



# SPACE

St. Petersburg Astronomy Club **Examiner**

December 2024

Editor – Guy Earle

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area since 1927. Our 354 adult members are dedicated to promoting and sharing the wonders and science of astronomy. We host a dark-sky star party each New Moon at Withlacoochee River Park, along with local star parties, telescope-making workshops, science lectures, astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

## Inside this Issue:

Jan. Examiner preview	2
General meeting info.	2-3
President's Message	4
Nov. meeting in review	5
New Moon Weekends	6-7
January Lunar Calendar	8
SPAC Outreach at Boyd Hill	8
SPAC Image Gallery	9-12
A quick Dwarf III share	13-14

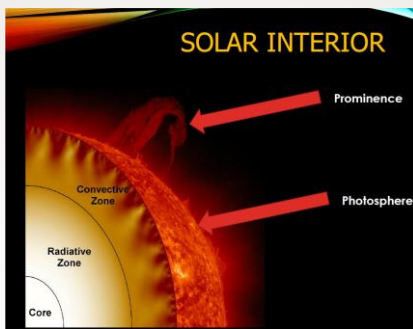
**Smart Scope Evolution – Seestar S50 producing amazing images such as this one of M42**

**The Orion Nebula processed in Siril, Lightroom and Photoshop** by Guy Earle



## January Preview

Our January speaker will be **Conrad Cardano** from the Astronomical Society of Rhode Island, with a presentation on Solar Time Lapse Imaging.



---

### December preview

This month is our Christmas party/end-of-the-year get together, which is held in the same room as the October meeting where we did our pot luck and officer election.

If you plan on attending, we ask that if you are able, please bring some kind of dessert to share with everyone. Come and enjoy the festivities!



## December General Meeting

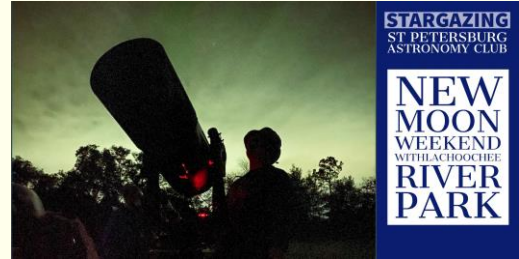
This month's general meeting will take place on Thursday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> at **7:00 PM** (set up @ 6PM). The meeting will be *in person* at St. Petersburg College, Gibbs Campus, 6605 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Philip Benjamin Social Arts Building, **Room 114**, (map on last page).

**This will be our end of the year holiday party, so come on out to enjoy the festivities!**



Please see a map to the event location near the end of the newsletter.

The club's **New Moon observing weekend** is temporarily suspended at [Withlacoochee River Park](#) east of Dade City.



## New SPAC Members

We would like to welcome Jose Mendez & Claudia Yanez, Rema Merrick, Joseph & Susan Miller, Joseph Al-Kirwi, and Isabella & Michael List to our family of members.

## Examiner Staff

Editor	<a href="#">Guy Earle</a>
Space News	<a href="#">Steve Robbins</a>
Field Reporter	<a href="#">Kelly Anderson</a>
Mirror Lab	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>
Image Gallery	<a href="#">Peter McLean</a>
Mirror Lab	<a href="#">Mike Davis</a>
	<a href="#">Allen Maroney</a>

## *President's Message*



*MIKE PARTAIN*

Yesterday, the St Petersburg Astronomy Club's board of directors met out at the site of our annual Orange Blossom Special held at Withlacoochee River Park near Dade City. As I wrote to everyone last month, the park sustained quite a bit of damage from Hurricanes Helene and Milton along with extensive flooding. While the waters have receded some, parts of the park remain flooded and closed. This includes the RV campground and our observing field. Our clubhouse also received flood damage to the structure. The RV campground remains inaccessible at this point and it is unknown what condition the electrical outlets are for the field and campground. The board looked at several options for OBS including delaying it till March, relocating to another park/facility or canceling the event all together. The board voted to cancel OBS for 2025 in light of the damage to the park and increased hardships for the park.

As a registered 2025 OBS attendee, you will have a few options regarding your fees and payment. First, if you would like a full refund, please respond to this email and let us know. Your fees will be refunded less any club membership renewal. The second option will be to apply your 2025 registration to 2026. OBS 2026 will be held January 14-18. If you choose this option, we will apply your 2025 registration to 2026, including the camping and electrical selections you have made for OBS 2025.

