



# Astrofiles

Volume 20, Issue 8

August 2014

## Upcoming Events

### Monthly Meeting,

Aug 8th, 7:45pm in Room 215 of Davis Hall on the Auburn campus.

New Moon Stargaze,  
Aug 23rd, at the club's Dark Sky site.

- 1st Qtr - August 3rd
- Full - August 10th
- 3rd Qtr - August 17th
- New - August 25th

## Inside this issue:

Letter from the President	1
Summer Observing	1
Thoughts for the Fall	2
Items for Sale	2
News from the Web	2
Communications Update	3
Congratulations!!!	3
Officers	4
Funny	5
Member Astrophotography	5
General Information	6

## Letter from the President

Well, I guess this is where I should say something encouraging to the club, perhaps about upcoming events, or maybe about changes I want to make in the club. I don't think so. I don't think that should be the first thing I say to the club, nor do I think radical change is needed. I have something more important to say, and it is from the heart.

Not only am I an *amateur* astronomer, I'm also an *inexperienced* one. I don't have the years of experience as a club president, years of watching amateur astronomy technology change, and not even that much knowledge of where things are in the sky. While I know more than some folks, I don't think I know the heavens as well as an astronomer should. Except for a few of the constellations and asterisms, I don't recognize much on star charts. As an amateur, I guess that I can only say that I am a quick study and an ea-

ger learner, but not as experienced as many others in our club. So, why do I talk about this here? Simple...

I think my first thoughts as club president are that we are all different. Some are seasoned observers, while others (like myself) are newbies. Some are retired, while others are still in grade school. We come from a multitude of backgrounds, experiences, professions, and (probably most importantly) have differing interests. While my experience as an astronomer is somewhat limited, my experience as a manager reminds me to take cues from the more seasoned among us. This, I will gladly do. So, a nod and a thank you are in order.

To Rhon Jenkins, our club president for most of the last three decades, I say on behalf of the club, "thank you." Thank you for being a supporter of not only the club, but our individual astronomy interests as club members. Your guidance and leadership, along with that of those who

have been with the club from its earliest years, are what have kept the club going. Thank you for a club that recognizes the value of the many facets of amateur astronomy, and what those interests mean to each of us. We ask that you please continue to share your thoughts and experiences with us as we continue into the future.

Another nod that is due is to Russell Whigham, who has been our club's Newsletter Editor and Web Master for nearly two decades now. Thank you, Russell, on behalf of the entire club, for your tireless efforts keeping our website up-to-date and for cranking out a newsletter each and every month.

Two other individuals that deserve our thanks are Allen Screws, our club VP and Program Chairman, and John Zachry, our club Treasurer. Thanks guys. Thanks a bunch.

Finally, I want to say thanks to our present members for hanging in there. I don't know

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Summer Observing

Don't you just hate Alabama summers? It is usually just too hot to get out and do much of anything, and when you do go out, it is so muggy that everything gets soaked, even on the drier days. Observing is almost impossible on most nights and, when one might consider the conditions favorable, the skies have so much haze and such poor seeing that many of us just stay in and wait for autumn. Many just spend their free time in the summer working on equip-

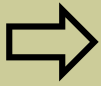
ment, studying charts, and focusing on the summer's many daytime activities (for me, it's boating, photography, and family). Whatever you do during the summer, have fun! If you do get to head out under the stars, GREAT. Summer does have much to offer, especially in August.

On August 4th, the [Moon](#) will occult [Saturn](#), which can be viewed with the naked eye. The moon itself will be a target of some interest on the 10th, as it reaches perigee when it is full. The [Perseid Meteor Shower](#) will peak be-

tween the 10th and 13th, though it occurs during a waning gibbous Moon, so the skies might be too bright to see much.

[Venus](#) and [Jupiter](#) will be only 15 arc-seconds from each other just before dawn on the 18th, which should make for a very nice photo, as it will occur only a degree or so from [M44](#), the Beehive Cluster. The [Milky Way](#) will be particularly bright during August's New Moon on the 25th, and take a good look at [Saturn](#) as well. It will be its last good

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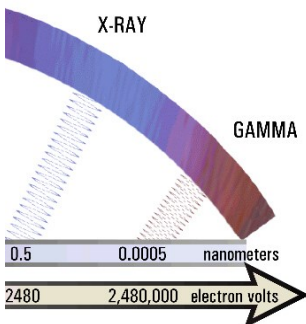


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HIGH-ENERGY →



NASA Settles  
X-Ray Debate  
([read](#))

