

# The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club  
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Editor: Tom Faber

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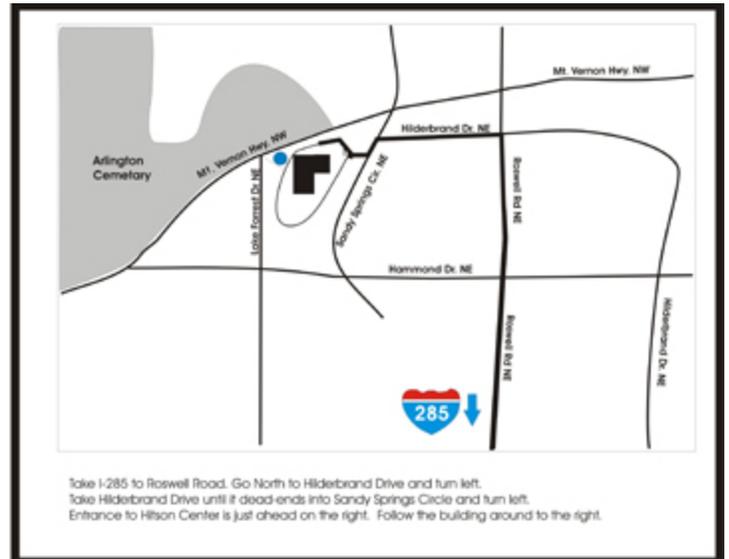
## January General Meeting

Join us for the January meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club on Friday January 20th at 8PM. Refreshments will be provided starting around 7:30PM. The meeting will be held at our new meeting location (first used in December for the Christmas Potluck) at the Parlor Room of the Hitson Center, in the Sandy Springs Methodist Church, 86 Mt Vernon Hwy, NE, Sandy Springs, GA 30328 (see map on right).

Our guest speaker will be Dr. Richard Schmude of Gordon College in Barnesville, GA. After Dr. Schmude presents his talk there will be the business portion of the meeting. The meeting will run for about 2 hours total. If you have any announcements that you want to make during the meeting please contact our President, Mark Banks, so that he can schedule the time for you during the meeting. His contact information is on page 7.

### The Program:

Dr. Schmude writes: "My talk will focus on Mars' Polar Caps, brightness and meteorology. After an introduction, I will present maps of that Planet's south polar cap which I constructed. I will also summarize brightness measurements of that planet which I have made. One important finding is that Mars appears to have had a smaller number of clouds during the 2009-2010 apparition than during the similar apparition in 1995. I will also present brightness measurements made during 2011. Mars images made during the past few months will also be shown and discussed. Finally, I will explain a few of the events that should occur during the first four months of 2012."



### Speaker Bio:

Dr. Schmude is a professor of physics and astronomy at Gordon College. He is the Remote Planets Section Coordinator, the Jupiter Coordinator, and board member of ALPO, as well as Secretary of the Astronomical League. He is also an active member of the American Association of Variable Star Observers, and the Flint River and Atlanta Astronomy Clubs. Raised in Texas, he received his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from Texas A&M University in 1994. Since then, Dr. Schmude has been teaching astronomy, physics and chemistry at Gordon College. His primary areas of study include the solar system, variable stars and planetary nebulae.

### Upcoming AAC Meetings:

Our meetings will usually be held on the 3rd Friday of the month. Future meeting dates for 2012 are Feb 17, Mar 16, and Apr 20. Meetings will be at the Parlor Room of the Hitson Center unless noted.

### From the President's Desk:

At the January 20th meeting we will be having a silent auction/fund raiser. This will give everyone a chance to regift some of those items you got for Christmas that you don't need or want. Also if you have any other household items you may want to donate that will be O.K. These items do not need to be Astronomy related. We will set up the tables for the auction before the meeting and give everyone a chance to bid on the items. At the end of the meeting the highest bidder gets the item. If the Item does not sell you take it home with you. All proceeds of the sale go to the AAC. You may set a minimum bid amount if you want to. So, please bring any saleable stuff you may want to donate!