New moon weekends remain cancelled at WRP until further notice. I am hoping the situation will change by January. Alafia River State Park has graciously allowed us use of their park for the time being. The observing area is located near their campground. Please contact Guy for more information. Lastly, if you wish to camp and stargaze, there remains Chiefland Astrological Village but you will need to become a member there before you can visit their facilities.

Take care and clear skies,

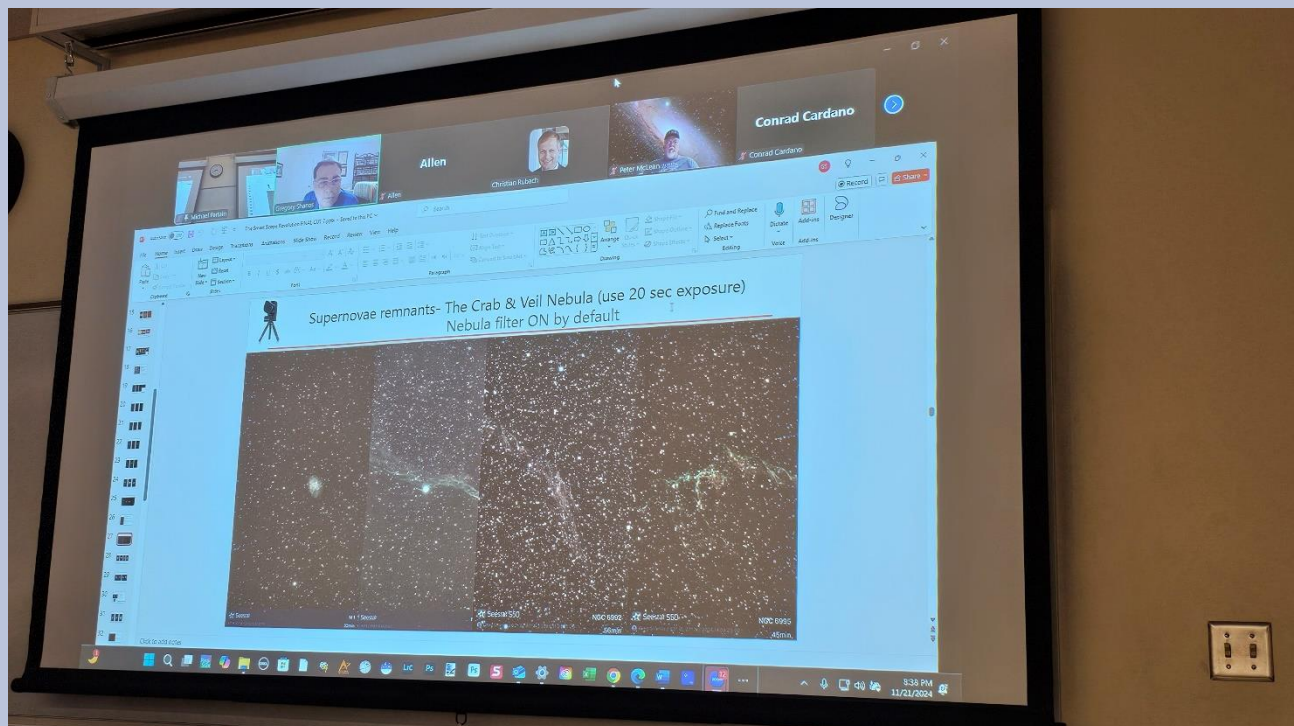
Mike Partain

## November General Meeting

Ugh. I had some positive feedback from the November meeting but for me, it was very frustrating. I have already sent an email apologizing for the technical issues, of which there were many, but we made it through well enough. Mike was giving updates and juggling the proverbial plates as I was working through hookup problems, starting about 30 minutes behind. We have our holiday party next month, but all should be good to go by our January general meeting.



Nonetheless, we got Greg Shanos presenting about 10 minutes late, which was a small miracle. Greg did a fantastic job introducing the Seestar and its capabilities. The smart scope revolution is going to be a huge part of this hobby in the coming years, and I'm happy to be riding that wave myself right now. Unfortunately, we did not get a recording of Greg's presentation because of all the tech problems. His PDF is available on the SPAC website [HERE](#).



