TAAA Desert Skies Bulletin

Observing Our Desert Skies Since 1954

January 2026

www.tucsonastronomy.org

Membership Meeting

Friday, January 2, 2026 6:30PM

TAAA's next general member meeting will be held on **Friday, January 2, 2025**. The Main Presentation will start at 6:30 PM. This will be a hybrid meeting (both in person and on social media). TAAA members will receive a Zoom link should they wish to attend remotely. The public may attend in person at the **Steward Observatory Lecture Hall (Rm N210), 933 N Cherry Ave, Tucson,** or stream from the TAAA YouTube page.

Inside this issue:

Presentations start at 6:30PM AZT

Our January 2026 meeting will feature two of our Special Interest Groups: The Astro-Imaging SIG and the Radio Astronomy SIG.

TAAA Astro-Imaging Special Interest Group (AISIG)

The Astro-Imaging SIG (AISIG) seeks to advance the skills of all who image the night sky, from beginners to veterans. Jeff Rothstein will describe the many activities of the AISIG, including monthly meetings that have included topics like the new smart telescopes, Astronomical League programs for imagers, and how to cull frames before integrating them. He will describe a recent imaging contest and a planned meetup at CAC next spring. He'll also be sharing some of the group's images.

TAAA Radio Astronomy Special Interest Group (RASIG)

The RASIG was formed in June 2025 to provide TAAA members the opportunity to pursue interests in radio astronomy. Gary Steffens will introduce this newest SIG offering available to all TAAA members. The stated objectives of the RASIG are:

- Learn about the history of radio astronomy.
- Assist members in pursuing Radio Astronomy observing through discussion and development of skills and equipment.
- Assist members in building a small personal radio telescope.
- Expand radio astronomy observing through outreach events.

Meetings are held monthly on the third Wednesday of each month via Zoom from 7-8:30 pm AZT. YouTube videos of the meetings can be viewed afterward. All members of TAAA are welcome to attend.

Outreach Awards

Following these presentations, the first batch of outreach recognition awards will be given out. Members participating in outreach are encouraged to attend in person.

Notes From The President

January 2026

by Ed Foley

In March 2024, a group of fourteen TAAA members met to discuss the long term outlook and plans for TAAA. Over two days the group considered TAAA's current mission and confirmed that it is as relevant as it was ten years ago. The group committed to review the organization from top to bottom for places we could improve the experience of our members, make the organization more effective, and serve the community with programs that would continue to deliver the 'Wow!' to students and adults in Arizona. The results were a quite extensive overview of what is becoming a larger and more complex organization each year. An overview of the organization was prepared covering our organizational management (policies, budgeting, fundraising, leader and volunteer staffing, IT systems), how we serve our members, how we communicate with members and the community, the ways we 'Facilitate the Wow!' through outreach in our community, and finally how we manage and ensure our extensive dark site physical assets meet members' needs and are sustainable into the future.

This past year the board followed that strategy session with meetings with key leaders discussing their past ten years of program work to find areas that could be refined. This February we are formulating another planning meeting to build on what we have learned. Using our last member survey, the 2024 Strategy work, and input from a leader survey to be conducted later this month, we will select a handful of key areas to focus on for 2026. We will then assemble member teams to work on those priority issues.

If you would like to learn more about the organizational review we did, the 20-page summary document can be seen here.

Ed

President: Ed Foley
president@tucsonastronomy.org

Vice-President: David Rossetter
vice-president@tucsonastronomy.org

Secretary: Bob Reynolds
secretary@tucsonastronomy.org

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Stephen Ferris mal1@tucsonastronomy.org
David Eicher mal2@tucsonastronomy.org
John Kalas mal3@tucsonastronomy.org

Immediate Past President: Mae Smith
past-president@tucsonastronomy.org

TAAA Board: taaabod@tucsonastronomy.org

The TAAA Board of Directors meets the second Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm. Members are welcome to attend Board meetings. If you would like to attend, you may email Ed Foley to receive a Zoom link for that meeting. Please send your email to Ed by the Monday prior to the meeting (by 5:00pm) and you will receive an email with the link on either Tuesday evening or Wednesday. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

Desert Skies Bulletin
Contributions to Editor: David Rossetter by the 24th.
Astro-Images to our Image Editor: Gregg Ruppel
Proofreaders: Terri Lappin, Jeff Rothstein, Jim Knoll

Astronomical League Observing Awards for December 2025

by Doug Smith

Below is a list of Astronomical League members who earned AL Observing awards during the month of December 2025:

Pete Hermes – Multiple Star Observing Program
Gus Gomez – Lunar Observing Program (Binocular)
Christian Weiss - Herschel 400 Observing Program
Gus Gomez – Meteor Observing Program
Gregg Ruppel - Special Observing Challenge: 15-3I-Atlas Observing Challenge

Recognition Committee Looking for Leader

The TAAA Board of Directors is looking to ramp up member recognition and service awards. As a result, they have asked the Nominating and Volunteer Resource Committee to look for an experienced member to head up the Recognition Committee.

This person should be familiar with past awards and have ideas for future recognitions. They will need to track past records and work with the committee to determine future awardees.

The Recognition Committee already exists. They have met and recorded some ideas of how to move forward. As might be expected, they are some of the busier leaders in the club. They are looking for someone to head the committee's efforts.

If you are interested, please contact the NVRC Chair, Pete Hermes.

TAAA Holiday Party

Ed Foley

Carol and Joe

TAAA Holiday Party Raffle

Becky and Dave Sharp

Jeff Buzek and Bernie Stinger

Martha and Brad Schaefer

The holiday season was the cause for another TAAA Holiday Party. The event is a potluck affair held at the Foley's house for the 10th year. There was lots of food as more than 50 attendees brought entrees, salads and desserts. Members also brought lightly used astronomy items to contribute to the evening's raffle, giving everyone a chance to take home a new astronomy toy for the coming season.

In addition to the raffle, there were four telescopes auctioned that evening. Two new members, Sam Maiorano and Eric Everts, along with Joe Gianinoto and Martin Hale, all went home with telescopes. The proceeds of the auction and cash donations that night all went to the TAAA Endowment account.

The event is always lots of fun and a chance to meet members, their significant others, and talk about astronomy etc. and plans for the New Year.

Martin Hale & Nelsey Toner

David Eicher, Ed Foley, Martin Purser, Mike McDowell

Michael & Holly Bakich, Tom & Chris Reinhart

Gary Rosenbaum & Terri Lappin

Becky & Scott Letz, Bernard Bell

Celeste & Bill Peters, Allen Klus

Paul Lorenz & Doug Smith

Sam Maiorano

Sharlene & Bob Rose

Vincent & Kathryn Verna

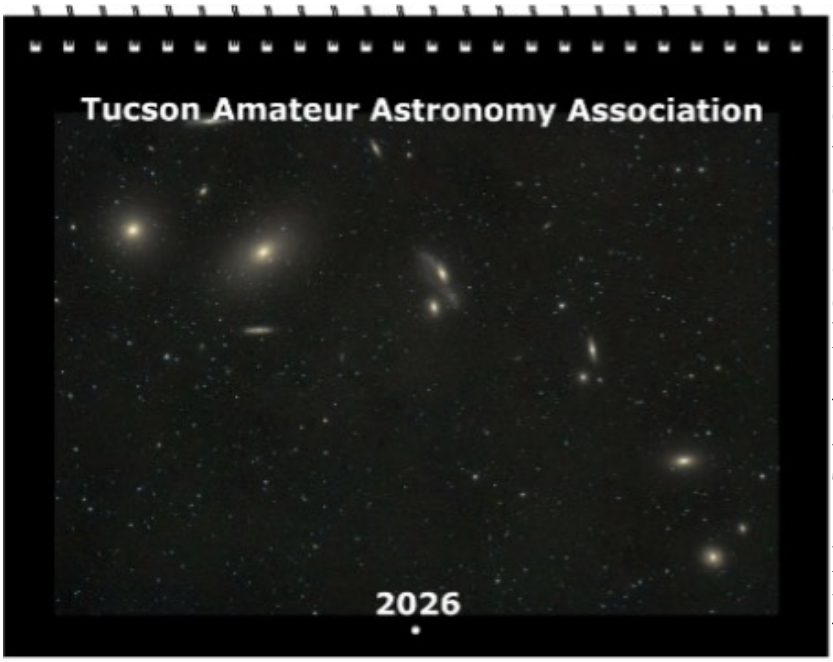
Rock Picking Party at CAC by Ed Foley

In 1887, Cochise County Arizona was affected by a magnitude 7.4 earthquake centered in Sonora, Mexico. The quake was felt as far away as Tucson. It caused moderate to major damage across the county and resulted in ground movement that affects TAAA's dark site today. The course of the river that bisected the land at the Chiricahua Astronomy Complex was moved north as a result of the earthquake, leaving the CAC property dry when it was purchased in 2009. While this allowed us to develop the land, we are still dealing with the river each time we want to gravel the site. Strewn across the site are river rocks that range from the size of golf balls to bowling balls. To excavate or gravel, these rocks need to be removed. We have tried many mechanical methods to clear the rocks, but it has always come down to manually removing the largest boulders with shovels, rakes and pick axes.

