Great Astronomy Books

AS PRESENTED BY
TAAS MEMBERS

How many times have we been inspired by books? It might have been a photograph of galaxies grouped in Ursa Major that made us want to look or puzzling loose ends revealed by very good nineteenth-century science that made us wonder. It might have been a description of a faint nebula that challenged us to try.

Nine TAAS member will recount moments of

continued on page 4 . . .

Astronomy 101 – Special Edition
Dave Pitonzo

Well, looks like it’s that time again—Messier Marathon time! I know we just had a 101 session last month but I’m ready to break with tradition and have a special session entitled “Messier and His Marathon.”

I’ll be discussing a little about Messier and the catalog, a little about the marathon and its history, and a little about how to do it, including my strategy on attacking the Virgo cluster. We’ll also have some Messier

continued on page 4 . . .
President’s Message

Out of this World

OUT OF THIS WORLD! I love it. We are different. We stand outside in the dark and look up. When we meet our colleagues in the daylight, we have to close our eyes, look up and ask them to say something so that we can recognize them. Also, we are amazed to find that the red spots on the heads we regularly see at night are invisible in daylight. Some of my few rational relatives have suggested that, because of this bizarre behavior, I am out of this world. Secretly, I take pride in their accusations as they sit in front of their TV’s encased in their own expanding universe.

However, we really are out of this world because we pay attention to things beyond the friendly confines of our planet. On a regular basis, we look for objects far beyond the conscious environment of almost every other human on the planet. This is fun and I will continue to look out there for more interesting double stars, asteroids, and even a deep, faint fuzzy that some claim is a 17th magnitude galaxy.

The real reason we are out of this world is because we believe in more than ourselves and our immediate needs. We enjoy sharing the objects outside of this world with people who have never before had the opportunity to observe something outside of their immediate safety zone. That is the beauty of astronomy. It provides us the means to direct people’s attention out of this world in a non-intimidating manner. We do not use equations, charts and fancy theories. We just show people the out-of-this-world objects, and always they love it.

So, as we celebrate our selection for the Astronomy Magazine 2011 “Out-of-this-world” Award, keep looking up and out and take pride in being out of this world.

OBSERVE—EDUCATE—HAVE FUN

TAAS Welcomes Two New Members to the Board of Directors

Amy Estelle

Amy Estelle is a longtime TAAS member who has been active in astronomy public outreach with the Bosque de Apache wildlife preserve south of Socorro. She has attended the Okie-Tex Star Party numerous times and works for the State of New Mexico.

Mike Molitor

Mike Molitor recently moved to New Mexico from Albany, New York, where he served as the treasurer of the astronomy club. Mike is a retired engineer with General Electric. He is a member of the GNTO committee and active in the solar observing program.
**There are exciting developments coming at GNTO, as we begin our “User-friendly Imaging Program.”** We will modernize our imaging setup in the small dome to be an imaging system that can be easily set up making it possible for inexperienced members to visit GNTO and in a few training sessions be proficient enough to obtain high-quality deep-sky images without assistance. Stay tuned for details!

We had four scheduled GNTO observing events since the last newsletter, starting with New Moon Observing on January 21—it was officially cancelled, due to clouds, although Lisa W. and Alan S. showed up in case someone missed the cancellation. The ROOst is a great place to hang out and talk to your fellow cloud optimists in these cases—I always enjoy the conversations even on the cloudiest night at GNTO. On January 28, I opened to much better weather, on a well-attended New Moon Observing and training event. Dale M. trained several new members on the Isengard. Tom D. hosted a group of students from Griegos Elementary. After the training, two first-timers saw geosynchronous satellites pass through the M42 field in the Isengard, and we got some great views of the Moon and Jupiter. Will F. closed, but not before the hardcore astronomers (I wimped out, sorry to say) gave these reports:

Kevin M.: …We looked at Jupiter, the Moon, Messier 41 in Canis Major, Mars, and various galaxies, and Auriga clusters. Eric ID’d quite a few Herschel 400 galaxies. …Supernova in NGC 3239: recovered in Carl’s big scope, courtesy Karen. The object was easy, albeit faint. The galaxy is likewise faint, but shows knots of H II regions. 433 Eros: initially hard to find, since its great brightness misled me! Easily found in binoculars (10X50’s), the motion needed about 20 minutes to detect…

