

# ★ ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

Vol. 54, No. 12 – December 2006

## December 20, 2006 – General Meeting

7:00 pm Doors Open . 7:30 pm Announcements . 8:00 pm Speaker

### BOB DOUGLAS

## Observing Deep Sky Objects From Australia



This talk will include a discussion and pictures of some of the major deep sky objects not observable from the continental US and who to get in contact with if you'd like to do some observing in Australia. For a combination of dark skies, amateur astronomers who welcome foreign visitors and the best latitude from the earth at which to observe the blockbuster objects in the night sky, Australia is the place to go. Four of my favorite five objects in the sky are essentially not observable from California.

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*I grew up in Seattle. Ever since grade school, I have been interested in astronomy and space travel. In the early morning hours, I would stick my head out of my bedroom window (which faced east) to see the "new" constellations coming up. When I was 13 or 14, my father bought me a 2.4 inch f/15 Unitron refractor.*

*I was an undergraduate and graduate student at the University of Washington in Seattle, receiving my BS, MS and Ph.D. in Mathematics. After a year as a Research Associate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I joined the faculty of the Mathematics Department at San Francisco State University. About 15 years later, the computer science program in the Mathematics Dept. became a separate Department of Computer Science, which I switched into. I retired in 2000 as a Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science.*

*Starting in 2001, I have traveled to Australia four times. On the first trip I took an 8" SC with me, but have made astronomy friends there and have had access to larger scopes. On the second trip, I traveled about a third of the way across Australia with them to view the solar eclipse. On the third trip, I spent 7.5 weeks in Australia (over two new moon periods), renting a cabin near Sliding Springs Observatory for three weeks of viewing every night. It was great! Between new moon periods, I drove over 3,000 miles, went to a Great Barrier Reef coral island and hiked in the subtropical rain forests just south of Brisbane. In October 2005, I returned and will be going for my fifth trip in March 2007. I have found that there is a bond between amateur astronomers all over the world. It's a good way to make close friends quickly. This has happened to me in Australia and in the Bay Area (through SFAA and through meeting people observing at Lake Sonoma).*

*My main astronomical interest is in deep sky visual observing, which I have done for many years. Up until 2004, I mainly used my 12" LX200 Meade. Since then I have used an 18" GoTo Starmaster.*

*My wife, Fran, is interested in astronomy, but not sufficiently to stay up late. Bob Douglas*

**!!!! IMPORTANT !!!!**  
**NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENT**

Commencing with the December issue, SFAA's official newsletter, *Above the Fog*, will be delivered via e-mail. When the newsletter becomes available, members will receive an e-mail notification with a link to the online version. If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter in hard copy format, please submit a request to [treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org](mailto:treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org).

## 2006 CI ub Officers & Contacts

<i>President</i>	John Dillon	(415) 332-8096
<i>Vice President</i>	Kenneth Frank	(415) 789-0459
<i>Secretary</i>	Stefanie Ulrey	treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org
<i>Treasurer</i>	Stefanie Ulrey	treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org
<i>Speaker Chair</i>	Linda Mahan	doublestar@comcast.net
<i>City Star Party</i>	Randy Taylor	(415) 255-8670 randytaylor3@aol.com
<i>Membership &amp; Subscriptions Bulletin</i>	Stefanie Ulrey	treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org
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<i>Associate Editor</i>	Annette Gabrielli	agabrielli-sfaa@sbcglobal.net
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<i>Honorary Director and Board Member</i>	John Dobson	(415) 665-4054
<i>Emeritus</i>		
<i>Board Members</i>	Peter Schumacher	(415) 566-6864
	Jorge Morales	(510) 337-1446
	Dirk Lammerts	(415) 242-1464
	Robert English	(415) 383-6475
		sfaa@bogusnet.net
	Annette Gabrielli	agabrielli-sfaa@sbcglobal.net
	Michael Portuesi	(415) 550-9366
<i>Alt. Board Members</i>	Karim Mokhtar	moktarkarim@yahoo.com
<i>Webmaster</i>	Joe Amato	Web-master@sfaa-astronomy.net

### Membership Dues

The mailing label on the back of this issue shows the month and year through which your membership was paid. If the date has passed, your membership has expired. Members may receive no more than one bulletin after the expiration of membership.

Please renew soon if your membership is expiring.

