



The Albuquerque Astronomical Society (TAAS) Membership Guide

Copyright 2006. May be reproduced if credit cited

TAAS Info Line: (505) 296-0549

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment.....	3
About the Society.....	3
Membership.....	3
Participation.....	3
Activities.....	4
Areas of Interest.....	4
Public Service.....	5
Loaner Telescope Program.....	5
Library.....	5
General Nathan Twining Observatory.....	6

Acknowledgment

We wish to express sincere thanks to those TAAS members who worked on this edition of the membership guide – Tom Graham, Ed Kist, Bill and Bev Firth, and to past edition writers – Barry Gordon, Bruce Levin, Kevin McKeown, Gordon Pegue, George Pellegrino, and Lisa Wood.

About the Society

Welcome to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society! The Society consists of people who share the enjoyment of amateur astronomy. The Society is a chartered, non-profit organization whose members include beginners, students, advanced amateurs, professionals and everyone in between. The Society maintains working relationships with the University of New Mexico (UNM) Albuquerque Public School, the US Park and Forest Services and New Mexico State Parks.

Monthly General Meetings are held on the UNM main campus and feature talks by professional and amateur astronomers and other lectures related to astronomy. These meetings are open to the public and there is no charge. Time and location are specified in the monthly newsletter *The Sidereal Times*, or call 296-0549 for information

The Society's own observatory, the General Nathan Twining Observatory ("GNTO"), is a first-class facility. It is located at a dark-sky site about an hour's drive from Albuquerque. GNTO includes two observatory domes, a bunkhouse, and a large observing field with concrete pads for setting up individual telescopes. Use of GNTO by members and their guests is encouraged.

An astronomy library is maintained by the Society. Books, videotapes, and slides are available by loan to members. The Loaner Telescope Program provides telescopes for members in need of scopes.

Membership

Participation

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in astronomy or stargazing, regardless of level of knowledge. There are no age restrictions, and one need not own a telescope to join. Indeed, we encourage you to join and attend a few star parties before buying or making a telescope. Family memberships are available at a reduced rate. Applications are available online at www.taas.org.

The annual fee covers the cost of Society activities and receipt of the monthly newsletter, *The Sidereal Times*. *The Sidereal Times* keeps members updated on meetings, Society news, observing sessions, technical tips and other articles related to amateur astronomy.

Activities

The Society offers a wide range of activities, from social events to “hard-core” stargazing. These activities include:

- ☀ Monthly General Meetings, held on the UNM Campus
- ☀ Equinox Picnics, held twice a year at GNT0
- ☀ December Banquet
- ☀ Oak Flat Public star Parties, hosted by TAAS and the Forest Service (Sandia Ranger District)
- ☀ GNT0 Observing Nights, minimum two per month around the time of the new Moon
- ☀ Use of GNT0, and the Society’s 16-inch reflector, and 6-inch refractor
- ☀ Astronomy Day, a public event
- ☀ Campus Observing Nights, hosted for the public by UNM and TAAS at the UNM Campus Observatory
- ☀ School Star Parties, where TAAS members can bring the wonders of the sky to public school students.
- ☀ Amateur Telescope Making (ATM) Workshops, held semimonthly on Wednesday evenings
- ☀ The Messier Marathon, part athletic endurance event and part astronomical smorgasbord, held on a Saturday evening in March or April
- ☀ Messier Special Interest Group (SIG) held weekly throughout the year to observe all the Messier objects

Areas of Interest

In addition to the specific activities described above, the following is a list of some areas of amateur astronomy in which you may be interested. Ordinarily, there are at least several Society members interested in these fields from whom you can learn and find out more.

- ☀ General Stargazing and constellation Lore
- ☀ Deep-Sky Observation (observing distant galaxies, clusters, nebulae, etc)
- ☀ Planetary and Lunar Observation
- ☀ Comet Hunting and Observation
- ☀ Meteor Shower Observation – for fun and research
- ☀ Variable and Double Star Observation
- ☀ Solar Observation
- ☀ Lunar or Asteroid Occultation Timing (Eclipses)
- ☀ Astrophotography and CCD (Digital) Imaging
- ☀ Telescope Making
- ☀ Computer Astronomy
- ☀ Starlab Planetarium – learning to run the Society’s mobile planetarium, used at school star parties and other public events.

Remember, you need not have prior knowledge or experience in any of these areas in order to become involved!

Public Service

One of the primary functions of our organization (right up there with having fun and learning about our universe) is to bring astronomy to the public and to groups involved with education. The following are some of the ways in which we achieve this:

- ☀ General meetings and programs are open to the public
- ☀ TAAS provides docents, planetarium shows, lectures, slide shows, astronomy exhibits, and demonstrations at TAAS public events and school star parties
- ☀ TAAS provides docents for many local non-TAAS astronomy special events
- ☀ For individual events, TAAS serves as a source of classroom speakers, student mentors, and docents/telescopes for schools and organizations.
- ☀ TAAS serves as a source of information for astronomical events through press releases to the local media

Loaner Telescope Program

The Society sponsors a loaner scope program for members in need of a telescope. At no cost, members can borrow scopes on a month to month basis. To borrow a scope, contact the Telescope Curator.

Library

The TAAS library is extensive and always growing. Astronomy books, atlases, and a nearly complete set of *Sky and Telescope* are available for checkout. The library has recently acquired the videotape astronomy course *Understanding the Universe: An Introduction to Astronomy*, by Alex Filippenko, and other videotapes are also available. Materials generally check out for one month at a time. If you wish to check out or donate materials, please contact the Librarian.

General Nathan Twining Observatory (“GNTO”)

GNTO is a fully-equipped observatory where members and their guests can observe under very dark skies. A 16-inch, f/6 Newtonian reflector is equatorially mounted under a dome. A 6-inch, f/6 refractor is also available for use. There is a selection of eyepieces available for use by members at the site. For electronic imaging, the Society owns a SBIG CCD camera for use with the Cave and Astrophysics scopes. A large, groomed observing field, with concrete pads is available for setting up telescopes. A bunkhouse and guest trailer allow for napping and dining. The facilities are supported by computers, software, and a small library. TAAS members can obtain detailed training in the use of all observatory facilities.

While at GNTO, please remember to adhere to these rules for your safety and the enjoyment of others:

- ☀ No pets
- ☀ No alcoholic beverages
- ☀ No music without the consent of all present
- ☀ Use red filtered flashlights when stargazing. Red light will not ruin night vision.
- ☀ Use only parking lights as you approach the observing site. Drive slowly. Do not “crash” star parties after dark with your headlights on.
- ☀ Be courteous when smoking cigarettes – the smoke can damage delicate mirror and lens coatings. Campfires/bonfires are not permitted during observing sessions. While smoking is permitted, please be aware that the site is two hours away from any firefighting support. Be cautious, and make sure your cigarette butts are completely extinguished before discarding them.
- ☀ Always have fun!