# *SPAC New Moon Weekend*

## *Field Report*

*November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

This wasn't technically a New Moon Weekend, since Withlacoochee River Park is still flooded. As Mike said, the board met the following day, on December 1<sup>st</sup>, to make the unfortunate determination to cancel the 2025 OBS star party. That decision was not made lightly, as we all look forward to those four or five nights to just relax under the stars.

But the ground is still too wet, with the southern end of the clubhouse still with water under it. There are still huge parts of the park, which is partially open except for the observing field and the bunkhouses. Those are still under feet of water, and that water is cut off from being able to retreat to the river, so it's sitting there like a basin. One hard rain and things are back to being dire. So, we had no choice to cancel it.

Seeing that there was going to be no New Moon at WRP, at least for a few months, Mike and I worked out an agreement with Alafia River State Park. They had initially reached out to us to assist with an outreach program they wanted to start. It was during these talks that Milton hit, and we asked if we could use Alafia as a backup location, to at least allow in some measure club members a place to drop a telescope. They agreed to specifically two dates, which I had suggested, both Saturdays; November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 28<sup>th</sup>. It's by the horse barn, located just down the main entrance road on the right. You have really good horizons but this is not a place to bring a motor home or trailer. There's only one electrical plug, so it's a bring-your-own-power location. BUT, at least it's still a location. We'll determine if we need to ask for any January days in case WRP isn't open again. I'd suggest reaching out to Chiefland Astronomy Village, which has seen a revival and surpassing the good old days up there. I plan on going with a bunch of SPAC members in February as a pseudo-OBS non-OBS get together.

That being said, I did go out last Saturday even though the weather was not favorable. There were low level clouds smeared out almost everywhere. I was the primary person who set this up and I couldn't not show, right? Tim Harris was already there, but the skies persuaded him to repack his 20" Dobsonian and instead just sit and relax. We also had new member Jose Mendez and his daughter, Paula, join us. The only thing I brought was my new Dwarf III, which still managed to plate



*GUY EARLE*

solve its alignment and punch through the clouds to image the Pleiades and the Double Cluster. I did test out a new camping chair that has solid sides, avoiding any cold drafts. A heating pad does a great job of keeping one's lower back warm, powered by my full-sized car battery that I use on my 10" reflector.

Park Ranger Stephanie, with whom I have been setting everything up, stopped by briefly, but eventually we packed up after a couple hours and came home.



# January Lunar Calendar

January 2025						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

**SPAC Astronomy Nights at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve**

Saturday, December 7 · 7:00 – 9:00pm

Boyd Hill Nature Preserve  
1101 Country Club Way S, St. Petersburg, FL 33705, USA

Contact at park is Brittany Blackford. Set up telescopes 6:00 pm. Event begins at 7:00 pm,

Moon night! First-quarter Moon near Saturn; Venus in the southwest, and Jupiter in the eastern sky.

30 minutes before

SPAC Outreach



# *SPAC Image Gallery*

★ Here are some excellent astrophotography photos from our fellow SPAC membership, shot from various locations and divided into categories similar to our annual star party imaging competition. If you would like to share your work, I encourage you to [email Peter](#) your image or share them on our SPAC Facebook page.



## **Deep Space (Galaxies, Star Clusters, Comets)**

*M45 Pliades Cluster  
from Oldsmar, FL  
by Paul Smith*



*M81 Bode's Galaxy  
from Willow Oak, FL  
by Peter McLean*

*M33 Triangulum Galaxy  
from Chiefland Astro Ranch  
by Jamie Kenas*



## Nebula

*B33 Horsehead & NGC2024 Flame Nebula  
By Philip Roey*



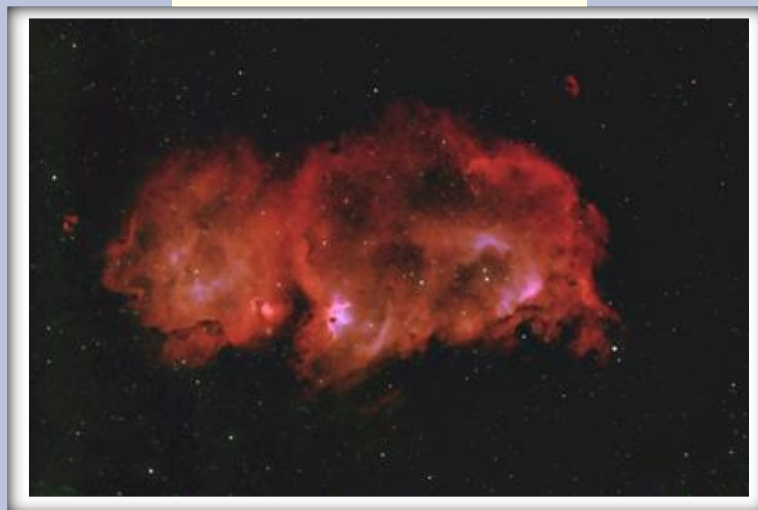
*NGC6992 Eastern Veil Nebula  
from Safety Harbor, FL  
by Richard Tobin*



