

Minutes of the August 27, 2011 Meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the AAC

The August 27th meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held in the CEWC Visitor Center in Mansfield, GA at 5 PM with thirty-two people in attendance. An additional ten guests, members of Jon Wood's family, came for the last half of the meeting to join in remembering Jon and dedicating the observing field in his name.

Outreach coordinator Theo Ramakers reported that the chapter's astronomy outreach has begun again for the new school year and asked that members consider helping out when able. Outreach dates are on the chapter calendar at <http://ceastronomy.org>. Art Zorka spoke briefly about the Night Sky Network and the observing clubs of ALCOR. For more information about these resources contact Art at nightsky.atlanta@yahoo.com.

Dr. Richard Schmude of Gordon College presented a lively talk about Jupiter and its belts, bands and spots. Larry Owens' animated photographs of the audience participation during his talk are a must-see at <http://bit.ly/CEphotosAugust2011>; Dr. Schmude's slides may be viewed at <http://bit.ly/SchmudeAugust2011>.

Observing supervisor Steven Philips gave the monthly "Observing 101" talk, a highlight of current sun, moon and planet rise & set times, and observing targets.

Events visible during the month of September 2011:

- Zodiacal light visible in the east before dawn
- Uranus approaches opposition and is visible all night long
- Neptune is visible all night long in western Aquarius
- Asteroid Vesta is almost stationary in the constellation Capricornus
- Comet Garradd passes through Vulpecula, Sagitta, and Hercules

Small Telescope/Binocular Target List: Globular clusters M2, M13 (Great Hercules Cluster), M15, M22 & M92; planetary nebulas M27 (Dumbbell) & M57 (Ring); open clusters NGC6633, M6 (Butterfly), M11 (Wild Duck), M24 (Small Sgr Star Cloud) & M25; diffuse nebulas M8 (Lagoon) & M20 (Trifid).



M17, the Omega /Swan Nebula
Two Micron All Sky Survey (2MASS), Wikipedia Commons

The featured object for September is M17 – the Omega Nebula, also known as the Swan, Horseshoe or Checkmark Nebula. An open cluster of 35 stars lies embedded within this nebula. The gas cloud is brightly illuminated by these young hot stars. Inside the dark clouds and molecular gas, new stars continue to form. This nebula is one of the youngest and most massive star-forming regions in the entire Milky Way. The Omega Nebula is located about 5500 light years away towards the constellation of Sagittarius.

At the close of the meeting Theo Ramakers, with the help of Janet Wood and her son, shared thoughts and photos of late Observing Supervisor and friend Jon Wood before unveiling a sign dedicating the observing field in his name.

Members and guests adjourned to the "Jon Wood Astronomy Field" with 25 scopes and several binoculars for an enjoyable evening of stargazing, comet hunting and deep sky observing. Skies were clear and the Milky Way stretched from one side of the field to the other. Three intrepid observers who stayed into the wee hours were treated to a spectacular fireball about 4 AM. The large glowing meteor was so bright that it cast shadows on the field as it passed overhead before breaking into three pieces and leaving a lingering smoke trail.

The next meeting of the chapter will be the quarterly potluck on Saturday, September 27, 2011 at 5 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Lott
CE Recording Secretary