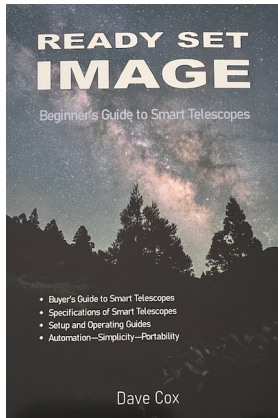




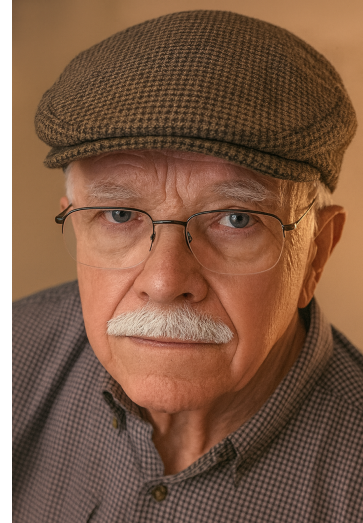
✧ Charlotte Amateur Astronomers Club
www.charlotteastronomers.org

Ready, Set, Image: Beginner's Guide to Smart Telescopes

At the March 2026 CAAC Club meeting, we will open the meeting with Stella Russell giving a brief presentation of her Girl Scout Gold Award on Dark Skies, Bright Futures.



Following Stella's presentation, Dave Cox will present his extensive research in small telescopes and how Electronically Assisted Astronomy (EAA) and Smart Telescope Technology (STT) have simplified the processes amateur astronomy and astrophotographers use to observe and image celestial objects and thereby, opening amateur astronomy to everyone.



Video Speaker: Dave Cox

Dave Cox has been interested in astronomy since the age of 10. Following a career in City Planning, and later as Deputy Director of the Tulsa (OK) Health Department, Dave retired in 2017, and since then, he has become an avid smart telescope user. In 2022, Dave realized that there was a need for more information about smart telescopes in general. He embarked on his research which culminated in the book which is the subject of his talk

CAAC March Meeting

<p><u>Next Meeting:</u> Friday March 20th, 2026</p> <p><u>Time:</u> 7pm ET</p>	<p><u>Place:</u> <i>Myers Park Baptist Church Education Building – Shalom Hall (Basement)</i> <i>Or Zoom Virtual Meeting</i> (See info on next page)</p>	<p><u>Address:</u> 1900 Queens Road Charlotte, NC 28207</p>
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CAAC Virtual Meeting Login Instructions

1. If you have not used Zoom before, go to Zoom.com and download the Zoom program onto your computer.
2. **To Log In:**

Click on the meeting link below:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82489334922?
pwd=dWRsdDFkMjJOWFVNUFIIN1IFL1NoQT09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82489334922?pwd=dWRsdDFkMjJOWFVNUFIIN1IFL1NoQT09)

If needed Meeting ID: **824 8933 4922**

Passcode: **893125**

This manual “log in” rather than invitation to everyone prevents all the emails showing up on the invite. This is a security issue for your privacy.

3. When on the Zoom screen to prevent chaos and overloading bandwidth:
 - a. Mute your microphone-icon lower left of screen
 - b. Mute Video icon on the lower left of screen.
 - c. You will be able to see and hear leaders of the meeting when they are speaking
4. If you wish to ask questions of the speaker after the main presentation:
 - a. Submit on the chat feature which is at the bottom of the screen. You will then type out your question and hit enter.
5. Excellent Zoom tutorials are available on You Tube:
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/user/ZoomMeetings>

From the President:

Greetings Friends,

Southern Star is just around the corner, and the registration deadline is fast approaching. If you haven't already sent in your registration form, now is the time to do so. We have limited availability, so the sooner you register, the more likely you are of getting the room you wish. Our 4 outstanding speakers will be the highlight of the event, and you'll have lots of opportunities to chat with them one on one. Go to our website, charlotteastronomers.org/southern-star and click on the registration tab.

We just had our monthly telescope training and we had quite the number of new faces there! It was a clear night and most folks stayed for at least part of the night, so it turned into an old-fashioned spontaneous star party!

If you've never done the training before and are interested, or just need to knock of some rust and get reacquainted with operating the club's equipment, be sure to reach out to our observatory directory and let him know you want to come to next month's training!

As we move into warmer weather, galaxy season is upon us, so it's time to take out those larger scopes and hunt faint fuzzies!

