NC Astronomers

Bringing Astronomy to the Public

Newsletter – April, 2026

All are welcome! Bring a friend!

President's Rant – March 29, 2026

The old real estate adage about the importance of **Location, Location, Location** applies to astronomical observation in spades. On a local level, overhead trees and horizons hidden by terrain interfere of course. **Greg Dolkas** walks his equipment to his neighbor's driveway across the street to image anything, and I walk up the street for a few minutes to get a decent view of the eastern horizon. We are used to driving to Old Downieville Highway or Washington Road for darker skies and a flatter horizon.

Our **latitude** of course determines the scope of night sky we can appreciate throughout the year. To give extreme examples, at the north or south pole one would only ever be able to see half of the night sky, and then only during the darker fall and winter months. At the equator one could see virtually the entire night sky over the course of a year, as the night sky faces different directions as the earth revolves around the sun. Polaris would always be on the horizon, though. How would we align our equatorial mounts?

In our northern latitude we miss seeing the Magellanic Clouds, Alpha Centauri, and the Southern Cross. Those in New Zealand never see any of the stars in the Big Dipper or Cassiopeia, even during their winter. Simple enough.

Our **longitude** also impacts what we can see. Last month I mentioned how the March lunar eclipse would be experienced at different hours on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean. Lunar occultations are very longitude dependent as the moon moves relatively quickly against the background sky, covering a star or planet for about an hour at most. Of course, total solar eclipses famously carve out narrow tracks of observability. Many of us have embarked on modern day pilgrimages to experience them.

This coming Wednesday at our monthly meeting, **Rod Brown** will discuss his recent **Messier Marathon** endeavor, in which an attempt is made to view all 110 Messier objects in one night. As expected, Rod was unable to view M30, which was too far to the south at our higher latitude. It turns out that the spring equinox is the best time to marathon. During summer months, the night is too short to be able to view all the needed longitudinal directions. During winter months the numerous Messier objects near the galactic center are too low in the sky and too sun-adjacent to be observable.

Following Rod, **Dave Weixelman** will be our main speaker for the evening. His multifaceted talk on **The Moon** will include many of his own marvelous images, a few of which he has posted recently on our club's groups.io email platform. Don't miss it!

Greg Ouligian

Observing the Moon

Dave Weixelman

April 1, 2026

For the April meeting, Dave Weixelman will cover a number of topics about the Moon, including the leading theory on the Moon's origin. The talk will also cover lunar libration, which is an interesting topic by itself. Then he will point out the location and characteristics for 10 of the most famous telescopic features on the Moon. This will include major craters like Tycho, Plato, and Clavius.

Dave is a retired Forest Service botanist. He has been an amateur astronomer since Junior High School when he built his first telescope – an 8-inch reflector. Since those days, Dave has been an avid visual observer, and imager of the night sky using both deep sky and nightscape imaging techniques.

NC Astronomers Meets at 7pm on the first Wednesday of the month
Madelyn Helling Library Gene Albaugh Community Room
980 Helling Way
Nevada City, CA 95959
(September – May)

** Note **

For the “Summer Season” (July and August) the NC Astronomers will be meeting on-line via Zoom.
Club members will receive the keys to the Zoom conference in their email via Groups.io.

** NC Astronomers "YouTube" channel **

Many of the presentations are recorded and posted to the club's YouTube channel.

Please see https://www.youtube.com/@ncastronomers9981/videos

Club News – Rod Brown

Want a telescope for free? Six (yes, 6) telescopes are available for club members. One is available to purchase, one available to keep for free, and one is negotiable! The rest are available for a free 1-year loan.

1. For loan: Celestron C90 Maksutov-Cassegrain (two available)

With a 3.4-inch (90mm) aperture and 1000mm focal length, this small telescope is very portable and good for looking at larger, brighter objects in the sky. The loan includes eyepieces, a red-dot finder, a dew shield, and a case. Also included is either a camera tripod (easiest to use), an equatorial mount and tripod (more complex but also more flexible to use), or you can use your own camera tripod. The whole setup is compact and light. Both telescopes have the same specs but slightly different cosmetics.

2. For loan: Celestron Super C8 Schmidt-Cassegrain
This classic eight-inch aperture, 2000mm focal length telescope has been a workhorse of amateur astronomers for years. It is able to see all of the Messier catalog objects. The Super C8 comes on a forked equatorial mount with motor drive and tripod and includes eyepieces, a Telrad, and a finder scope along with a storage trunk.