Will F.: …At 11:15, the following people were still in attendance: Eric E. with a lovely portable homemade 12” dob, Tom D. with near identical setup. Kevin M. with F6 10” Dob, Chuck W. with a small Dob, Carl F. and Karen K. with 24” Dob, me with 18” Dob. We observed the supernova in NGC 3239. We also viewed Eros, the asteroid. Its unusual yellow color and changing position in relation to other objects indicated it was an asteroid. I made a grand start to the Spring scavenger hunt. I found some exquisite objects, which will start the hunt with a bang! The scavenger hunt is March 17.

On February 18, we had the first of two New Moon Observing nights, straddling the new moon on the 21st. Lisa opened, and it was another well-attended night at GNTO (thirteen scopes, including two of our loaners in use, and 25 people in attendance). Larry C. and Pete E. joined Mike M. as Isengarders at the beginning of this night. Later, after the crowd thinned, Mike had the Isengard all to himself and he gave this report:

…We had Jupiter at 270x. Things were getting soft. I had only a couple of visitors to the dome all night. I had much of the time to myself. Pete and Larry introduced me to operations using the laptop and I needed practice. Running the scope via laptop makes targeting rapid and I punched through a long list before closing around 1a.m.—M77, 74, 78, 79, 42, 1, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 46, 47; NGC2232, 2244, 2264, 2362, 2403, 2451. I used 40, 26, and 16mm eyepieces. Running solo with this kind of speed, I wished for an eyepiece turret and a motorized dome!…

This night was cut short even for the hardcore astronomers after midnight when an unpleasant wind picked up, and Will closed shortly after.

The February 25 event had a four-day-old Moon, for a great show at the beginning with Jupiter, the Moon, Venus, and Mercury standing out. I opened, and we had a good turnout (~20 people with about 10 scopes on the field, including Carl F. with the GNTO Astrophysics 6” refractor), with several first-time visitors. I gave a green laser constellation tour to one new-to-TAAS couple. After moonset at 10:30 p.m., most of the people had gone home. Mike M., Gordon P. and Bill W. shared the Isengarder duties. I closed up and went home before 2 a.m.

**continued on page 7…**

---

**GNTO Slogan Contest and Dates**

Lisa Wood

Please note, the deadline for the GNTO Slogan Contest should have read, “The contest will be judged and winner announced at GNTO at the big Spring Equinox Picnic on March 17th, NOT March 1. There is no event on March 1.

Please e-mail what you think GNTO might stand for (Giraffes Need Tall Oculars is definitely on my Favorites List) to TAAS-L.

March 3 Spring Cleanup
March 17 Spring Equinox Picnic/Training/Observing with TAAS 200 Scavenger Hunt Contest and Medals Awarded! Contact Will Ferrell for Contest Details.
March 24 Messier Marathon—for the Traditionalists out there
April 14 Observing
April 21 Observing
The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society

**March 2012**

**March 2012 Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 GNTO Committee Meeting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 GNTO Spring Cleanup, Observing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 ATM SIG Meeting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10 TAAS General Meeting, Astronomy 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Solar Sunday at NM Museum of Natural History</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13 TAAS Communications Meeting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16 Explora Adult Night</td>
<td>17 GNTO Equinox Picnic/Training, Scavenger Hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21 ATM SIG Meeting</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23 Sidereal Times Deadline</td>
<td>24 GNTO NM, Messier Marathon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27 Arroyo del Oso Elementary School Star Party</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Astronomy 101 continued from page 1**

trivia, so there should be something for everyone. What are my qualifications for leading this discussion you ask? My first marathon was in 1988—103 objects seen. Since then, I’ve done seven marathons observing all but one Messier object (M30) and three successful completions of all “110,” including the great night two years ago at GNTO. Hope to see everyone at Regener at 6:00 p.m. on 6:00 p.m., Saturday, March 10, at UNM’s Regener Hall. See the map on the last page of this issue.

---

**General Meeting News continued from page 1**

inspirations derived from books at the Society’s March 10 General Meeting—7 p.m. at UNM’s Regener Hall.

