



STAR STUFF

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Newsletter

Star Stuff

This newsletter is published eleven times per year by:

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Officers

President: Arica Flores
Vice President: Ed Halash
Secretary: Jesse Godsey
Treasurer: Joseph Bostic

Departments

Webmaster: Liam Finn
Membership: Doug Bauer
Newsletter: Tim Campbell
Equipment: Jeff Gorman
Speakers: Sandra Macika

Club Information

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club meets on the fourth Thursday of each month, except for the combined November/December meeting which meets on the first Thursday of December – at Henry Ford College Administration Services and Conference Center in Dearborn.

President's Corner

by Arica Flores, President

Club Elections

Annual officer elections will be held at the January general membership meeting. The nominating committee has presented a slate of nominees for each office.

The nominees presented by the nominating committee are:

President - Arica Flores (incumbent)
Vice President - Sean Pickard
Secretary - Cheri Grissom
Treasurer - Joe Bostic (incumbent)

Any member may nominate someone from the floor to run for any seat (the member must accept the nomination).

Annual Astronomy Conference & Swap Meet

The swap meet is scheduled for Saturday, March 23 from 9am to 3pm at Henry Ford College. The event will include general talks, tech talks, planetarium shows, and of course the swap meet. Watch this space for details.

Club Meetings: Trying New Things

During COVID we switched to online meetings. Last year we resumed meeting at Henry Ford College with hybrid meetings. We generally have a presentation at every meeting except our holiday potluck in December. We have wonderful speakers that present on a variety of different topics.

Our December Meeting was in-person only, since it was our annual potluck. There was a lot of good food. We had a nice time socializing with fellow members. We did a show and tell with some of our club

Club Information

Refer to our website for a map and directions:

www.fordastronomyclub.com

Observing

The FAAC primary observing location is Spring Mill Pond located within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The Club maintains an after-hours permit. Club members can contact any club officer for procedures to enter or exit the park when the main gate is locked.

The club also has use of a private observing site near Gregory Michigan. See the FAAC Groups.io Group for more information.

Inquiries can be directed to info@fordastronomyclub.com

Membership

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The FAAC is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (FERA).

Fees

Annual - New Members: \$30
Annual - Renewals: \$25
(\$30 if not renewed by Jan 31)

Benefits

Membership includes the Star Stuff newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected

equipment, highlighting that it was available to borrow by club members. There was conversation and sharing between long time astronomers and those new to the hobby.

The board has decided to add in a couple additional social meetings though the year. This will allow us to talk to our fellow astronomers. This meeting would be in person with our normal snacks. Instead of a formal presentation, we will have something less formal like ask the astronomer or a small demonstration with lots of audience feedback. This will allow the atmosphere of long-time hobby members to share their knowledge with the newbies.

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, filling in for Jesse Godsey, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – December 7, 2023

Meeting called to order at 7:06 p.m. by President Arica Flores. Other officers present were VP Ed Halash and Treasurer Joe Bostic. We had 29 members and guests present all together. Tonight's meeting was our combined November/December General Meeting, and since it was also our annual Holiday Potluck, we did not offer an online attendance option.

Arica began by thanking all of the officers and committee chairs for their service to the club this past year. Members and guests present introduced themselves. We then had a brief Member Observing Reports session, combined with What's Up, where everyone was invited to not only tell us about anything they have observed in the past month but also tell us about anything upcoming they felt might be of interest to other members.

Doug Bauer's nephew and his family were visiting and Doug treated all of them to views of Saturn, Jupiter, and the moon. Tim Campbell recently gave a talk to the University Lowbrows astronomy club at U of M, specifically at the historic Detroit Observatory on campus in Ann Arbor. They were able to observe Jupiter with their 17-foot long telescope that evening. The observatory is open to the public on certain nights and is well worth a visit. Jeff Gorman recently found himself in a position to be able to reassure a member of the public that the very bright and mysterious light she had been seeing in the sky for several evenings in a row was actually the planet Jupiter. We all hope she believed him! Arica had the opportunity to observe recently when the moon and Jupiter were

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area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake observing site and private observing sites.

