General Meeting News

Lynne Olson

TAAS General Meeting
Saturday, August 29, 7:00 P.M.
Science and Math Learning Center
UNM Campus

Our Observatory: GNTO

Jim Fordice, Observatory Director

Our speaker for August 29 will be Jim Fordice, Director of the TAAS General Nathan Twining Observatory (GNTO) near Belen, owned, built and developed by TAAS over the last few decades. Jim will discuss what GNTO offers to TAAS members, how to use the facility (which includes two domes—observing and imaging, a large general building, and a separate kitchen), what equipment is available for member use, what to bring for an observing session, and how to open the observing field on your own—all the actual ins and outs of enjoying our Observatory!

The main purpose of this talk is to acquaint TAAS members with GNTO and to
continued on page 2 . . .

Oak Flat Public Star Parties Continue on Saturday
Fourth in the Summer Series!
by Lynne Olson

TAAS will host the August Oak Flat Public Star Party on Saturday, August 22, opening at 5:30 p.m.

We hope to give the visitors another splendid night of stars and the Milky Way and the TAAS scope owners another opportunity to show the celestial wonders to our guests. The Moon and Saturn and many, many deep-sky objects will be our main targets!

Doug and Christina LeGrand will be our openers/closers, giving access to the Juniper and Yucca public parking areas
continued on page 2 . . .

Astronomy 101 is Back

Saturday, August 29, 6:00 P.M.
UNM Science and Math Learning Center

by Lynne Olson

Preceding the 7:00 p.m. General Meeting on August 29, at 6:00 p.m. we are reviving the very popular Astronomy 101 program with a presentation by Kevin McKeown on “Eyepieces.”

Learn more—or for the first time—about these subjects: the purpose of an eyepiece - magnification - apparent FOV - exit pupil - 2-inch barrels - types of eyepieces - Barlow lenses - choosing the right eyepiece - and much more information that will improve your viewing experience.

The Astronomy 101 sessions highlight a specific area of amateur astronomy, from observing to equipment to the basic science. We look forward to continuing this series every other month in the future. Our motto is “Observe, Educate, Have Fun,” and this does all three! See www.TAAS.org for full details.
ensure that they are comfortable and familiar with using the facility. We have a wonderful asset in GNTO, and it should be visited often to take advantage of the buildings, grounds, and telescopes it offers TAAS members. Visiting non-members will learn what membership can bring and can inquire about other advantages of joining TAAS.

You can read the report and see photos of the July Oak Flat Star Party on page 6.

M57, the Ring Nebula is a shell of ionized gas from a collapsing star, located about 2,300 light-years away in the direction of the constellation Lyra. Based on its current size and approximate rate of expansion, it is estimated to have been expanding for about 6,000 years. Planetary nebulae are estimated to remain visible for only about 100,000 years before they become too diffuse to be observed. So you should get out and observe it while you can.

At about 1.5’ in diameter, good seeing and calm winds are required to successfully image this object. I was able to capture sixteen ten-minute subframes using a C11 Edge at 2800 mm focal length and an SBIG ST4000XCM camera at GNTO on August 12 while watching for Perseid meteors.

—Vance Ley

...Oak Flat Star Party Saturday, August 22 continued from page 1

(and the road to the observing field only for cars with telescopes to set up). Please arrive early to park and orient yourselves and to talk with our scope operators as they set up—they have some impressive equipment of all types and sizes and a wealth of knowledge to share.

Sunset is at 7:47 p.m., allowing us to begin observing earlier than before, so keep that in mind when planning your arrival time. With good clear skies, we will have a laser-guided constellation tour as the stars pop out.

Bring a jacket or layers as the evening can be chilly, in spite of hot days; also pack water and/or food as none is available on site. Red flashlights or headlamps will help preserve night vision for TAAS members and visitors alike, and, based on last month’s environment, insect repellent would be handy for the first few hours. Questions to TAAS@TAAS.org. Details and map on www.TAAS.org.

You can read the report and see photos of the July Oak Flat Star Party on page 6.

What is a “Blue Moon” issue?

