



# Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society

Amateur Astronomy News and Views  
In Southwestern Virginia



Volume 42—Number 1

January 2025

## *RVAS December Meeting Notes*

### **RVAS Winter Social**

The Winter Social was held in place of the normal meeting on Dec 16, 2024, in VWCC STEM building room ST212. Dr. John Wenskovitch presented a What's Up, which was an homage to Frank Baratta for his service in this capacity for years.

Many members brought food and desserts to share, and it was a very good evening for all!

During the meeting John Sheffey was elected Treasurer for RVAS. Thanks to John for his willingness to serve.

There were 22 folks who signed the attendance list for the Winter Social.

Pictures and details for the Winter Social can be found at this URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/262461596251/permalink/10162275361506252/>

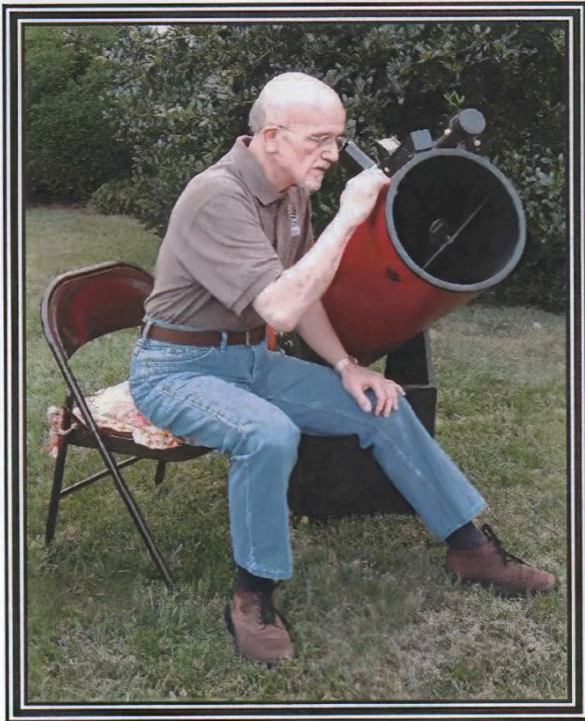
**Bill Krause has lined up Caleb White to present on his recent trip to Chile at the next RVAS meeting. Following info from Caleb about the trip:**

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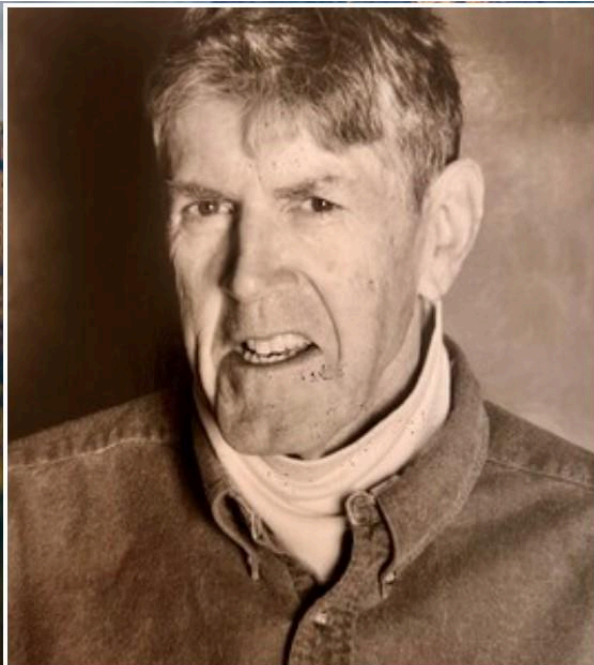
**My parents and I visited Chile for a couple of weeks. We spent about 10 days in the Elqui Valley and Atacama Desert to tour some ESO facilities and enjoy the dark, clear skies of the Chilean desert. We finished with a must-see trip to Easter Island where star gazing was limited, but still awe-inspiring. I will be sharing:**

- **images of ESO's La Silla and Paranal observatories and telescopes alongside information about the scopes we saw and facilities themselves.**
  - **A few landscape astrophotography images from the Atacama region and Elqui Valley to accompany the talk.**
  - **\*VR Headset to view a 360 degree panorama I shot in the atacama with my astro-modded Canon EOS R and 14mm lens on a tracker**
  - **\*30"x30" aluminum print of one of my favorite images from the atacama**
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**More info to follow at the January meeting on Monday January 27, 2025.**



Frank Eugene Baratta passed on Dec 7, 2024. He was a pivotal member of RVAS. He joined July 1986, and by July 1988 was President. In 38 years in our club he served as president six years, the last four years as Treasurer, and our Membership Coordinator. He took an interest in our members and created a wonderful "Welcome Mat" for new members. He did our What's Up segment and put Astro-Quiz in our newsletters. Frank will be missed.