The members attending the December 20, 2025 CAC weekend demonstrated what makes TAAA tick when they volunteered to clear rocks from the member pads and the B. G. Stinger observatory areas. Doug Davis, Dave and Cindy Evans, Ibrahim Kocahidir, Scott Letz, Paul Lorenz, Craig Harding, Jim and Elaine McSheehy, Anne and Mike Stringfellow, Dave Thomas, Gary Steffens, Bob Zawada, Bob Rose and Ed Foley did the hard work. Getting the large rocks moved allows us to now hire a roller to pound the smaller rocks into the surface making the area flat. We will then pour and rake gravel onto this area of the member pads and the new observatory.

Doug Davis, Dave Evans, Ibrahim Kocahidir, Scott Letz, Paul Lorenz, Craig Harding, Jim & Elaine McSheehy, Anne & Mike Stringfellow, Dave Thomas, Bob Zawada, Bob Rose, Ed Foley

TAAA Calendar Now Available



They are here! The 2026 TAAA Calendar is available to members. It is packed full of information about TAAA, our events, and significant astronomy events throughout the year. The picture portion of the calendar has been formatted differently to emphasize TAAA events as well as astro-images and to more easily find significant astronomy events happening during the month.

You can order on the website or get them at the Friday General Meetings. The calendars are only $15 each (plus $5 if you want them mailed to you). So, help support our association and get a useful calendar to use throughout 2026. Your support and donation is deeply appreciated.

Only 14 calendars left for sale! *-The Calendar Team*

TAAA Ladies' Night Out

by Susan O'Connor

Ladies' Night Out is a social interest group for women members of the club. The group meets once a month at a local restaurant for fellowship and conversation.

Thursday, January 15, 6:30pm

Polish Cottage

4520 E Broadway
(S side of Broadway between Columbus and Swan)

Preview the menu at polishcottageaz.com

Susan 520-780-0136

Dean Ketelsen Observatory (DKO) Status

As was mentioned in the October Bulletin, the TAAA is planning to construct a roll-off roof observatory to house Dean's favorite telescope, his Celestron C-14. The observatory facility will be identical to the current Wally Rogers 12'x14' observatory and will be located nearby.

The selected construction contractor, Randy Maddox, has helped the TAAA build most of the facilities at CAC. Randy's current work schedule should allow him to start work on the DKO in early 2026.

In October, the club initiated a funding campaign seeking $50,000 to complete this project. To date, cash and pledges have been received totaling over **$45,000**! We are about $5,000 away from the goal to honor this longtime champion of outreach. Please consider supporting this worthwhile project in Dean's memory. You can donate specifically to the Dean Ketelsen project using the donate link below or on the website and selecting the Dean Ketelsen Observatory.

Sincerely,
John Kalas
DKO Project Coordinator

Member Meetings - We Need Your Help!

If you typically attend the monthly Friday General Meeting in person, we could use your technical help. We currently monitor and comment for our YouTube guests, operate camera(s) for in-person attendees, moderate Zoom, and do a live stream to YouTube. Right now, there are only a few of us to manage the technical requirements for the meetings. It would be helpful to have a team so we don't feel obligated to make every meeting and can spread the requirements and share the tasks. We will provide training in whichever area you want to specialize. If you want to help, contact Jim Knoll or Terri Lappin. Thank you for your consideration!

Tucson Stargazing Adventures

It has been a great year for the private star party events for TAAA. We hosted 86 events (47 resort, 19 personal, and 20 for private organizations) employing 124 telescopes for 446 volunteer hours and 2,858 participants. Revenue generated for the club was $25,150, helping to keep our dues low while still supporting the various activities for club members. We not only spread knowledge and the joy of astronomy to local residents but also to people from all over the U.S. and the world. It is an excellent opportunity to showcase Tucson and all we have to offer. We are also a member of *Visit Tucson*, so we get great exposure to groups visiting from all over the world.

Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who helped make this program possible. These include: Ben Bailey, Ken Hochberg, Gerry Hodge, Joe Jakoby, Jim Knoll, Susan Knoll, Jim Long, JD Metzger, Sam Miller, Jim O'Connor, Rick Paul, Bob Rose, David Rossetter, Tom Sarko, Gary Steffens, Bernie Stinger, and Gary Wells.

If you would like to help out and continue this great tradition within TAAA, please let me know. We can always use additional volunteers.

Jim Knoll e-mail

Astronomy Classes (Free!)

by Doug Smith

Pre-enrollment is open for ALL future workshops and the next Fundamentals in Astronomy class.

If interested please send an e-mail to Douglas Smith and specify which workshop or class you are interested in or if you have questions pertaining to future offerings.

I am currently putting together my schedule for 2026 and want to get an idea of the interest level before picking dates.

Grand Canyon Star Party 2026
T-Shirt Design Contest

Purpose: To obtain original designs to be considered for use on the 2026 GCSP T-shirts. Only one design will be selected for the 2026 T-shirt, but any submitted design may be used for a different year in the future or for a different purpose. Once a design is submitted it permanently belongs to TAAA.

Theme: No required theme, anything centering on GCSP.

Status of the Design: The design must be as "ready-to-go" as a completed entity as possible. Please do not send sketches of designs that are in process or designs that require significant further development.

Who May Participate: Anyone. A person submitting a design is not required to be a TAAA member or a GCSP participant. **The winner receives two free T-shirts plus $100.00 and recognition.**

Due Date: **February 1, 2026.**

How to submit: email the design, written information about the design, and information about the contributor to Mae Smith at ssmith@email.arizona.edu.

Important Rules:

1. The design and all its parts must be original and copyright free.
2. No material that may have advertising anywhere in the design (This includes the TAAA name or logo.). This is a National Park requirement and exceptions cannot be made.
3. Submission gives rights of use for the design to TAAA for the 2026 T-shirts and/or use at a later time on T-shirts, paper, or electronic publication.
4. The design many contain up to three or four colors.
5. The design must be appropriate for T-shirt use.
6. The 2026 GCSP Committee and/or its designees will have sole responsibility for selection of the winning design, any modifications of that design, the determination of any or all future use of all submitted designs, and the selection of 2026 T-shirts, including color.
7. Any design submitted by a minor must be so indicated and accompanied by written parental permission.
8. No particular format is required. Please remember that when designs are processed and placed on T-shirts or other items, some aspects of the design may be inadvertently distorted or altered in some way or simply may not work in the medium or size we are working with. While our intent is to honor a design and retain its qualities, designers, in submitting, agree to accept changes/modifications.

Observing Sites

TIMPA

by TIMPA Planning Group

TIMPA (Tucson International Modelplex Park Association) is TAAA's dark sky site west of the Tucson Mountains.

Location: The TIMPA observing site is located a few miles beyond the Desert Museum (3250 N. Reservation Road, Tucson, AZ 85743).

TIMPA Star Party Dates this month (Friday - Saturday)

January 9-10
January 16-17

The TIMPA Planning Group will be offering assistance with telescope usage and observing during the monthly TIMPA Star Parties. You are invited to bring your equipment and questions to TIMPA on Star Party dates for assistance. Be sure to register using the link below.

The TIMPA site is only partially improved. There are no inside buildings provided other than restrooms. TAAA provides very limited seating (members are welcome to bring folding chairs). Please note that members visiting the TIMPA site may encounter things commonly found in partially improved desert areas such as desert creatures and/or their remnants (such as rodent holes or ant hills), uneven terrain, weeds, and desert pollens. Members using the site are encouraged to bring red lights and to move cautiously taking appropriate safety measures. The site does not have potable water, so bring your own non-alcoholic drinks.

Reservations for the TIMPA Site are made on the TAAA website at TIMPA DARK SITE RESERVATIONS. Please fill out the form completely and be sure to indicate the date you desire to visit TIMPA.