Since TAAS operates on the lunar calendar, the newsletter schedule can get out of sync with the solar month once in a (dare we say it?) blue moon, which occurred in July. To keep in sync, we produce an extra issue, such as the present one, and call it a “Blue Moon issue.” (Some may call it lunacy.) We plan to publish four more issues of The Sidereal Times in 2015.
July 18 New Moon Observing Event:

Marshall Gatten opened the site at about 4:30 p.m. We opened early to attack the weeds that have erupted due to the wet weather. While we trimmed the mesquite bush at the SE corner of the observing field a rattlesnake emerged from under the bush. We stopped trimming at that point but it is important to note that GNTO is in an isolated area with plenty of wildlife including snakes. It is always a good idea to be alert.

The observing conditions started off promising, but as sunset approached, clouds rolled in and observing became impossible.

Attendance was quite good with a dozen people, including: Marshall Gatten, Jim Fordice, Dee Friesen, John Briggs, Vance Ley, Jeff Boggs, Jim Kaminski, Alan Scott, Corey Alden, and Louie Guzman and his two grandsons from out of town, David and Matthew.

A pleasant evening of chatting and watching the distant lightning was had by all. We finally gave up on the weather and left at 9:30 p.m.

July 23 GNTO Committee Meeting:

The meeting was at Jim Fordice’s home in order to have a more pleasant atmosphere to recognize the contributions of Mike Molitor as the Observatory Director and present him with a certificate for his service. Thanks Mike for a job well done!

The GNTO Committee has purchased a security camera system to be installed in the near future to allow us to monitor events at the facility and have forensic evidence if another break-in occurs.

Planning is in progress for the August 15 Annual Picnic and several other events later in the year.

We received a fairly positive response from PNM concerning the lighting to be installed at the power plant being built on Harrison Road. They have incorporated several of our suggestions.

August 8 Third Quarter Moon Observing Event:

Jeff Boggs and Jim Fordice opened the site at 6:30 p.m. Jim was observing Jeff as he went through the opening and closing procedures. By the end of the evening Jeff had demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the procedures and Jim presented him with his opener keys. Congratulations to our newest opener!

A prospective TAAS member, Tom Hartsman, showed up and we gave him a tour. He just moved to this area from New York and wanted to see our facility. He seemed pleased that we have such a fine facility at a dark-sky location.

Jim and Jeff finished up some preparations for the August 15 picnic. The site has been seeded and trimmed and is ready for a large crowd. The next time you are there you will notice that the “Parking Area” and “Telescopes Only” signs have been repainted. They are much easier to read now.

We closed the site and departed about 9 p.m. without seeing a single star.

Signage Improvements:

New reflectors and signs have been installed to make it easier to exit the site in the dark using your car’s parking lights. We need your feedback on whether these are adequate and where other signs are needed. Please send comments to GNTO@TAAS.org.

Upcoming Events:

- September 12: New Moon Observing
- September 19: Training Event for the Isengard and Imaging
- October 3: Third Quarter Moon Observing
- October 10: New Moon Observing

Don’t forget that the GNTO Observing Field is available for use by TAAS members anytime. Check the TAAS website for the procedure to follow. Contact me if you have any questions.

As always, check TAAS_Talk and the TAAS website for last-minute changes and updates. GNTO events are open to all TAAS members and their guests.

GNTO Director: GNTO@TAAS.org or 505-803-3640.
The Summer/Fall Session of TAAS Fabulous Fifty on August 8 attracted more than 40 attendees of varied backgrounds, from novice to expert. Host Dee Friesen discussed how to orient yourself when observing the summer sky and navigate between objects. The iffy sky conditions cleared up considerably just in time for the group to head outdoors to practice their skills with the naked eye, binoculars, and telescopes coached by knowledgeable TAAS members. Objects observed included Saturn, the Ring Nebula, Alberio, a bicolored double star, and numerous others. An indoor social hour followed the observing.

**HAMfest Serves Up STEM on Cloudy, Busy TAAS Evening**

*by Tom Graham*

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). You cannot help but notice this acronym anytime you are reading about education and, with the political season here, it will be more prevalent. TAAS supported HAMfest, a STEM event on Saturday, August 8, at the Albuquerque Marriot Pyramid. This was the same night as a scheduled GNTO observing and Dee Friesen’s TAAS Fabulous 50 session at his home. It also was cloudy and rainy, as a monsoon August can be in New Mexico.