The RVAS lost another long-time member when Tom Skelly passed away on Dec 15, 2024. Tom (with wife Dolores) joined RVAS in March 2000, and was frequently seen in attendance at club meetings. Hailing from the Republic of Ireland, Tom worked for GE for 30 years. A quiet, intelligent man who will be missed.

The Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society is a membership organization of amateur astronomers dedicated to the pursuit of observational and photographic astronomical activities. **Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month. See calendar on last page of newsletter for location. Meetings are open to the public.** Observing sessions are held one or two weekends a month at a dark-sky site. For information regarding joining RVAS, including annual dues, [click here](#). Articles, quotes, etc. published in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the RVAS or its editor.

### Officers/Executive Committee/Editor/Webmaster

Michael Good, President ([president@rvasclub.org](mailto:president@rvasclub.org))

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Nancy Vogelaar, Officer at Large #1 ([officeratlarge1@rvasclub.org](mailto:officeratlarge1@rvasclub.org))

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Erin Elliott, Webmaster ([webmaster@rvasclub.org](mailto:webmaster@rvasclub.org))

## Directions to RVAS Meeting Location

Virginia Western Community College STEM Building, Room ST212  
3094 Colonial Ave SW, Roanoke, VA 24015

VWCC is located in the southwestern area of the City of Roanoke. The STEM Building is accessed via the roundabout at Overland Drive and Colonial Avenue, near Campus Security at the top right of the map. The STEM Building is at the opposite end of the Colonial Avenue parking lot from Campus Security. Follow the darker blue path from the roundabout and park anywhere in the lot.



**Note:** Google provides incorrect guidance to access the parking lot from the roundabout at McNeill Drive. That roundabout **does not** provide an entrance to the parking lot.

**NOTE: Our next meeting is on the FOURTH Monday of this month, Monday January 27, 2025. This is because our meeting venue, VWCC, is \*CLOSED\* for Martin Luther King's day on Jan 20.**

# What's Up? Highlights

January 1 to 31, 2025

## **This Month:**

Our recent evening sky planetary richness continues into the January skies, with good views possible for every planet at some point during the month. Mercury is a morning-sky object as the month begins, slowly sinking towards the horizon before sunrise as the month progresses. Venus remains an evening object throughout the month, getting higher above the horizon until reaching its peak altitude above the horizon on the 30<sup>th</sup>. All of the outer planets with the exception of Mars are visible in the evening sky at sunset throughout the month, but Mars joins the others at 6:38 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> and reaches opposition two weeks later on the 15<sup>th</sup>, visible throughout the night. In fact, by the end of January we will see Saturn dip below the horizon at only 8:31pm, with Venus and Neptune following almost an hour later. Jupiter remains a dominant sight for most of the night throughout the month, not setting until 5:35 am on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3:24 am on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The best meteor shower for the month is the Quadrantids, located between Boötes and Draco and peaking overnight on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. We also get a lunar occultation of Mars in the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup>, two days before opposition when Mars is near peak brightness. Finally, there is always a chance that we will see Comet C/2024 G3 (ATLAS) in an unusually bright outburst, but there's no need to pay attention to the hype about it unless you're planning a trip to the southern hemisphere – it will be too close to the Sun for us. And as always, let's hope for another aurora outburst or two, as well as the eruption of T CrB (which will be a morning object now)!