Mark Banks, AAC President

## December Meeting & Potluck Dinner

Photos by Tom Faber

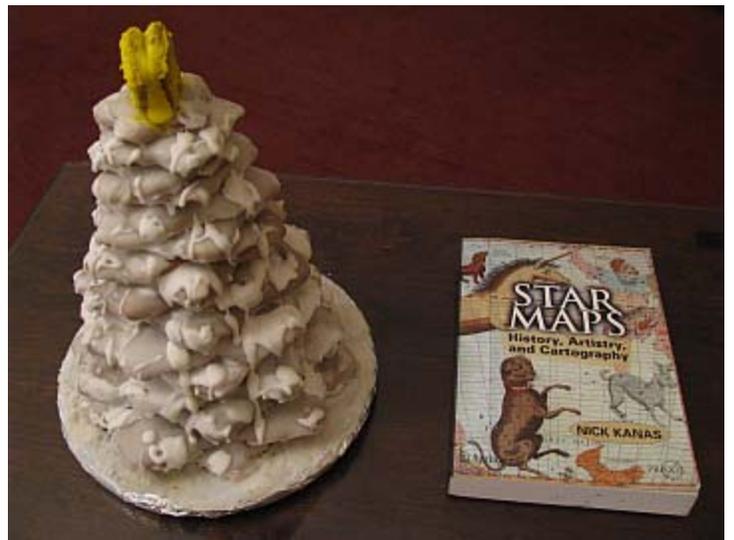
The AAC held its annual Holiday Potluck Dinner and meeting on Saturday evening, December 10th at our new location in the Parlor Room, at the Hitson Center, in Sandy Springs. About 50 members enjoyed the turkey and ham provided by the AAC and the many tasty side dishes, snacks, and desserts provided by the attendees. After the dinner club member Daniel Herron presented a talk about his efforts to view and photograph the last several Space Shuttle launches. Daniel also showed photos taken by club member Chris Hetlage, who had press credentials which allowed him access to place automated cameras near the launch pad. It was a fascinating and informative talk!



*Socializing before the dinner.*



*Socializing before the dinner.*



*Sharon's gingerbread tree with a star on top.*



*Getting the buffet table set up.*

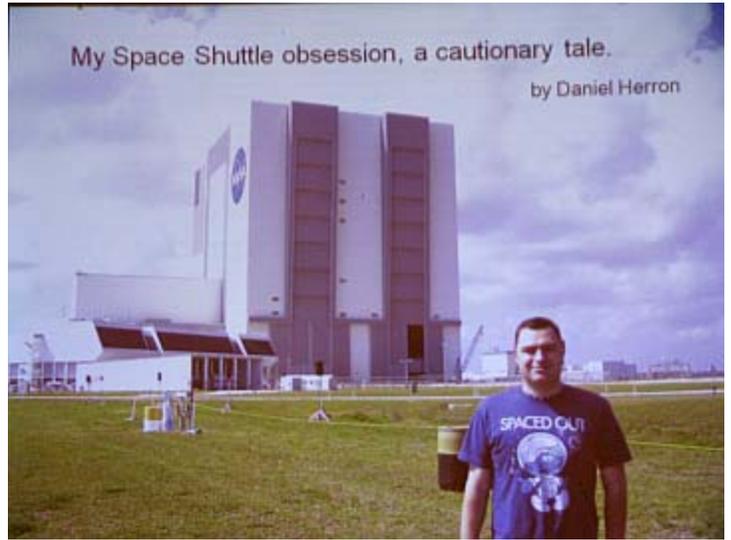


*Peter and Sharon hard at work in the kitchen of the Hitson Center getting the main courses ready. Thanks!*



*Dinner is served!*

*Guests enjoying the great dinner!*



*Daniel presenting his talk about viewing and photographing the last few Space Shuttle launches.*

## 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.

**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 Meeting Minutes

by Marie Lott, CE Chapter Recording Secretary

The December meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held on Saturday, December 17 in the Visitor center at 3 PM. This was the quarterly potluck meeting, with twenty six people in attendance. While dining, members were treated to a slideshow of the 2011 APODs (Astronomy Picture of the Day) downloaded from <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>.

The Charlie Elliott chapter meeting schedule for 2012 was reviewed and the members present decided to keep the meeting start times at approximately three hours before sunset. Because of this floating schedule, members were advised to be sure to check [ceastronomy.org](http://ceastronomy.org) for start time each month. All 2012 meeting dates are listed on the chapter's home page.