Questions? Contact the TIMPA Director: Stephen Ferris

Observing Sites' Upcoming Star Party Dates

TIMPA	New Moon	CAC
January 9-10; 16-17	January 18	January 16-17
February 6-7; 13-14; 20-21	February 17	February 13-14
March 13-14; 20-21	March 18	March 20-21
April 10-11; 17-18	April 17	April 17-18
May 8-9; 15-16	May 16	May 15-16
June 5-6; 12-13	June 14	June 12-13

Chiricahua Astronomy Complex

by Jim Knoll

Upcoming CAC Weekend Dates (Friday - Saturday)

January 16-17 (New Moon January 18)

Chiricahua Astronomy Complex (CAC) is the club's eastern dark sky (Bortle 2) observing site, located in Cochise County approximately 100 miles southeast of the center of Tucson. We have many large telescopes ranging from 40-inch, 25-inch and 18-inch Dobsonians, a 9-inch folded refractor, our new 32-inch Cassegrain, and quite a few Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes (SCTs) of various sizes. The telescopes are configured for either visual observing or imaging.

You can be trained to operate most of these telescopes. To request training, please complete the request form here. We also have ten sleeping rooms with heat and air conditioning, a Learning Center/Classroom, seven RV sites with electricity, and a large tent camping area.

If you would like to observe, you must make a reservation on the CAC Web page at CAC Reservations.

Additional Member-Leased Observing Pads Planned for CAC

We are planning to build four new member-leased pads at CAC this Spring. If you are interested in having a leased pad available for your use with your equipment, please email Jim Knoll. Although we use leased pads for overflow during our normal CAC weekends, you would have priority on your pad. You would fund the pad initial lease (cost to build the pad with electricity) and have priority use during your lease.

CAC 2025 Review. What a year at our premiere astronomy complex. Many members used and enjoyed the site throughout the year. We completed and dedicated a classic Cassegrain 32-Inch telescope and new B.G. Stinger Observatory, held two Evening Under the Stars public outreach events and an Astronomy Camp for a HS group, and trained and certified members to use CAC telescopes. We completed a graveling project around the Member Observatories and RV area and many other maintenance tasks to keep the site in top form. **For 2026**, a couple major projects include building the Dean Ketelsen Observatory, additional member pads, and finish graveling the B.G. Stinger Observatory area, Member Pads, and Member Observatories. We will also have several Astronomy Camps to include one doing research using the B.G. Stinger Observatory 32-inch telescope.

Thanks to all the volunteers who help keep CAC going strong!

CAC Director: Jim Knoll CAC on the Web

by Bernie Stinger

January 2026 Star Party Volunteer List

Thank you for volunteering your time and talents for our extremely important outreach mission. **Below is the current status of the Public/School Star Party list for January, 2026.**

Please let me know by email if you are interested in volunteering for any of the events listed below. First come – first served. I will let you know in return if you are on it or that it was already filled. Some events go fast!.

If you are new to Star Party outreach, let me know and we'll be sure to help you get started. It is important you sign up for star parties if you plan to attend, whether you bring a scope or help in other ways, so I can manage who from TAAA will be on-site and for you to be included in any reminder or weather emails.

The PUBLIC Astronomy Events are also listed on the TAAA (tucsonastronomy.org) and Night Sky Network (NSN) (nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov) calendars. Also, all PUBLIC star parties will be listed on the TAAA Facebook events page and will be updated based on weather, etc. in real-time. You can follow any of these events and get a notification when I update each event but this is only for PUBLIC star parties listed on Facebook.

The requests have been updated as of January 24th. **The first section, in RED, is a list of events where we still need volunteers.** If you can help out please contact me at: astronomy-events@tucsonastronomy.org

Bernie Stinger
TAAA Public/School/Non-Profit Star Party Manager

To all Star Party Volunteers past and present:

Jim Knoll & I will be handing out the Outreach Awards to all who have reached at least 25 hours of outreach dating back to our records starting in 2014. Please come to the January monthly meeting on Jan. 2nd for your free bag of goodies and certificates!

January Events still in need of Volunteers

Sunday – January 4 -- EAST TUCSON – SOLAR Saguaro National Park – EAST
Saguaro EAST is located at 3693 S Old Spanish Trail.
Age Group: All Ages
Estimated # Participants: 50
1 – 2 Additional Solar telescopes needed (white light or H-alpha)
Setup Time: 12:30 pm
Start Time: 1:00 pm End Time: 3:00 pm

Friday – January 9 -- FAR SOUTH -- GREEN VALLEY
Pima County Conservation Lands and Resources (CLR) – Canoa Ranch
5375 S I-19 Frontage Road
Age/Grade Level: All Ages
Participants: 75-100
1 – 2 Additional Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

January Events still in need of Volunteers

Saturday – January 10 -- TUMACACORI AZ
Tumacacori National Historical Park
1891 E Frontage Rd, Tumacacori, AZ
Age/Grade Level: All Ages.
Participants: 125
2 – 3 Additional Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 5:30-6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

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Saturday – January 17 — ORACLE AZ
Oracle State Park
3820 E Wildlife Dr, Oracle AZ
Age/Grade Level: All Ages
Participants: 125 – 150
1 – 2 Additional Scopes needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

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Thursday – January 22 -- WEST TUCSON
Cooper Center for Environmental Learning
5403 W Trails End Rd
Age/Grade Level: Grade 4
Participants: 40
1 Additional Scope Needed
Setup Time: 6:30 pm.
Start Time: 7:00 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

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Tuesday – January 27 -- FAR EAST TUCSON
Steele Elementary School
700 S Sarnoff Drive
Age/Grade Level: 3rd and up, plus families.
Participants: 60+
2 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 7:30 pm.

Friday – January 16 -- SOUTHWEST TUCSON
Vesey Elementary School
5005 S. Butts Road
Age/Grade Level: K – 6
Participants: 150
1 – 2 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm End Time: 8:00 pm.

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Thursday –January 22 –NE FOOTHILLS TUCSON
Canyon View Elementary School
5725 N Sabino Canyon Rd.
Age/Grade Level: K – 5
Participants: 60+
1 Additional Scope Needed (Dob's preferred for early start)
Setup Time: 5:30 pm Start Time: 6:00 pm (show moon till dark) End Time:7:30-8:00pm

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Friday – January 23 -- FAR EAST TUCSON
Dunham Elementary School
9850 E. 29th Street
Age/Grade Level: K – 5
Participants: 100
1 Additional Scope Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 7:30 pm.

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Wednesday – January 28 – NE TUCSON – Daytime Solar viewing
Sunrise Drive Elementary School
5301 E Sunrise Drive
Age/Grade Level: K – 5
Participants: Total 200 (small groups rotating through during the day)
1 Additional Solar Scope Needed for Morning & Afternoon Shift ***(H-alpha or Whitelight)***
Setup Time: Shift 1: 8:00am.
Start Time: 8:30am. End Time: 11am.
Setup Time: Shift 2: 11am.
Start Time: 11:30am. End Time: 2:00pm.

January Events Filled—No Volunteers Needed

Friday – January 9 – Sells AZ
Tohono O'odham Nation @ Sells Recreation Center
Hwy 86, Sells Business Loop, Sells, AZ
Age/Grade Level: All ages
Participants: 10++
0 Scopes Needed ***(O'Connor – talk)***
Setup Time: 6:00 pm. Start Time: 6:30 pm (talk), 7pm viewing End Time: 9:00 pm.

Wednesday – January 14 -- SOUTH TUCSON
Holladay Magnet Elementary School
1110 E 33rd Street
Age Group: K – 5 plus parents
Estimated # Participants: 100
0 Scopes needed
Setup Time: 6:00pm
Start Time: 6:30 pm End Time: 8:00 pm

Wednesday – January 21 -- EAST TUCSON
Edge High School
2555 E 1st St.
Age/Grade Level: 9 – 12th grades
Participants: 50+
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm
Start Time: 6:30 pm End Time: 8:30 pm.

Saturday – January 24 -- EAST TUCSON
Congregation Anshei Israel Synagogue
5550 E. 5th Street
Age/Grade Level: Split: kids, teens, and adults
Participants: 100
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

Tuesday – January 27 -- FAR EAST TUCSON
Soleng Tom Elementary School
10520 E. Camino Quince
Age/Grade Level: K – 6th Grade
Participants: 200+
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:00 pm.

Saturday – January 10 – Roosevelt AZ
Tonto National Monument
26260 N AZ Hwy 188
Age/Grade Level: All Ages
Participants: 100
0 Scopes Needed *(Filled: Stinger/Buzek)*
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

Friday – January 16 -- FAR WEST TUCSON
Redhills Visitor Center @ Saguaro National Park -- WEST.
2700 N Kinney Rd.
Age/Grade Level: All ages
Participants: 100+
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6 – 6:30 pm.
Start Time: 7:00 pm. End Time: 9:00 pm.