## SFAA WEBSITE AND ONLINE SERVICES



The SFAA web site at [sfaa-astronomy.org](http://sfaa-astronomy.org) is provided to our members and the general public for the sharing of club information and services. The web site contains links for club [star parties](#), [events](#), [newsletters](#), [lectures](#) and [meetings](#). If you wish to interact with other people who are interested in astronomy, the SFAA web site offers public and members only [bulletin board forums](#). If you wish to remain up-to-date on club activities, then we encourage you to subscribe to one or both of our public [mailing lists](#), which will allow you to receive our newsletter and/or club announcements via email. Other useful and interesting information and services are available on the site such as [observing location reviews](#), member [astronomy photos](#), and [members only telescope loans](#). Information about SFAA's membership, organization and by-laws are available at the club's online public document [archive](#). If you need to contact a representative of the SFAA, then please visit our [contacts](#) page to help in finding the right person to answer your questions.

## CI ub Tel escopes



The SFAA owns eight very fine, easy to use, loaner telescopes well-suited for deep sky, planets, and star parties. All scopes are available to any SFAA member. The loaner custodians for the majority of our fleet are Pete & Sarah Goldie. Please contact them at [pg@lbin.com](mailto:pg@lbin.com) for details if you are interested in borrowing a scope or if you have items you can donate for the loaner program (eyepieces, star maps/books, red flashlights, collimator, etc.). Please contact the appropriate member indicated below if you are interested in borrowing one of the telescopes.

- 1) 6" f/10.3 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 2) 8" f/7 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 3) 8.5" f/6 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 4) 10" f/8 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 5) 114mm f/4 Newtonian StarBlast/Pete Goldie
- 6) 8" f/10 Celestron SCT/Annette Gabrielli/agabrielli-sfaa@sbcglobal.net
- 7) 8" f/10 Meade SCT/Stefanie Ulrey/treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org
- 8) 9.5" f/5.6 Celestron Newtonian/Ken Frank/kennethfrank@planitarium.net

## CI ub Astronomy Videos

The SFAA owns a series of astronomy videotapes featuring Alex Filippenko, a world-renowned professor of astronomy at UC Berkeley. The videotapes provide an introduction to astronomy and cover topics such as the Solar System, the lifecycles of stars, the nature of galaxies, and the birth of the Universe. The SFAA loans the tapes free to all members. If you are interested in viewing these tapes, you may check them out at any of the SFAA General Meetings. These tapes were kindly donated to the SFAA by Bert Katzung. For information on the course tapes themselves:



<http://www.teach12.com/ttc/assets/coursedescriptions/180.asp>

***Above the Fog*** is the official bulletin of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers. It is the forum in which club members may share their experiences, ideas, and observations. We encourage you to participate by submitting your articles, announcements, letters, photos and drawings. We would also like to hear from our new members. Tell us about yourself – what you have done in the past and what other clubs you have joined. **The deadline for the next issue is the 20th day of the month.** Send your articles to Phil Estrin at [pestrin@dir.ca.gov](mailto:pestrin@dir.ca.gov).

## THROUGH THE FINDER...

Situations happen. In calling to confirm menu choices for our annual dinner at the Basque Cultural Center, I discovered that the person who accepted our reservation last month wasn't THE person who accepts reservations. THE person who accepts reservations had already accepted another reservation for our room from another group. We were left out in the dark, so to speak. Great for stargazing, bad for finding your salad fork. So after some scurrying, we discovered what promises to be a better spot – the Delancey Street Restaurant on the Embarcadero (at Brannon). Great food and great views, and in our own backyard. We need to thank Annette Gabrielli for making the rescue. Look for details about the menu and reservations elsewhere in this newsletter.

Also enclosed in this issue is a ballot for your SFAA Officers and Directors for 2007. Most of last year's Board has agreed to continue but as always there is space for write-ins in case you want to throw any of us rascals out. You will also notice a new lineup of Officers. Ken Frank has agreed to take over the helm (navigating by the stars, of course). In most cases taking over as President means an increased work load. This won't be the case with Ken – only because it's not possible. Ken has already been working more than full time on SFAA's behalf, and for AANC, and for the Sidewalk Astronomers, and for the Randall Museum's telescope making classes, and for...