Steve Philips, Observing Supervisor, presented "Observing 101", a highlight of current sun, moon and planet rise & set times, observing targets and challenges. This month all eight planets will be visible. - Venus, Jupiter, Uranus & Neptune in the early evening and Mercury, Mars and Saturn before sunrise. Two interesting flybys should be visible from the CE field after the December meeting - the ISS passes overhead from 6:42-6:47 pm and the "secret" spy satellite X37b will be visible for less than a minute at 7:26 pm.

Upcoming Astro Calendar:

Jan 2011 - Mars returns to the evening sky

Jan 2011 - Comet P2006 / T1 (Levy) cruises out of Pegasus and crosses Pisces and Cetus

Jan 1 - 1st Quarter moon

Jan 2 - Moon 5° north of Jupiter at 10:00 AM

Jan 3 - Io shadow transit of Jupiter 11:07 PM

Jan 4 - Quadrantid meteor shower peaks

Jan 7/8 - Explore the shoreline of Oceanus Procellarum on the moon

Jan 9 - Full Moon

Jan 12 - Neptune 1.2° north of Venus

Jan 13 - Io shadow transit of Jupiter 7:32 PM

Jan 14 - Moon 9° south of Mars 2:00 AM

Jan 16 - Last quarter moon

Selected small Telescope/Binocular Target List for December & January:

Double Stars in Andromeda: Almach, Alpheratz, Delta Andromeda, Mirach,

Galaxies: M31 in Andromeda, M33 in Triangulum, NGC 253 in Sculptor

Open Clusters: M34 in Perseus, M45 in Taurus, M103 in Cassiopeia

Planetary Nebulas: NGC 246 in Cetus, NGC 7662 in Andromeda, M76 in Perseus

Carbon Star: U Camelopardalis

Steve Philips also presented a review of "Eyepiece Basics", covering the different types of eyepieces commonly available. He also explained considerations regarding magnification, image brightness & contrast, field of view, light dispersion, and eye relief. Steve gave some helpful suggestions for selecting eyepieces, with one of the more important take-home lessons being "a small number of good eyepieces is better than a large selection of bad eyepieces."

To conclude the meeting, Theo Ramakers made a surprise presentation of a telescope which had been donated to the club by avid stargazers & frequent chapter visitors Deborah and Katie Haslow. Theo then shared some photos of his recent trips to California to visit the Night Sky

Network team and to Florida to witness the launch of the Mars Science Laboratory Curiosity rover. After the meeting, members and guests adjourned to the Jon Wood Astronomy Field for observing.

The next meeting of the chapter will be Saturday, January 21, 2012 at 3 PM in the Charlie Elliott Visitor Center. Steve Siedentop will present a talk entitled "Building a Push-to Dob". Weather-permitting, all are invited to stay afterwards for observing.

## CE Chapter Outreach Programs

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

In December we went to Clifton elementary school on two days where we did programs for all 4th grade, 2nd grade and yes even the Kindergarten classes. This was our first exposure working with kids this young, but I believe we (and they) handled it very well. We had a great time but did not have much time to make pictures. Another event for which the school only wanted outside observing had to be cancelled because of weather. So we have completed our outreach programs for 2011 and have set another record. Eleven members participated in over 70 events for schools, boy and girl scout troops, and other civic clubs. We also started participating in the STEM festivals which the Georgia Department of Education puts on all over the state. We reached out to 5900 individuals and our members combined drove more than 8900 miles to reach them. We have a great number of requests already for 2012, so we believe that we will definitely kindle the fire for astronomy and space exploration in some young individual who someday will be a major contributor in the science we love.



# Curiosity's Launch

By Theo Ramakers, CE Chapter Outreach Coordinator

I received an invitation from NASA to attend the launch of the Mars Science Laboratory's rover Curiosity. Initially scheduled for Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, but delayed until Saturday morning. In order to attend the briefings, we had to be there on Wednesday. We would be bussed in to the Cape 4 hours before launch to the viewing site which was at 5:30a.m. I did not hear the alarm clock, but managed to get to the pickup site at the Space Coast Stadium at 5:45 a.m. Got on bus #10 out of 60 and we arrived at our viewing site at the Banana Creek viewing area, next to the Apollo/Saturn building, around 6:45. It was still relative dark and rain clouds were abundant. We endured two short showers about 2 hours