Friday – January 23 -- SOUTHWEST TUCSON
Academy Del Sol
7102 W Valley Crest Pl
Participants: 100
Age/Grade Level: 8th + Adults
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:00 pm.
Start Time: 6:30 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

Monday – January 26 -- WEST TUCSON
Cooper Center for Environmental Learning
5403 W Trails End Rd
Age/Grade Level: Grade 4
Participants: 44
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:30 pm.
Start Time: 7:00 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

Wednesday – January 28 -- WEST TUCSON
Cooper Center for Environmental Learning
5403 W Trails End Rd
Age/Grade Level: Grade 4
Participants: 50
0 Scopes Needed
Setup Time: 6:30 pm.
Start Time: 7:00 pm. End Time: 8:30 pm.

Special Interest Groups

Astronomy Fundamentals SIG

by Connor Justice

Come join us for a presentation on the fundamentals of amateur astronomy. Learn your way around the night sky to add to your observing enjoyment. Meetings are on the second Thursday of each month.

The next AFSIG meeting is **Thursday, January 8, 6:30pm to 8:30pm.**
Topics to be determined.

Contact Connor Justice for Zoom link and more information.
Access videos of previous meetings in the TAAA YouTube Channel AFSIG on the Web

Radio Astronomy SIG (RASIG)

by Sandy Nichols

The next RASIG meeting will be **Wednesday, January 21th** at 7:00 pm AZT via ZOOM.

Are you wondering what radio astronomy is all about? Come join us for an inside view as we discuss member projects.

Topics: At our January meeting we will discuss the various antenna designs used by amateur radio astronomy. We will also continue viewing a presentation by Dr. Wolfgang Hermann titled "Radio Astronomy Possibilities and Limitations – Do's and Don'ts"; Dr. Hermann will discuss, among other things, exotic hydrogen.

Email Sandy Nichols for the ZOOM link or any other information about the new SIG.

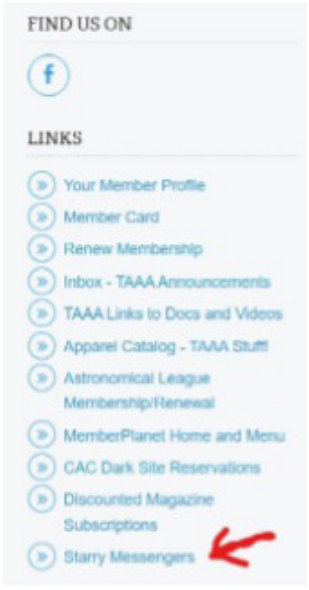
Starry Messengers Special Interest Group

Opening Minds to the Universe

The Starry Messengers group contributes to the TAAA outreach program by providing age-appropriate hands-on activities at school star parties and community events. We differ from the TAAA Star Party outreach program in that most of our activities can be performed indoors, and most don't require telescopes or clear skies.

Our December meeting was very productive. We looked at activities about extremophiles and possibilities for life beyond the Earth. These activities will be displayed at our Tucson Festival of Books exhibit in March. Our January meeting will include updates on our progress with these and other activities.

Our January meeting will be held on Monday, January 12th, 7pm to 8:30pm. This will be a Zoom meeting. All TAAA members will receive an email with the SMSIG meeting link closer to the meeting date.



Opportunities to volunteer for hands-on, non-telescope events are listed below. To sign up for an event, use this link, or use the link found on the Starry Messengers page after logging into MemberPlanet (see the MemberPlanet menu pictured on this page). On this page, you'll also find links to learn more about the toolkits and to submit your report following an event.

If you've thought about getting involved in this type of astronomy outreach, it's recommended that you sign up for an event that already has a volunteer so you can see how to present the activity. Volunteering for these events won't obligate you to attend our monthly meetings, though you may enjoy hearing from others doing this type of outreach.

- 1/14/2026 (Wed) 6 PM – 8 PM Holladay Elementary (36th St/Park Ave) Our Galaxy Our Universe Toolkit, 150 expected. Volunteers: **OPEN**
- 1/22/2026 (Thu) 5 PM - 7 PM Hermosa Montessori (Ft Lowell/Soldier Trail) any toolkit, 200 expected. FILLED: Tom Sarko, Pete Hermes
- 1/22/2026 (Thu) 5:30 PM - 7 PM Douglas Elementary (Miracle Mile/Flowing Wells Rd) Light Pollution Education Kit, 150 expected. Volunteers: Terri Lappin, **and one more volunteer.**
- 1/23/2026 (Fri) 6 PM - 7:30 PM Dunham Elementary (29th St/Harrison Rd) Space Rocks Toolkit, 100 expected. Volunteers: **OPEN**
- 1/27/2026 (Tue) 6:30 PM - 8 PM Soleng Tom Elementary (Houghton/Broadway) PlanetQuest Toolkit, 400 expected. Volunteers: Susan O'Connor, Vincent Verna
- 1/27/2026 (Tue) 4:15 PM - 5:30 PM Keeling Elementary (1st Ave/Grant Rd) Black Hole Survival Toolkit, 150 expected. Volunteers: **OPEN**
- 2/5/2026 (Thu) 6:15 PM - 7:45 PM La Paloma Academy-Central (Grant/Wilmot) Exploring the Solar System Toolkit, 250 expected. FILLED: Susan O'Connor, Tom Sarko
- 2/21/2026 (Sat) 10 AM - 9 PM SE Pima Community College (Kolb/Irvington) Life in the Universe Toolkit, 80 expected. Volunteers: Susan O'Connor, Vincent Verna
- 3/5/2026 (Thu) 5 PM - 7 PM Copper Creek Elementary (La Canada/Naranja) Space Rocks Toolkit, 150 expected. FILLED: Pete Hermes, Susan O'Connor
- 4/23/2026 (Thu) 5:30 PM - 7 PM Donaldson Elementary (Ina/La Cholla) Space Rocks Toolkit, 150 expected. FILLED: Susan O'Connor, Pete Hermes

Questions about the Starry Messengers SIG and our hands-on outreach toolkits can be directed to Terri Lappin (email or 520-977-1290).

Astro-Imaging SIG

by Gregg Ruppel

The next AISIG meeting will be **Monday, January 19, at 7:00 pm** via ZOOM.

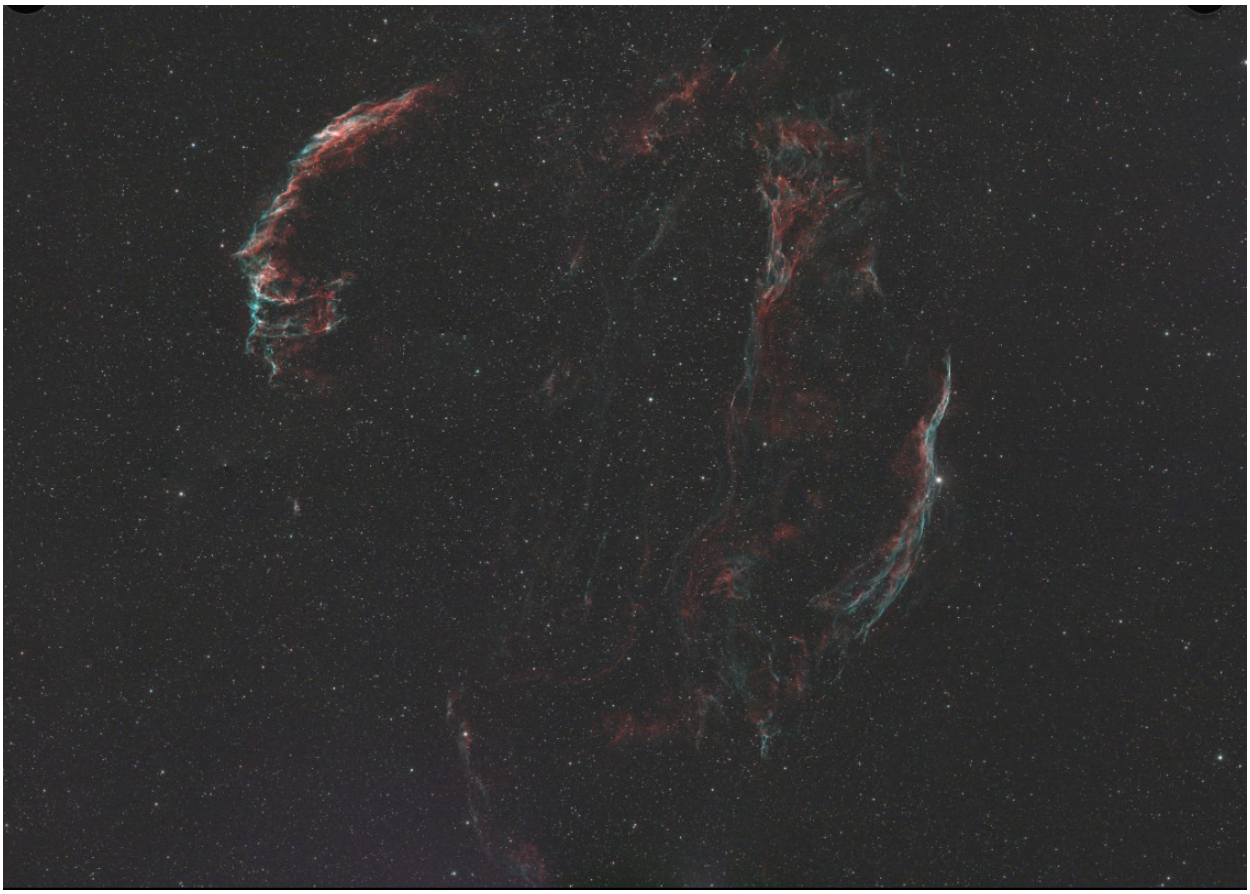
Topics: **Beginners' Corner** - Ask A Question
Filters For OSC Cameras - Open Discussion
If you use filters with your OSC camera, join the discussion and share your experience.
Image Sharing, Q/A

Email Gregg Ruppel for the ZOOM link or any other information. Gregg and the AISIG folks are very active on the TAAA groups.io forum. Check out all the helpful advice and amazing images there. For more information or instructions on how to join the forum, click here.