If you received a hard copy of this newsletter you can cut out the ballot and mail it to: SFAA, PO Box 15097, San Francisco, CA 94115. If you prefer, we will have the ballots available at our December 20 Member's Meeting which you can fill out and deposit directly into our SFAA ballot box. Vote either way - but not both ways. One member, one vote. Just like national elections (except maybe Florida). But while on the subject of the December Member's meeting – this is your once a year chance to show off your astrophotography and/or astro-art work. It's also a chance for you to see what others have been up to and vote on what you like best. Winners will be announced and feted in January on the Embarcadero (remember: Delancey Street Restaurant, January 27th).

See you in the dark, or on the Embarcadero,

**John Dillon**  
**President**



**IT'S TIME TO ORDER RASC HANDBOOKS  
AND CALENDARS AGAIN  
LET KEN <[KENNETHFRANK AT PLANIARIUM.NET](mailto:KENNETHFRANK AT PLANIARIUM.NET)> KNOW  
IF YOU WANT ONE --GOING FAST!**

# IMPORTANT DATES

## SFAA GENERAL MEETINGS & LECTURES

Wednesday, December 20  
(No January General Meeting)

**JANUARY 27 – ANNUAL DINNER – MEMBERS ONLY**

*See information in newsletter*

Wednesday, February 21

7:00 p.m. Doors open. 7:30 p.m. Announcements. 8:00 p.m. Speaker

## BOARD MEETINGS

Tuesday, December 12

Tuesday, January 9

Tuesday, February 13

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way

(Near 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Roosevelt)

## CITY STAR PARTIES - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset

Saturday -- December 16 - 5:00 p.m. at Randall Museum

*“WHAT’S A SOLSTICE?” – A “Family-Friendly” Demonstration in the Randall Theater at 5:30 p.m.*

Saturday, January 13, 5:06 p.m. at Land’s End (Point Lobos)

Saturday, February 24, 5:52 p.m. at Land’s End (Point Lobos)

Map and directions – Land’s End (Pt. Lobos) <http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org/clubarchive/directions-pointlobos.p>

Weather may cancel the City Star Party. Call the SFAA Hotline at (415) 289-6636 AFTER 4 PM to learn the status of the event and the location. If the hotline announces the Star Party is cancelled, the Telescope Clinic and Lecture are cancelled as well. However, if the Hotline does not cancel the Star Party, be assured that the Lecture will proceed as scheduled even given less-than-perfect telescope conditions.

Please also note that while City Star Parties WILL ALWAYS be held on Saturdays, some will be closer to the last quarter phase of the moon, while others will be close to first quarter. This is so we can work around dates for Mt. Tam public star parties as well as

## MT TAM STAR PARTIES – SPECIAL USE PERMIT – MEMBERS ONLY

SATURDAYS -- December 23, 5:00 p.m. – Gatekeeper ROBERT ENGLISH

January 20, 5:14 p.m. – Gatekeeper **VOLUNTEER NEEDED**

February 17, 5:44 p.m. – Gatekeeper **VOLUNTEER NEEDED**

## FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING - February 21

### R. JAY GABANY - POSTCARDS FROM THE UNIVERSE

Take a tour with one of the Bay Area’s finest astrophotographers. Imaging from New Mexico and Australia, R. Jay GaBany presents Cosmotography. His tireless attention to detail reveals stunning new vistas, described with a poet-philosopher’s sensibility.

Be sure to attend this special event!



#### NEW SFAA MEMBERS

Scope City is offering to new members a \$25 credit toward the purchase of telescopes and binoculars.

Obtain a receipt for dues payment from Stephanie Ulrey, Treasurer,

[treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org](mailto:treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org).

Contact Sam Sweiss at Scope City to arrange for your discount.



## San Francisco Amateur Astronomers

SFAA  
P.O. Box 15097  
San Francisco, CA 94115

### *BALLOT*

#### *2007 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

#### OFFICERS

_____ President	Ken Frank
_____ Vice-President	Jorge Morales
_____ Secretary	Stefanie Ulrey
_____ Treasurer	Mel Pritchard

\_\_\_\_\_ Write-in \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name and office*

\_\_\_\_\_ Write-in \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name and office*

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

_____ Joe Amato	_____ Dirk Lammerts
_____ Lon Carter	_____ Elan Morpurgo
_____ John Dillon	_____ Michael Portuesi
_____ Robert English	_____ Peter Schumacher
_____ Annette Gabrielli	_____ Jason Simon

\_\_\_\_\_ Write-in \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_ Write-in \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name*

#### VOTING INSTRUCTIONS

The club members listed above are candidates for Officers and Board of Directors of SFAA for the year 2007. Please vote for a total of four officers and a total of seven board of directors including write-ins. **Voting for more than four officers or for more than seven board members per ballot will invalidate the entire ballot.** Family memberships may submit a separate ballot for each voting family member. Write-ins for officers must include the candidate's name and office for which he or she is nominated.

