

Astrofiles

Auburn Astronomical Society E-Newsletter March, 2012

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Events Calendar

We'll hold our monthly meeting on Friday, **March 2**, at **7:45PM**, [in room 215](#) of [Davis Hall, the Aerospace Engineering Building](#). Riders from the Montgomery area are welcome to meet at the [home](#) of Russell Whigham, [518 Seminole Dr.](#), and carpool over to Auburn. Plan to be ready to leave for Auburn at 6:45PM.

March 02, March meeting, 7:45PM, [in room 215](#) of [Davis Hall](#)

March 18, [Solar System Stroll](#)

March 24, Star Party at [Cliff Hill's farm](#)

March 17 or 24, MOTDF Stargaze? Let's discuss at the meeting

April 28, Astronomy Day at the [W. A. Gayle Planetarium](#)

June 05, [Transit of Venus](#)

2012 Dues

AAS memberships (\$20.00/\$10.00 for full-time students) were due in January. AAS members who are current on their 2012 dues are:

William Baugh
Scott & Rebecca Carnahan
Alan Cook
Chad & Mary Ellington
Dr. Rhon Jenkins
Everett Leonard
Charles B. Lewis
Michael Pastorett

Allen Screws
William T. Sprankle
Frank Ward
Russell Whigham
John Wingard
Dr. Ben Wouters
John B. Zachry

If you don't see your name above, and have just let this slip your mind, please make your check payable to "Auburn Astronomical Society". Families are covered with a single membership. If you're unable to attend the meeting, mail your dues to:

Auburn Astronomical Society
c/o John B. Zachry
501 Summerfield Road
West Point, GA 31833

Astronomy Day 2012

Astronomy Day 2012 will be on **Saturday, April 28**, at the [W. A. Gayle Planetarium](#). Planetarium director, **Rick Evans**, wrote to say that plans are changing on a daily basis; now the Digital Full Dome demonstration [for TSU administrators and City of Montgomery officials] will be on the Friday before Astronomy Day so we won't be able to show it on Astronomy Day after all. **Chad Ellington** has volunteered to give a presentation geared to the lay audience, and as always, AAS will offer telescopic viewing of the Moon and planets.

At our February meeting, Rhon read a copy of a letter from **Dr. Michael Patton**, (University of Montevallo Astronomy Club) to the Mayor of Montgomery. In it, Dr. Patton cited what an asset that the planetarium was to Montgomery, and detailed the lengths to which **Rick Evans** has gone to make that happen. We're glad that Rick's efforts were finally and formally recognized.

Solar System Stroll

Chad Ellington

I've scheduled a Solar System Stroll at the [Alabama Nature Center](#) on Sunday March 18th from 1-5pm. If the club is interested in helping me out in any, it would be much appreciated. Here's a little synopsis of what I've got planned: 1 kilometer scale model of our Solar System. Borrow a guidebook on where to find various planets/spacecraft around the trail system of the Alabama Nature Center. Hands-on activities under/near the pavilion include: sorting Solar System images, sorting the Earth/Moon historical timeline, constructing a pocket Solar System, solar telescope viewing, making an origami wrist sundial and making/launching stomp rockets. I still need some [stomp rockets](#) built...these are fun and we could always fire them off behind Davis Hall after the meeting for fun. Those attending the meeting could bring old calendars/heavy card stock and a few empty 2-liter bottles to help out with this.

Attached is the guidebook I mentioned above to give you an idea of what I'm working on. I plan on having several laminated versions of this on hand for borrowing as well as a few copies for public 'consumption'.



[ANC_SolarSystemStroll.pdf](#)

Also attached is a file of what kinds of things I want to have on hand and where. As you can see it will be difficult, if not impossible, for one person to handle it all. Also attached is the Google Earth .kmz file for showing where objects will be found.

