

WELCOME!

TO THE

WILDERNESS CENTER

ASTRONOMY CLUB

Dear New Member:

Welcome to the Wilderness Center Astronomy Club (WCAC)! We're glad you joined us! This packet of information has been designed with you in mind. It introduces you to the Club, its benefits and opportunities.

The WCAC is a part of the larger Wilderness Center community. We hope that you will take the opportunity to get involved in the many other activities available to you as a member of The Wilderness Center (TWC).

We urge you to become active in the club. It is our experience that the more active you become, the more you will get out of your WCAC membership. Our members are a friendly bunch, and we've never met an astronomer who doesn't want to show off the views through his/her telescope. We have a wide diversity of experience within the club, from beginners to grizzled veterans. Don't have a telescope? No problem! We'll help you learn about them and choose one for yourself when and if you are ready. Don't know Orion from Ophiucus? No problem! Spend some time with your new-found friends and you will learn your way around the sky faster than you can say Corona Borealis.

I guess we are trying to say we want you to feel welcome, not intimidated. We all started out as beginners, and some of us even remember what it was like!

If there is something special that you are interested in, or that you don't see among our club offerings, please let us know. This is your club, and it's here to meet your needs.

Clear and starry skies, and welcome from the members of WCAC.

The Wilderness Center Astronomy Club – A Brief History

It always helps to understand an organization if you understand where it came from. So here is a short history of the WCAC, and its relationship with TWC.

It all began on an April evening in 1982 when Dave & Robin Gill ventured down to TWC to attend one of the “member nights,” as they were called. As members of TWC, the Gills were familiar with its rural setting and the promise of dark skies. When they arrived, they introduced themselves to the man giving the program, who turned out to be the new Director of TWC, Gordon Maupin. When introduced to a planetarium lecturer, a life long observer and their telescope, Gordon quickly demonstrated his administrative acumen by turning much of the evening’s activities over to the Gills! After an enjoyable evening, the three talked about offering an astronomy workshop at TWC. Gordon quickly agreed, and a fall time was scheduled. The workshop was well received and the idea of forming a special interest club for astronomy at TWC was suggested.

Special interest clubs have become quite common at TWC in recent years. The first was the Nature Photo Club. The WCAC was probably the second (not including the Women’s Auxiliary, which is now defunct, and existed as primarily a social and fundraising group for TWC). The idea is that a group of interested TWC members forms a club to pursue their common interest. TWC offers meeting space and support. In return, the club attracts new members to TWC and enhances the overall program of TWC through its offerings. It is a truly symbiotic relationship that has served TWC and its clubs extremely well over the years.

The Wilderness Center Astronomy Club was organized in January, 1983. Dave Gill, Roy Preece and Ralph Geschwind drafted a set of bylaws. These were adopted in March, 1983 and Dave was elected the first president. During the first year the club felt its way around trying to develop an identity.

When the Center’s Interpretive Building was built in 1974, a small classroom in the back was built with a small dome in the ceiling. Our first major project was to turn it into the planetarium it was intended to be. We worked with the Auxiliary to buy a Tech Link planetarium projector and console, customized to our needs, from Dick and Tom Emmons of North Canton. We then had to figure out how to mount it. We debuted the new planetarium in July, 1984. It had a great run of 16 years, closing down in June, 2000 when the Interpretive Building closed for renovations.

The Club has always taken its public education role very seriously. Public observing at TWC has been a fixture for many years. We set the first Friday of each month for our public Star Watches, and have stuck to that schedule since the mid-1980s. We also gave quarterly StarFest programs that were a combination of a star lecture and observing. The first Friday public Star Watches have continued and are now combined with a planetarium program for a “rain or shine” event. In the new Astronomy Education Building, they are well attended.

When special events occurred in the sky (like eclipses, meteor showers or comets), we sponsored observing at TWC. Our Halley’s Comet watches were well attended, with over 1000 folks seeing the

comet or a program about it at TWC. Even more folks attended our Comet Hale Bopp programs. One of our fun events was the 1989 Voyager-Neptune flyby. Technology allowed us to rent a satellite dish for TWC and downlink NASA broadcasts of the Voyager pictures. We kept TWC open 24 hours during the closest passage. Several of us even stayed all night – as did several visitors. It was a unique feeling of history seeing the first pictures of Triton coming in at the same time the scientists saw them.

Over the years we have been blessed with many selfless folks who really enjoy taking their telescopes out to schools and camps to show children the skies. In the late '80's we began to do school observing sessions more seriously. With the coming of TWC's Education Director, Joann Ballbach, we had more encouragement, plus someone to help handle the bookings and billings. In Joann, we found the partner we had needed. She embraced astronomy education. At first we helped her with development of programs. Later, we mostly gave her moral support. We probably do about a dozen school Star Watches a year now, many in the fall at schools and camps.

