



SFAA Welcome Kit

2022

SHARING THE WONDERS OF ASTRONOMY WITH THE SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY

SINCE 1952

Welcome to the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers

From the President

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our organization. Our membership is a diverse group from all walks of life and varied astronomy knowledge—fascinating people who share a common interest in the exploration and experience of the wonders in the sky above us.

This brochure is designed to provide new members, from beginners to experienced amateur astronomers, a guide to the various programs and services offered by SFAA. Please note that due to COVID-19, we have scaled back some of our programs and our monthly lectures are being delivered online. We are abiding by city, state, and CDC guidelines and keep all of our members up to date with any changes to SFAA activities.

We are a very active organization, with monthly star parties and lectures, and a schedule of field trips and other public educational outreach events throughout the year. One of the best ways to get involved in SFAA is to help initiate, organize and staff these events, and engage with the public and other members in learning about the universe. I urge you to join us in making 2022 a great year for amateur astronomy in San Francisco.

Clear skies ahead!

Jessica Miller,
President 2022

About Our Members

Members come from all backgrounds and have a broad spectrum of experience with astronomy, from absolute beginners through to professional or semi-professional practitioners.

If you are new to astronomy, you will find our Summer Star Parties useful, with public and members-only viewing 'above the fog' on Mt Tamalpais in Marin.

Those who are experienced and are looking for fellow experts to challenge you or share best practice, members' nights and Astronomy Lectures are for you.

If you are looking to find the events that are right for you, contact a Board Member who will be happy to help guide you.



About Our Board

Club members who vote at our General Meeting held each year in December elect the Board. The new Board is installed in January. All Board Members are active club members. We invite all of our members to get involved. If you would like Board experience, please contact the [President](#) or [Vice President](#).

Meet the SFAA Officers and Board of Directors: <http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org/about/the-board/>

The SFAA Board for 2022:

Jessica Miller – [President](#)

Bill Kircher – [Vice President](#)

Jim Burke – [Treasurer](#)

Mimi Zou – [Secretary](#)

Scott Miller

Jay Pea

Thomas Perfumo

Philip Rice

Dan Smiley

Douglas Smith

Liz Triggs

Angus Wong – Alternate

**** PLEASE NOTE ****

Due to the ongoing pandemic and state/city guidelines, many of the in-person events the SFAA is involved with have been moved to an on-line format or have been put on pause. When events return to in-person, all members will be notified. The most current information is available on the SFAA website.

Getting Started

We are happy to help you with any questions. Please find us at the monthly meetings, send us a note at the email addresses in the links to the SFAA Board, interact through our Member Portal: <https://sfaa-astronomy.org/for-members> or through our [Contact](#) page.

The SFAA Bylaws are listed [here](#).

STAR-VIEWING ETIQUETTE

Please review the full listing of SFAA Guidelines for [star party etiquette](#).

This is a brief summary of some of these best practices for SFAA events:

- Use the designated event area.
- Arrive before sunset to allow plenty of time to set up while it is still light and allow your eyes to gradually become dark-adapted.
- When departing, consider your vehicle's lights, exterior and interior, to not disrupt others night vision.
- Preserve your night vision: don't use white lights! Use red light.
- Maintain workable space between telescopes and observers.
- Laser pointers require careful handling! Keep laser pointers upward and not horizontal. A misdirected beam of laser light can blind by causing retina damage. When showing constellations or objects in the sky, keep the beam away from any aircraft, as the range of the laser is far more than you may realize.
- Ask before touching anyone's telescope and never touch any glass optical surface.
- Keep food and drinks away from equipment.

Expert tip:

It's easy to modify a regular flashlight by covering the lens with a red filter - automobile brake light repair tape works very well or try red transparent wrap - available at most craft stores.

SFAA CALENDAR

Subscribe to the SFAA calendar so you don't miss any lectures or star gazing events. From the [Events Calendar](#) website page, click on the [Subscription URL](#) link -- it's that easy!

EQUIPMENT

Don't have a telescope? No problem!

Many of the experienced SFAA Members recommend starting with binoculars. Here are a few steps to get your started with ordinary binoculars:

- Start with a small, easy-to-use size.
- First, view the moon with binoculars. Hint: the best time to observe the moon is in twilight. Then the glare of the moon is not so great, and you'll see more detail.
- Move on to viewing planets with binoculars. Planets move around, so check out our Resources section for guides on how to find what's visible in the night sky.

If you're acclimated to the night sky, you may want to move your equipment up a notch and consider a telescope. SFAA can help in several ways:

- Be sure to attend an "Observing Basics" session. Speak with experienced amateur astronomers about the types of telescopes they have used and are using now. They will be happy to share tips.
- Inquire about availability of loaner telescopes with the SFAA Loaner program. This is a great way to try out a scope and see if it's right for you.
- Build your own telescope at one of our workshops.