Astronomy or Sky & Telescope magazine discounts are available by contacting the FAAC club treasurer treasurer@fordastronomyclub.com for the discount form. The form should be sent to the respective publisher with your subscription request and payment. Do not send money directly to FAAC.

The FAAC has a pool of equipment including telescopes, cameras, and other gear used for outreach. Much of the gear can be borrowed for personal use in the interest of furthering your knowledge and experience in astronomy.

Please see the equipment list for further information.

Club Wear

Club logo-wear (embroidered with club logo) can be ordered directly through LLBeanBusiness.com

See the groups.io files section for ordering information and instructions on how to request the correct logo.

Communication

The FAAC uses Groups.io for our email distribution list (both formal and informal discussion.)

Observing nights & locations (scheduled and unscheduled as weather permits), equipment

Constant Companions — Circumpolar Constellations, Part I

by Kat Troche



Winter in the northern hemisphere offers crisp, clear (and cold!) nights to stargazers, along with better views of several circumpolar constellations. What does circumpolar mean when referring to constellations? This word refers to constellations that surround the north and south celestial poles without ever falling below the horizon. Depending on your latitude, you will be able to see up to nine circumpolar constellations in the northern hemisphere. Today, we'll focus on three that have gems within: **Auriga**, **Cassiopeia**, and **Ursa Minor**. These objects can all be spotted with a pair of binoculars or a small to medium-sized telescope.



The counterclockwise circumpolar constellations Auriga, Cassiopeia, and Ursa Minor in the night sky, with four objects circled in yellow labeled: Pinwheel Cluster, Starfish Cluster, Owl Cluster, and Polaris. Credit: Stellarium Web

- **The Pinwheel Cluster:** Located near the edge of Auriga, this open star cluster is easy to spot with a pair of binoculars or small telescope. At just 25 million years old, it contains no red giant stars and looks similar to the Pleiades. To find this, draw a line between the stars Elnath in Taurus and Menkalinan in Auriga. You will also find the Starfish Cluster nearby.
- **The Owl Cluster:** Located in the 'W' or 'M' shaped constellation Cassiopeia, is the open star cluster known as the Owl Cluster. Sometimes referred to as the E.T. Cluster or Dragonfly Cluster, this

questions, events, outreaches, etc. are normally discussed via this list.

Join by visiting <https://groups.io/g/FordAstronomyClub> to request membership.

Articles & Submissions

Your submissions to Star Stuff are welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at: starstuff@fordastronomyclub.com

Observatory

The FAAC maintains and operates the Hector J Robinson Observatory (HJRO) at Lincoln Park Schools.

The observatory houses a 14" Celestron C14 Schmidt Cassegrain Telescope as well as other instruments and can be used by club members.

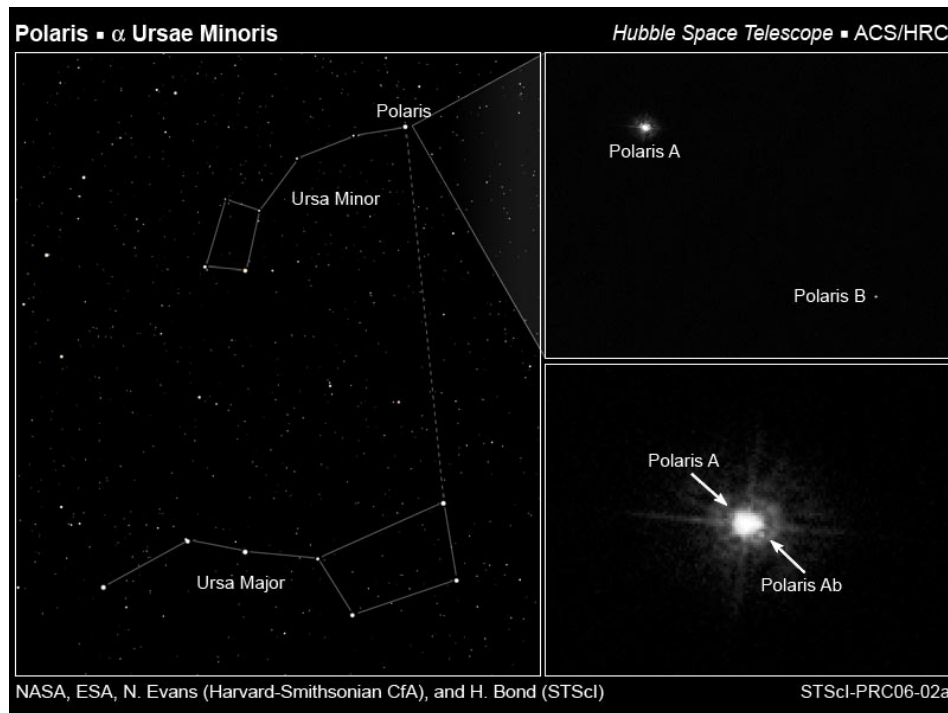
The observatory is adjacent to the athletic field situated between the Lincoln Park Middle School and High School buildings near