View previous AISIG meetings on the TAAA YouTube Channel.

Member Astro-Images

Craig Harding IC 1848
Sharpstar 94edph, ASI 2600MC Air, and IDAS NBZ filter. Astrobin

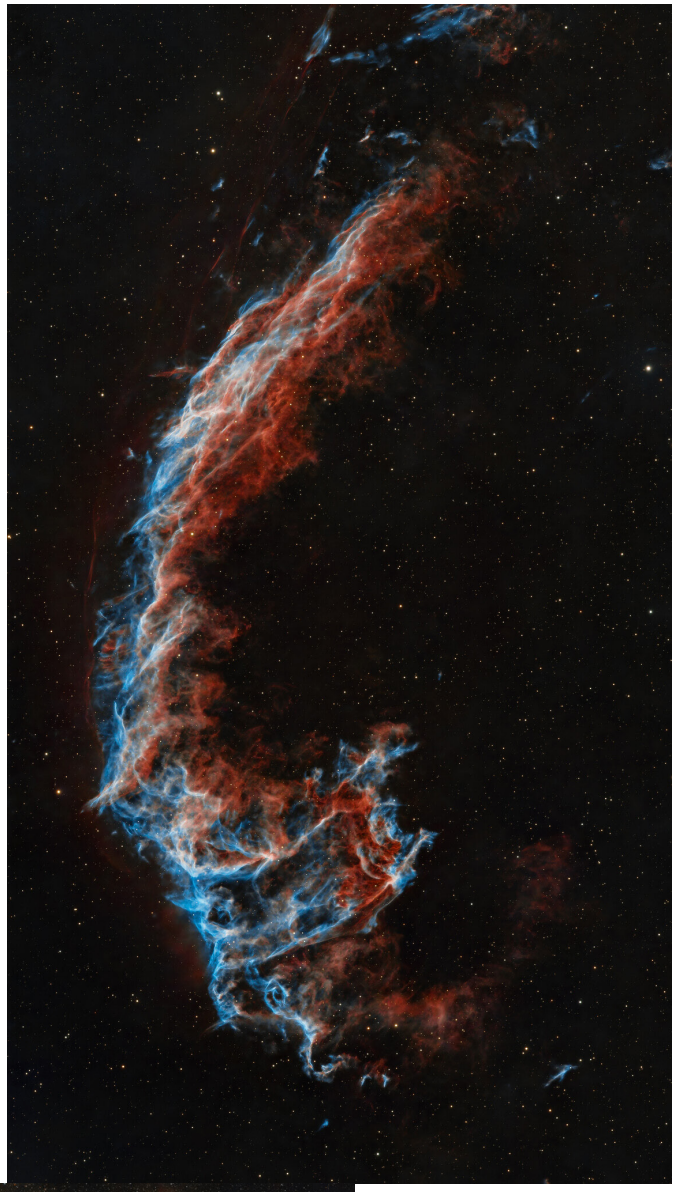


Sean Shifflette

Veil Nebula

Astrobin

Ed Beshore - **Sh2-129 and Ou4** 111h exposure time, Astrophysics 155 Refractor



Eastern Veil

Astrobin

David Stearn

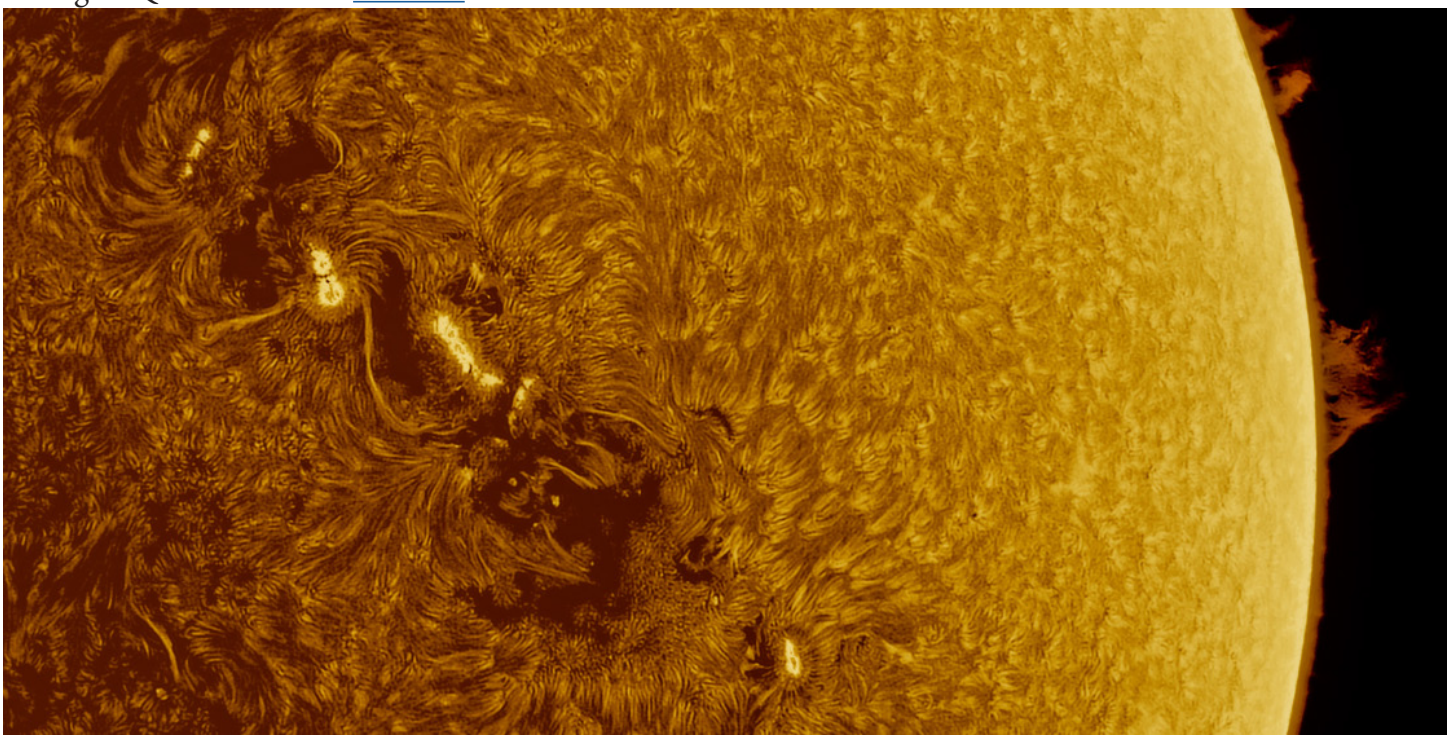
Heart and Soul Nebulae

2600MC Pro OSC camera and Lpara2/Askar D2 filters, SQA55, 60 hours total integration.

