



# CAPE FEAR *Skies*

Monthly Newsletter  
**Cape Fear Astronomical Society**  
Serving Wilmington, NC and Surrounding Areas



*Cape Fear Astronomical Society is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.*

**March 2024**

## **President's Message**

*by Ben Steelman*

In case you missed the email, I'm sad to report the passing of Wayne Teachey, one of the earliest CFAS members, who died Jan. 10, in Topham, Maine.

Wayne was active in the Society for many years, and served several terms as treasurer.

Wayne was born in Wilmington in 1945, and graduated from New Hanover High School and UNCW (back when it was still Wilmington College). According to his family, he began stargazing at the age of 10, using plastic binoculars. He soon graduated to real binoculars and telescopes, eventually developing a pretty impressive observatory in his backyard.

He was a 38-year employee of Sears, Roebuck. (I used to buy water filters from him at the old store in Independence Mall.) After retirement, he and his wife Deborah moved to Maine.

A memorial service is planned for his birthday, April 3, via Zoom. For access, please email requests to [n teachey@gmail.com](mailto:n teachey@gmail.com).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We are still looking for a volunteer to take over as chair of the Observatory Committee. It doesn't require great expertise, just a little time and the ability to work with others.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Thanks to Jon Stewart-Taylor for confirming the reservations for public viewing sessions at Carolina Beach State Park.

The series starts up again at 6:15 p.m. on Saturday, March 16.

Sessions will be generally scheduled on the Saturday closed to the first-quarter moon. The big exception will be Friday, April 12, which is the Statewide Star Party, when we'll be teaming up with the Cape Fear Museum.

Please make a note. If you can get your scope out, particularly on April 12, it will be a big help. Last year's Star Party drew hundreds and could be a major recruiting tool for us.

*Keep looking up!*

# Calendar

## March 2024

### Date – Event – Time

**01 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
7:00 PM; 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Moon**

**02 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
7:00 PM; 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Moon**

03 Last Quarter Moon

04 Staunton River Star Party (Spring), Staunton River State Park, VA

08 Moon-Venus-Mars; Waning crescent moon near Venus and Mars: morning

**08 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
5:30 PM; New Moon**

**09 Club Observing @ Starfields (the Club Observatory);  
5:30 PM; New Moon**

10 New Moon

**10 ★ Cape Fear Astro Monthly Meeting ★**

**GAStronomy Meeting**

**Sunday, February 9, 5:00pm – 6:45pm  
(Dinner, prior to the Monthly Meeting)**

**McAlister's Deli**

**740 College Rd, Wilmington, NC 28403**

**CFAS Monthly Meeting**

**7:00pm – 9:00pm - 212 DeLoach Hall; UNCW**

**Also simulcast via Zoom**

12 Spring forward - Daylight savings time begins

13 Moon and Jupiter; Waning crescent moon near Venus and Mars: morning

16 First Quarter Moon

**16 Public Observing, 06:15 PM; starts at sunset at  
Carolina Beach State Park which closes at 9 PM.**

19 March Equinox; (Northern Spring)

24 Mercury at greatest Eastern elongation: evening

25 Full Moon

25 Penumbral Lunar Eclipse

**Astro phenomena from:**

**<https://www.universalworkshop.com/astronomical-calendar-any-year/>**

### 2024 Public Events

**March 16 – CBSP; park closes 9 PM**

**Friday, April 12: 7 - 10pm - STAR PARTY 2024; by the Cape Fear Museum; CBSP (replaces State Wide Star Party)  
4.6 day old crescent Moon**

**May 18 – CBSP; park closes 10 PM**

**June 15 – CBSP; park closes 10 PM**

**July 13 – CBSP; park closes 10 PM**

**Aug 10 – CBSP; park closes 10 PM**

**Sep 14 – CBSP; park closes 10 PM  
&**

**Sept. 14 - International Observe the Moon Night**

**Oct 12 – CBSP; park closes 9 PM**

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**CBSP = Carolina Beach State Park**

