

Minutes of the May 7, 2011 Meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the AAC

The May meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held on Saturday, May 7, 2011 in the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center Visitor Center at 5 PM. Twenty-nine members and visitors were in attendance.

Five short workshops were presented: Night Sky Network tool kits by Frank Garner; Imaging the Sun by Theo Ramakers; Constructing the Denver Observing Chair by Dan Schmitt; Planning Your Observing with AstroPlanner by Steven Phillips; and Considerations for Deep Sky imaging by Tim Geib.



Frank & Theo demonstrate the NSN kits

Steven Phillips presented "Observing 101", a highlight of current celestial events and observing targets. Mercury, Venus Mars & Jupiter will all be rising shortly before dawn. Saturn is an evening riser this month. Six moons of Saturn will be visible after midnight on May 23. On May 31 there will be a beautiful gathering of the waning crescent Moon, Mercury, & Venus above the eastern horizon at dawn. In June look for Comet Garrard as it travels through Aquarius.

Small Telescope/Binocular Target List for May: Galaxies M51 (Whirlpool), M63 (Sunflower), M64 (Black Eye), M81 (Bode's), M82 (Cigar) & M101 (Pinwheel); Open Cluster M44; and 5 double stars: Alula Australis, Cor Caroli, Mizar, and Polaris.

This month's featured object: M97, a complex planetary nebula in Ursa Major, is often called the Owl Nebula due to its resemblance to an owl's face. This nebula, discovered by Pierre Méchain in 1781, formed approximately 6,000 years ago. The shape of this object is believed to be a cylindrical torus shell. The matter-poor ends of the shell make up the "eyes" of the owl.



M97, the "Owl Nebula"

The meeting closed with the elections of the new board. Theo Ramakers will continue as Outreach Coordinator and Webmaster. Steven Phillips will continue as Observing Supervisor and Marie Lott will continue as Secretary. The election of Chapter Director will take place at the next chapter meeting to be held at 5 PM on June 4th.

Observing was held on the Jon Wood field after the meeting. A large number of scopes (16) were set up and everyone enjoyed spectacular views of Saturn, star clusters, galaxies & nebulas in the clear night sky. At 9:11 PM observers were treated to a bright ISS passing close to the crescent moon. The moon set shortly after midnight and many people stayed out longer to enjoy the stars, some until after 2 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Marie Lott, Recording Secretary