1701 Champaign Rd.
Lincoln Park, MI 48146

The school system has designated four "key-holders" within the club who have the ability to open the observatory.

Call (313) 444-5850 to learn when the observatory is opening (or request an opening).

group of stars never sets below the horizon and can be spotted with binoculars or a small telescope.



A black and white image from the Hubble Telescope of the Polaris star system, showing three stars: Polaris A, Ab, and Polaris B.

Credit: NASA, ESA, N. Evans (Harvard-Smithsonian CfA), and H. Bond (STScI)

- **Polaris:** Did you know that Polaris is a triple star system? Look for the North Star on the edge of Ursa Minor, and with a medium-sized telescope, you should be able to separate two of the three stars. This star is also known as a Cepheid variable star, meaning that it varies in brightness, temperature and diameter. It's the closest one of its kind to Earth, making it a great target for study and conceptual art.

Up next, catch the King of the Planets before its gone for the season with our upcoming mid-month article on the Night Sky Network page through NASA's website!

Scheduled Club Events

Month	Date	Sunset	Location
April	8th		Total Solar Eclipse
April	13th	8:13pm	Spring Mill Pond
May	11th	8:44pm	Spring Mill Pond
June	15th	9:11pm	Spring Mill Pond

Planetarium

FAAC members are volunteer operators for the Hammond Planetarium at Henry Ford College.

Planetarium shows are free and open to the public.

Four seasonal planetarium shows are offered per year with the stars and constellations of the current season as well as a multi-media presentation featuring select planets.

Public planetarium shows are normally the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. Please see the planetarium schedule for specific times. It is posted here:

fordastronomyclub.com/hfc-planetarium

Social Media

The FAAC has several social media accounts. Members are encouraged to join and follow them.

Facebook

facebook.com/FordAstronomyClub

Twitter

twitter.com/Ford_Astro

Month	Date	Sunset	Location
July	13th	9:08pm	Spring Mill Pond
August	10th	8:40pm	Spring Mill Pond
September	20 & 21st	7:32pm	Kent Lake Beach Astronomy at the Beach

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
January 17th	7:00pm	On a Snowy Evening (Winter Show)
January 31st	7:00pm	The Science of the Solar Eclipse
February 21st	7:00pm	On a Snowy Evening (Winter Show)
March 6th	7:00pm	The Science of the Solar Eclipse
March 20th	7:00pm	Nothing Gold Can Stay (Spring Show)
March 23rd	2:00pm	The Science of the Solar Eclipse
April 17th	7:00pm	Nothing Gold Can Stay (Spring Show)
April 27th	2:00pm	Nothing Gold Can Stay (Spring Show)
May 15th	7:00pm	Nothing Gold Can Stay (Spring Show)
May 25th	2:00pm	Nothing Gold Can Stay (Spring Show)
June 29th	7:00pm	The Wonderful Webb (James Webb Space Telescope Show)

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
January 25th	Tim Campbell	Photographing a Total Solar Eclipse
February 22nd	TBD	

November December Talk Details

Photographing a Total Solar Eclipse

Tim Campbell, NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador & Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Description:

Watching a total solar eclipse is an event to be enjoyed. Don't let photography interrupt your enjoyment of these wonderful events. Tim will

discuss equipment, software, and methods that fully automate photography of a total solar eclipse.