In 1985, we did our first Astronomy Day at TWC with various lectures, movies, videos, slide shows, displays, etc. to promote astronomy. Robin Gill organized most of these events. Over the years, many of them were based around a theme. Keynote speakers included astronaut Dr. Karl Henize, author Chet Raymo, and many NASA speakers. Various local astronomical speakers filled out the programs.

The Club started dreaming about an observatory in the mid-80s. The late Norman Giust of Canton donated a 6" f/8 Astrophysics refractor to TWC, plus several

thousand dollars toward an observatory building. That money was set aside for future use. The Giust refractor is mounted in the new Observatory, and gives spectacular lunar and planetary views. In 1990, Elizabeth Keller of Canton donated her late husband's 16" Ealing Cassegrain Telescope, now called the Dr. Karl W. Keller Telescope. The acquisition of an observatory-class telescope spurred us to think about suitable home for it. The early '90s saw The Wilderness Center poised on the edge of a major expansion. It took them a number of years to do the planning for the Center's needs, and to plant the seeds with local private, institutional and public donors. The "Connecting People and Nature" capital campaign raised nearly \$5 million. The Astronomy Education Building is a direct result of that campaign. After nearly a decade of planning and replanning, ground was broken in August, 1998 for the building. The Keller telescope was completely refurbished and automated by a team led by Kent Rothermel and John Waechter. The small planetarium in the Interpretive Building had paved the way for the new, larger Fred F. Silk Planetarium in the Astronomy Education Building. The new planetarium was installed, supervised by Dave Ross. This new facility brings a new era to TWC for astronomy education.

We were pleased to accept a 10" Meade LX-200 Schmidt-Cassegrain and accessories on behalf of The Wilderness Center in 2001. The Philip Janecko family of Jackson Township donated the instrument in memory of Mrs. Janecko's late brother, Bill Resetar, who owned the telescope. TWC was chosen as the home for this fine instrument because the Janeckos believed that we would immediately incorporate it into our education program. It resides in the observing chamber of the Astronomy Education Building. Combining this

telescope with video technology allows us to show bright objects on a monitor for interpretation, and to allow handicapped access to the views.

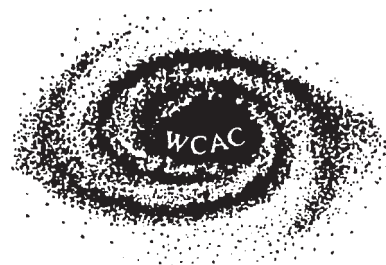
The Club's quarterly Newsletter, *HORIZON*, has been a fixture since the summer of 1983. Dave Gill has edited every issue. The look of *HORIZON* has changed over the years with better quality publishing. For a number of years, Dave Ross pasted up and printed the newsletter. When John Waechter, a printer by trade, joined the WCAC in the mid-90s, he took our little newsletter and gave it a bold new look. The content is "local," with minimal use of material from outside sources. We also try not to do what others do better – we are not (and don't want to be) *Sky and Telescope*. But we provide a forum for our members to try their writing skills and to explore and express their interests. We have always been proud of *HORIZON*

The Club started its web page in 1999, and it is now located at www.twcac.org. Its goal is to promote astronomical knowledge and the enjoyment of astronomy, as well as serving as a club communication vehicle and promotional tool. It contains up to date schedule information, club news, a photo gallery, links and more. Our Webmaster, Bill Castro, keeps the content fresh and the access simple.

Over the years, the Club has had various folks in leadership positions. Our presidents have been:

Dave Gill – 1983-1993
Eric Mast – 1993-1994
Kent Rothermel – 1994-1996
Dave Ross – 1996-1998
Dave Gill – 1998-2000
Robin Gill 2000-2002
Bill Castro 2002 – present

It is hard to predict where our future will take us. With the new Astronomy Education and Interpretive Buildings at TWC, and the Silk Planetarium and Keller Telescope at our disposal, the future is unlimited!



The Wilderness Center and The Astronomy Club

The relationship between The Wilderness Center and The Wilderness Center Astronomy Club is really quite simple. The Wilderness Center is the parent organization to which we all belong. TWC owns the property, the buildings, the equipment – everything. It is an incorporated, non-profit organization – a legal entity. It operates largely on the income derived from memberships.

The Wilderness Center Astronomy Club is a special interest club within The Wilderness Center. All of our members are members of TWC. As members of TWC, the Club gains the use of TWC's facilities and the help of the staff. Each Club member gains the other benefits of TWC membership.