All candidates, including write-ins, must have committed to attending at least seven board meetings and may not miss more than two consecutive meetings during the calendar year for which they are nominated.

The seven board of directors' candidates who receive the highest number of votes will become regular board members. The two candidates receiving the next highest number of votes will become alternate board members. The new Officers and Board of Directors will be installed at the Annual Awards Dinner on January 21, 2007.

*Please return your ballots to: SFAA Secretary, at the address above.*

***Ballots must be received no later than the general meeting on Wednesday, December 20, 2006.***



# San Francisco Amateur Astronomers

## Annual Awards Dinner

*Saturday, January 27, 2007*

*6:00 p.m. - No-host Bar 7:00 p.m. - Dinner*

### **DELANCEY STREET RESTAURANT**

*600 Embarcadero, San Francisco CA 94107*

*(415) 512-5179*

**\$27.00 per person**

*Tax and gratuity included*

### **MENU**

*Corn Chips and Salsa Cruda*

*Baskets of Onion Rings*

*Organic Field Greens with Balsamic Vinaigrette*

*Served with Baskets of Assorted Breads*

Please select from the following entree choices –

- 1) Rotisserieed Rosemary and Garlic Chicken, Served with grilled vegetables
- 2) Blackened Meatloaf, Served with garlic mashed potatoes and glazed carrots
- 3) Pasta Primavera – Angel hair pasta in a light red sauce with fresh tomatoes, garlic, basil and asparagus

*Vanilla bean ice cream and homemade chocolate dipped biscotti*

*Coffee or tea*

Please send a check or money order (made out to San Francisco Amateur Astronomers), along with your choice of entrée, to SFAA at P.O. Box 15097, San Francisco CA 94115 by **January 16, 2006**.

**Any requests received after this date cannot be guaranteed.**

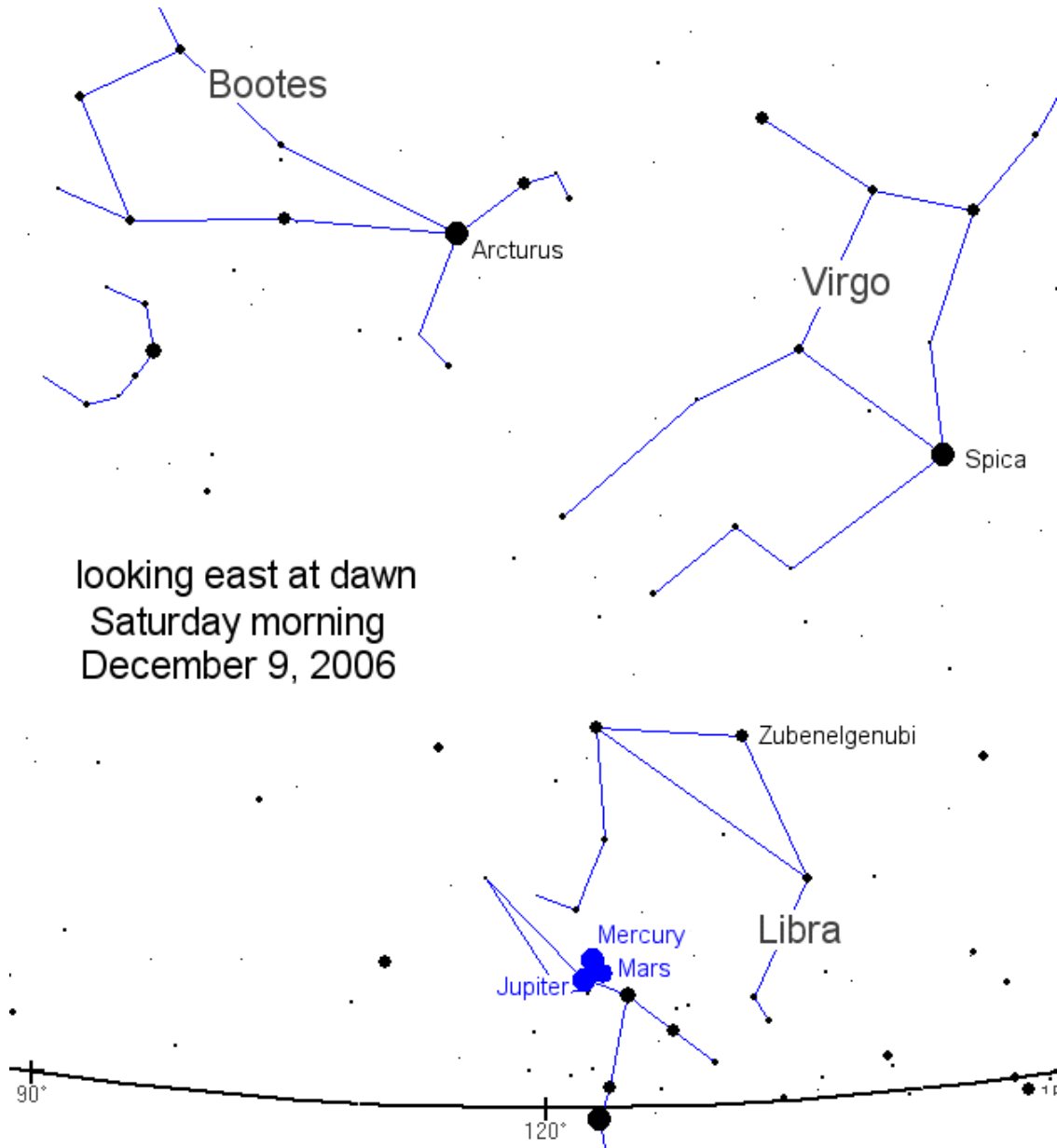
**From Highway 280:** Take Highway 280 North toward CIVIC CENTER/BAY BRIDGE. Take left ramp onto KING ST and proceed 1.0 mile. Continue on THE EMBARCADERO, go 0.4 mile. Make a U-turn at BRANNAN ST. onto THE EMBARCADERO, arrive at 600 THE EMBARCADERO, on the right.