IC 434 - Takahashi FSQ106N, ZWO ASI 6200M, 8 hrs Astrobin

Michael Mulcahy

Sunspots 12/6/25 - Astronomics ED72, ZWO ASI 174MM, 300 12ms frames through a Quark Ha Filter Astrobin

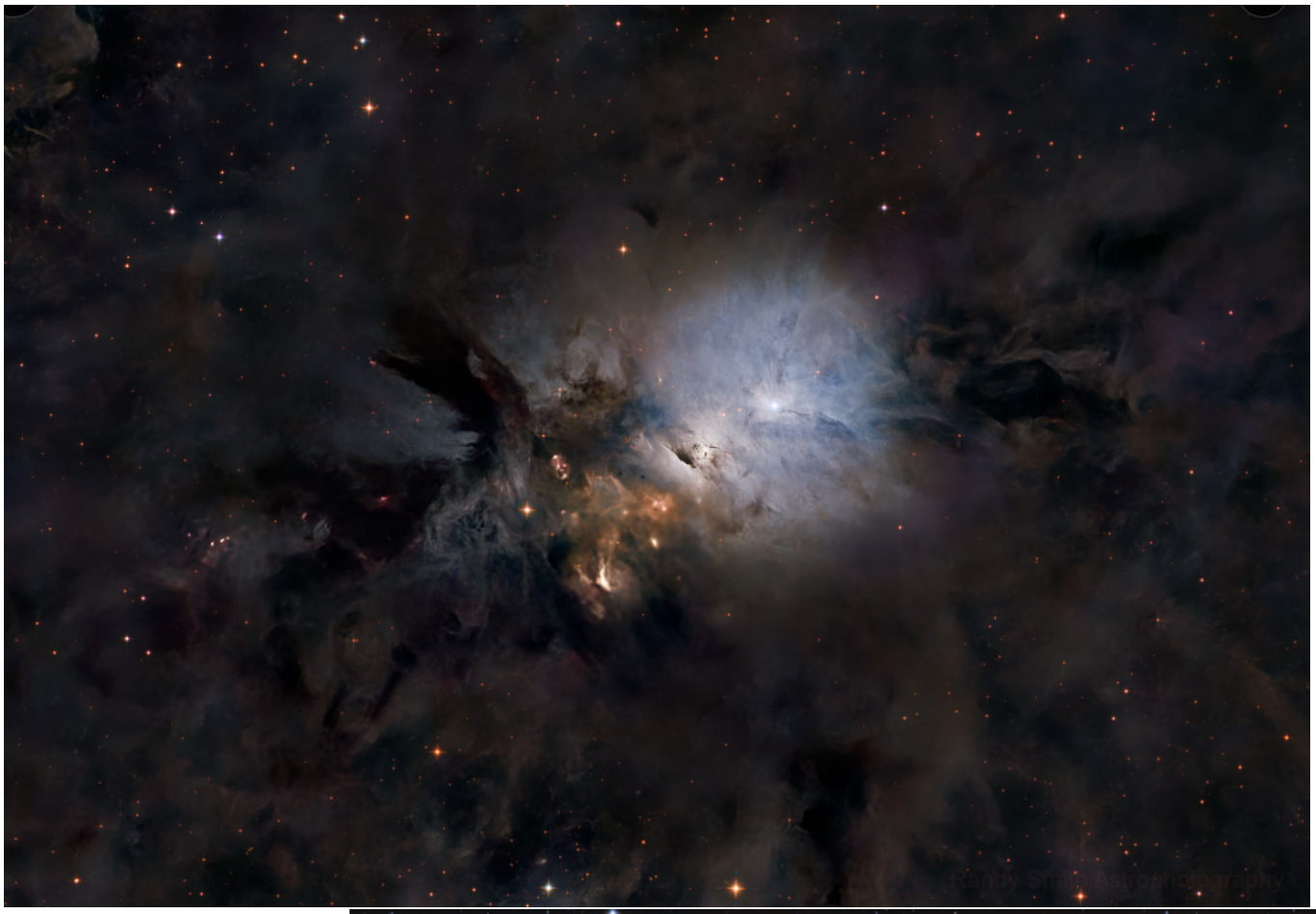


Geminids
Taken between 9:00 PM, Dec 13 and 4:30 am Dec 14 looking at about 14% (18 mm lens) of the sky with a Nikon D7500 camera on a tripod, 10 sec exposures, f/3.5, ISO 3200.

Richard Spitzer

Orion Nebula and Horsehead
SQA55 and the ASI 2600MC Pro, 265 mm.
150 subs at 3 minutes. Antlia Triband

Ed Jacoby



NGC 1333

Total integration: 15h 27m, Sky-Watcher Quattro 200P, ZWO ASI 2600MC Pro, Sky Watcher CQ350 Pro, Optolong L-Pro 2". Astrobin

Randy Smith

Sh2-274

Total integration: 8h 45m, Sky-Watcher Quattro 250P / 10-S, ZWO ASI2600MM Pro, Sky-Watcher CQ350 Pro, Antlia 3nm Narrowband H-alpha 2", Antlia 3nm Narrowband Oxygen III 2", Antlia 3nm Narrowband Sulfur II 2". Astrobin

Ardis Herold

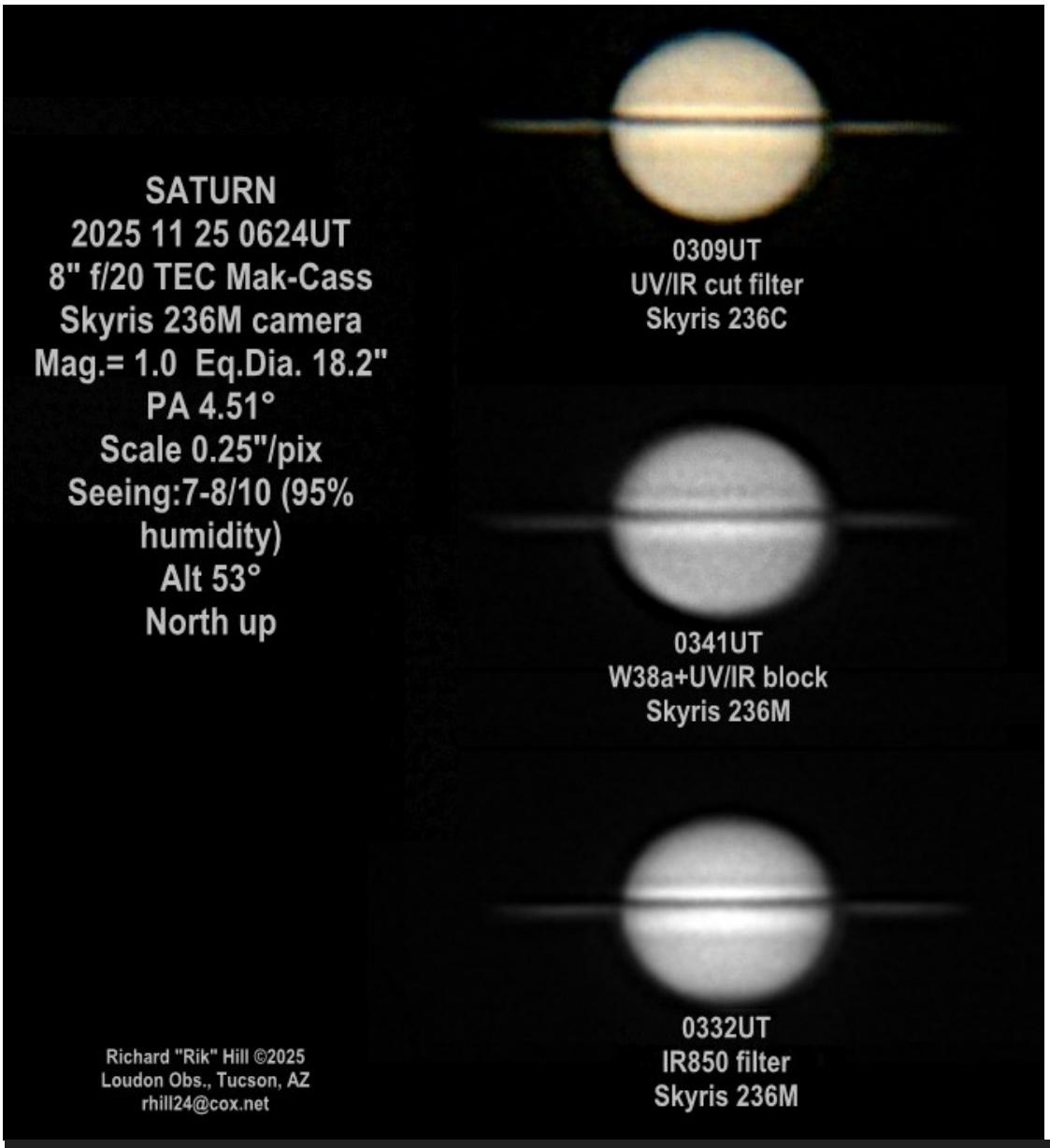
Comet 3I ATLAS

30 minute image, stacked on the stars.