The Astronomy Club has no independent existence outside of the context of TWC. TWC is the legal entity; we are a grouping within TWC. The Astronomy Club technically owns no property. All of our books, loaner telescopes and other equipment belong to TWC, although we pretty much manage them as we please. The Keller Telescope and Silk Planetarium are facilities belonging to TWC. The Astronomy Club, because of its expertise and interest, has a special role in these facilities. We are stewards – responsible caretakers. In return, we get special access to these facilities. But any TWC member who is qualified also has access.

To use an ecological metaphor, TWC and the WCAC have a symbiotic relationship. TWC provides an umbrella for us. It provides space for us to operate. It provides a larger organization to help out. In return, the WCAC attracts members to TWC because of their interest in

astronomy – folks who might not otherwise join a nature center. TWC gains their membership dollars and the intangibles that go along with membership, especially access to their talents. The Astronomy Club helps provide programming for TWC to help it fulfill its mission.

So that is why you pay two sets of dues for being an Astronomy Club member. You pay to be a member of TWC, the parent organization. The WCAC gets none of your TWC dues which to help TWC operate, pay staff, etc

You pay to belong to the Astronomy Club. TWC gets none of the Astronomy Club dues – most of those dollars pay for *HORIZON* and occasional food.

We hope, after reading this, and seeing the good things done by both organizations, you will see the great value in both your memberships.



WCAC Membership Requirements and Benefits

Requirements:

Members must be members of TWC. There are various levels of TWC membership. Annual dues are \$25 individual, \$35 family, \$60 supporting and up. Membership dues for the Astronomy Club are \$12 per year per family.

Benefits

In addition to benefits of being a member of TWC, Astronomy Club members get:

- The quarterly newsletter *HORIZON*
- Discounted subscription opportunity for *SKY & TELESCOPE* magazine
- Discounted subscription opportunity for *ASTRONOMY* magazine. To subscribe to either, contact the treasurer
- 10% discount from Sky Publishing Corporation on books and accessories in their catalog or web site. When you call to order, tell them that you are a member of the Wilderness Center Astronomy Club and should get a club discount.
- The opportunity to borrow a loaner telescope. However, you must get checked out on it. Currently available for loan are:
 - 6" Newtonian reflector
 - 8" Newtonian reflector
 - 90mm Celestron Maksutov Cassegrain
 - 4.5" Newtonian reflector

To borrow a telescope, contact the president, who will put you in contact with the current keeper of the telescopes. This person will help you select an instrument, show you how to use it, and check you out on it. You have use of it for a month. Offer it at the next meeting and, if no one asks for it, you may keep it for another month. After a month, you may also be contacted by an officer if someone has asked to borrow the telescope. You are responsible for the equipment while it is in your

possession.

- The opportunity to borrow books or other materials from the Club's library. Robin Gill is the Librarian. She has established the library in the Astronomy Education Building. Borrowing is on the "honor system". Fill out a card from the envelope inside the door when you borrow a book and check your name off when you return it.
- The use of the observatory in the Astronomy Education Building (on the condition that you are a member in good standing and are checked out in the use of the instrument and the building). Remember, the telescope is property of TWC, and its primary usage is for educational programs under the authority of TWC's Education Director. Astronomy Club members can apply for observing time when the telescope is not otherwise reserved. Please note – your membership does not entitle you to some minimum amount of observing time, but it does give you the opportunity to get observing time. John Waechter is the Observatory Coordinator. He handles training and scheduling of observatory time. Contact John to learn more details.
- TWC's lower parking lot is always available to you if you want to set up your own instruments in a place darker than your home skies. Informal observing parties spring up. If you want to be included in a call or email list for such things, let John Waechter know.
- We also have a small but fairly crazy group who like to travel to get REALLY dark skies. They go to various places in southern Ohio, western Pennsylvania and West Virginia for weekend observing – often on the spur of the moment when weather and the moon are favorable. Contact Phil Creed or Phil Hoyle to learn more and to be included in their call list.

Club Activities and Involvement Opportunities

When joining a new club, you are often unaware of the many opportunities that you have to participate with your new friends. When we started to list all the different club activities and opportunities we have, we had problems separating them from each other! So, we'll lump them all together here, with a brief description of each.