Bio:

Tim Campbell has always been interested in space. He was inspired watching the Apollo missions as a young child, but was really hooked when he saw the rings of Saturn through a telescope. While you can still find Tim looking through telescopes, these days he wants

to know how these things work... so cool geeky science experiments are often added in for extra fun. Tim is a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador, is a past president and active member of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club and is also a planetarium operator and presenter at Henry Ford College. Tim does numerous outreach events and talks both under the night sky and indoors.

Secretary's Report (Con't from Page 2)

very close in the sky, a very pretty sight. Dennis Salliotte has had mostly cloudy skies but did get an unexpected view of the ISS passing over one evening in spite of them. Gordon Hansen has been trying for quite a while to get some good images of the Witch Head Nebula. To his dismay, his most recent ones have been ruined by bands in every image caused by geostationary satellites. Pat Nixon has been using a nice pair of 10 x 50 binoculars to observe the night sky and got lucky enough one night to catch a jet passing right in front of the disk of the moon as he was looking at it. This all goes to show we can still enjoy the little pleasures of astronomy even during a cold, cloudy Michigan winter!

Our usual committee reports were brief, with basically nothing new to report. Gordon Hansen is chairman of our nominating committee this year, assisted by Dennis Salliotte and Tim Campbell. The committee has put forth the following nominees for our 2024 officers: President, Arica Flores; Vice President, Sean Pickard; Secretary, Cheri Grissom; and Treasurer, Joe Bostic. Our election will be held at our January general meeting. Additional nominations from the floor will be accepted that night.

After this very brief business meeting, we continued with our potluck feast and socialization. It happened to be Noah Pickard's third birthday, so his mom and dad brought birthday cake, and we all sang "Happy

Birthday" to him. We then had a show-and-tell of a few different types of telescopes: a reflector and equatorial mount belonging to the club that is available for borrowing; a three-inch refractor also on an equatorial mount belonging to Gary Gibson, who is making this kit available to the club for borrowing; and Arica brought her tabletop Dobsonian reflector to show people that your equipment doesn't always need to be large and heavy.

All in all, it was a good turnout with great food and friends. Thanks to everyone who attended. Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

January 4, 2024 Board Meeting Summary

(Videoconference meeting.) Board members Arica Flores, Ed Halash, and Joe Bostic were present, along with eight other members.

Our guest speakers for January and February will be Tim Campbell and Liam Finn, respectively, talking on eclipse-related topics.

The club is now using new accounting software, and our treasurer is transferring data to the new program. The majority of our members have submitted renewal dues, and Doug Bauer will be contacting those who have not with a reminder soon.

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Equipment

The FAAC maintain an equipment pool of telescopes, binoculars, cameras, and other equipment used for special events. Much of this equipment is available to members.

Each piece of equipment is either stored by a club volunteer who offers to be the caretaker of the item, or by the person who last borrowed the item.

Most equipment can be borrowed for one-month durations. At the end of the month, the borrower can extend the loan if no other members have requested it.

Some items are reserved for special events use and are not normally available to be borrowed.

