

## Minutes of the February 18, 2012 Meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the AAC

The February 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Charlie Elliott Chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club was held in the CEWC Visitor Center in Mansfield, GA at 3 PM with thirty-five people in attendance.

Chapter Director Ken Poshedly welcomed visitors and led a brainstorming session about possible speakers for future meetings. Theo Ramakers announced that members of the chapter were scouting locations for public viewing of the Venus solar transit on June 5<sup>th</sup> in Covington, Barnesville, Grayson, and possibly other places. There was a lively discussion (which continued after the meeting and later on the Charlie Elliott Chapter's Facebook page) as to whether or not the waxing and waning moon crescents look different from the Northern and Southern hemispheres. The answer is "yes": a waxing moon appears as a right crescent to observers north of the equator but as a left crescent to observers south of the equator.

Six chapter members, Steve Siedentop, Steve Phillips, Marie Lott, Frank Garner, Dan Schmitt and Theo Ramakers, qualified for the Night Sky Network Outreach Award. They all received pins and certificates during the award ceremony. Thanks to all of them for their time and effort to reach out to so many schools and clubs.

The meeting's feature presentation was an excellent talk, "Star Hopping and the Messier Marathon" by the AAC's Board Chairman and former Observing Chair Daniel Herron, followed by Steve Phillips "This Month's Sky, February 2012". Both presentations are available on the chapter's web site, [www.ceastronomy.org](http://www.ceastronomy.org) in the "Past Events" section. During the break between the talks we celebrated Galileo's birthday (February 15, 1564) with a fully decorated cake and cupcakes brought by Valerie Whalen.

Selected events visible in March:

- Feb 28 - Mar 10: Mercury is more than 10° above the western horizon ½ hr after sunset. This is Mercury's best evening apparition in 2012.
- Mar 3 - Mars at opposition
- Mar 3 - Observe lunar craters Kepler and Encke
- Mar 7 - Waxing gibbous moon near Mars
- Mar 8 - Full moon
- Mar 15 - Venus & Jupiter are just 3° apart. Look West 1 hour after sunset.
- Mar 22 - New moon

**Small Telescope/Binocular Target List:** double stars Bogardus (Auriga), El Nath (Taurus) and Gamma Persei (Perseus); galaxies M42 (Orion) and M81 & M82 (Ursa Major); open clusters M36, M37 & M38 (Auriga), M44 (Cancer), M45 (Taurus), and Trumpler 2 (Perseus); Supernova Remnant M1 (Taurus); Carbon Stars R Leporis (Lepus) and U Camelopardalis (Camelopardalis).

The featured object this month is **Mars**. Steve showed an entertaining movie short by Walt Disney on the Red Planet along with some helpful tips for its observation:

- The best time to observe Mars is a few months before, during, and after opposition
- Acclimatize your telescope for 30 - 60 minutes
- Study Martian features on a map before you observe
- Observe on nights with steady air and good seeing conditions while the planet is near the meridian
- Use High Magnification to see details on the surface and in the atmosphere
- Make regular sketches to train your eyes and brain to see fine detail
- Observe frequently over several weeks to see both sides of the planet
- Try using colored filters to improve image contrast

Rainy weather prevented the observing session after the meeting.

The next meeting of the chapter will be the quarterly potluck ("Dinner and a Movie"), followed by observing on the field on Saturday, March 24, 2012 at 5 PM in the Charlie Elliott Visitor Center in Mansfield, GA. All are welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Lott  
CE Recording Secretary