Meetings and Speakers – The Club meets on the last Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at The Wilderness Center, unless otherwise notified in *HORIZON*, our newsletter. Our meetings begin with a program – usually a speaker from within the club, or other speaker from the area. Sometimes we will have a video, a slide show, or some other special meeting activity. Often, we even have 2 speakers – a “short program” update on current sky happenings, quick astronomy insights or other short topic of interest, and a “long program” the main speaker or program for the evening. After the program, we have a short break (snacks!) followed by a business meeting. We try to keep the business short and informative. Most Club business is conducted in monthly Planning Committee meetings, which helps keep the business portion of Club meetings mercifully short.

Public Star Watches – The Club holds a Public Star Watch the first Friday of each month at TWC. If you are a new member, these are excellent opportunities to get to know your new friends, to look at a variety of telescopes and to know the night sky a little better. You can familiarize yourself with different types of telescopes, get help using your own ‘scope, or decide if you

want to get your own instrument. Star Watches are informal, with no planned program. Usually we use all three telescopes in the observatory plus have a number of members set up their scopes in the parking lot. In winter, when it gets dark early, we start at 7:30p.m. During Daylight Time, we meet at dusk and watch it get dark. There is a rain/shine planetarium program, followed by observing if clear. See meeting times in *HORIZON* or on the web page “Event Horizon”.

Dark Sky Observing – The Public Star Watches are held regardless of moon phase. Much of the observing effort is aimed at showing things to the public. To give our members an opportunity to do some personal observing under dark, moonless skies, we try to arrange occasional dark sky observing sessions at more remote locations such as Salt Fork, Killbuck, or Mohican. These are scheduled and publicized to our members in *HORIZON* and at meetings, but they are not open to the general public. In addition, we have a few hard-core dark sky observers who like to get out more often, and sometimes travel greater distances like southeastern Ohio or West Virginia. If you are interested in these kinds of excursions we would be glad for your company.

It should be noted that as a TWC and WCAC member, you may use the Center's parking lots at night so you may come down and observe.

Planetarium Programs – Club members present programs in the Silk Planetarium on a regular basis, typically on the fourth

Sunday of the month. Programs are free and open to the public. They often consist of some combination of a current star show and/or slide program on an astronomical topic. As a WCAC member, you are also welcome to learn to use the planetarium instrument and give programs. You are encouraged to develop your own program. The more experienced presenters will be happy to help you out. If you are checked out on the planetarium, you can give a presentation to your own private group.

Trips – Occasionally, the Club plans astronomical field trips. Some are observing related, like a distant dark sky observing run, or to see a special event like an eclipse or bright star occultation. More often, they are to astronomy or space-related attractions like planetariums, museums, observatories, etc. If you have an idea for a trip, please suggest it! Plans are typically published in *HORIZON* and at meetings.

Workshops- The Club periodically holds workshops at TWC. Some typical topics have been, “Backyard Astronomy”, Telescopes, Telescope Making (where you actually walk away with a working telescope), specific sky event-related workshops, and workshops for teachers. You have the opportunity to take a workshop, or help in presenting one. Ideas are also welcome.

The Web Page – The Club has a Web Page at www.twcac.org. Our webmaster works hard to keep the page easy to navigate and the content current and interesting. The page contains up-to-date schedule information on the “Event HORIZON” page, as well as current sky happenings and club news. The web page is another

opportunity for you to contribute.

HORIZON – The Club publishes a newsletter, *HORIZON*. It provides a forum for club members to explore a topic and write about it. With rare exception, all the content is from our members. We accept all contributions, and will be glad to help you develop an idea. *HORIZON* also provides club news and happenings and a club roster. *HORIZON* is published quarterly, on the equinoxes and solstices, with deadlines the first of March, June, September and December.

Special Interest Groups (SIG’s) – These are formal or informal subsets of the membership devoted to exploring some topic of the hobby. In the past, we have had SIGs dedicated to telescope making, observing, photography, and electronic projects. We currently have such discussions largely by email and exchange pictures, observations, news and such. If you have an interest or an idea for a SIG, let us know!

School Outreach Programs – One of our major activities is to take our telescopes to schools and camps to show the skies to children. Typically, we have three to six scopes at an event. Our busy season is the fall. These events provide the club with income we use to support our programming and the work on the Keller Telescope. What do you need to help out? A telescope and the ability to find a few of the brighter objects in the sky, and the enthusiasm to explain them to kids. To learn more, contact the Club’s Outreach Coordinator, John Waechter. You are welcome to tag along to a couple events before you take the plunge and help out at one.

