

The Focal Point

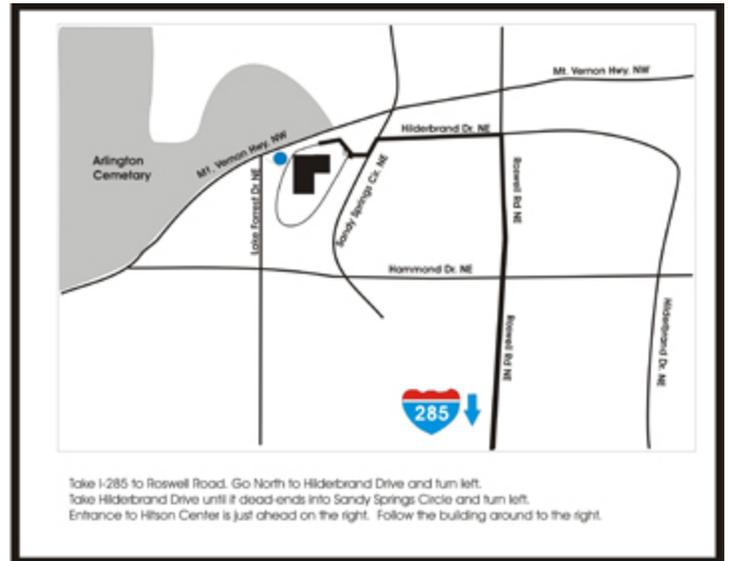
Vol. 24 No. 7

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
Established 1947
December 2011

Editor: Tom Faber

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December Meeting and Potluck Dinner

By Sharon Carruthers, AAC Treasurer

Once again, it is time to plan for our “Yummiest Meeting of the Year” - our Holiday Potluck! This year it will be on Saturday December 10th. Our new location will be the Parlor Room, at the Hitson Center, in the Sandy



Springs Methodist Church, 86 Mt Vernon Hwy, NE, Sandy Springs, GA 30328 (see map on right).

We will start serving at 6:30PM and run until 8PM, followed by our two guest speakers. Club members Chris Hetlage and Daniel Herron will present their images of the last few Space Shuttle launches.

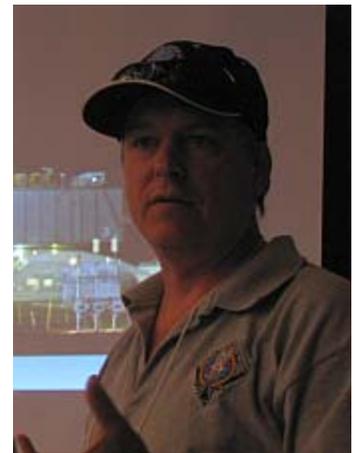
The AAC will provide the main courses of turkey and ham, and also

provide coffee, tea, and soft drinks. We ask for contributions of appetizers, side dishes, or desserts - items that will provide 6-8 servings. Family and ethnic favorite dishes are especially welcome!

PLEASE let me know the dish you are bringing by email at: Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org or phone at 770-941-4640 so I can keep track of what is being brought and what we still need. I will update the list on the AstroList regularly. (You non-cooks may consider bringing things that don't need cooking, such as cheese and crackers, chips and dip, dinner rolls, pickles or mixed salads.)

The Program:

After the dinner is over club members Chris Hetlage and Daniel Herron will present a program on their efforts to photograph the final few Space Shuttle launches. Expect a very interesting talk and many fantastic photos!