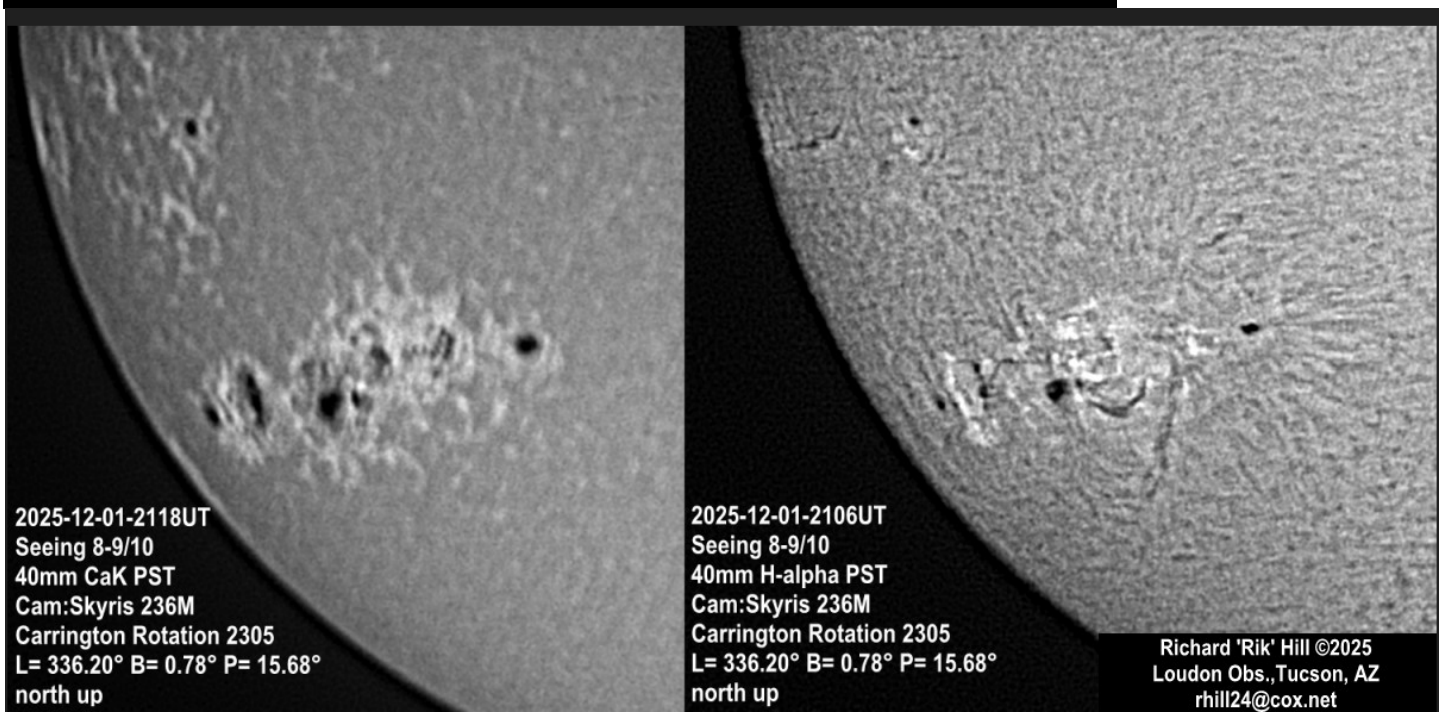
John Tsantes

NGC 2359 Thor's Helmet

7 hours of integration, Sky-Watcher Quattro 200p telescope, ZWO ASI2600MC Pro camera, Optolong L-eXtreme filter.


SATURN
2025 11 25 0624UT
8" f/20 TEC Mak-Cass
Skyris 236M camera
Mag.= 1.0 Eq.Dia. 18.2"
PA 4.51°
Scale 0.25"/pix
Seeing:7-8/10 (95% humidity)
Alt 53°
North up
0309UT
UV/IR cut filter
Skyris 236C
0341UT
W38a+UV/IR block
Skyris 236M
0332UT
IR850 filter
Skyris 236M
Richard "Rik" Hill ©2025
Loudon Obs., Tucson, AZ
rhill24@cox.net

Rik Hill


2025-12-01-2118UT
Seeing 8-9/10
40mm CaK PST
Cam:Skyris 236M
Carrington Rotation 2305
L= 336.20° B= 0.78° P= 15.68°
north up
2025-12-01-2106UT
Seeing 8-9/10
40mm H-alpha PST
Cam:Skyris 236M
Carrington Rotation 2305
L= 336.20° B= 0.78° P= 15.68°
north up
Richard 'Rik' Hill ©2025
Loudon Obs.,Tucson, AZ
rhill24@cox.net

M45 Astrobin

Alex Woronow

NGC 6888 Astrobin

Sh2-136 Ghost Nebula
f/2.2 RASA 11 + Baader UFC system, ZWO 2400MC Pro sensor. No filters used other than the UV/IR cut in the camera. 156 min exposure.

Tom Eby

M33
RASA 11" f/2.2 + ZWO 2400MC Pro, no filters. 3 hour exposure.

by Doug Smith

Observing Programs - What's Up List for January - February 2026

Many of the Astronomical League observing programs can be done from our backyards. The following objects are visible in January and February for the common observing programs.

Constellation Hunter Program – The following constellations are well placed for observing in January and February:

Auriga, Camelopardis, Canis Minor, Gemini, Lynx, Monoceros, Orion, Perseus, Taurus.

Messier Observing Program - Prime time for the winter Milky Way. The following Messier Objects are well placed for observation during January and February (listed in ascending RA):

M45, M79, M38, M1, M42, M43, M36, M78, M37

Lunar and Binocular Observing Program

Here is a list of dates for lunar phases in January and February:

New Moon: January 18, February 17	10 days old:January 28, February 26
40 Hours waxing: January 20, February 19	Full (14 days old): January 3, February 1
72 hours waxing: January 21, February 20	Gibbous: January 10, February 9
4 days old: January 22, February 21	72 hours waning: January 15, February 14
7 days old: January 25, February 24	40 hours waning: January 16, February 15

Solar System Observing Program

The following is a list of planets that can be observed during January and February:

Mercury is an early evening object during late January and all of February. It reaches greatest elongation on February 20. During the last half of February it is well placed for observation, setting almost 1.5 hours after sunset.

Venus transitions from an early morning object to an early evening object during the first week of January. It will remain visible in the early evening sky for most of 2026 (until October). By the end of February it sets an hour after the Sun.

Mars has emerged from behind the Sun but is lost in the morning twilight during January and February. It does not emerge from morning twilight until May.

Jupiter is still well placed for evening observation. It transits around 1 am on January 1 and around 9 pm on February 28. It reaches opposition on January 10.

Saturn is still visible in the early evening sky, setting around 11 PM on January 1. On February 28 it sets around 8 pm. The rings are still nearly edge on, but opening.

Uranus is well placed for evening viewing. It sets around 4 am on January 1 and around 12:30 am on February 28. It is near the Pleiades during January and should be easy to locate.

Neptune is still visible in the early evening sky. It sets around the same time as Saturn during this period. It should be easy to locate as it remains close to Saturn and on February 20 Neptune is closest to Saturn.

Urban Observing Program

The following **deep sky objects** are well placed for observing during January and February:

Tr 3, Stock 23, Mel 20, NGC 1342, M45, Hyades, NGC 1647, NGC 1807, NGC 1817, M38, M36, M42, NGC 1981, M37

The following **Double Star** is well placed for observation during January and February: Trapezium

The following **Variable Star** is well placed for observation during January and February: Algol

TAAA Astronomy Equipment For Sale

TAAA has an assortment of astronomy-related equipment for sale. This equipment is available for members only at this time.

Celestron 8" CPC
(No Photo)

Dual fork arm mount, 9x50 finder, 2 eyepieces, Telrad, finder rings, hand controller, user manual, tripod, diagonal. Basically new in original box. **$1400***

Celestron 6 NexStar
2 of these.
Some are black tube, some are orange. All come with Tripod, eyepieces, finder. All are single fork rail mount, NexStar (tested), 1.25" visual back, 1.25 diagonal, 2 1.25" eyepieces. One comes with 6x30 crosshair finder and one comes with a Telrad
$500 each

Homemade 8 inch Newtonian telescope. Sturdy GEQ mount. Solid tripod. 2-inch focuser (with 1.25" adapter), 6x30 crosshair finder. **$100**

12" Dobsonian
Another great deal!
Very large, Homemade.
Crosshair finder. **$500**

12-inch Skywatcher Collapsible Dobsonian scope.
2" focuser, large 8x50 finder, and 2 eyepieces. **$750***

16 inch Meade Lightbridge Truss Tube Dobsonian. 2" focuser (with 1.25" adapter), crosshair finder, mirror cooling fan, shroud, dust cover. A steal at **$1000!**

TAAA Astronomy Equipment For Sale (continued)

Celestron 5" Omni XLT Tripod, Celestron CG4 GEQ mount, 6x30 finder, diagonal, 1 eyepiece, user's manual. **$400***

We have numerous **tripods**. Celestron, Meade and others. Heavy duty, light duty, etc. If interested please inquire. Flexible on price

Small camera tripods - $10

Several full aperture **white light solar filters**. Most are 'film type'. We have one 'glass type'. Various sizes. All checked out okay. If interested please inquire for available sizes and prices.