Regardless, Jim Fordice opened GNTO, Dee conducted his TAAS Fab 50, and Trish Logan headed up the STEM event. Steve Snider, John Laning, Amy Estelle, and Tom Graham lent support and had a few folks look to the heavens. About the only thing we could observe was Saturn, and for Brandon, a six-year-old from El Paso, Texas, it created a memory of a lifetime.

What a great group of TAAS folks we have to press on, rain or shine, to provide our members, the public we serve, and kids like Brandon a chance to learn about astronomy. Well done Trish, Jim, and Dee.
Oak Flat Star Party Report, July 25

by Lynne Olson

We had an excellent turnout. We arrived at 5:30 p.m. to open the field and set up the solar scopes. Thanks to Jim Kaminski, James Carr, and Dave Ray for providing some great views of our closest star.

At 5:30 p.m. the skies were mostly clear but by 8:30 p.m. it was 100% overcast. From then on sections of the sky would be clear only to have the clouds move in again. We mostly showed our guests the Moon and Saturn but as it grew later other objects became visible at least for short periods. Thanks to all of the telescope operators for doing their best to show the night sky under these conditions.

I counted 29 telescopes and binoculars on the field. Jim Kaminski counted 75 guests at his telescope so we probably had something over 100. I tried to keep track of all of the members who attended and counted 40. My apologies if I missed anyone:


Thanks to Kevin McKeown for providing a green laser tour of the night sky. He had at least forty people around him as he explained everything that could be seen around the clouds.

The last few of us closed the field at 12:55 p.m. and headed home. Jim Fordice was the opener/closer. Another great night at Oak Flat!
A FEW YEARS AGO, I was in one of those “I wonder” moments while I was talking with our Chief Scientist, Barry Spletzer, about sundials. We talked about the math, the history, the different types, and the pure joy they can bring to people. Somewhere in that conversation Barry must have seen my eyes go into the begging mode and, lo and behold, a unique sundial was created for Griegos Elementary School of which I was principal at the time. It is publicly displayed near the parent drop-off and pick-up area and is a topic of conversation and learning to this day. It is unique in that it has two gnomons (the parts that cast a shadow) that are ninety degrees from each other on two sides of a brick waiting area. It is also very accurate.

I learned that Dr. Spletzer has helped numerous TAAS members with their telescopes in so many ways it is hard to categorize—some are many pounds lighter, some easier to operate. He has repaired loaner and member scopes, the planetarium, and drive motors. He also created the HandiScope for people with disabilities that other clubs have inquired about. He has presented numerous times at outreach events, made solar attachments for binoculars, and these are just a few of the things I know about. He has a wonderful mind, talented hands, and a big heart.

Not done begging, I asked for help with another sundial for my personal use and that of about half of my neighborhood kids and adults. We discussed; Barry planned, built models, came up with ideas, researched, and created a beautiful sundial that is accurate, one of a kind, and well appreciated. I learned a tremendous amount about the history, uses, and types of sundials. (Trivia: The Sundial Bridge in Redding, California, uses part of the support structure as a giant gnomon.)

On behalf of all our members, Thank You, Barry Spletzer, TAAS Chief Scientist, for all you do for our organization!
A small portion of the Milky Way, captured at GNTO on August 12, 2015, using an SBIG ST4000XCM camera fitted with a 50 mm Nikon lens at f/2.8, piggy-backed on a C11 Edge OTA/Losmandy G11. Five five-minute integrations were made and combined in DSS. Further processing was done in Photoshop CS2 and Lightroom 5. The Lagoon Nebula (M8) and the Trifid Nebula (M20) are the small red glowing regions slightly above center. By my count there are about a dozen Messier objects in this image.