Finally, a slate of candidates for officers of the club will be presented at the April meeting. If anyone is interested in becoming a member of the leadership team, don't hesitate to see me at the club meeting or drop me an e-mail at president@charlotteastronomers.org

Clear skies,

Justin
CAAC President

Secretary's Report:

1. **CAAC 2026 Southern Star Conference - Registration is Open!**

April 23-26 at Wildacres Retreat. Please see the enclosed Southern Star 2026 flyer for the Speakers List and programs. Register at this [link](#) on the CAAC website. We will have more information about this terrific event at our Friday meeting including a call for volunteers for the 2026 Southern Star Committees.

- The **2026 CAAC annual membership** began in October and we want to express our gratitude to new joining members and to our renewing members. Your participation is greatly appreciated.
 - Annual individual/family membership, which includes access to the CAAC dark sky [observatory](#) (GHRO) - \$60.00
 - Dues are collected at the October meeting and are pro-rated for members joining in January or later.
 - Students up to 18 years old - \$15.00 per year.
 - Private Observing Pads - additional \$25.00 per year.
Optional fee for members with private concrete observing pads at the club's dark sky location. Contact the Observatory Director for additional information.

Membership Applications are available through the CAAC Treasurer at monthly meetings. Click <https://charlotte-amateur-astronomers-club-2.square.site/> to navigate to the CAAC online store. Then select "CAAC Membership" to add it to your cart

- If you are a former CAAC member and have not been keeping up with your membership dues, firstly please come back! We'd love to reconnect you with the love of astronomy through our club, use of GHRO observatory, and the camaraderie of our members.

Please also remember to return your badges on the table near the exit at the end of the meeting before you leave! Doing this will significantly reduce the chances of badges getting lost and reduce the amount of time (and cost) of having to re-create your name tag if it is lost. Thank you!

- Register with the **Night Sky Network!** It is imperative that all members of the CAAC join the Night Sky Network (NSN). Many of the club's outreach activities are managed by the NSN, as well as club communications (newsletters, event notifications, general email). The NSN is a wonderful tool specifically designed for amateur astronomy clubs like ours. Membership allows you to contact other members via email, and receive last minute updates for outreach events via text message:

http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/club-apply.cfm?Club_ID=1468&ApplicantType=Member Pre-Monthly

- Are you looking for ways to participate in the club?** We would appreciate volunteers for the following standing committees to better serve our members:

- Room Set Up
- Refreshments
- Audio/ Video
- Web Master/ Social Media. Please be on the lookout in the next couple of weeks for emails with more details and how to participate. Please contact the CAAC Officers and let us know

which committee interests you. Thank you for your consideration. The club is adding a new CAAC Astronomy Equipment Sales page to the newsletter. Please check out the offerings at the end of the newsletter.

6. The club is adding a new CAAC Astronomy Equipment Sales page to the newsletter. Please check out the offerings at the end of the newsletter.



7. Sign up for **CAAC Slack / chat!**

Chat with fellow astronomy and astrophotography enthusiasts on our discussion group. This is a free service, we are using the basic plan. See who's going to GHRO, ask questions, or just be sociable. You can access via webpage or native applications on all major platforms and mobile phones. Sign up, introduce yourself, talk to your peers, tell your stories, ask your questions, and share your wisdom!

How do I sign up?

- Visit this link: <https://slack.theastroshed.com> or email caac-slack@jamieandamy.com

If you run into issues signing up, email Jamie at caac-slack@jamieandamy.com and he will help you get on the team.

8. The **CAAC website**, <https://charlotteastronomers.org/> has been updated to provide better service to our members with easier navigation, up to date announcements and postings, and accessible communication. Please explore and enjoy your new CAAC website.

Best,

My Do
CAAC Secretary

CAAC Treasurer's Report as of 2/28/2026

Operating Fund

Purpose: Enable the CAAC to pursue our non-profit goals, maintain our facilities, and run our programs.

*Funds are acquired through ongoing receipts of dues, fees, and annual Southern Star income (or expense).

*Funds are expended to meet operating obligations of the club.

1	Operating Fund Balance: 1/31/2026	\$29,119.27
2	Income:	
	Dues and Fees	\$510.00
	Donation in honor of Gayle Riggsbee	\$1,000.00
3	Expenses:	
	GHRO pest control	\$146.00
	X-fer to Self Insurance fund	\$10,000.00
	GHRO Utilities (alarm, elec, internet)	\$183.90
	Service fee to accept credit cards	\$19.86
4	Operating Fund Balance: 2/28/2026	\$20,279.51

Non-Operating Funds

Purpose: Administer gifts and donations for designated use.