Barry Spletzer, Bob Havlen, Dave Pitanzo, Karen Keese, Becky Ramatowski, Shane Ramatowski, and Kevin McKeown will each describe a book that inspired. David Blair will moderate “No one was assigned categories or topics,” he said. “We threw this wide open, and our participants have come up with a great selection.”

There will be door prizes, including—not surprisingly—some great books.

7:00 p.m., Saturday, March 10, at UNM’s Regener Hall. See the map on the last page of this issue.

---
### April 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 ATM SIG Meeting</td>
<td>5 Board of Directors Meeting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 TAAS General Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Solar Sunday at NM Museum of Natural History</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14 GNTO Training/Observing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Texas Star Party Begins (April 15–22)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18 ATM SIG Meeting</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20 Sidereal Times Deadline</td>
<td>21 GNTO NM, Backup Messier Marathon Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, March 10, 2012, 7:00 P.M.**

Regener Hall

University of New Mexico

(See map, back page)

**Great Astronomy Books**

**AS PRESENTED BY TAAS MEMBERS**

6:00 p.m.—Astronomy 101 Special Edition: Messier and His Marathon

---

**Notes**

TAAS = The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
Hotline 254-TAAS (8227),

GNTO = General Nathan Twining Observatory
GNTO Training = GNTO Observing and Training
GNTO NM = New Moon Premium Observing Night

UNM = University of New Mexico Observatory. Call the TAAS hotline @254-8227, or the UNM hotline @ 277-1446 to confirm, or unm_coordinator@taas.org.

ATM = Amateur Telescope Making. Call Michael Pendley for information @ 296-0549, or atm@taas.org.
P & A = UNM Physics and Astronomy Building, Corner of Lomas and Yale

School Star Party

SIG = Special Interest Group
TBA = to be announced

Blue Italics = Non-TAAS events
Montezuma Elementary Star Party a Swan Song for Education Director Tom Davies

Trish Logan

The TAAS star party at Montezuma Elementary School was an outstanding success! At least 300 people attended the event. Volunteers included Tom Davies, Tom Grzybowski, Bob Havlen, Bob Hufnagel, John Laning, Louise Lopez, and Trish Logan.

Gi Wan, a foreign-exchange student from Korea who lives with the principal, was a willing host to the club’s StarBlast scope. He came out to the telescope field to deliver sandwiches and stayed with the scope the entire evening.

Several students sent thank-you notes to the club and to be shown at the going-away party for Tom Davies. Tom has spearheaded the Educational Outreach Program and will be missed by everyone as he starts a new adventure in Michigan.

Meeting to Enhance TAAS Communications

TAAS Vice President David Blair is leading an effort to coordinate and strengthen TAAS’s communications program. He will host a meeting at 7 p.m. MDT, Tuesday, March 13. Any TAAS member who would like to participate is welcome. RSVP David at (505) 296-9632 or skyekiva@comcast.net for directions to the meeting.

The group will review TAAS’s current communications assignments and tools, discuss ways to develop those tools, and look at strategies for publicizing spring events, such as the solar eclipse and Venus transit.
There were several hours of clear sky observing at GNTO on February 18. Here are comments from some of the observers and commentary from the reporter.

Amy E. wrote: “I’ve never focused on galaxies before. They just seemed too small and too faint. Well, with Leo rising in late evening on Saturday at GNTO, I decided to try for some. (Thanks to Gordon P. for helping me solve the extra galaxy problem.)” Her objective was to observe at least 10 galaxies (new to her) by star hopping. Amy used a 12.5” Obsession with a 22mm Nagler, and only a Telrad for finding her objects (I’m impressed). She found twelve and said her objective was met and now the bug has bitten.

Dave T. said he was just looking at what was up. Strong, silent type apparently.

Jodie F. said he still enjoys looking at Orion after twenty years. There were five planets out at once to observe: Uranus, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, and—look down—Earth!

Chuck W. was on the trail of “stars and fuzzy things.” More specifically, looking at six galaxies in Canes Venatici, and mixed objects from the Caldwell list.