*Thor's Helmet (under a Supermoon)  
from Chiefland Astro Ranch, FL  
by Jamie Kenas*



*IC1848 Soul Nebula  
from Zephyrhills, FL  
by Joe Canzoneri*



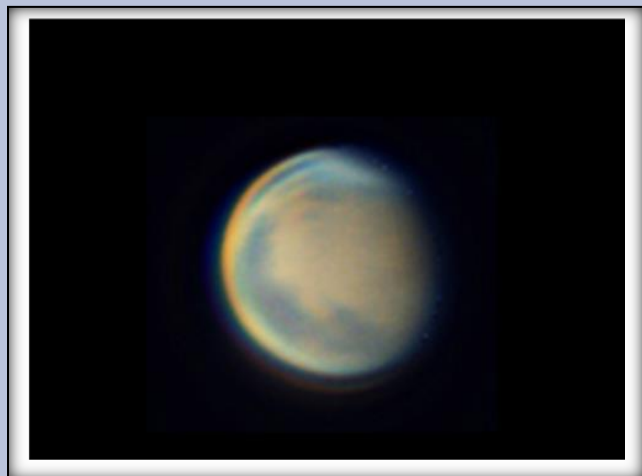
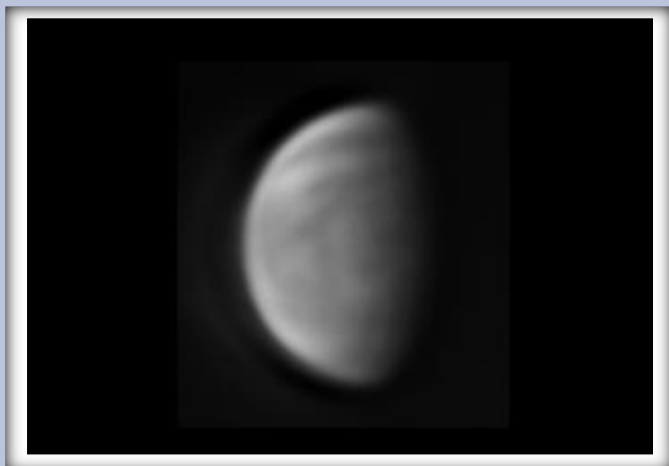
### Planetary-Lunar-Solar



*Jupiter  
from Riverview, FL  
by Guy Earle*



*SuperMoon  
from Indian Rocks Beach, FL  
by Bruce Sobut*



*Venus and Mars from Sarasota, FL by Gregory Shanos*



*Saturn  
from Oldsmar, FL  
by Paul Smith*

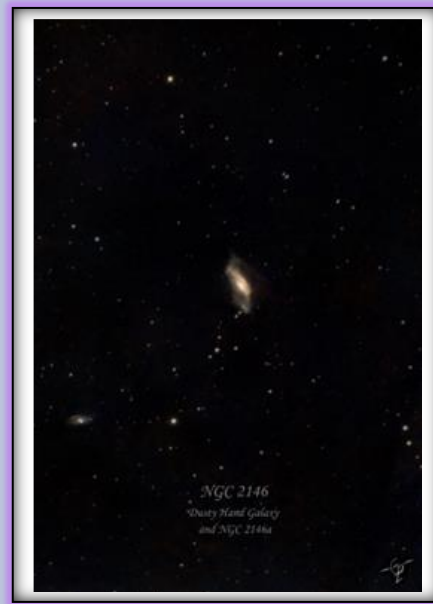
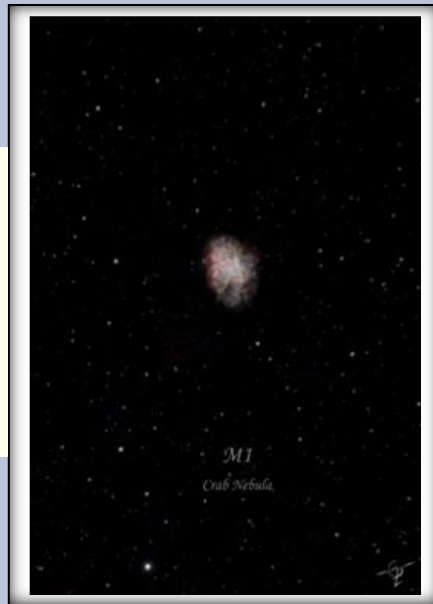
### Smart Telescope