I'm working with Rebecca Bearden at AL Nature Center on this. She wants to add more outdoor education programs to the Wildlife Center's repertoire so I'm trying to have this developed into a detailed package so she can run it (with Auburn Astronomical Society) in the future.



[SolarSystemStroll.pdf](#)



[ALNatureCenter.kmz](#)

Member News

Get to know our newest members, **Scott & Rebecca Carnahan** at their [Who R We page](#).

Maybe you saw **Chad Ellington's** quotes from last month's Wetumpka Crater tour in the [Montgomery Advertiser](#). See more photos [HERE](#). Here's Chad's review of the tour:

The crater tour was rather enjoyable. I was on the last tour of the day so we got to spend some extra time up on Bald Knob. Luckily our tour guide was quite the geological expert. (I had heard one group had a weak guide but luckily one of the participants was a geology enthusiast so most folks stuck with him on their walk.) As much fun as I had on the tour, it did feel somewhat lacking in overall scope. Not enough getting out into the dirt and walking around for me.

Before the tour was a thorough 45 minute geologic presentation by Lucille Petruny regarding the evidence of the Wetumpka impact crater. Unfortunately some of her astronomy knowledge was lacking as I found myself shaking my head on occasion. The errors I caught involved asteroids, how many there were and general misinformation on Near-Earth Objects along with a complete misunderstanding of why our Moon is slowly drifting away from us via tidal interactions. She described it as though Earth's gravity was getting weaker over time!

If I were to improve on the tour, I'd suggest a few things. More/better overlooks from atop the crater rim. I'd even go so far as to suggest some chain sawing on strategically chosen trees (and I somewhat consider myself a 'tree-hugger'). Find a better way to display their multitudes of posters. Laying on table tops with light's reflecting off their laminated surfaces wasn't optimal. Then maybe have portable microscopes or lenses for looking at some of the structures in the rocks up close.

A fellow on my tour who also attended Dr King's talk mentioned that I didn't miss a thing by only attending the tour, what we did on tour day was way better than the evening talk.

I uploaded a [track of the van tour](#), although I didn't take good enough notes to correctly label all of the rock formations. Still, the photos show some of the evidence that this is indeed an impact crater. The property atop Bald Knob we visited is private property, although currently for sale...perhaps making this a good time to get up there and look across to the east rim without 'angering the natives'. The crater commission obviously mentioned that they are a non-profit so anyone purchasing this 6 acre lot could donate the overlook for a tax incentive.

Chad

Jennifer Lolley, Outreach Administrator at the Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve writes: I would love to schedule some astronomy nights for the year for the [Forest Ecology Preserve](#). One in late spring- March? Not sure about the new moon dates. And one in the late fall.

Thanks, Jen

Web Links

I found this (that [Einstein may be correct about the speed of light after all](#)) but was waiting for some corroboration from the domestic news sources.

The **Keck interferometer** is [no longer funded](#) by NASA. Here is more on the future of high resolution optical interferometry from a new S&T news release.

Cloudy Nights just published William Paolini's [Best 1.25" wide angle eyepiece comparisons review](#).

[Milky Way and Aurora time lapses](#), put to music.

Brian Combs' [Mars image](#)

Twin tails of comet [2009 P1 Garrard](#)

Check out the new the [new video](#) about [Georgia Sky View 2012](#)

It's not too early to begin preparation for the June 05, [Transit of Venus](#). The transit will begin in late (Tuesday) afternoon just before 5:05PM when the Sun is only about 35 degrees above the western horizon. The full silhouette of Venus' disk will be visible about 17 minutes later at 5:22. Sunset is at 7:48 so we'll only be treated to less than half of the full transit. Obviously we'll need a near perfect western horizon and some really good luck with the clouds. Be sure to get your solar filter if you don't already have one. Just Google "[safe solar filter](#)" and don't forget [our friends down in Pensacola](#). I'm a big fan of the Baader solar filter.

Hoping to see everyone at the meeting,

Russell