Daniel Herron (above) and Chris Hetlage (right). Photos by Tom Faber

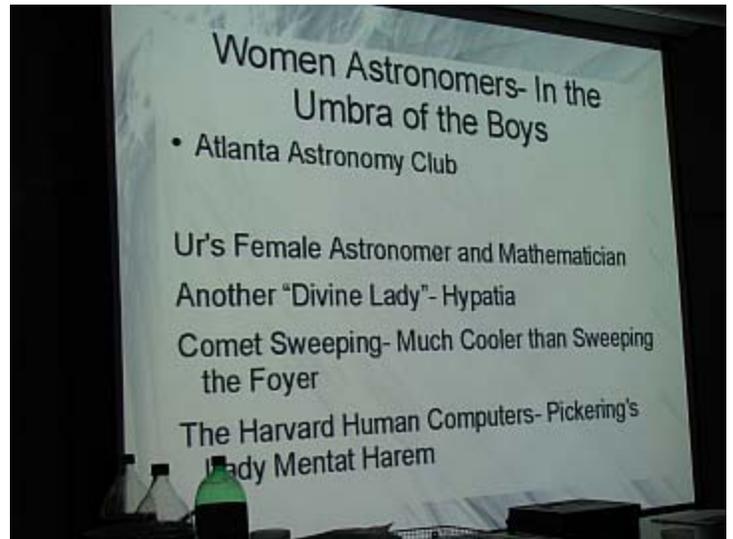
The Next AAC Board Meeting

The next Board meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club is scheduled for Saturday, December 3rd at 3PM at the Atlanta Freethought Society (AFS) building in Smyrna. Contact President Mark Banks or Board Chair Daniel Herron for more information about the meeting agenda.

November General Meeting Minutes

by Pixie Bruner, AAC Recording Secretary, Photos by Tom Faber

The November 11th meeting of the AAC was held at the Howey Physics Building at GA Tech. There were approximately 25 attendees. Refreshments were provided by the club and hosted by Sharon Carruthers. Pixie Bruner presented "Women Astronomers - In the Umbra of the Boys"- a presentation touching upon important women who were astronomers dating back to 2250 BCE. This project is part of a research project she is doing on the unsung women heroes of astronomy (our scheduled speaker had to cancel due to work commitments). After the presentation, the Howey observatory was open and offered amazing views of the city and Jupiter from the rooftop. December 3rd is the next AAC Board Meeting at 3pm and will be at the Atlanta Freethought Hall. December 10th from 6:30-10pm is the annual AAC Holiday Party and will feature an amazing multimedia presentation on the last US Space Shuttle launches and the end of the Space Shuttle program by Dan Herron and Chris Hetlage. It will be held at the club's new location at the Hitson Memorial Activities Center (86 Mt. Vernon Highway, NW. Sandy Springs, GA 30328) as part of the AAC's new and promising partnership with the city of Sandy Springs. Please RSVP to Sharon Carruthers with what dish you are bringing so there is not a globular cluster of dinner rolls and a supernova of cookies (yum!). The roast beasts will be provided by the AAC so bring sides, fingerfoods and sweets. The meeting, as always, is open to the public as the skies belong to all and our club has a duty and love of sharing and teaching about what is going on and what is up there when one looks up! The schedule of events is available at www.atlantaastronomy.org and Art Zorka has a schedule of outreach that always needs volunteers so please consider giving of your time and helping out at one of the many exciting community outreach programs the AAC is doing for Georgia. Consider making it a new years resolution to do one outreach event a month. Happy Holidays, clear skies, and see you December 10th!



Bradley Observatory Open House Series 2011-2012

Return of the Alumnae

Graduates of the Department of Physics & Astronomy have gone on to a wide range of graduate studies and careers. This year, our speakers are all returning alumnae who will tell us about their journeys since they have left Agnes Scott College, and the work or research that they are now doing. All Open Houses run from 8:00 - 10:00 PM unless noted.

December 9 - Open House Lecture Series: Active Galactic Nuclei

February 10 - Open House Lecture Series: Considering Human Factors in the Design of Multimodal Displays for NASA

March 23 - Spring Equinox and Open House Series

April 13 - Open House Lecture Series: Science Writing and Writing Science

May 11 - Open House Lecture Series: En Route to Smart Materials

For more information and updates see: <http://www.agnesscott.edu/academics/bradleyobservatory>

Charlie Elliott Chapter October Minutes

by Marie Lott, CE Chapter Recording Secretary

The October 22nd meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held in the CEWC Visitor Center in Mansfield, GA at 4 PM with twenty one people in attendance.

Alicia Rast, outgoing Charlie Elliott liaison, gave an update on overnight options at Charlie Elliott in the lodge and camping area. She also reviewed the CEWC hunting season list so that we would be aware while on the observing field (which is in the safety zone).

Frank Garner did a demonstration of how to align a German equatorial mount, followed by Larry Owens who explained drift alignment. Marie Lott gave a short presentation about the Great Star Count, currently underway, and how to estimate sky darkness using the visibility of stars in Cygnus. The web site www.starcount.org has details and instructions for submitting your own observations.