1	Non-Operating Funds Balance: 1/31/2026	
	Scholarship Fund	\$4,706.87
	CAAC Self Insurance Fund	\$20,000.00
	Contingency Fund	\$7,434.36
2	Income:	
	Interest	\$0.32
3	Expenses or Transfers:	
	X-fer from checking to Self Insurance Fund	\$10,000.00
4	Non-Operating Funds Balance: 2/28/2026	
	Scholarship Fund	\$4,706.87
	CAAC Self Insurance Fund	\$30,000.00
	Contingency Fund	\$7,434.68

Scott Goforth
CAAC Treasurer

News from GHRO

1. Don't forget the monthly star party on Saturday, March 21...dusk is getting later!!!
2. **There is no telescope training in April. The next training date is May 23 at 6:30pm.**
3. When observing at GHRO please ensure you minimize the amount of light you produce. Especially for imagers, **please take care to hide lights from your equipment and computers.** Plastic bins are available for use to put your laptop in.
4. Please follow the posted startup and shutdown procedures for any club owned scopes. This helps other members when they go to use our equipment. Please ask if you are unsure.
5. Don't forget that the current sky conditions and weather and the Clear Sky Clock is found at the bottom of our homepage... <https://charlotteastronomers.org/>
6. The binocular observatory building is complete and the binoculars should be installed by end of month...ready for training on May 23. We ran into a couple of issues that needed resolution but they're completed now and the binoculars should be installed shortly.
7. The complete GHRO calendar for 2026 is at the bottom of this page.

What would you like to see at GHRO?

Please provide any suggestions on things you would like to see at GHRO! I want to make sure this facility is providing the maximum benefit to all of our members, and I can't do that without your feedback. GHRO is already a world class amateur astronomy location, but it can always be improved. You can

2026 Star Party and Training Schedule GHRO

	Star Party	Moon Illumination on Star	Moon rise/set time	Training Date	Training start time (PM)
	Date	Party date		Date	
January	17	3% waning	4:26 PM (set)	24	4:30
February	21	16%	10:58 PM (set)	28	5:00
March	21	6% waning	10:57 PM (set)	14	6:00
April	18	1% new	9:52 PM (set)	No training, Southern Star	
May	16	1% new	5:42 AM	23	6:30
June	13	6% waning	4:15 AM	20	6:30
July	11	15% waning	2:53 AM	18	6:30
August	15	8% waxing	9:47 PM (set)	22	6:30
September	12	1% new	8:13 PM (set)	19	5:30
October	10	0% new	6:40:00 PM (set)	17	5:00
November	7	4% waning	4:10 PM (set)	14	4:30
December	12	9% waxing	8:21 PM (set)	No training in December	

always contact the GHRO director, Jim Gaiser at ghro@charlotteastronomers.org.

Jim Gaiser

CAAC Observatory Director

GHRO Information

GHRO is located at [1427 Bloomwood Drive, Lancaster, SC](#). (some GPS show city as Pageland). Gravel road leading to the observatory is located 5.22 miles east of the "522 Grill" on Taxahaw, Rd.

Facebook FAQ

<https://www.facebook.com/CharlotteAstronomers/> scroll down to NOTES, then Frequently Asked Questions page for more information about GHRO. Be sure to share your astronomy photos and observing tips.

Night Sky Network -- "Heading to GHRO"

For updates on GHRO, be sure to join the <https://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/index.cfm> "Heading to GHRO" message group.

As always, we care about the safety and security of all visitors to our observing facility, the GHRO. To keep us all mindful for the need to keep alert while visiting the observatory, we provide the following reminder. Please share this with your family and any visitors who may join you at the observatory. Thank you.

***** WARNING *****

This facility (GHRO) and adjoining area may contain uneven terrain, dangerous wildlife, low light conditions, and dangerous man-made obstacles.

By using this facility, users assume the risk of personal injury, and loss or damage to personal property. All persons should use extreme caution at all times.

Users of this facility agree to hold harmless the Charlotte Amateur Astronomers Club, its Directors, and its members for any and all injuries sustained while participating in club activities or using this facility.