before the launch. The sunrise was very nice through the thick clouds. The count down clock (being about 37 minutes fast) was stopped at -2:00:00 and again at -4 minutes. NASA Administrator Bolden gave a speech, and 2 minutes before launch the 3500 viewers at our location sang the National Anthem, which brought everyone's emotions high. As the clock approached 0 you could hear a pin drop, but as the rocket lifted off, a roar released the silence as everyone kept their eyes on the Atlas 5 with Curiosity on top. The roar of the Atlas 5 with 4 solid rocket boosters was not as loud as with the space shuttle, but seeing the fire and smoke this close across the water and marshes made this launch unforgettable. A perfect launch. The very high humidity made it a bit murky to make pictures from our site, but I will never forget the emotions in me when Curiosity set off on its voyage to Mars.



Four Local newspapers covered the visit on the front page with pictures and headlines like: "Social Circle resident a spectator to history". Overall, a great advertising for the Charlie Elliott Chapter and the Atlanta Astronomy Club.

I am now following Curiosity on its voyage to Mars, and it was great to see that some amateurs captured Curiosity in the night sky the next morning after the launch. I will be using the experiences gained in this mission in outreach events later in 2012 as I've done with previous missions.

## Return to Starlight

By Alex Langoussis, Photos by Alex Langoussis unless noted

Aperture fever is nothing new. The year was 1955. Lifetime AAC member Leonard Abbey, then just a teenager, decided to upgrade from a 6-inch to an 8-inch reflector. Lenny placed his mirror order with Cave Optical Company, whose primary optician at the time was the legendary Alike Herring. The performance of that mirror leaves little doubt that it was one of his mirrors.

The new mirror became the centerpiece of Lenny's homemade f/8 Newtonian, which incorporated some special features intended to improve the steadiness of the images. The rolled steel tube, which comes to ambient temperature very quickly, was made by an acquaintance of Lenny's father and was built with "oversized" dimensions. Its diameter was a full 10 inches, allowing air currents to go up the inside edge of the tube without getting in the way of the mirror. It was also made extra-long by several inches, both below the mirror and above the secondary, to enhance a laminar air flow through the tube. The telescope's 6-foot length made the scope a bit unwieldy to carry, so handles were put on the tube exterior to facilitate carrying the scope. The exterior of the optical assembly was painted battleship gray from war surplus paint, and the scope rested on a homemade pipe mount.

This 8-inch scope was used by Lenny for the next 12 years, including for many of his ALPO observations, until he eventually upgraded to a 10-inch Cave. The 8-inch mirror was then put into a box, the

*Continued on next page*



*Lenny Abbey with 6-inch reflector, early 1950s. Photo by Lenny Abbey.*

tube assembly stored in Lenny's basement, and the mount eventually dismantled. The mirror never again saw the light of day (or night) after 1967. Until now.

This past May, some 44 years later, Lenny generously gave me the telescope in order to put it back into operation. I was somewhat hesitant, because I am not very handy when it comes to fixing things.



*Nelda Langoussis painting the inside of the tube.*

Piece by piece, we set about getting the scope back into shape. Nelda painted the unfinished interior of the long tube flat black, and freshened up the battleship gray exterior to "starship silver." The secondary holder and spider were replaced with new ones from Astrosystems to aid in collimation. At Emory, Horace Dale smoothed out the motion of the original focuser, and in addition tapped holes and added nylon screws to the mirror cell to prevent the mirror from shifting. The mirrors themselves were already immaculate, with the Clausing recoating from the early 60s looking like it was applied yesterday. The project had moved slowly over the summer, but finally it was time to put it all together, and the telescope was assembled and collimated.

The only problem left to solve was the mount, since the original no longer existed. We finally decided that Lenny's 10-inch mount would double as the 8-inch mount until a replacement could be found. On October 7, I added locking wheels to the tripod, and using multiple bungee cords and straps, the telescope was secured to the mount.



*Andra Langoussis checking the view while Dad watches.*

A week later, Lenny and Eugenia joined us on the Emory Observatory deck, where the resurrected telescope awaited its original owner. As the seeing settled we were treated to the fine details of Jupiter, such as barges and the Great Red Spot. We then enjoyed views of the waning gibbous moon, with tour guide Lenny pointing out areas such as O'Neill's Bridge. The telescope performed beautifully. Optically the views through this telescope are better than any of the numerous 8-inch telescopes I've viewed through.