HANDY LINKS

In addition to the great links we provide on the SFAA Home Page, here are some handy links to help you make the most out of your SFAA membership and to stay connected with other club members:

SFAA Events Calendar:

<https://sfaa-astronomy.org/calendar/>

SFAA Telescope Loaner Program:

<https://sfaa-astronomy.org/telescope-loans>

SFAA Membership Renewal:

<https://sfaa-astronomy.org/Sys/Profile>

Follow SFAA on Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/sfaastronomy>

Join the SFAA Facebook Group:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/152754481404310/>

OBSERVING BASICS

These sessions are targeted primarily to those new to astronomy and who want to start observing the evening sky. They are held quarterly, prior to the club meeting and lecture. Different types of telescopes will be setup and owners will be available to answer your questions.

Check out the [Observing Basics](#) series created by SFAA member Bill Kircher.

TELESCOPE WORKSHOPS

The SFAA offers Telescope Workshops where you can learn how to build your own telescope or repair and tune-up a telescope you already have.

You can learn the step-by-step method for grinding and polishing the mirror, building the mount, and assembling a complete telescope. Learn about John Dobson and his reflector telescope, as well as how these telescopes work.

MEMBERS WEBSITE PORTAL

After logging into the [Members](#) page, members have exclusive access to the community forum, the SFAA Slack community, the telescope loan program, invitations to special events, and their SFAA Profile.

You can also buy, sell or trade astronomy equipment here with other SFAA members.

Check out the "Above the Fog" Newsletter archive under [Historical Assets and Photos](#).

SFAA WEEKLY

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SFAA launched a weekly newsletter to help members stay informed. Subscribe to SFAA Weekly so you don't miss any club updates or astronomy news. Login to your Profile from the [Members](#) page, then select "Yes" to receive the weekly newsletter -- it's that easy!

Members have contributed some of our best articles! Want to submit a summary of an event or your astrophotos? Send an email to: newslettereditor@sfaa-astronomy.org

Getting Involved

The club has something of interest for everyone. We encourage you to experience all of the activities we have to offer, and if you have ideas about something you'd like to see the Club offer, talk to the Board and we'll see if we can make it happen!

LECTURES & CLUB MEETINGS

Every month on the third Wednesday, the SFAA hosts a renowned Astronomer, Cosmologist or Physicist at our Astronomy Lecture at the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco, CA. Lectures start at 7:00pm; doors open at 6:30pm. Join us prior to the start of the lecture to enjoy mingling with club members and board members.

See the [Events Calendar](#) on the Website for Topics & Dates. Archived lectures are available on the [SFAA YouTube Channel](#).

TRAVELING WITH ASTRONOMY

There are Astronomy clubs across the entire country. Check out this site to see if there are any club meetings or star parties near where you will be: <http://www.go-astronomy.com/astro-club-search.htm>

Go and introduce yourself as a fellow astronomy enthusiast--you're sure to be welcomed!

MEMBERS-ONLY STAR PARTIES

Once every month, the Rangers at Mt. Tamalpais State Park allow SFAA Members ONLY to stay at Rock Springs for late night viewing.

This is an opportunity to observe from a relatively dark location, check out other members' telescopes, and get help and advice learning how to use your telescope.

NOTE: A **parking pass is mandatory** and can be requested by e-mail from the Treasurer at: treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org

See the SFAA Website for the latest details on [Members-only Star Parties](#).

SUMMER ASTRONOMY PROGRAM ON MT. TAM

Between April & October each year the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers partners with the Friends of Mt. Tam, Wonderfest, and the California State Parks to support the Summer Astronomy Program.

Each month an astronomy-related talk or movie is presented in the Mountain Theater at Rock Springs.

The SFAA provides volunteers and telescopes to support public viewing after the lecture. This is the perfect opportunity for members who like public outreach, and sharing the wonders of astronomy with people who may be experiencing telescope viewing for the first time.

Program dates and details can be found on the [Mt Tam Astronomy Program](#) Website.

PUBLIC STAR PARTIES

Each month, club volunteers bring their telescopes out to Point Lobos or the Presidio Parade Grounds to share astronomy with the public.

We share the wonders of the moon, stars, nebulae and galaxies with an appreciative public, to inspire people to think about our place in the universe. All ages are welcome. Who knows? We may just inspire the next generation of Astronauts!

Check the SFAA Website for the latest information on [Public Star Parties](#).

LOANER TELESCOPE PROGRAM

Not sure which telescope is right for you? The SFAA maintains a library of telescopes that members may borrow on a month-to-month basis. This helps you decide what size, power and type of telescope best suits your needs.