*Seestar S50 Images*

*Left:  
M1 Crab Nebula*

*Right:  
NGC2146 Dusty Hand Galaxy*

*by Guy Earle*



*Dwarf III  
B33 Horsehead & NGC2024 Flame  
by Guy Earle*



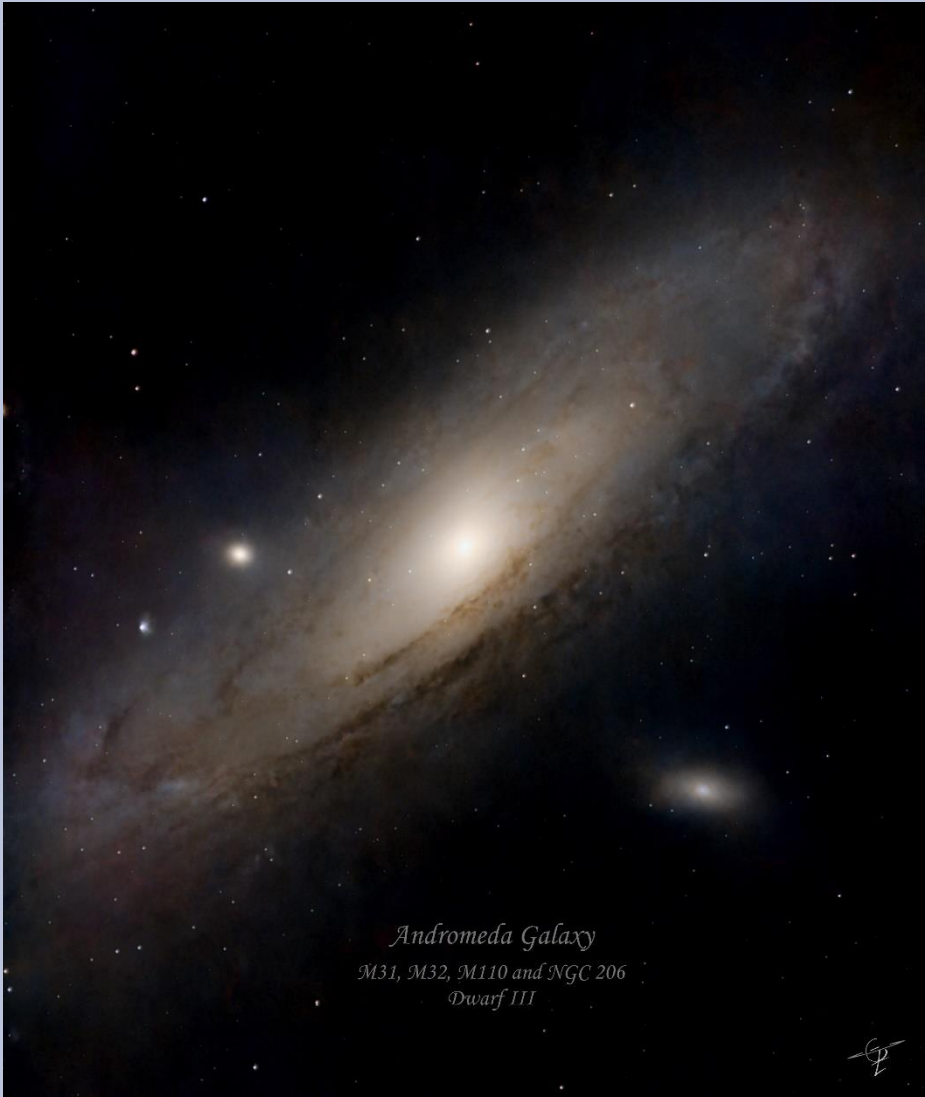
*Seestar S50 Mosaic  
M31 Andromeda Galaxy  
by Peter McLean*