*Lenny Abbey back under the stars with his telescope.*

I'm hoping to soon find a suitable dedicated mount for my "new" 56-year-old 8-inch reflector. (Can anybody help?) I am also now working on the successor 10-inch Cave, which should be ready shortly. Then, both telescopes will be used for mostly lunar and planetary observation. After decades of slumber, two fine vintage telescopes will once again be viewing the night sky.

## What's Up? Fantastic Astronomy Tales

### The Austell Alien

By Sharon Carruthers, AAC Treasurer

July 8, 1953. It is a hot summer night in Austell, (Cobb County) Georgia. Two policemen, nearing the end of their shift, are driving down an isolated back road and come across the most bizarre scene of their careers. Officers Sherley Brown (who retired in 1985) and his partner came across a pick-up truck blocking the road and three frightened men standing beside a small huddled shape on the road.

The three young men, barbers, Edward Watters and Tom Wilson, and a butcher, Arnold "Buddy" Payne, claimed they were returning home in the early morning from a night out, came over the crest of a hill and slammed on their brakes to avoid hitting a group of 2 foot tall creatures walking in front of a "red, saucer-shaped object." At their approach, the creatures ran into the "ship", which blasted off, scorching the side of the road. One was hit by their truck and killed.

The evidence was a circular scorch marks on the road and a small naked, green body at their feet. And, to add to the credibility of their claim, there had been reports of a large, multicolored object seen flying over Atlanta on the previous night.

Within hours of Officer Brown filing his report, the phones at police headquarters were ringing off their hook. Local, national and international news organizations sent reporters to cover the story; and even the US Air Force arrived to investigate.

A local veterinarian who examined the corpse said it looked "like something out of this world." A newspaper ran an artist's drawing of the saucer based on the men's description.

However, after an examination of the body by Dr. Herman D. Jones, the founder and director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation crime lab, and Dr. Marion Hines, an anatomy professor at Emory University, the story unraveled. Dr Hines was quoted as saying "If it came from Mars, they have monkeys on Mars."

When confronted with the results of Dr's Jones and Hines, the three men finally confessed to the hoax. One man had made a \$40 bet with his

*Continued on next page*

girlfriend that he could get his name in the papers within a week. He purchased a Capuchin monkey from a pet shop, shaved it and dyed it green. Because it still looked “wrong”, he took it to a local vet to have its tail removed, where it died from the chloroform while under surgery. The scorch marks on the road came from a blowtorch.

The up-shot was that the hoaxster won the \$40 bet, and was promptly fined \$40 for obstructing a highway. (This would seem to be a very expensive hoax, after you factor in the cost of the monkey, the dye, the surgery and the fine!)



And what happened to the body of the poor little Capuchin monkey that was the focus of the escapade that has been called “The Great Monkey Hoax of 1953”? It is currently stored in the mini-museum of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation in Decatur, GA.

Jack Warner, “Monkey mayhem 45 years ago, pranksters briefly were able to convince some folks they had found an alien in Cobb,” Atlanta Journal-Constitution, July 30, 1998.

“The Great Monkey Hoax”; [http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/archive/permalink/the\\_great\\_monkey\\_hoax](http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/archive/permalink/the_great_monkey_hoax)

“Monkey from Mars graces Ga. crime lab display” Copyright 2008 The Associated Press; <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25922012/>

“La triste historia del ‘marcianito verde’ de Austell”; (“The sad story of the ‘little green men’ in Austell”); <http://marcianitosverdes.haaan.com/2009/02/la-triste-historia-del-marcianito-verde-de-austell/>

Another “alien” encounter in Georgia was reported to MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) in 2009. On August 30, a woman camper who went to the bathroom at 4 a.m., saw three strange “beings” near the washroom. She thought they were men, until one turned and approached her. She described him as about 5’3” tall, pale skinned, with large, black eyes, long arms, an “extra thin” body and an over-size bumpy head. She ran screaming to her husband but they were gone when he went to investigate. There are no official answers for this one. But plenty of questions. “Aliens in Georgia - Three Aliens Seen at Georgia Campsite” By Billy Booth, <http://ufos.about.com/od/currentuforeports/a/georgiaaliens.htm>