CAAC Outreach Report March 2026

Scheduled:

03/27/2026 Daniel Stowe Conservancy Garden - Planets + Lunar

[6500 S New Hope Rd, Belmont, NC 28012](#)

Setup: 6:00 PM

Program: 7:00 - 9:00 PM

03/28/2026 Girl Scout Troop 2105 - GHRO Heritage Learning Center - Planets + Lunar

[1427 Bloomwood Dr, Lancaster, SC 29720](#)

Setup: 6:30 PM

Program: 7:30 - 9:30 PM

04/22/2026 Southminster Retirement - Planets + Lunar

[8919 Park Road Charlotte 28210](#)

Setup: 7:30 PM

Program: 8:30 - 9:30 PM

04/24/2026 Aquinas Learning Charlotte - GHRO Heritage Learning Center - Planets + Lunar

[1427 Bloomwood Dr, Lancaster, SC 29720](#)

Setup: 7:30 PM

Program: 8:30 -10:00 PM

04/25/2026 Statewide Star Party - Morrow Mountain State Park - Planets + Lunar

[49104 Morrow Mountain Rd, Albemarle, NC 28001](#)

Setup: 6:00 PM

Program: 7:00 - 9:00 PM

05/22/2026 Cornelius Family Campout - Robbins Park Cornelius - Lunar

[Robbins Park 17500 W. Catawba Ave. Cornelius](#)

Setup: 7:30 PM

Program: 8:30 - 10:00 PM

05/23/2026 Huntersville Parks & Recreation - R.C. Bradford Park Huntersville, NC - Lunar

[R.C. Bradford Park 17005 Davidson - Concord Rd, Huntersville, NC](#)

Setup: 7:30 PM

Program: 8:30 - 10:00 PM

If you would like to volunteer with any of these outreach programs, please contact Tom Blevins at, publicoutreach@charlotteastronomers.org

Clear Skies,
Tom Blevins
CAAC Public Outreach Coordinator

CAAC Astronomy Ad Listings

Welcome to the CAAC classifieds. If you would like to post an ad in the newsletter, please let us know at the beginning of each month and we will list your items. Please provide a brief description and your contact information.

- Item 24-001:** *Obsession 15 Classic f4.5 with Argo Navis, Custom Equatorial Platform, etc.* for sale in Chapel Hill. \$2700. Local pick up or seller is willing to drive for meet up. Ad can be viewed on AstroMart [here](#), or contact:
- Bob Clemen, rtclemen@gmail.com



Item 24-002: Sold

Item 24-003: Sold

- Item 24-004:** *Star Tracker for sale: iOptron SkyGuider Pro EQ camera & the optional iOptron SkyTracker Ball Head camera mount, lightly used & in excellent condition.* for sale in Charlotte
Included:

1. *iOptron SkyGuider Pro EQ camera (mount model #355)*

- internal rechargeable lithium battery, good for 20 hours of operation

- illuminated internal polar scope for polar alignment & built in bubble level

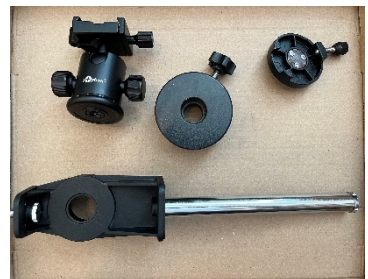
- built in camera trigger port & ST-4 guiding port

- Detachable counterweight shaft & 3-pound counterweight

2. *Includes the separately purchased iOptron SkyTracker Ball Head camera mount (model #3305A)*

- ball head mount allows for 360 degree panning & makes it easy to tilt a camera into position

- can support a heavy camera lens, bubble levels on each axis & also has a dovetail mounting bracket



List price for this package brand new with the optional ball head mount is \$463 today. Asking \$325 for the full package. Can be picked up in Charlotte or other arrangements may be accommodated, contact:

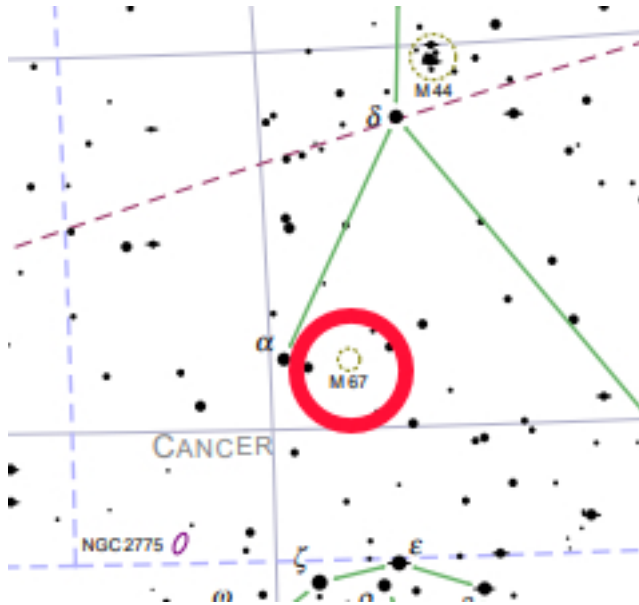
- David Harris, 704-577-8977, davidharris11@yahoo.com

- Item 23-001:** *1958 Criterion Newtonian reflector*, 6" f/8 for sale with original mount. Asking \$600 with free delivery within the Charlotte area.
- David Friday, wdfriday@twc.com 704-579-1778.