## Thoughts for the Fall

Some of you may be wondering what changes might be coming for the Auburn Astronomical Society over the coming months. Well, I do have a few things that I think we need to “tweak”, but most of them will come as no surprise to those attending our last few club meetings. I don’t plan to do much without more discussion, but here is a summary:

- One of our discussions was with regard to what we can do to add more members. We

quickly concluded that we need to first address what we need to do to stop LOSING members. To that end, we generally agreed that we should add more variety to our monthly club meetings. As many of you know, we typically discuss club business for a few minutes, then watch a video from our library. While we will still be watching videos at some of the club meetings, the general consensus is that perhaps we can include presentations from others. Several club members have

volunteered to give presentations on a variety of topics, and we have talked about inviting a guest speaker as well. We may even have a “show-and-tell” from time to time, where club members bring a piece of equipment, an artifact, or other interesting “thing” that may be of interest to other astronomers.

- Another thought that came out of our discussions was the possibility of having a club picnic to kick off our Fall stargazing season. We are tentatively

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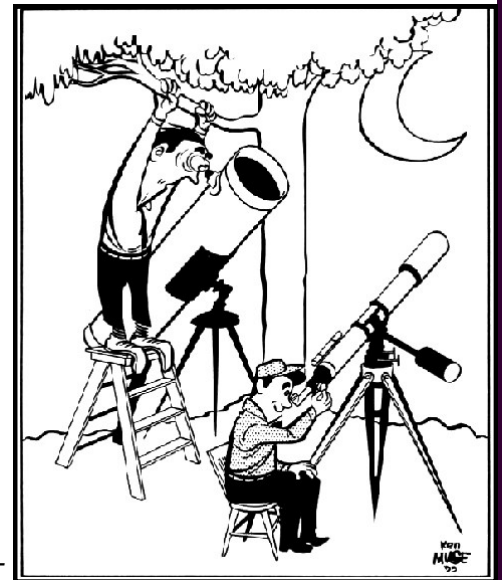
## Items for sale by member of the Escambia Amateur Astronomer’s Association

I received an email from Russell Whigham a few days ago, which was forwarded to him by a member of the EAAA.

The items below are for sale at some very reasonable prices. If anyone is interested, email me at [ceo@trustc3.com](mailto:ceo@trustc3.com), and I will send you the owner’s contact information.

- Vixon Porta Mount ii w/ tripod \* \$180
- Celestron Super C8 w/ accessories \* \$350
- William Optics 80mm Zenithstar APO refractor\* \$400
- Orion 127mm Maksutov w/case & accessories \$275
- Astro Zap Dual channel controller w/ heating strips \$145
- Celestron f / 6.3 Focal Reducer / Corrector \$90

\* Items with an asterisk will be particularly good deals, and the owner would be delighted to avoid the risks associated with shipping these items.



## Astronomy News from Around the Web

- These galaxies are merging ([watch](#))
- Astronaut Henry “Hank” Hartsfield has passed away ([read](#))
- Sunny stargazing in Yosemite National Park ([watch](#))
- Comet-chasing probe reveals space rock’s strange shape ([read](#))
- Another article on the above comet ([read](#))
- “Draggable” Milky Way panorama from Bryce Canyon ([view](#))
- Team hits snag while trying to rescue vintage spacecraft ([read](#))
- Earth’s magnetic field is fading and may be ready to flip ([read](#))
- Astronomers discover three new Jupiter-like exoplanets ([read](#))
- Peru: Archaeologists uncover ancient astronomy lab in Peruvian ruins ([read](#))
- Five massive new telescopes that will change astronomy forever ([read](#))
- The most precise measurement of an alien world’s size ([read](#))
- Mystery of the ‘transformer’ pulsar: Rapidly spinning star shapeshifts... ([read](#))
- Astronomy “Photographer of the Year” 2014: the shortlist - in pictures ([read](#))
- Astronomers bring the third dimension to a doomed star’s outburst ([read](#))
- Cassini reveals 101 geysers on Enceladus ([read](#))

### Communications Update

Shortly after taking over from Rhon as the AAS' President, I was contacted by Russell Whigham, who has served for quite a while as our club's webmaster and newsletter editor. Russell has asked that we locate someone to take over for him in these roles. Until then, I agreed to take over from Russell on a temporary basis, until someone can be identified to handle these tasks on a more permanent basis. After giving it much

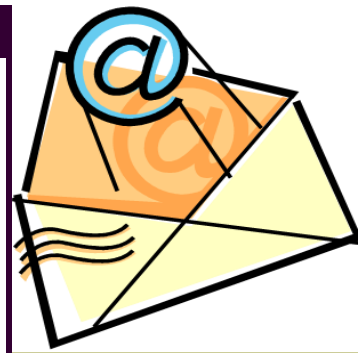
thought, I thought it would be fair and proper to ask Robert Fuller first, as he has been handling the club's [Facebook group page](#). He and I discussed this and a few other things, and then he agreed to take over the Newsletter and Website, which means that he will be handling nearly all of the club's external communications.