3. To keep: Meade ETX-60AT achromatic refractor
This 2.4-inch aperture, short 350mm focal length telescope is best for wide-angle views of larger objects. It comes with an electronically controlled motorized mount with a hand controller, a tripod, and eyepieces. This small telescope is quite portable and is best for someone who is interested in wide views of brighter objects and comfortable with electronic controls. It is available for purchase for $45, the amount we have put into making it work. If you are interested in tinkering with an electronic mount, this is a good opportunity to do so at low cost.

4. To keep: Meade 4504 reflector
This 4.5-inch aperture, 910mm focal length Newtonian is good for looking at many objects in the sky. It comes with a manual equatorial mount, tripod, finder scope, and eyepieces. This telescope is available for free to keep.

5. For loan or to keep: Home-built eight-inch reflector

Tim Hogan generously donated this eight-inch aperture, 1830mm focal length Newtonian that he built himself. It comes on a classic Cave-Astrola equatorial mount with an AC-powered tracking motor, and it is capable of viewing all the Messier objects and providing great planetary views, too. I have cleaned and collimated the scope and used it to view a variety of objects, and I can vouch that it is quite sharp, providing great views. Because of the size and weight of this setup, it is not portable. It would be best for someone who has a place to observe with a garage or storage shed nearby which they can roll the telescope into for storage and out to a driveway or patio to observe. It comes with a finder scope, a motorized focuser, and eyepieces, including a couple that are quite good. This setup is available to borrow or keep. If you would like to keep it, let me know and I can estimate a cost that is less than what the parts are worth.

Outreach – Ania Brandysiewicz

No events are currently planned, though we have one in the queue for this coming May. Please let us know if you become aware of any community outreach opportunities!

NC Astronomer members continue to enjoy the beer and blather, which will now be held at the 1849 Brewing Company. The beer selection at the brewery is quite comprehensive and they also have an on-premises cafe for your culinary delight. The environment allows for in-depth conversations on deeply philosophical questions.

Each month we discuss current topics in Astronomy and share our collective ignorance.

Meeting location:

<u>Astronomy on Tap</u> meets on
The third <u>Wednesday</u> of the month at 5pm

Come and join the conversation at
1849 Brewing Company - 468 Sutton Way in Grass Valley

April 2026 Calendar, courtesy of In-the-sky.org:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 136472 Makemake at opposition The Sombrero Galaxy is well placed Full Moon	**2**	**3** Mercury at greatest elongation west Mercury at dichotomy	**4** Mercury at aphelion Comet C/2026 A1 (MAPS) passes perihelion Messier 94 is well placed The Moon at aphelion
5 The Jewel Box cluster is well placed	**6** Comet C/2026 A1 (MAPS) passes perigee Lunar occultation of Antares	**7** The Moon at apogee	**8** Conjunction of Venus and Ceres	**9** Lunar occultation of Sigma Sagittarii Moon at Last Quarter	**10**	**11**
12	**13** Conjunction of Mars and Neptune Centaurus A is well placed Omega Centauri is well placed	**14** The Moon at perihelion The Whirlpool Galaxy is well placed 136199 Eris at solar conjunction	**15** Conjunction of the Moon and Mercury Conjunction of the Moon and Mars Conjunction of the Moon and Saturn	**16** Conjunction of Mercury and Neptune Messier 83 is well placed	**17** New Moon Messier 3 is well placed	**18** The Moon at perigee
19 Conjunction of the Moon and Venus Comet C/2025 R3 (PANSTARRS) passes perihelion Close approach of the Moon and M45 Conjunction of Mercury and Mars	**20** Conjunction of Mercury and Saturn Close approach of Mercury and Saturn Conjunction of Saturn and Mars Lunar occultation of Beta Tauri	**21**	**22** Lyrid meteor shower 2026 Conjunction of the Moon and Jupiter Close approach of the Moon and Jupiter	**23** 136108 Haumea at opposition Comet 141P/Machholz passes perihelion Messier 101 is well placed Moon at First Quarter Conjunction of Venus and Uranus	**24** π-Puppid meteor shower 2026 Close approach of the Moon and M44	**25** Lunar occultation of Regulus
26 Comet C/2025 R3 (PANSTARRS) passes perigee	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**		

Officers	
President	Greg Ouligian
Vice President	Position open
Secretary / Treasurer	Rod Brown
Communications Coordinator	Greg Dolkas
Outreach Coordinator	Ania Brandysiewicz

NC ASTRONOMERS
Meets
First Wednesday Of The Month
Madelyn Helling Library
Community Room
980 Helling Way
Nevada City 95959

NC ASTRONOMERS
302 Gethsemane St.
Nevada City, CA 95959
http://ncastronomers.org

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