### 2024 Monthly Meeting Dates

**Mar. 10 - Frank Rich on ASI AIR imaging controller**

**Apr. 14 - Ben Steelman on Edwin Hubble**

**May 5 - Mitchell Torikelson and Jessie Townsend from UNCW on SeaHawk/HawkEye science and related work**

**Jun. 9 - Field Trip to Ingram Planetarium**

**Jul. 14, Aug. 11, Sep. 8, Oct. 13,  
Nov. 10, Dec. 8**

## **Planned Monthly Presentations**

*by Jon Stewart-Taylor*

At each monthly meeting, we have a presentation on an astronomy- or space- related topic. So far we have presentations planned for March through June. Of these four, two will be by Cape Fear Astro members, one by UNCW faculty, and one is a field trip. If you have a presentation in you, please feel free to contact me at a meeting, or via email, and I'll be pleased to schedule you at a month of your convenience.

The March presentation will be by our own Frank Rich, who previously talked about Eyepieces. For March, he'll discuss the ZWO AISAir wireless imaging controller, which allows you to control a camera, telescope mount, and other peripherals from a mobile device.

For April, Cape Fear Astro President Ben Steelman will do one of his patented biographies of famous astronomers: "Hubble, Hubble, Toil and Trouble" on Edwin Hubble, the discoverer of the modern universe.

In May UNCW grad students Mitchell Torikelson and Jessie Townsend will discuss the UNCW cubesat "SeaHawk/HawkEye" project, its science results, and related work.

Finally, in June, we plan to have our annual field trip to the Ingram Planetarium. About a month before the June meeting, we'll have to choose the program they'll show in the dome. We can also look forward to a custom seasonal star tour just for us.

I'm looking forward to these, and hope everyone will enjoy them. If you have an idea for a future presentation, please let me know.

## **Spring at the Observatory**

*by Jon Stewart-Taylor*

Looking at the constellations the other night, I saw that Orion was well to the west, while Leo and Ursa Major were rising high in the east. Spring is arriving, and we can hope for milder temperatures for observing. With the warmer weather, I'm hoping members can come out on club observing nights. We have lots of open observing locations with room to park and set up a scope.

With the spring, there'll also be lots to do to develop the Cape Fear Astro observatory. A lot of progress has already been made through donations of equipment and hard work by club members. We have a shed for equipment storage, warming, and part of the club library. We've installed a permanent pier with an Atlas mount, which will support a variety of 8" and 10" SCTs for visual and imaging work. We have a 100 watt solar panel feeding two 50 AH batteries, which will power the Atlas and dew heaters all night.

We've also been blessed with two more major donations. Russ Noll gave us a trove of equipment, including multiple telescopes, as many as 50 eyepieces, and more exotic items such as imaging cameras, a laptop, and an image intensifier eyepiece. And member Perry Moon has donated a 13" truss-tube Dobsonian with encoders and digital finding aid. We'll need to integrate these into our existing observatory, and use them as a basis for expanding it into something truly extraordinary.

Our long term vision includes more solar power, operating three buildings: two for big SCTs on computerized mounts, and a roll-off building for the Dobsonian. We will still have 10 open observing locations for people to bring their own equipment or to use the club's smaller scopes from the storage shed.

We now have all the equipment and fittings, but we need funds and hard work. Some of the equipment will be sold for funds, some of the funding will come from the club accounts, and we hope members will be able to provide some. And, we will definitely need member help to install

foundations and erect the telescope enclosures. If you want to be deeply involved, please consider being part of the Observatory Committee. If you just want to help out now and then, we'll definitely let you know when.

If all goes well, we should have at least one of the scopes fully enclosed and ready to go 24/7 by the end of the summer.

## March SIG Meeting

*by Jon Stewart-Taylor*

We've restarted our SIG meetings, although only once per month, on the first Wednesday of each month. At our last meeting we spent some time on the Messier Marathon, but mostly we discussed the comets forecast to arrive this year.

This month's meeting is on March 6th, at 8 pm EST. I'll post a Zoom invite on the e-mailing list by Monday the 4th. If you have a topic you'd like us to discuss, please post about it. At this point, i plan to talk about some of the astronomical events on the calendar for this year, such as planet elongations and conjunctions with other planets, the moon, and deep-sky objects. There'll be some very pretty events to look at unaided eye and with binoculars.