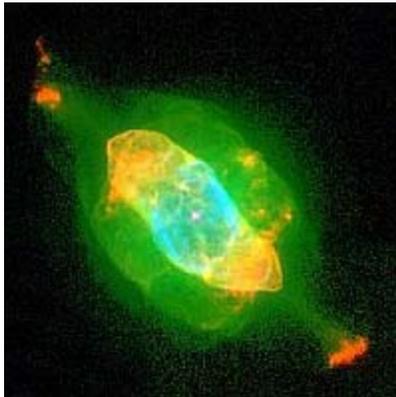
Observing supervisor Steven Phillips gave the monthly "Observing 101" talk, a highlight of current sun, moon and planet rise & set times, and observing targets. Small Telescope/Binocular Target List: double stars Albireo (Beta Cyg), Mesarthim (Gamma Ari), 61 Cyg, Gamma Del, Zeta Aqr, galaxy M31; globular clusters M2 & M15; planetary nebulas M27 & M57, NGC 7009; open clusters M39 & NGC 457.

The featured observational topic for October was Binocular Mounts. Steven reviewed the many ways to stabilize & mount your binoculars: tripod heads (included with small and medium duty tripods), "L" adapters, monopods, parallelogram mounts ("T" mounts), fork mounts, and permanent piers.

Many members adjourned to Jon Wood Astronomy Field to enjoy amazing views of Jupiter as well as a beautiful blue Uranus, a pale Neptune, and some close up view of favorite Messier objects.



*Steven Phillip's son demonstrates binocular mount.
Photo by Larry Owens.*



*NGC 7009, the Saturn Nebula.
Credit - Wikipedia Commons.*

Charlie Elliott Chapter Nov. Mtg Minutes

by Marie Lott, CE Chapter Recording Secretary

The November 5th meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held in the CEWC Visitor Center in Mansfield, GA at 4 PM with thirty-three people in attendance, including several members of the Atlanta Outdoor Club.

Dr. Julius Benton, coordinator of the ALPO (Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers) Saturn Section, presented a talk about observing and researching Saturn. He reviewed the equipment needed, sample observing forms, nomenclature, and showed many examples of outstanding "amateur" photography. His presentation may be viewed at <http://bit.ly/Benton-Saturn-talk>.

Observing supervisor Steven Phillips gave the monthly "Observing 101" talk, a highlight of current sun, moon and planet rise & set times, and observing targets.

Selected events visible during the months of November & December 2011:

Nov 1 - Dec 31 - Comet Garradd continues to travel through Hercules

Nov 8 - Asteroid 2005 YU55 closest approach

Nov 8/9 - Moon near Jupiter after sunset

Nov 9/12- Mars 1.4° north of Regulus at midnight

Nov 17 - Leonid meteor shower peaks

Nov 25 - New Moon

Nov 26 - Thin crescent moon in the southwest 4° right of Venus after sunset

Nov 28 - Asteroid Eunomia at opposition. Gliding through southern Perseus, it crosses the California nebula in late November.

Dec 7 - Mons Rumker visible on waxing gibbous moon

Dec 14 - Geminid meteor shower peaks

Small Telescope/Binocular Target List: double stars Albireo, 61 Cygni & Gamma Delphini; galaxies M31 & M33; globular clusters M2, M13 & M15; planetary nebulas M27 & M57, NGC 7009 & NGC 7662; open clusters M39, NGC 457, Trumpler 37.

The featured object for November is NGC 7009 - the Saturn Nebula (photo below left) in the constellation Aquarius, also known as Caldwell 55. Discovered by William Herschel on Sept 7, 1782, it was named the Saturn nebula by Lord Rosse in the 1840s due to its superficial resemblance to the planet Saturn with its lobes nearly edge on to the observer. The precise distance to this nebula is unknown due to a lack of reference stars in its immediate vicinity. The most recent estimated distance is 5,200 light years. The Saturn Nebula is a complex planetary nebula with multiple shells, a halo, jet streams, ansae (handles), and small scale knots and filaments. The nebula was created when a low mass star was transformed into a hot blue dwarf star and blew off its outer layers. The ultraviolet radiation from the central star is believed to create the fluorescent tint of the nebula via doubly ionized oxygen. The ansae are still expanding away from the central star. This central star has a visual magnitude of 11.5 with a temperature of 55,000K and absolute luminosity of approximately 20 suns.