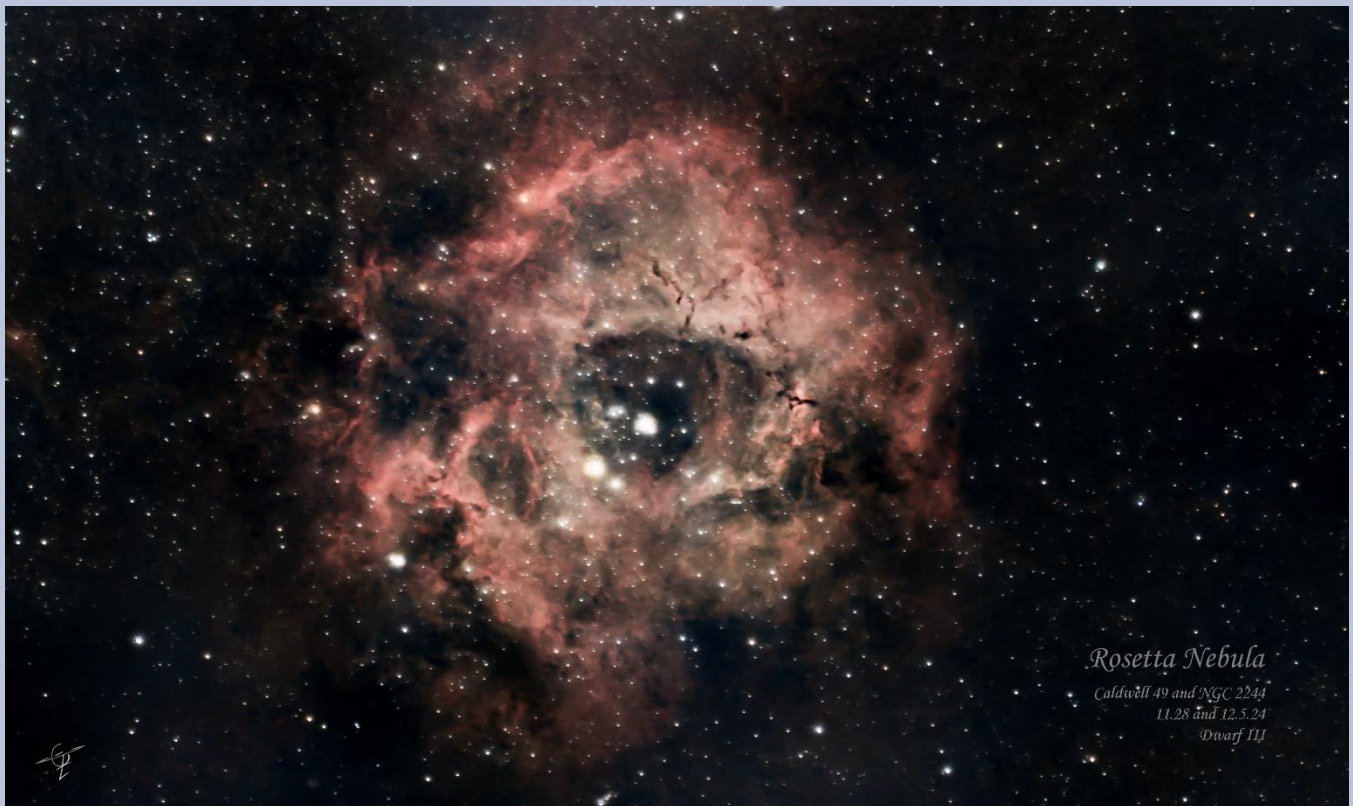
*Dwarf II Image  
Comet 2023/A3  
by Guy Earle*

# *A quick Dwarf III share*

The newsletter is going out quickly this month because our holiday party is next week, and between Thanksgiving just ending and work, things are bit briefer this edition. I plan on doing a full review of the Dwarf III, which I received just recently. At the moment, an update from ZWO on the Seestar just bricked up my scope, along with many others. Personally, I find it amazing how quick people are to anger anymore, especially online. The people I see losing their collective minds on the Seestar FB page clearly don't understand the basic reasoning that ZWO is clearly aware of the issue and is working on an update, due to come out next week apparently. As for the Dwarf II, it has found a new home with our own Peter McLean! The Dwarf III arrived in time to take advantage of the week of clear, cold, and DRY skies. Besides the larger lens and the constantly improving program (get ready, mosaic mode is coming), such as scheduled shooting, a huge advantage of the Dwarves is that they can easily be equatorially mounted unlike the Seestars AND the Dwarf 3 can shoot up to 60 seconds. The s50 can shoot 20 and 30 seconds, but you can only shoot 20 under certain alignment conditions, and I have yet to see a post by anyone who uses it at 30 seconds.