Vance L. was far from the madding crowd to image the Cone Nebula and Thor’s Helmet. He said he might image one of these objects for up to four hours. Sleeping bags rock, apparently. Tom D. might be leaving us. What a hard-working and fun guy. We’ll miss him!

Pete E. made the prototype for our combo hand focuser and battery holder. Steve W. helped him refine it. It looks like something from a 60s sci-fi movie. I vote we call it The Gizmo. It’s cool.

Larry C. was just there to “serve mankind”—holding a flashlight for Pete at that moment. This is a vast understatement, since any time there is something to be done, Larry is quietly there to assist, in addition to contributing his considerable astronomical moxie.

Simon A. and Josh S. were there—didn’t catch their report.

Gordon P. commented that Dave P. could make telescopes sprout from the ground by merely watering it, since while Gordon was donning his “duds” the field went from one to many telescopes. It’s that “watering” part that gave me pause, Gordon.

Dave P. observed about thirty-five galaxies and clusters that he had not seen, but the “theme” of the evening could have been supernova remnants. He successfully saw five distinct remnants.

Kevin M. wrote, “I had some good views of Jupiter and the red spot. Mars looked nice, but the ‘Pacific Ocean’ side of the planet was in view, so no detail. Gordon showed me a galaxy—NGC 180 something. I also looked at Omicron 2 Eridani in my 10-inch, and
This image of Mars was generated using the sharpest 402 of 1500 video frames taken near 11:55 p.m. MST on the night of February 24, about a week before its closest approach to Earth during the current opposition. Mars is near aphelion putting it about as far as possible from the Earth during any opposition—subtending only 13.9 arc seconds compared to nearly 25 arc seconds during its close opposition in August 2003.

It is spring in the northern hemisphere on Mars, and the north polar cap is rapidly shrinking. The large dark area to the south of the polar cap is known as Acidalia Planitia. The Viking and Pathfinder landing sites are just to the south, near the center of the disk. The bright area on the limb at 9 o’clock are morning clouds near Olympus Mons, the largest mountain on the planet.

An imaging source DBK-21AU04-AS color planetary video camera was used with a 3x Barlow on an Orion 180 mm f/15 Maksutov-Cassegrain scope, giving an effective focal length of 8100 mm at f/45. Seeing was 4/5, with a 5–10 mph breeze (my best observing conditions of the winter so far in Santa Fe). The images were registered, stacked, and wavelet-processed using Registax 4. Wavelet processing is a balance between bringing out real detail in an image, and creating digital artifacts. The amount of sharpening was limited in this case to reduce linear artifacts near the bright eastern limb.

—James (Skip) Dearing

Orion Nebula complex shot down at GNTO on January 28.
Telescope: Meade 80mm f/6 Apo Triplet
Camera: Canon SXI DSLR
Exposure: Stack of 5 three-minute raw exposures processed with Corel PaintShop Pro x4
—Dale Murray
Welcome to New or Returning TAAS Members

David Bellinger
Brian Cassidy
John Chan
Edgar Fischer
Ron Hospelhorn
Larry Porter
Cliff Pulis
Donna Williams
Sheldon Yee

Explanation of Dues and Membership Renewal Date

New memberships will be posted as beginning the first day of the month regardless of what day during that month the check is received. Notice of renewal will be sent out the month before the due date. You will have until the end of the month after your renewal date to send your membership check. If you fail to pay and renew at that time, your membership will lapse. When you pay on a lapsed membership you will be reinstated in the month that the membership was originally due. (If dues were due in March and you did not renew until May or June or July, etc., the date of your renewal will be in March. If your dues are due in April and you pay in March, your membership will still be renewed in April.)

In a nutshell, if you pay late or early your membership date stays the same and your next year’s dues will be due on that date next year.

—Dan Clark

Location, Location, Location

• Chaco Canyon
  6185’ elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  36˚ 01’ 50”N     107˚ 54’ 36”W
  36.03’     -107.91’
  36˚ 1.83’     -107˚ 54.60’

• Oak Flat
  7680’ elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  34˚ 59’ 48”N  106˚ 19’ 17”W
  34.99˚  -106.32˚
  34˚ 59.80’  -106˚ 19.28’

• UNM Campus Observatory
  5180’ elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  35˚ 5’ 29”N  106˚ 37’ 17”W
  35.09˚  -106.62˚
  35˚ 5.48’  -106˚ 37.29’

For security reasons, GNTO location is available by request only, so please contact Pete Eschman or Steve Welch for GNTO information.