—Vance Ley
TAAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
THURSDAY, June 25, 2015

Attended by: Stephen Snider, Lynne Olson, Mike Molitor, Bob Anderson, Jim Fordice, David Frizzell, Dan Clark, Roger Kennedy, Sigrid Monaghan.
Absent: Trish Logan, Bob Havlen
Guests: Peter Eschman, Dan Richey, Vance Ley

I. Approval of Agenda

II. Approval of Minutes

III. Committee Reports

A. Education - Solar Astronomy Outreach (SAO)- Roger Kennedy
   Roger submitted his monthly activity/financial report to the Board showing 110 events completed to date, attended by over 15,500 adults/children. A question was asked concerning UVB (Ultra Violent Beads) and what they do. Roger went on to explain that the beads were sensitive to UV light and changed colors demonstrating the power of sunlight on the skin.

   Specific instructions for directions to all SAO events are to appear on the Solar Astronomy link of the TAAS website as a redirect (see more) from the TAAS Calendar.

   Roger, Dee Friesen, and Barry Spletzer will present at the ALCON Conference in Las Cruces in July about our (TAAS) approach to Outreach Programs including the Solar Outreach Programs.

B. Finance - Dan Clark
   Nothing major to report except a notation that the SAO funds have been separated from the Nighttime Outreach educational monies.

   The Board requested that a copy of the financial spreadsheet be submitted to the Board each month for review at meetings.

   The TAAS "HotLine" has been officially discontinued.

C. GNTO - Mike Molitor
   A GNTO subcommittee met to review improvements on the site to the observing field and to address safety when leaving GNTO at night. Purchase of signs, arrows, and reflectors have been made to be placed in and around the parking lot and exit route. Dan Rossbach has already made stakes for use on the road outside the fence area. Testing will be done on the reflectors to determine if they can be seen with a car's parking lights rather than headlights.

   Received the revised lighting plan from PNM for the new power plant. They have made changes that will minimize the night sky impact of artificial lighting at power plant. These changes are based on the comments GNTO previously submitted to PNM.

   Waiting to hear from the Committee on recommendations for security cameras to be on site.

   Mike presented a mid-year financial report and took questions.

   Note: Mike has changed the basis for all the property values to the one used for insurance coverage.

   Jim Fordice has been recommended by the GNTO Committee to the Board as the new Director replacing Mike who will be stepping down.

   Jim was asked if he would be willing to take on the duties as the new Director. He indicated yes. A motion was raised to appoint Jim Fordice as Director of the GNTO. Motion was seconded. All in attendance voted in favor of the move. There was no dissent.

D. Membership - Bob Anderson

   Nineteen Renewal notices went out in the month of June.

   Bob is trying to change the membership cards to read the date of joining ("been a member since...") rather than an expiration date.

E. Publicity/Special Events - Lynne Olson

   Lynne presented the list of events scheduled for July/August/September.

   It was commented that the last Oak Flat Star Party was a great success including attendance by new members, guests, and the level of sharing with the public by the members with scopes.

   Plans are being made to revamp our TAAS brochure. The Board has been asked to look through the current brochure and submit comments and suggestions for improvements. Lynne wants to begin handing out new brochures that are fresh, meaningful, correct information, and up to date, and to include newer photos plus Solar Astronomy info and other outreach programs.

   Chaz Getty is now certified for Scout Work. He has BSA certification.

   John Fleck, Media Contact, has retired from the Albuquerque Journal. Ollie Reed will be the new contact for Science there.

   Trish Logan has been added to the TAAS Facebook Editors.

   Astronomy 101 Plans: Looking for a possible team of volunteers to manage the programs instead of one individual to be responsible. This way they can rotate, make suggestions and coordinate efforts and plans.
IV. Current Activities

General Meeting 06/27/15 - David Frizzell

Guest Speaker will be Tom Farrell. Topic will be “The Hubble Telescope, a Personal Engineering Perspective.”

Tom will be explaining the Hubble engineering history as well as give insight on what really happened with “The Mirror Error,” when did it happen, and who knew?

V. Future Activities

Already reviewed in Publicity and Events.

VI. Old Business - Stephen Snider

A. Insurance Coverage: The insurance broker has said he has all information needed and the Contract is being drawn up now and should be ready shortly. General Liability is being included. Roger inquired if we had a COLI document (Certification of Liability Insurance), such a document stating all our insurance coverage is in existence. The Excel spreadsheet for the two biannual financial reports will be given to Stephen by Dan.