This is a FREE program, but members are asked to place a deposit and take care of the telescopes they borrow. Scopes are rotated, as demand requires. Just email us at: telescopes@sfaa-astronomy.org

ANNUAL YOSEMITE STAR PARTY AND SPECIAL FIELD TRIPS

Every summer, the National Park Service reserves campsite space for SFAA members. In return for providing telescopes and conducting public Star Parties at Glacier Point (at least one telescope for every two SFAA volunteer), club members camp at the Bridalveil campground for FREE and are welcome to stay at the viewing area for extended viewing.

This is one of the most popular, and magical, events held by the club, you will want to get on the 'Camper List' early so as not to miss out. Spaces are limited.

We also schedule and organize other annual field trips such as a special evening tour at the world famous Lick Observatory.

SCHOOL OUTREACH

Every year the SFAA works with local educators to support their Astronomy programs.

If you are a good presenter and have a passion for inspiring the next generation of Astronomers, there are plenty of public outreach opportunities for you with the club. Contact: volunteer@sfaa-astronomy.org

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DINNER

The Annual SFAA Awards and Membership dinner is included with your membership dues. It's a fun evening with dinner, drinks, and awards. Of course, weather permitting, telescopes are set up to enjoy the night sky!

Members are encouraged to participate and nominate fellow members for such awards as the Service Award and Observer of the Year.

Expert tip:

Enjoy your night of stargazing. Be sure to dress warmly and bring an extra layer in case it's colder than you expected.

RESOURCES: BOOKS

This is a small selection of books, which you may find helpful, grouped in two categories:

INTRODUCTORY

- **The Backyard Stargazer: An Absolute Beginner's Guide to Skywatching With and Without a Telescope** by Patricia Price
- **NightWatch: A Practical Guide to Viewing the Universe** by Terence Dickinson and Adolf Schalle
- **Astronomy 101: From the Sun and Moon to Wormholes and Warp Drive, Key Theories, Discoveries, and Facts about the Universe** by Carolyn Collins Petersen
- **Exploring the Night Sky: The Equinox Astronomy Guide for Beginners** by Terence Dickinson and John Bianchi
- **To Know the Sky** by Guy Ottewell
- **The Monthly Sky Guide** by Ian Ridpath and Wil Tirion

INTERMEDIATE

- **The Total Skywatcher's Manual: 275+ Skills and Tricks for Exploring Stars, Planets, and Beyond** by Astronomical Society of the Pacific
- **The Night Sky Companion** (from The Patrick Moore Practical Astronomy Series) by Tammy Plotner
- **Stars and Planets** by William S. Kals
- **David Levy's Guide to the Night Sky** by David H. Levy

RESOURCES: WEBSITES & MOBILE APPS

Here are some sites that can be helpful if you're just getting started with astronomy:

[Sky and Telescope Magazine](#)

[Astronomy Magazine](#)

[Astronomical Society of the Pacific](#)

There are also many mobile apps that are helpful. Here are just a few you may want to evaluate for your needs:

- Celestron Sky Portal (Free)
- Star Walk
- Sky Safari
- Orion StarSeek

SFAA LOCAL TELESCOPE HISTORY

John Lowry Dobson (September 14, 1915 – January 15, 2014) was an amateur astronomer and is best known for inventing the Dobsonian telescope, a portable, low-cost Newtonian reflector telescope. Many SFAA members have Dobsonian scopes. John Dobson was also the co-founder of the amateur astronomical group, the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers. These YouTube videos provide a little background on John's life and his contributions to astronomy:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ght_w7BAHaA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6XWdNo68ZY&spfreload=10>

VOLUNTEER – SFAA NEEDS YOU

SFAA is an entirely volunteer-run organization and our events rely on the time and energy of our members. Volunteers are always welcome and valued.

If you would like to bring your telescope to a public event, provide refreshments for a meeting, contribute to Above the Fog, become a gatekeeper at Mt. Tam, or give a talk at a City Star Party, please inquire at the monthly meeting or send a note to our president at: president@sfaa-astronomy.org.

Join the Board!

One of the most rewarding ways to get involved is to join the Board. Contact the [President](#) or [Vice President](#) to discuss how you can join this dynamic team of volunteers.

SFAA ON-LINE STORE

Want to rock some SFAA gear when out observing the night sky or just on a daily basis? Check out the SFAA online store with some sweet t-shirts, sweatshirts, water bottles, and more. Follow the link below to see if anything strikes your fancy:

https://www.zazzle.com/store/sfaa_astronomy

If you want a different item with the SFAA logo, or simply a different color scheme, please email: store@sfaa-astronomy.org