A large crowd with 19 telescopes and binos made it to the Jon Wood Astronomy Field under clear skies to observe the moon, two ISS passes and the transit of the GRS and Io on Jupiter.

The next meeting of the chapter will be the quarterly potluck, followed by observing on the field, on Saturday, December 17, 2011 at 3 PM in the Charlie Elliott Visitor Center in Mansfield, GA. All are welcome.

CE Chapter Outreach Programs

by Theo Ramakers - <http://ceastronomy.org/tramakers>

Three years ago we went for the first time to Chamblee Middle School and this year we returned again with Solar outreach and a star party still to come. The second group of the Children's School of Atlanta saw the sun and the stars and learned about the solar system quite a bit. Our outreach not only focuses on Schools but also other groups, such as two Brownie troops who observed the night sky from their backyard in Atlanta. We will follow up at Panola Mountain State Park where we did introduce the visitors to the night sky in a presentation as well as observing, with the second session of a series of two early next year and the Atlanta Outdoors Club joined us for the Saturn presentation and observing the night sky at the Jon Wood field for the third year in a row. It is great to see so much activity in Astronomy Outreach in the Atlanta area. I believe the effort of the Atlantans in this regard is hard to beat. Thanks for helping out.



The PSSG 2011 Photo Gallery - Part 2

Another great Peach State Star Gaze is in the history books. We had hot weather and partly cloudy skies early in the week, but for the last few days the weather cooled off and clear skies ruled! A big thanks to PSSG Chair Peter Macumber, Sharon Carruthers, Co-Chair Joanne Cirincione (who was only able to attend the last 2 nights this year), the PSSG staff, and volunteers for organizing and running another great Peach State! On the next few pages are photos from this year's Peach State including speakers and some of the door prize winners. See you at the 2012 PSSG!!



The Peach State "Cafe at Night" with Jupiter rising. Photo by Tom Faber.



Friday evening the AAC provided brownies and ice cream to the PSSG attendees. Photo above by Frank Marchese, left by Tom Faber.



Photo Gallery continued on next page.

The PSSG 2011 Speakers

Top Row: Friday's Solar System Symposium talks were organized by Tom Wilson (photo left) who presented the first talk about how he got into planetary imaging. Tom was followed by Theo Ramakers (center) who talked about solar observing and imaging, and Richard Jakiel (right) who spoke about lunar observing and imaging. Photos by Frank Marchese.

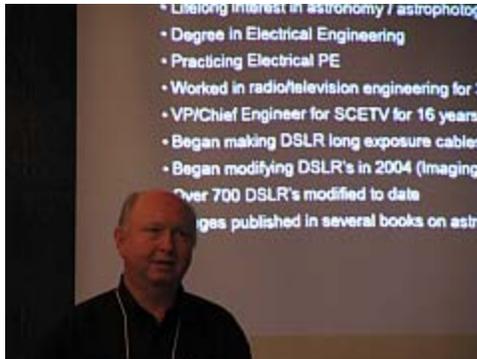
Second Row: Next up were Dan Llewelyn (photo left) and Brian Combs (center photo) who hosted a Q&A session on Advanced Planetary Imaging. They were followed by Dr. Richard Schmude (photo right) who presented a talk (and got the audience involved) on how planetary scientists use amateurs' data. Photos by Tom Faber.



The last talk on Friday was presented by Dr. Michael Covington (left) whose talk was about how to get started in planetary imaging. Photo by Tom Faber.



Saturday's talks began with Tom Crowley (left) speaking about the interstellar medium. Photos by Tom Faber.



Next up was Paul Tankersley's talk about narrow band imaging (far left - no talk image available) then Hap Griffin's talk "Intermediate Astrophotography". Photos by Tom Faber.

Photo Gallery continued on next page.

The final talks on Saturday were presented by Chris Hetlage (right) who gave a very interesting talk on his efforts to photograph the final few Space Shuttle launches. Chris was followed by Pixie Bruner (far right) who presented a talk about women astronomers of the past. Photos by Tom Faber.

Photos below - After the talks were the door prize drawings which had a full house in the speaker hall! Here are a few of the winners. Photos by Frank Marchese.



Photo Gallery continued on next page.