B. Amendments to By-Laws

Final copy of the amendments has been sent to all Board Members and to Barry to have put on the TAAS website. It was also sent to Gordon Pegue and Gary Cooper, the Editor.

C. Board Member Replacement - Executive Session

VII. New Business

Dark Sky NM working group Report - Pete Eschman

Over the past three months the working group has reached out to the TAAS membership to gauge interest in dark-sky issues. There has been no response from the TAAS membership to newsletter articles, TAAS Talk postings, e-mails to past donors, and appeals made at the monthly general meetings. The members of the dark sky working group are: Pete Eschman (primary contact), Dan Richey, David Penasa, Karen Keese, and Vance Ley. However none of these individuals are interested in leading a TAAS Dark Sky NM SIG.

Pete presented a status report and action plan to the Board to answer any questions. It was noted that 38 members have donated to the Dark Sky initiative, many more than once, going back to 2012.

Pete requested that the Board of Directors preserve the monies already donated to the Dark Sky Fund in order to use them for continued on page 11 …

M12 I was fighting my mount and clouds on the night of August 11 and I do not know who won. I was finally able to get my mount to go to M12, a bright globular cluster in Ophiuchus. The clouds luckily stayed away during my imaging for the most part. I lost 6 three-minutes images during the session.

Equipment: Explore Scientific ED127CF f/7.5, SBIG ST8300M and FW5, iOptron CEM60 mount, guiding with SBIG SG-4 on a AT72ED f/6.

Software: CCDSoft V5.210, CCDStack V2, Photoshop Elements V9, ImagesPlus V 5.75a.

Location: 3 miles north of Oak Flat on my backyard patio, August 11 10:30 p.m. to midnight. Exposure 10 x 3 minutes for each Red,Green,Blue Filters for a total of 90 minutes.

Note: I gave up the session because the clouds just about covered the entire sky except the area around M12 and I was slowly losing the battle.

I was also multitasking by observing 42 Messiers with my Celestron 11” Edge and doing some Astronomical League Messier objects (M30, M57, M56, M39, M71).

—John Laning
The floor was opened to questions.

Are any members of the dark sky working group also members of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)? At present, Dan Richey is a member.

Jim noted that when going to the IDA Website for a local chapter in the NM area, he found none. There is currently no “mechanism” that he found that could affiliate TAAS as an organization with the IDA. A chapter could be set-up in NM that TAAS could support. Pete was asked to clarify this. Pete commented that though they have investigated, to date their focus has not been on this particular issue but on the usage of the funds already donated.

Jim suggested that they should look at forming a chapter in NM then take the money that TAAS has and give it to that chapter. TAAS wants to support the IDA in NM as it is the organization devoted to the Dark Skies Initiatives. The Board feels this is the best way to proceed having reviewed the way the IDA is structured and organized.

The question is “Is there someone willing to take on the task of setting up an IDA chapter in NM.”

Vance Ley agreed to take on the task of leading the effort to set-up a chapter in NM.

Other suggestions for donation of the funds were also discussed.

Vance has agreed to submit a report of his findings and recommendations at the July 30 Board Meeting.

VIII. BOD remarks/discussion
The Board went into Executive Session to discuss board member replacement.

IX. Meeting Adjourn
The Albuquerque Astronomical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are deductible as charitable contributions on the donor’s federal income tax return.

For security reasons, GNTO location is available by request only, so please contact Jim Fordice, GNTO Director, for GNTO information.

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

Contact Bob Anderson at membership@TAAS.org

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@TAAS.org

P.O. Box 50581
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### 2014 TAAS Board of Directors/Staff

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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 or compatible word processor; one space between paragraphs is preferred. ASCII and RTF are acceptable. One column is approximately 350 words. Contact the Newsletter Editor at TAASeditor@gmail.com for more information.

Note that the Sidereal Times is no longer mailed. It is posted on the TAAS Web site, www.TAAS.org.

The editor’s e-mail address is TAASeditor@gmail.com.

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

TAAS is honored to receive an "Editor’s Pick 2013 Best of the City" award from Albuquerque Magazine.