EYEPIECE CLEARANCE SALE!!!
50+ eyepieces and filters for sale at rock bottom prices! Mostly 1.25". Inquire for availability and pricing

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We also have an assortment of other items available at this time including: Finders (various sizes), Finder rings, focusers, some eyepieces, some eyepiece filters, telescope rings of various sizes, mirror blanks of many sizes, a 6-inch Newtonian mirror set mounted in mirror cells, several large mirrors and much more.

To make inquiries about what is available or to express a desire to purchase one of the items please contact: Douglas Smith; 520-396-3233

Member Equipment for Sale

- All advertisements are for member-owned equipment. Members may not place ads for non-members.
- Advertisements are for one month. If you would like to run the ad for a longer period you must resubmit the ad each month.
- If you would like to show the item as sold in a following issue, you must send the sold notice to the editor.
- Each member may submit up to two ads per month.
- There are no formal ad restrictions. Please keep them relatively brief. A small photo or two may be submitted. The editor has total discretion as to the formatting of the ads.

Buyers: The TAAA does not assume responsibility for the products sold or offered. It is the responsibility of individuals who posted the ad to reply to your message and confirm the legitimacy. There are risks which you assume when dealing with people who might be acting under false pretenses; all these risks are borne by you. The TAAA does not control the products offered by and to members. But please, let's all be honest with each other!

Public Astronomy Events

ARIZONA | DEPARTMENT OF ASTRONOMY AND STEWARD OBSERVATORY

Public Evening Lecture Series
Fall 2025 to Winter 2026

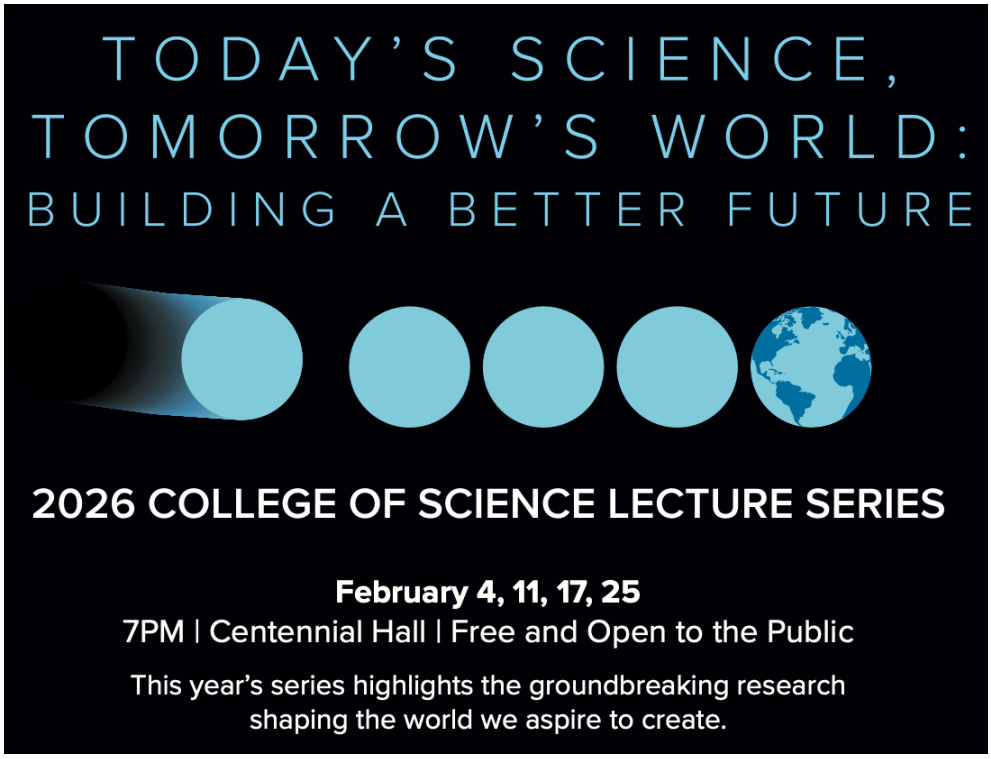
Monday, January 26, 2026
Dead Planets Around Dead Stars
Dr. Laura Rogers

Lectures are in-person or Watch via ZOOM.
Location: Steward Observatory N210; Parking 2nd Street or Cherry Ave Garage
Open at 7:00PM, Lectures begin at 7:30PM; Telescope viewing 8:30PM Weather Permitting
More Information

College of Science

College of Science Lecture Series

"Tomorrow's World" 2026 Lecture Series



Wednesday, February 4: Dr. George Sutphin
Aging Science: Preventing Disease at Its Source

Wednesday, February 11: Dr. Martha Bhattacharya
From Fruit Flies to Future Cures: How Tiny Insects are Driving Big Discoveries in Brain Science

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 Dr. Lise-Marie Imbert-Gérard
Harnessing the Power of Stars: Shaping the Future of Energy with Fusion Science

Wednesday, February 25 Dr. Laura Condon
Earth's Story: The Importance of Human Understanding in the Age of AI

More information and links to free tickets here.

Skyward

By Dr. David H. Levy

January 2025

Friends with a Comet?

Can you be friends with a comet? Yes! Of course. I like to imagine that I can. Of the 241 comet friends I have observed since I first spotted Comet Ikeya-Seki in October of 1965, Comet 3I/ATLAS has got to be one of my favorites. More than a mere comet, it is a friend with a personality, a beating heart, and a soul.

Comet Atlas was the highlight of the wonderful observing session 25074AN2, held on the night of 18 November 2025. That session included a check on the brightness of my favorite variable star, TV Corvi, plus a morning check on the field of the soon-to-erupt recurring nova T Coronae Borealis. I wanted to see this particular comet badly, but I was uncertain if it would be bright enough, and condensed enough, to sight. I was wrong. On the previous night Tim Hunter took a beautiful picture of the comet, that appeared at about tenth magnitude. It sported a small tail, and a second antitail in the opposite direction. I set up Eureka, my 12-inch diameter reflector telescope, and I began searching for comets in the region where I thought this comet would be. I passed by an almost invisible fuzzy object that I assumed was probably NGC 4697, a spiral galaxy with a bar crossing it. It may be a twin of our own Milky Way galaxy. But because the galaxy was just rising in the southeast, I could hardly notice it. I searched a few fields to the north and west.

Tim Hunter took this month's picture of the interstellar comet ATLAS a couple of nights before I spotted it.

Suddenly it was there. It was an obvious, approximately 9.5 magnitude bright spot. I did not make out either tail, but the coma was there. And the comet smiled at me.

Of all my friends, Comet Atlas is by far the oldest. Not only is it older than I, but it may also be almost as old as our galaxy itself. Its age has been estimated at between 7.6 and just over 13 billion years old; if it is anywhere near that old it is older than our solar system and possibly as old as the

galaxy itself. (Our galaxy is probably about 13.6 billion years old.) This comet was a leftover part of the birth of a solar system far away, maybe as far as a system on the other side of our galaxy. Wandering through empty space for possibly all these billions of long years, this comet carries with it the wisdom of much of our galaxy.

What it could teach us! But actually, it can offer us nothing. It may carry wisdom, but cannot utter a word of it, has no understanding, no knowledge. My live human friends and my family, for the brevity of their lives, offer much more salient hints, humor, and understanding of our lives and existence.

As Comet Atlas surges away out of our system, in my imagination it will witness the political world in which humanity lives. Our different beliefs and customs, legal interpretations, even our religious faiths, will lie layered upon its icy surface. Perhaps some day it will encounter another world, with intelligent life, and in its mind's eye it would share what it has learned about us. But for a quarter of an hour on a mid-November morning, it was my friend.

There is a frivolous idea that the comet is not a comet but an alien spaceship. It is not but the idea is the subject of much humor these days. When I went inside and enjoyed a Star Trek Voyager episode before heading for bed at 0630 that morning, I imagined me and the comet trading jokes with, not the crew of the spaceship, but the comet itself. I have studied comets since I was a teenager, and I imagine that each of the comets I have seen has had a cometary personality of some sort. Comet Atlas and I are friends, talking with each other, joking around, and celebrating our mutual love of the infinite space of which we both are a part. This, whether it be a comet or a human being, is what defines friendship.

Dr. David H. Levy is a long-time member and former President of the TAAA. He is a well-known astronomy writer and discoverer of comets. He writes this monthly "Skyward" column for the Vail Voice and generously allows us to publish it here.