This actually seems logical, given the now common practice for communications channels to be integrated across technology platforms. Web-

masters can no longer be just webmasters, and Newsletter Editors are no longer concerned with simple printed text. Everything is connected and a broad skill set is needed.

Robert has the experience, technology tools, and skills to serve as our club Webmaster, Newsletter Editor, and Social Networking Administrator. That's a long list of titles, so I thought we might shorten it a bit. My intent is to ask the members present at the next club meeting to give a nod to

*(Continued on page 4)*



**Have anything of interest or just want to help?**

**We welcome contributions from our members and others. Just email the editor.**

### CONGRATS!!

On May 31st, Wes Schwarz got hitched. He and his new bride, Donna Hayes Schwarz, were married in Dahlonga, GA, then took off on a European honeymoon tour shortly after. They've returned, and are starting their life together on the right foot. Wes graduated from Auburn the week before the wedding, and took a job in Georgia. Donna is a nurse in Columbus, but hopes to return to school soon for nursing anesthesia. Both are interested in photography, and Wes is also an avid astrophotographer (see pg 5). We wish them both well, and hope to see them together out under the stars, but they still have a lot to do combining camera kits, households, etc. Hopefully, their equipment will be compatible (Wes is a Canon user, not sure about Donna), but experimenting is half the fun of the hobby. We look forward to seeing more of the new couple in the coming months, after things settle down and they can get some free time. Live long and prosper, Mr. & Mrs. Schwarz!



### Did you know??

*If you were to place a pinhead-sized piece of the Sun's core on the Earth, it would kill everyone standing within 90 miles of it.*



### ASTRONOMY EXAM ASKS AGE OF THE UNIVERSE



### "BIG BANG THEORY" THEME SONG MEMORIZED

Seriously, quit mooning me!

Only if you stop waving at me!





## CONTINUED ARTICLES

Click [HERE](#)  
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Auburn/Opelika  
Clear Sky Chart

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National Hurricane  
Center Forecast

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for the  
Dark Sky Finder

## Letter

*(Continued from page 1)*

of many groups where a bunch of folks can have so little in common and yet get along so well. As we continue into the future, let's not forget who we are: A diverse group of people, encouraging each other's differing interests related to our common interest. We are astronomers. Some of us are into astrophotography, others into making our own equipment, and (I believe) we even have a few folks that really enjoy keeping up with the deeply theoretical research in astrophysics. Some have rather expensive equipment, others have almost no equipment at all., yet we are all astronomers, and respect each other's interests and talents. What a group!

As we move into the future, let's not forget the legacy left for us, nor what we will leave for those that will come after: namely, that the Auburn Astronomical Society is a safe place for astronomers to enjoy each other's company, to encourage each other's efforts, to learn from the expertise of others, and much more. As club president, I can only say that I'll do my best not to forget that. I hope that, as a club, we can build on that legacy, and I sincerely welcome the input of all club members. Clear Skies to all! --RM

## Summer

*(Continued from page 1)*

month for a while.

The Hercules Cluster ([M13](#)) will be prime for viewing in August, as will a number of other outstanding clusters ([M6](#), [M7](#), [M11](#), and [M93](#)). While you are looking, check out the great views of the Lagoon Nebula ([M8](#)), the Star Queen Nebula ([M16](#)), the Swan Nebula ([M17](#)), the Trifid Nebula ([M20](#)), and take in as much of the [Milky Way](#) as you can. Summer doesn't last long and, each month, the skies advance about 30 degrees. This means that, every 2 weeks, the skies look to have advanced an hour in position. If you get a chance to observe, don't waste it. Summer only comes once a year! -RM

## Thoughts

*(Continued from page 2)*

looking at having a family picnic/BBQ at either our September or October New Moon outing, to be followed by an evening under the stars. More on this later.

- I would also like for us to consider becoming more involved with the [Astronomical League's observing programs](#). This would be a great way for us to improve our observing skills and might even be a good outreach program for us to interact with our local communities (especially schools). I'm open to ideas, for sure, so if you have any thoughts, please don't hesitate to speak up. More to come! RM

Top 10 [Amateur Telescopes](#).