If you are interested in borrowing an item, please contact either the current holder of the equipment, or contact the club equipment manager, Jeff Gorman, at equipment@fordastronomyclub.com

Item	Held by	Item	Held by
Telescopes		Display Items	
TK1 Coronado Personal Solar Telescope (Doublestack) w/Meade Autostar Goto Mount	Jessica Edwards	Astronomy Event Sign (3' x 6')	Gordon Hansen
TK5 4.5" Reflector on Fitz GEM mount	Jerry Jamula	Astronomy Event Signs 18x24" (x8)	Liam Finn
TK6 8" Orion XT8i Dobsonian	Dan Smith	PVC Display Board - Folding	Sandra Macika
TK7 TPO 8" f/4 Newtownian Astrograph (OTA Only - no mount)	Gary Gibson	Banner - Small (24" x 32")	George Korody
TK8 20" f/5 Obsession Dob, Ladder & EP Kit	Liam Finn	Banner - Medium (24" x 72")	Sandra Macika
Presentation Tools		Banner - Large (32" x 16')	George Korody
Projector (older)	Jim Frisbie	Tri-Fold Presentation Boards	George Korody
Projector (newer)	Gordon Hansen	Other	
Projection Screen 8'	John McGill	Canopy (10' x 10')	Liam Finn
Projection Screen 6'	Liam Finn	Pop Cooler	Sean Pickard
Bullhorn	Liam Finn	TA Sky Quality Meter	Liam Finn
Speaker System w/Wireless Mic	Liam Finn	Demonstration Tools	
		Weigh on Planets Scale	Liam Finn
		Lunar Phase Kit	Bob MacFarland
		100' Scale Model Solar System Kit	Bob MacFarland
		NSN Meteorite (Outreach) kit	Sandra Macika

Item	Held by
Imaging Cameras	
C2 Meade Deep Sky Imager Pro III w/Autostar Suite	Gordon Hansen
C6 Canon 60Da Astrophotography DSLR and accessories	Tim Dey
Other Imaging Equipment	
CA1 Rigel Systems Spectrascopes	Gordon Hansen
C7 Canon EOS EF 70-200mm f/1.4L IS USM lens & tripod mounting ring (for Canon EOS cameras)	Gordon Hansen
Rokinon 8mm f/3.5 Fish-Eye Lens (Canon EOS Mount)	John McGill
Special Event Items - Not available for Loan Out	
BK2 Zhumell 25x100 Binoculars, hard case, & Zhumell TRH-16 tripod w/soft fabric bag	Sandra Macika
TAK1 Night Vision Image Intensifier for telescopes (2" barrel size)	Tim Dey
Lunt 100mm H-alpha Solar Telescope with Celestron CG-5 equatorial mount	Tim Campbell

Secretary's Report (Con't from Page 8)

We will be adding three telescopes to our club's inventory of items that can be borrowed by members. Keep an eye on the list in "StarStuff" for these new items or anything else you may be interested in borrowing.

The work of the nominating committee is complete, and we will have our annual election at the January general meeting. Nominees are: President, Arica Flores; Vice President, Sean Pickard; Secretary, Cheri Grissom; and Treasurer, Joe Bostic. Additional nominations may be made from the floor the evening of the meeting.

Arica would like to see us set up budgets and records of expenses for our various activities and events. Also, we used to have donation jars at various events, and we should get back to doing that. Our income was significantly reduced during the pandemic years, and it's time to try to build it back up. Along that line, the board discussed the fact that membership dues have not been raised in many years (decades, really), and we

will be having discussion later in the year about a small increase going forward.

We discussed the April 2024 solar eclipse. Many members will be traveling out of state, but for those who are staying in Michigan, do we want to have a club-sponsored observing event? Arica, Gary Gibson, and Gordon Hansen all had ideas they put forth and will follow up on.

Our annual Swap Meet and Conference is a go again this year. Jim Frisbie has agreed to be the chairman again, and it will be held in early April, but the date is still TBD. We want to be cognizant of the eclipse date and not have any conflicts.

Sandra Macika is working on lining up speakers for our 2024 meetings. We will most likely have eight months with speakers, leaving three months for social nights.

The club has a need to purchase some audio/visual equipment to continue holding our general meetings

both online and in-person. There was discussion, and for now a camera purchase was approved unanimously by the board. A speaker may be the next purchase.

We also discussed the possible need and/or advantage to creating some formal committees to deal with various aspects of club business. This topic will continue to be discussed going forward, decisions will be made, and we will reach out to club members for volunteers at that time.