Donations to TAAS

EDUCATION
Brian Cassidy

Welcome to New or Returning TAAS Members

EDUCATION
Brian Cassidy

Monthly Membership Report
January 2012

Membership Current Past Change
Regular Month Month
207 198 9
Family
58 54 4
Educational
8 8 0
Military
4 3 1
Total Paid
277 263 14
Honorary
7 7 0
Complimentary
36 36 0
Total Members
320 306 14

Editor’s Note

The deadline for the next issue of The Sidereal Times is Friday, March 23. The newsletter editor’s e-mail address is editor@taas.org.

Text: E-mail text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word or compatible format.

Photos: Caption and credit needed. Attach photos or graphics in separate graphics files. Photos or graphics in Word files are no longer acceptable.
except for Sunday with cooler weather and rain for the night.

Comet Lovejoy has been the biggest highlight for the astronomers here. This was a sun-grazing comet that survived and then went to climb higher in the southern sky. You northerners might have to settle for enjoying the photos on [http://www.spaceweather.com](http://www.spaceweather.com) as the comet became circumpolar here.

The increasing solar activity has resulted in a lot more solar observing and solar photography. Also everyone has been on the lookout for aurora australis (the southern lights). Wellington at 41 degrees south can have a reasonable showing, with a good dark sky to the south.

We are planning for the transit of Venus. At this stage we’re looking at a solar scope with video out to a large screen in the clubrooms to view the transit. There will be a few observing evenings and Mars programs with the opposition. This year our society is also hosting the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand conference in May, this has a more science research focus than Stardate’s observational focus.

—Edwin Laintal
MEMBERSHIP: You may request a membership application by sending e-mail to membership@taas.org or calling (505) 254-TAAS(8227). Applications may also be downloaded from the Web site. Annual dues to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society are $30/year for a full membership and $15/year for a teacher, student (grades K-12), or military membership. Additional family members may join for $5/each (teacher, student and family memberships are not eligible to vote on society matters). New member information packets can be downloaded from the Web site or requested from the TAAS Membership Services Director at membership@taas.org. You may send your dues by mail to our newsletter return address with your check written out to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society or give your check to the Treasurer at the next meeting.

MAGAZINES: Discount magazine subscriptions to Sky and Telescope and Astronomy as well as discounts on books from Sky Publishing Corporation are available when purchased by TAAS members through our society. Include any of the above magazine renewal mailers and subscription payments as part of your renewal check. Make checks out to TAAS (we will combine and send one check to the publisher). Warning: publishers take several months to process magazine subscriptions.

ARTICLES/ADVERTISEMENTS: Articles, personal astronomical classified advertisements and business card size advertisements for businesses related to astronomy must be submitted by the deadline shown on the Society calendar (generally the Friday near the new Moon). Rates for commercial ads (per issue) are $120 per page, $60 per half page, $30 per quarter page, $7 for business card size. The newsletter editor reserves the right to include and/or edit any article or advertisement. E-mail attachments in Microsoft Word, 11 point Palatino, justified, no indent at paragraph beginning, one space between paragraphs is preferred. ASCII and RTF are acceptable. One column is approximately 350 words. Contact the Newsletter Editor at editor@taas.org for more information.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Note that the Sidereal Times is mailed at a first class mail rate. As a result, the newsletter may be forwarded to your new address should you move, or it may not!! Please provide the Treasurer (treasurer@taas.org) with your new mailing address or e-mail address to ensure that you receive your newsletter.

TAAS LIBRARY: Please contact the Librarian at librarian@taas.org or 890-8122 to check out a book or make a contribution.

TAAS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB:
TAAS Web site: http://www.taas.org
The TAAS Web site includes:
- Online Sidereal Times
- Educational Outreach
- Programs: TAAS 200, Equipment Trader, Telescope Loaner Program, and more
- SIGs
- Members Guide
- Links to Astronomy Resources and Members’ Blogs

E-mail: taas@taas.org