Making the [Oberle Telescope](#)

Orion's [GIANT Binoculars](#)

## Communications

*(Continued from page 3)*

Robert Fuller as our club's first official, "Communications Director." In this role, he would be responsible for providing oversight in the areas previously mentioned, along with any other related communication issues that may require attention in the future. Robert has his hands full at the moment, but should be able to step in later in August.

Another issue that will need to be discussed at our next meeting is that of paying our website hosting fees, which Russell has been paying from the start. This should be corrected before they are paid again. RM

[Click HERE for latest C2](#)  
[Click HERE for latest C3](#)  
[Click HERE for latest B/W](#)  
[Click HERE for Prediction](#)

## Officers & Others

- Rodger Morrison, AAS President and Observing Director ([ceo@trustc3.com](mailto:ceo@trustc3.com))

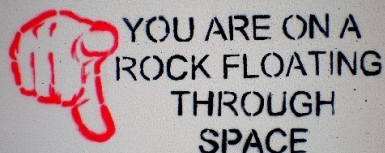
- Allen Screws, AAS Vice President and Program Chairman ([screwewa@mindspring.com](mailto:screwewa@mindspring.com))

- John Zachry, AAS Treasurer ([jbzachry@knology.net](mailto:jbzachry@knology.net))

- Robert Fuller, AAS Facebook Group Administrator ([ssgtalon@aol.com](mailto:ssgtalon@aol.com))

- Rhon Jenkins, AAS Official Keeper of the Door Key ([rhon\\_j@bellsouth.net](mailto:rhon_j@bellsouth.net))

- Russell Whigham, Montgomery area Contact ([russellwhigham@bellsouth.net](mailto:russellwhigham@bellsouth.net))