So, that being said, I just wanted to share a couple photos of what the Dwarf III (\$499) can do from Riverview skies, Bortle 8. Full disclosure, these are not what comes out of the Dwarf, but using free post processing software to get a better image. It takes me about 10 minutes or less to process an image.



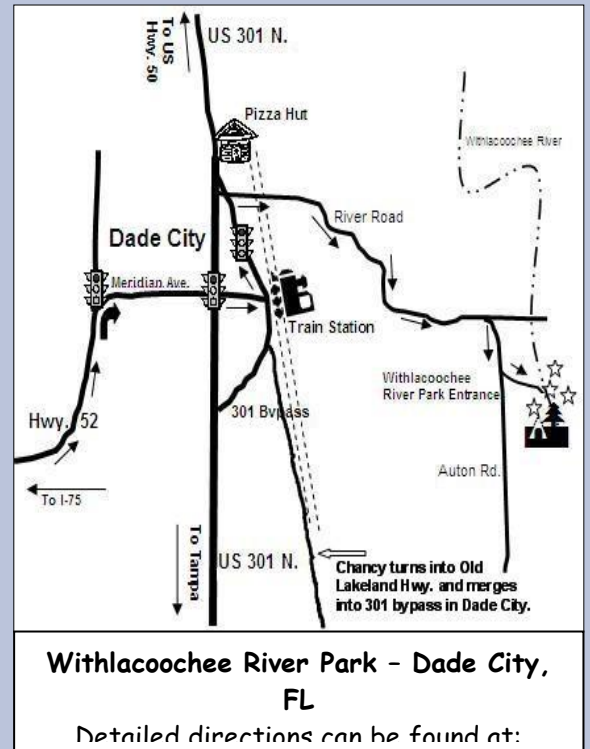
## SPAC Business Meeting

Our next business meeting is **Wed., Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 PM** via conference call; details upon request. All interested members are invited to attend. All club business decisions are made at the business meeting so as not to encumber the general meeting.

## Officers & Directors

President	<a href="#">Mike Partain</a>
Vice Pres.	<a href="#">Guy Earle</a>
Secretary	<a href="#">Peter McLean</a>
Treasurer	<a href="#">Christian Rubach</a>
Dir.-at-Large	<a href="#">Allen Maroney</a>
Dir.-at-Large	<a href="#">Steven Gaber</a>
Dir.-at-Large	<a href="#">Jack Fritz</a>
SPACE Editor	<a href="#">Guy Earle</a>
Public Relations	<a href="#">John O'Neill</a>
Membership Chair	<a href="#">Shirley Vuille</a>
Mirror Lab Chair	<a href="#">Paul McNabb</a>
Outreach Chair	<a href="#">Jim Hunter</a>
Star Party Chair	<a href="#">Mike Partain</a>
Librarian	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>
Club Webmaster	<a href="#">Jack Fritz</a>
Dark Sky Chair	OPEN

*Click on the name to send email*



## *Withlacoochee New Moon Weekends*

There's no need for reservations. However, the park closes at sundown, so you will need to arrive before then. The park rangers will give you the gate-code once you're inside the park. Please do not call for the gate code as they are not allowed to give it out over the phone.



Please join us! All astronomy enthusiasts are welcome. You do not need to be a club member to attend. Please refer to our [Club Calendar](#) for details and scheduled dates. There is a small fee to the park for using electricity, reduced even further for club members, which you can pay on our club website [HERE](#).



