, Science & Math Building, Emory University. See pg 1. CEC Meeting. See pg 6.**
December 17th, Monday: Moon First Quarter.
December 18th, Tuesday: Mars nearest Earth.
December 22nd, Saturday: Solstice at 1:08AM.
December 23rd, Sunday: Full Moon - near Mars.
December 24th, Monday: Mars Opposition.
December 25th, Tuesday: **Merry Christmas!**
December 31st, Monday: Moon Last Quarter.
January 2nd, Wednesday: Earth at Perihelion.
January 3rd, Thursday: Quadrantid Meteors.
January 4th, Friday: Latest Sunrise (~7:42 AM EST at Atlanta). Moon near Venus.
January 5th, Saturday: **DSO at location TBA - Contact Daniel Herron for details.**
January 8th, Tuesday: New Moon.
January 15th, Tuesday: Moon First Quarter.
January 17th, Thursday: Moon near Pleiades.
January 18th, Friday: **AAC Meeting at White Hall, 8PM, Emory University.**
January 19th, Saturday: **CEC Meeting. See pg 6.** Moon near Mars.
January 21st, Monday: Mercury Greatest Eastern Elongation.
January 22nd, Tuesday: Full Moon.
January 24th, Thursday: Moon near Regulus.

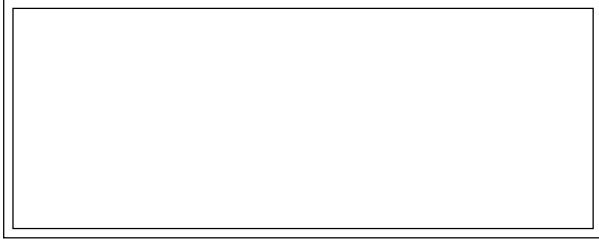
Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserve

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 . This list is owned by Lenny Abbey.

Focal Point Deadline and Submission Information

Please send articles, pictures, and drawings in electronic format on anything astronomy related to Kat Sarbell at focalpoint@atlantaastronomy.org. Please send images separate from articles, not embedded in them. Articles are preferred as plain text files but Word documents are okay. You can submit articles anytime up and including the deadline date. **The deadline for January is Thursday, December 27th at 4:00 PM ... Submissions will no longer be accepted after the dead-**

FIRST CLASS



The Focal Point

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

FROM:

Kat Sarbell

506 Treeridge Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30022

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

Atlanta Astronomy Club

P.O. Box 76155

Atlanta, GA 30358-1155

www.atlantaastronomy.org