**From Highway 101 (south of San Francisco):** Take US-101 NORTH to the I-280 exit toward PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO, go 3.2 miles. Take left ramp onto KING STREET, go 1.0 mile. Continue on THE EMBARCADERO, go 0.4 mile. Make a U-turn at BRANNAN ST. onto THE EMBARCADERO, arrive at 600 THE EMBARCADERO, on the right.

**From Marin County:** Take US-101 SOUTH over the Golden Gate Bridge. Continue on RICHARDSON AVENUE, go 0.2 miles. Continue on LOMBARD STREET, go 1.1 miles. Turn left on VAN NESS AVENUE, go 0.2 miles. Turn right on BAY STREET, go 1.1 miles. Turn right on THE EMBARCADERO, go 1.9 miles. Arrive at 600 THE EMBARCADERO, on the right.

# Dance of the Planets

Between December 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> for early risers you can get an eyepiece full.



Mercury, Mars and Jupiter will grace the south eastern sky before sunrise.

## TRANSIT OF MERCURY

On Monday, November 6, Aeddan's fourth grade class was treated to talk and telescopes by his dad, Ken. Even the principal of the school came down for a look through John Dobson's Sun Scope and newly-acquired Coronado PST from Scope City. Sam was gracious enough to donate a very practical hard case. Thanks, Sam!

The talk was an adaptation of the one Mike Portuesi and Ken gave at the Randall on Transit Day. On Wednesday, Transit Day, at Ken's suggestion, Bel Aire School linked up to the live feed from Hawaii.





## DECEMBER SUP MEMBERS ONLY NIGHT LEONID METEOR SHOWERS



We had a small group --

Renita & Cary, the couple with the seven-year-old daughter in the white truck (who offered great chocolate chip cookies); a new guy from Chicago who had a refractor, now lives in the East Bay; a couple, also from the East Bay, who are members of East Bay Astronomical Society; a guy who built his own Dob, and Slava with his refractor. Ok, it was dark so I can't remember names either. All are members, though, and have SUP placards.

We saw Comet Swan, the Pleiades, M-31, M-57 a few satellites and not much more before a blanket of moist air covered everything in dew.

The Rangers found a lost hiker.

After a few more luscious chocolate chip cookies, we all headed down before 8 pm.

Ken

# SFAA 2007

## Calendar of Events

### Mount Tam Public Events

Public nights on Mount Tamalpais start with a lecture in the Mountain Theatre, followed by public viewing in the Rock Springs parking lot. SFAA members may view privately after crowd departs, approx. 11 pm-2 am. Note that access to SUP private events is contingent on our participation in the public events.