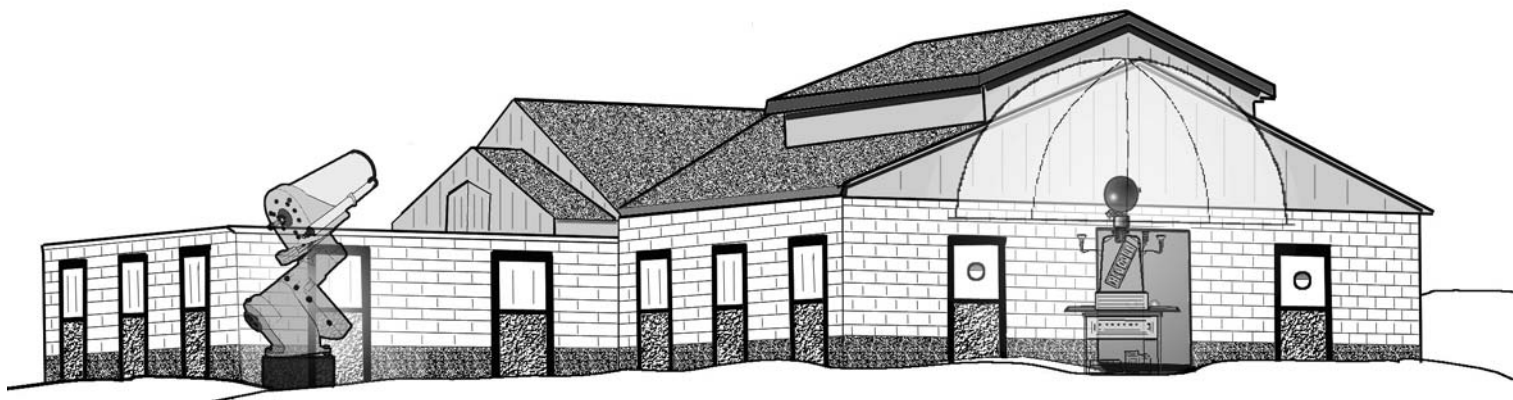
Planning and Volunteering – We hope you have the impression, in reading this list of activities, that the WCAC is a busy place! But much of the “heavy lifting” is done by a surprisingly small number of folks. In order to keep the business content at the meetings to a reasonable level, the Club is operated by a Planning Committee consisting of the elected officers, the appointed coordinators (such as Observatory Coordinator, Planetarium Coordinator, Outreach Coordinator, *HORIZON* editor, Webmaster, etc.) and any interested Club members. (That’s YOU!) The Planning Committee is not a secret cabal, but just the folks trying to keep the Club interesting. All members are always welcome at these meetings. Planning Committee meeting dates and locations are published in *HORIZON* and at the monthly meetings. Contact the President for more details.

Even if you don’t want to get involved in more meetings, there are plenty of volunteer opportunities for both one-time and on-going tasks that need to be done – be a greeter at meetings, bring refreshments, give a short or long program, work on the telescopes, be a librarian, keep track of the Club’s loaner scopes, work on the Club display in the Interpretive Building, work on Astronomy Day or Space Day activities, help at an outreach,

coordinate a picnic or party, write an article, manage the Club’s slide library, write a planetarium program, do building maintenance, work on telescope maintenance or figure out something new we need to work on! There are always new projects cropping up as well, which need volunteer helpers.

Spontaneous Learning – TWC is encouraging “spontaneous learning” activities at the Center. These are opportunities to informally show off something to folks visiting TWC, especially on busy weekends. We need folks to help do solar observing, or some other appropriate astronomical topic.

TWC Volunteering – TWC thrives because of volunteers. TWC can always use more help. Some opportunities include docent (teacher for school groups), groundskeeping, office help, committee work, maintenance work, special events, and thousands of other possibilities. Contact TWC’s Volunteer Coordinator for more details.



CLOSING THOUGHTS

We hope that this packet of information has been useful to you in getting to know more about the WCAC. Combine this with HORIZON and our Webpage and you can get an accurate picture of who we are and what we do.

There are many different activities and opportunities that we offer to you. There are chances for folks of all experience levels and a wide range of interests to find common ground.

One thing that is common through all of the various ways that you can experience the Club – the more of yourself you put into the club, the more you will get out of it. I don't think you will find any of our active members who haven't found this to be true!

So come out often. Get to know us at meetings and under the starry sky. The folks who love the stars are the best folks around!

*He got a good glass for six hundred dollars.
His new job gave him leisure for star-gazing.
Often he bid me come and have a look
Up the brass barrel, velvet black inside,
At a star quaking in the other end.
I recollect a night of broken clouds
And underfoot snow melted down to ice,
And melting further in the wind to mud.
Bradford and I had out the telescope.
We spread our two legs as it spread its three,
Pointed our thoughts the way we pointed it,
And standing at our leisure till the day broke,
Said some of the best things we ever said.*

Robert Frost, from "The Star-splitter"