Hope to see some of you on the 6th.

## Wishfully

*By Karl Adlon*

Is that even a word? Spellcheck likes wistfull. Anyway, *wishfully* we will have clear skies for:

March 1 & 2, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Moon observing nights at Starfields.

March 8 & 9, New Moon nights at Starfields and possible Messier Marathon dates.

March 16, Public Observing at Carolina Beach State Park (CBSP). The park closes at 9 PM.

*Wishfully:*

- ★ we will have great weather for all of these nights (but realistically, probably not)
- ★ you can make it out to Starfields and CBSP again or for the first time.

## HELP!

*By Karl Adlon*

That's one of my favorite Beatles songs!

*Wishfully*, you've read the articles and can see that CFAS is looking for help with Starfields: committee help, planning help and especially physical help. We don't want to plan a building and plan on several people helping if we only have a few who are willing and able. Personally, I think this is the biggest stumbling block that could inhibit our future success.

Personally, if we don't do a lot of the work ourselves I think it will be difficult for us to agree to spend the amount of money it would take to contract the work out, considering the cost of materials and labor these days. Next time you are at a big box hardware store that has sheds sitting out for your inspection, take a look at them. Note the prices. Note the quality of materials. Most do not include flooring or foundation. Ideally, we'd want an elevated observatory so ground heat does not negatively affect seeing.

This 10' x 14' roll-off roof cost, per owner, \$34,000.

Maybe ours wouldn't cost this much, but cheap it will not be.



## Get to Know YOUR Astronomical League



The Astronomical League (Astroleague or AL) is one of the largest amateur astronomical organizations in the world. The organization serves to encourage an interest in astronomy (especially amateur astronomy) and promote the science of astronomy by:

- ✓ fostering astronomical education;
- ✓ providing incentives for astronomical observation and research;
- ✓ assisting communication among amateur astronomical societies.



CFAS is one of over 300 member societies affiliated with the Astroleague. Your membership in CFAS allows you take full advantage of this relationship so periodically review the information below to see how the Astroleague can support your astronomical interests and endeavors.

Astroleague Home Page	<a href="http://www.astroleague.org">www.astroleague.org</a>
AL Observing Programs (Alphabetical Listing)	<a href="https://www.astroleague.org/alphabeticobserving/">https://www.astroleague.org/alphabeticobserving/</a>
Night Sky Tools	<a href="https://www.astroleague.org/navigating-the-night-sky-guides/">https://www.astroleague.org/navigating-the-night-sky-guides/</a>
Astroleague Store	<a href="https://store.astroleague.org/">https://store.astroleague.org/</a>
Current and Past Issues of <i>Reflector Magazine</i>	<a href="https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/">https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/</a>
<b>Additional AL News, Information and Reminders</b>	<p>Click <a href="#">HERE</a> for the Astroleague News Page and be sure to check the Astroleague Home Page weekly for new and important posts.</p> <p>Contact Hank Lyon, <a href="mailto:hlyon8448@gmail.com">hlyon8448@gmail.com</a>, for any changes to your Reflector delivery preferences (US Mail or Email).</p>

The Astroleague Correspondent (or ALCor) is your link between CFAS and the Astroleague. Don't hesitate to contact your ALCor if you need assistance with anything Astroleague related whether its general information or detailed coordination of observing program completions for certification. **Check back each month to see any new links, postings or reminders.**

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<b>CFAS Officers:</b> President: Ben Steelman Vice-Pres: Karl Adlon Associate VP: Jon Stewart-Taylor Secretary: George Pappayliou Treasurer: Bill Cooper ALCor: Hank Lyon	<b>Dues:</b> Dues for 2024 are \$25 for Individual and \$32 for Family Membership. Students dues are \$5 per year. Mail to: CFAS, P.O. Box 7685, Wilmington, NC 28406 <b>Contact Us:</b> You can contact CFAS at <a href="mailto:info@capefearastro.org">info@capefearastro.org</a> Our website is <a href="http://www.capefearastro.org/">http://www.capefearastro.org/</a>