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](mailto: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](mailto:President@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

**Program Chair:** Richard Jakiel [Programs@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:Programs@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

**Observing Chair/BoD Chair:** Art Zorka  
[Observing@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:Observing@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

**Corresponding Secretary:** Tom Faber  
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**Treasurer:** Sharon Carruthers [Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:Treasurer@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

**Recording Secretary:** Pixie Bruner  
[Secretary@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:Secretary@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

**Board Chair:** Daniel Herron, Contact info TBA

**Board:** Brigitte Fessele, Contact info TBA

**Board:** David Lumpkin, Contact info TBA

**Board:** Theo Ramakers 770-464-3777  
[webmaster@CEastronomy.org](mailto:webmaster@CEastronomy.org)

**ALCor:** Art Zorka 404-633-8822 (H) 404-247-2474 (C)  
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**Elliott Recording Secretary:** Marie Lott [mtlott@comcast.net](mailto:mtlott@comcast.net)

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**Elliott Outreach Coordinator:** Theo Ramakers 770-464-3777  
[outreach@ceastronomy.org](mailto:outreach@ceastronomy.org)

**Georgia Astronomy in State Parks:**

**PSSG Chairman:** Peter Macumber [pmacumber@nightsky.org](mailto:pmacumber@nightsky.org)

**PSSG Co-Chair:** Joanne Cirincione  
[starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

**Sidewalk Astronomy:** Brad Isley  
[sidewalkastronomy@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto: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](mailto: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

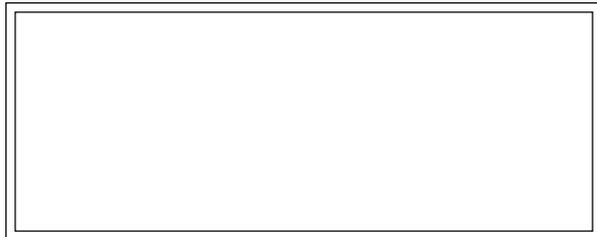
- January 3rd, Tuesday: Quadrantids Meteors.
- January 4th, Wednesday: Latest Sunrise in Atlanta: ~7:42 AM.
- January 6th, Friday: **How To Use A Telescope, 7:30 PM, Hitson Memorial Activities Center.**
- January 9th, Monday: Full Moon.
- January 12th, Thursday: Venus near Neptune evening.
- January 16th, Monday: Moon Last Quarter.
- January 20th, Friday: **AAC Meeting at Hitson Center, 8PM.**
- January 21st, Saturday: **CE Chapter Meeting, 3PM.**
- January 23rd, Monday: New Moon.
- January 25th, Wednesday: Moon near Venus evening.
- January 27th, Friday: **Focal Point Deadline.**
- January 30th, Monday: Moon First Quarter.
- February 7th, Tuesday: Full Moon.
- February 9th, Thursday: Venus near Uranus evening. Moon near Mars.
- February 10th, Friday: Bradley Observatory Open House, 8PM, See p.3
- February 14th, Tuesday: Moon Last Quarter.
- February 17th, Friday: **AAC Meeting at Hitson Center, 8PM.**
- February 18th, Saturday: **CE Chapter Meeting, 3PM.**
- February 19th, Sunday: Neptune Conjunction the with Sun.
- February 21st, Tuesday: New Moon.
- February 22nd, Wednesday: Thin crescent moon near Mercury.
- February 24th, Friday: **Focal Point Deadline.**
- February 25th, Saturday: Moon near Venus.
- February 29th, Wednesday: Moon First Quarter.
- March 3rd, Saturday: Mars at Opposition.

## 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](mailto:AstroAtlanta@yahoogroups.com) . To add a subscription, send a message to: [AstroAtlanta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto: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@atlantaastro.org](mailto:focalpoint@atlantaastro.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 February is Friday, January 27th. Submissions after the deadline will go in the following month.**



FIRST CLASS



[www.beclage.com](http://www.beclage.com)



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

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.



*The Focal Point*

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Alpharetta, GA 30022

Atlanta Astronomy Club

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Atlanta, GA 30358-1155

[www.atlantaastro.org](http://www.atlantaastro.org)

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