- April 21, sunset 7:42 pm
- May 19, 8:08 pm
- June 23, 8:26 pm
- July 21, 8:19 pm
- August 18, 7:51 pm
- September 15, 7:11 pm
- October 13, 6:29 pm

### Mount Tam SUP Events

SUP (Special Use Permit) observing nights on Mount Tamalpais are open *only* to SFAA members. Please arrive by sunset (times listed below). A permit is required for each car. We must vacate the mountain by 2 am except on specially approved nights (such as Messier Marathon).

- January 20, 5:14 pm
- February 17, 5:44 pm
- March 17 (Messier Marathon night), 7:12 pm
- April 14, 7:37 pm
- May 12, 8:01 pm
- June 16, 8:25 pm
- July 14, 8:23 pm
- August 11, 7:59 pm
- September 8 (Picnic night), 7:21 pm
- October 6, 6:39 pm
- November 10, 4:56 pm
- December 8, 4:44 pm

### City Star Party

CSP events start at sunset (times listed below) with a public lecture, followed by public viewing. Land's End (LE) and the Randall Museum (RM) are the locations for the CSP this year.

- January 13 (LE), 5:06 pm
- February 24 (LE), 5:52 pm
- March 24 (RM), 7:18 pm
- April 28 (LE), 7:49 pm
- May 26 (LE), 8:13 pm
- June 9 (RM), 8:22 pm
- July 7 (LE), 8:26 pm
- August 25 (LE), 7:42 pm
- September 22 (RM), 7:00 pm
- October 20 (LE), 6:19 pm
- November 17 (LE), 4:51 pm
- December 15(RM), 4:46 pm

## Board Meetings

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month, at the Randall Museum. 7 pm. All SFAA members are invited.

- January 9
- February 13
- March 13
- April 10
- May 8
- June 12
- July 10
- August 14
- September 11
- October 9
- November 13
- December 11

## General Meetings

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month (except January) at the Randall Museum. Doors open 7 pm, announcements 7:30 pm, guest speaker 8 pm. All are invited.

- February 21
- March 21
- April 18
- May 16
- June 20
- July 18
- August 15
- September 19
- October 17
- November 21
- December 19

## Other SFAA Events

- Annual Dinner, January 27
- Messier Marathon, March 17
- Astronomy Day, April 21
- Fremont Peak, May 11-12
- Annual Picnic, September 8
- Yosemite Weekend, TBA

## Other Astronomy Events

- Riverside Telescope Maker's Conference, May 25-28 [www.rtmcastronomyexpo.org](http://www.rtmcastronomyexpo.org)
- Grand Canyon Star Party, June 9-16 [www.tucsonastronomy.org/gcsp.html](http://www.tucsonastronomy.org/gcsp.html)
- Shingletown Star Party, July 11-16  
[www.shingletownstarparty.org](http://www.shingletownstarparty.org)
- Oregon Star Party, August 16-19  
[www.oregonstarparty.org](http://www.oregonstarparty.org)
- Fremont Peak Star-B-Q, TBA  
[www.fpoa.net](http://www.fpoa.net)
- Calstar (Lake San Antonio), TBA  
[www.sjaa.net/calstar](http://www.sjaa.net/calstar)

Founded in September 1952, the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers (SFAA) is an association of people who share a common interest in astronomy and other related sciences. Our membership consists of people from all walks of life, educational backgrounds and ages. Many SFAA members own their own telescopes; some have been made by hand in local telescope-making classes and vary in size from 6 to 25 inches.

**Treasurer, SFAA, POB 15097, San Francisco CA 94115**

make checks payable to **San Francisco Amateur Astronomers** and mail to:

- \$10 enclosed, youth/student membership
- \$25 enclosed, individual membership
- \$30 enclosed, family or foreign membership
- \$40 enclosed, institutional membership
- \$75 enclosed, supporting membership

Select one category:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address:

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name: Telephone:

## San Francisco Amateur Astronomers Membership Application

**San Francisco Amateur Astronomers**  
P.O. Box 15097  
San Francisco, CA 94115



Information Hotline: (415) 289-6636

Web Page: [www.sfaa-astronomy.org](http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org)

*Sharing the Wonders of the Universe*

**Has your membership expired?** Your mailing label includes the month and year through which your membership is paid. If it is past, your membership has expired and this may be your last issue.