Observing on the last night of the PSSG. Observers line up to view through Alex Langoussis' 24-inch Dob with the crescent moon and Scorpius in the sky.



A sunny Sunday morning for attendees to pack up and head home!

The **Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.**, the South's largest and oldest astronomical society, meets at **8:00 P.M.** on the Friday closest to full moon of each month at Emory University's White Hall or occasionally at other locations or times. Membership fees are **\$30 (\$42)** for a family or single person membership. College Students membership fee is **\$15 (\$27)**. These fees are for a one year membership (\$12 per year extra charge to receive a printed *Focal Point* by mail).

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.

Atlanta Astronomy Club Online

While this newsletter is the official information source for the Atlanta Astronomy Club, it is only up to date the day it is 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 and other information. <http://www.atlantaastronomy.org> You can also follow the AAC on Facebook by joining the AAC group, and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/atlastro>.

AAC Officers and Contacts

President: Mark Banks President@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Program Chair: Richard Jakiel Programs@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Observing Chair/BoD Chair: Art Zorka

Observing@AtlantaAstronomy.org

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Focalpoint@AtlantaAstronomy.org

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Recording Secretary: Pixie Bruner

Secretary@AtlantaAstronomy.org

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Board: Brigitte Fessele, Contact info TBA

Board: David Lumpkin, Contact info TBA

Board: Theo Ramakers 770-464-3777

webmaster@CEastronomy.org

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

Elliott Webmaster: Theo Ramakers 770-464-3777

webmaster@CEastronomy.org

Georgia Astronomy in State Parks:

PSSG Chairman: Peter Macumber pmacumber@nightsky.org

PSSG Co-Chair: Joanne Cirincione

starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Sidewalk Astronomy: Brad Isley

sidewalkastronomy@AtlantaAstronomy.org

Light Trespass: Open - Contact Mark Banks if you would like to volunteer for this position

Woodruff Observ. Coordinator: Sharon Carruthers

Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org

AAC Webmaster: Daniel Herron, Contact info TBA

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

AAC Events are listed in BOLD

- December 2nd, Friday: Moon First Quarter.
- December 8th, Thursday: Earliest Sunset in Atlanta: ~5:27PM.
- December 9th, Friday: Bradley Observatory Open House, 8PM - see pg 2.
- December 10th, Saturday: Full Moon, Lunar Eclipse - partial at Atlanta.
- December 10th, Saturday: **AAC Meeting and Holiday Potluck Dinner, Hitson Center, 6PM.**
- December 13th, Tuesday: Geminid Meteors.
- December 17th, Saturday: Moon Last Quarter. **Charlie Elliott Chapter Mtg - 3PM.**
- December 22nd, Thursday: Solstice at 12:30AM. Moon near Mercury morning.
- December 23rd, Friday: Mercury at Greatest Elongation West.
- December 24th, Saturday: New Moon.
- December 26th, Monday: Moon near Venus evening.
- January 1st, Sunday: Moon First Quarter.
- January 3rd, Tuesday, Quadrantids Meteors.
- January 4th, Wednesday, Latest Sunrise in Atlanta: ~7:42 AM.
- January 6th, Friday, How To Use A Telescope, 7:30 PM, Hitson Memorial Activities Center.
- January 9th, Monday, Full Moon.
- January 12th, Thursday, Venus near Neptune evening.
- January 16th, Monday, Moon Last Quarter.
- January 20th, Friday, **AAC Meeting at Hitson Center, 8PM.**
- January 23rd, Monday, New Moon.
- January 25th, Wednesday, Moon near Venus evening.
- January 30th, Monday, Moon First Quarter.
- February 7th, Tuesday, Full Moon.
- February 9th, Thursday, Venus near Uranus evening.
- February 14th, Tuesday, Moon Last Quarter.

FIRST CLASS



www.beclage.com



The Focal Point

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

FROM:

Tom Faber

2206 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

On Twitter at <http://twitter.com/atlastro>



Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserv

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

Focal Point Deadline and Submission Information

Please send articles, pictures, and drawings in electronic format on anything astronomy, space, or sky related to Tom Faber at focalpoint@atlantaastronomy.org. Please send images separate from articles, not embedded in them. Articles are preferred as plain text files but Word documents or PDFs are okay. You can submit articles anytime up to the deadline. **The deadline for January is Sunday, December 18th. Submissions will not be accepted after the deadline.**