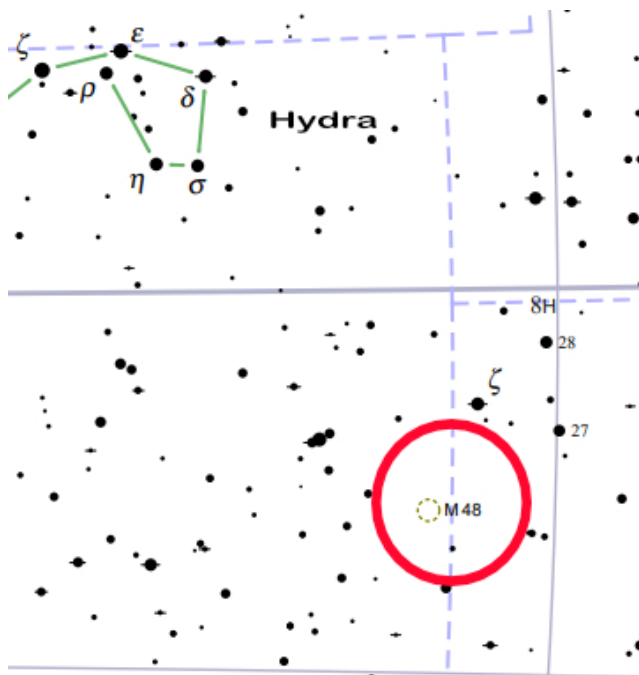
- Item 23-002:** **New SkyQuest Intelliscope XT8.** List Price \$ 1,300.00.
All manuals with it-including initial purchase paperwork
- **Make An Offer.**
 - Contact Jim Gaiser



Small Scope Objective – Urban Target – Open Cluster M67
Mag. 6.1 R.A. 8 hr. 51 min. Declination + 11 Deg. 47 min.



Binocular Challenge – Messier 48



We welcome and encourage our CAAC members to visit the **GHRO Observatory** to enjoy, learn, and observe these and other celestial wonders.

Celestial Objects Map courtesy of [Stellarium](#)

We would like to acknowledge the star field map for this report was edited from information courtesy of [Mag Star 7 Star Atlas Project © 2005 Andrew L. Johnson for star maps](#)

If you would like to download a map of each month's night sky, use this link, <http://www.skymaps.com/downloads.html> to download, print, and navigate the Evening Sky Map.

An *ENHANCED* Star Atlas – FREE!

Our CAAC member, Mark Hoecker, has used the *Mag 7 Star Atlas – Color Milky Way version* (available on the internet) and added some enhancements including:

- A star map index to quickly identify the individual star chart you are looking for.
- Blue directional arrows at the edge of each chart guiding you to the adjacent chart. Also large page numerals were added in the lower right corner, helpful when thumbing through the charts.
- Finally, he manually added common star names and a selection of deep sky object names to the star charts, helpful in finding your way around the sky.

Such enhancements are allowed under the Creative Commons License by Andrew L. Johnson, author of the original charts.

SUGGESTION: While printing at the largest paper size you have available is helpful, a great alternative if you have a “letter size” color printer with a manual auxiliary feed slot, is to print on “legal size” (8½ x 14-inch) heavy paper or even “card stock”. You could also punch holes and place in a legal-size report cover available at office supply stores. You would then have a wonderful star atlas to help you through the night skies!

If you have access to a color printer that can print on 11 x 17-inch paper (or card stock), you can print a magnificent copy whose readability will rival that of very nice, commercially available atlases.

To download your ***Mag-7 Star Atlas Milky Way version – ENHANCED***, go to the CAAC website and scroll down the left column to “Mag 7 Star Atlas” and follow the link.

Happy Observing!

Endowment Corner

Gifts for The Present

Appreciated Assets: You can give appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual funds and receive an income tax deduction. In fact, there is a double tax benefit because neither you nor the CAAC Endowment is taxed on the capital gains of your appreciated assets.

To make a contribution or learn more, please visit <http://charlotteastronomers.org/endowment.htm>

FYI: The balance in the CAAC Stewardship Foundation is \$32,681.51.

Ken Steiner
Chair, CAAC Stewardship Foundation

CAAC CONTACTS

President	Justin Peatross	president@charlotteastronomers.org
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