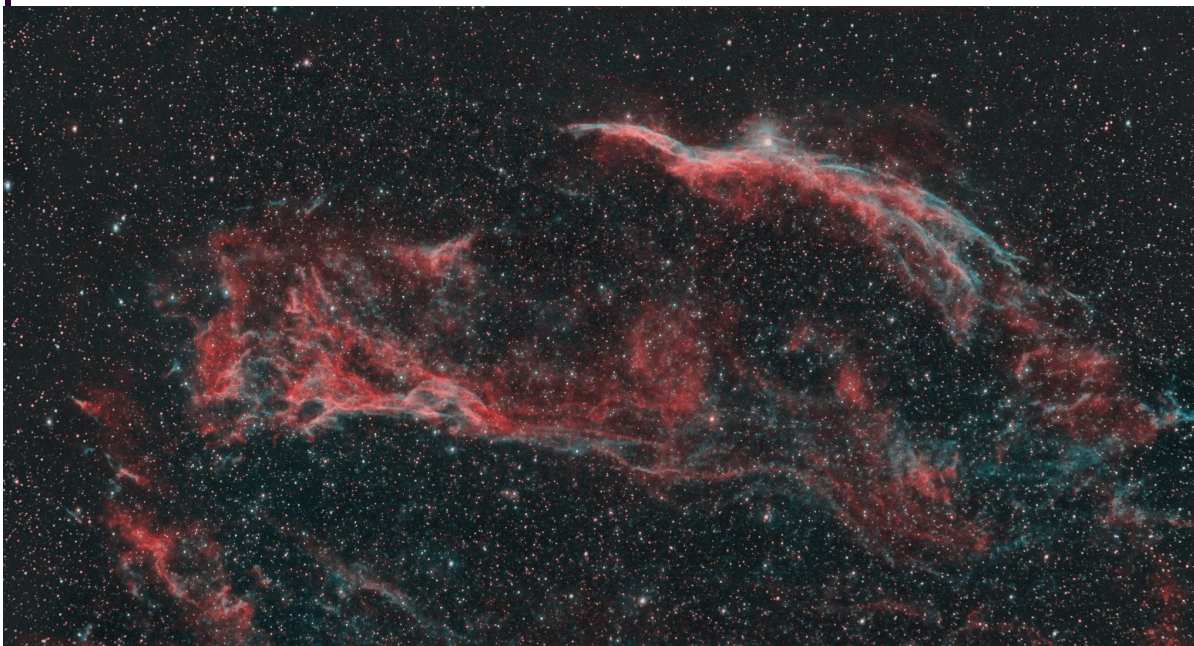
## Funny

A photon walked into a bar and ordered a drink. The bartender said, "Do you want a double?," to which the photon replied, "No thanks. I'm traveling light," and sat down by his friend, Crazy Moon, who was a luna-tick. He was complaining about not knowing how to get a hair cut, until someone suggested that ec-lipse it. About then, a spiral galaxy tried to come in, but was quickly told that she was barred. Apparently, she had been in earlier with her astronomer friend, who got caught chewing gum and blowing Hubbles. Everyone else was just hanging around waiting for the show, except for the astronomer trying to fix the position of the lights, which was much easier after he switched over to standard candles. A singing group, the Nep-tunes, were waiting for one of their members to return from the restroom, who was a little blue about being so gassy. Another performer, Uranus, had the same problem the night before. He had come in with his neighbor, Jupiter, and were getting drunk over discovering how many black holes could fit on the head of a pin. It seems that the singular truth is that all of them can, though few could see the light of the importance. Jupiter's other neighbor, Ceres, also stopped by to belt away a few. She was sad because those nearest to her didn't want to stay by her side. They just couldn't plan-et. Everyone thought that a neutrino was going to stop by but he just passed right through without charging the issue or connecting with anyone. Most everyone else enjoyed the show, and many hung around the west of the night, wondering where the star, the Sun, had gone. It did not dawn on them until the next morning. Most everybody got a good laugh at the events of the evening, except for the Dog Star. He was just too Sirius.

How many puns did you count?

*(Okay, I admit it. I wrote the above by combining jokes and puns I found online—RM)*

## Member Astrophotography - NGC6960 by Wes Schwarz, 8 May 2014



Wes says... "This is my longest integration time on any target yet, and also the most complicated workflow. 6.2 hours shot over the course of several nights through a high contrast filter and two narrow band filters, 12nm Oxygen beta, and 6nm Hydrogen alpha. The process technique is Ha + Oiii + LLRGB. It was really tough but I think it turned out pretty well. The hardest part is reframing the image each night, my overlay was just a little off each time and I ended up having to crop a lot of the top and bottom out, which was a shame because there was some amazing stuff going on. "



Having Trouble?

Visit the online edition at [www.auburnastro.org](http://www.auburnastro.org) to use the active hyperlinks located throughout this issue of the *Astrofiles*

*"If a little kid ever asks you just why the sky is blue, you look him or her right in the eye and say, "It's because of quantum effects involving Rayleigh scattering combined with a lack of violet photon receptors in our retinae."*

**Philip C. Plait**

## ASTROFILES

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**Rodger Morrison**  
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**Star light, star bright,  
First star I see tonight.  
I wish I may, I wish I  
might...**

**...Wait...**

**...Darn!...**

**... Just an ISS pass.**

See more  
astrophotography by the  
AAS club members by  
visiting the club's website  
at [www.auburnastro.org](http://www.auburnastro.org)  
and clicking on  
"Astrophotos"

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUBURN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

**Established in September 1980, the Auburn Astronomical Society welcomes anyone with an interest in astronomy, including beginners, amateurs, educators, or professionals.**

The monthly club meetings of the AAS are held at 7:45pm on Friday evenings near each Full Moon in room 215 of Davis Hall, the Aerospace Engineering Building on the main campus of Auburn University (see club website for specific [dates](#) and [directions](#)), The AAS is not directly affiliated with Auburn University. Regular club meetings are informal and typically include discussing club issues and recent club member activities, hearing reports from recent star parties, sharing [astrophotos](#), new objects observed, new telescope or accessory reviews, book reviews, and/or news of recent astronomical discoveries. The program feature can range from astronomy-related videos, astronomy software demonstrations, and how-to programs presented by our members, to programs given by invited professional astronomers. Again, visitors are welcome.

Monthly stargazes are held each month, on a Saturday evening near the New Moon, at the AAS dark sky viewing site near the intersection of Macon County Roads 22 and 24 (see club website for specific [dates](#) and [directions](#)). Other stargazes are held periodically, upon request by schools or other local organizations. At these stargazes, all AAS members are especially encouraged to attend, as they are typically one of our best outlets for sharing our hobby with the general public.

Club dues are \$20 per year (\$10 for students), payable in January. Club members enjoy a number of benefits, which include access to the club's library of videos and other material, borrowing permission for club equipment (some restrictions apply), membership in the [Astronomical League](#), permission to access the AAS dark sky viewing location, discounts on purchases from select suppliers, discounts on subscriptions for [Astronomy](#) and [Sky&Telescope](#) magazines, and much more. Spouses and family are encouraged to attend club events, as well as visitors who are interested in astronomy.

As part of our mandate to promote amateur astronomy, and as a service to the community, the Auburn Astronomical Society makes itself available to school and scout groups, to supplement their classroom studies with some real hands-on observing. For more information, please contact the AAS President, Rodger Morrison, by sending an email to [ceo@trustc3.com](mailto:ceo@trustc3.com).