# St. Petersburg Astronomy Club

## Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors

Walter Brinkman	Benefactor	Jason & Margie Bedell	Patron
Dave & Deborah Catalano	Benefactor	Kyle Brinkman	Patron
Stephanie Colon &		Michael Callahan	Patron
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor	Ralph & Christine Craig	Patron
Michael Haworth & Melanie Otte	Benefactor	Glynis Dilaire	Patron
Matt Hughes & Manuel Ordonez	Benefactor	Peter & Jaclynn Dimmit	Patron
Valerie Hyman	Benefactor	Guy & Kelly Earle	Patron
Craig & Roberta Jameson	Benefactor	Joseph & Pamela Faubion	Patron
Naseeb Nas Kaleel	Benefactor	Darla & Peter Flynn	Patron
Jamie Kenas	Benefactor	Steve & Cindy Fredlund	Patron
David Knowlton	Benefactor	Steve Gaber & Karen Sell	Patron
Laura & Roy Lanier	Benefactor	Richard & Mary Garner	Patron
Tod Markin	Benefactor	Timothy & Mary Ann Harris	Patron
Kelly McGrew	Benefactor	Charlie & Linda Hoffman	Patron
Kevin & Karen Mulford	Benefactor	Eric Houghton	Patron
David & Kathryn Musser	Benefactor	Mark Kepka	Patron
David & Tara Pearson	Benefactor	Matt Labadie & Jennifer Willman	Patron
Rath, Damon & Jean Futch	Benefactor	Willy & Beth Lebian	Patron
Vincent Risalvato &		Dave & Mary MacKenzie	Patron
Tabitha Castillo	Benefactor	Steve & Jeri Maiaroto	Patron
Mike Rozycki	Benefactor	Joseph Mandara	Patron
Christian & Wendy Rubach	Benefactor	Allen Maroney & Tracee Elliott	Patron
Doug and Teri Sliman	Benefactor	Ralph & Molly Merritt	Patron
Garrison & Ruth Smith	Benefactor	Steven Miller & Lisa Alessi	Patron
Jill & Robin Sumner	Benefactor	Herb Monroe & Martha Stewart	Patron
Andrew & Bonnie Watts	Benefactor	Leeann Muszynski	Patron
*****		Stephen Oros	Patron
Bill & Norma Amthor	Patron	Michael & Carli Partain	Patron
Jan Anschuetz	Patron	Brad & Lisa Perryman	Patron
Steven Balke	Patron	Alan Polansky	Patron
Christopher Bankston	Patron	John & Abbie Redmond	Patron



---

Gregory Satchwell	Patron	Jose & Mary Torres	Patron
Manny Sosa & Leslie Long	Patron	Alexie Velez & Yanira	
Tom Spano	Patron	Hernandez-Velez	Patron
Anthony Staiano	Patron	Skip & Kim Walker	Patron
Jonathan Stewart	Patron	Shawn Wilson	Patron
Tom & Michelle Sweet	Patron	Elizabeth Wood	Patron



## St. Petersburg Astronomy Club Membership Form

Membership in St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc. (SPAC) is open to anyone, regardless of age, who is interested in astronomy. Benefits of membership include a monthly subscription to the SPAC Examiner newsletter, reduced camping rates and use of the club's bunkhouse at our dark sky site at Withlacoochee River Park, the ability to serve on the SPAC board and voting privileges. Dues are considered donations and are non-refundable. Membership options are available as listed below.

You are now able to choose how you wish to join or renew your membership:

- **Preferred On-line Website Option: New instructions as our website has been updated.**

Go to [https://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/Sign\\_In.php](https://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/Sign_In.php) on the SPAC website where you can join, view and update your membership profile, provide payment, and **print your membership card.**

- **US Mail Option: Takes more time to process manually because we are all volunteers.**

Complete the attached membership form and send it along with your payment to:

Jim Hunter  
17316 Oak Ledge Drive  
Lutz, FL 33549.  
(Checks should be made payable to SPAC, Inc.)

Adult 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Adult 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children under 18: \_\_\_\_\_

### Memberships:

Single:  \$ 30.00/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.

Family:  \$ 35.00/YR. Includes two adults, minor children and the above rights and privileges.

Patron:  \$ 50.00/YR. A Patron member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.

Benefactor:  \$100.00/YR. A Benefactor member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.

Student:  FREE. SPAC offers free membership to full time high school and college students.

Expected date of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Submitted: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Your SPAC Membership Card is required for reduced fees at the campground.**

# SPAC END-OF-THE-YEAR / POT LUCK / HOLIDAY DINNER

Location: Philip Benjamin Social Arts Building, Room 114

Park on the south side of the building next to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. It is ok to park in several Staff Parking spaces during this time. The only unlocked door to the building will be the Room 114 outside access door facing the south parking lot. The rest of the building's outside doors will be locked.