## **Celestial Events:**

- January 2: Peak of the Quadrantid meteor shower
- January 5: Earliest sunrise
- January 10: Venus at Greatest Eastern Elongation
- January 13: Lunar occultation of Mars
- January 15: Mars at opposition (9:32pm)
- January 15-21: Watch Venus pass Saturn in the southwestern evening sky
- January 30: Venus reaches greatest altitude above the horizon at sunset

## **Sunset and Twilight:**

- Sunset ranges from 5:13pm (1<sup>st</sup>) to 5:43pm (31<sup>st</sup>)
- Evening twilight ends from 6:46pm (1<sup>st</sup>) to 7:12pm (31<sup>st</sup>)

## **Lunar Phases and Apsides:**

- First Quarter: January 6, 6:57pm
- Perigee: January 7, 7:01pm (230,013 miles)
- Full Moon: January 13, 5:27pm
- Last Quarter: January 21, 3:32pm
- Apogee: January 20, 11:54pm (251,219 miles)
- New Moon: January 29, 7:37pm



# Your Astronomical League Just Gave Away Nine Library Telescopes

In 2024 the Astronomical League once again offered a free Library Telescope to a lucky Astronomical League club in each region, plus one to a member-at-large.

The Library Telescope consists of a 4.5-inch Dobsonian reflector fitted with an 8–24 mm zoom eyepiece. The value of this opportunity is approximately \$400; the potential is enormous.

The Library Telescope Program was initiated more than fifteen years ago by the New Hampshire Astronomical Society and has grown into a nationwide presence. Clubs donate an easy-to-use portable telescope with both quality optics and a sturdy mount to their local library. Patrons can then check it out as they do books.

Thank you, Woodland Hills Camera and Telescope, for your help making this wonderful program possible!

Congratulations to these 2024 winners!

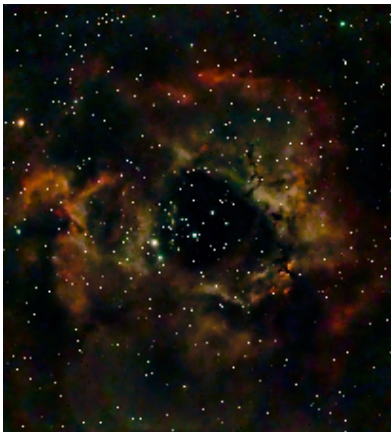
**GLRAL – Evansville Astronomical Society**  
**MERAL – Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society**  
**SERAL – Birmingham Astronomical Society**  
**MSRAL – Springfield Astronomical Society**  
**NCRAL – Twin City Astronomers**  
**NERAL – Skyscrapers, Inc.**  
**NWRAL – Idaho Falls Astronomical Society**  
**WRAL – Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association**  
**MAL – Tiffany Nash Effinger**

As many of you may have heard, the manufacturer of these telescopes (Orion Telescopes) is no longer in business, and the manufacturer of the substitute telescope (Celestron) is no longer offering it. At the moment, another suitable manufacturer has not been found.

December 2024

*Ctrl- Click on the picture see the source file and additional information*

Ed Dixon



Noah Winslow



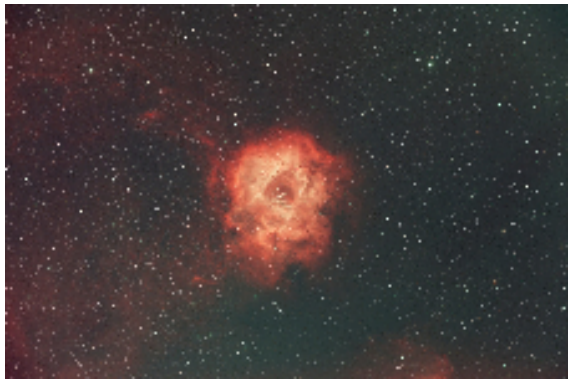
Ben Hartman



Noah Winslow



Ben Hartman



Ed Dixon





**Ed Dixon**



**Ben Hartman**



**Mark Hodges**



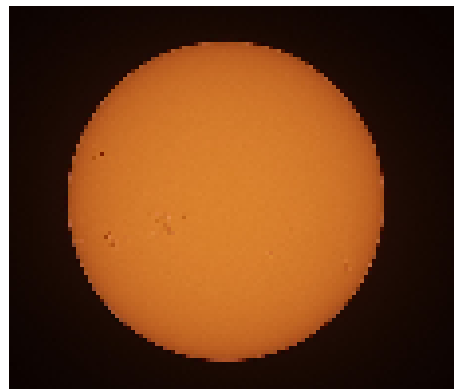
**Mark Hodges**



**David Thomas**



**David Thomas**

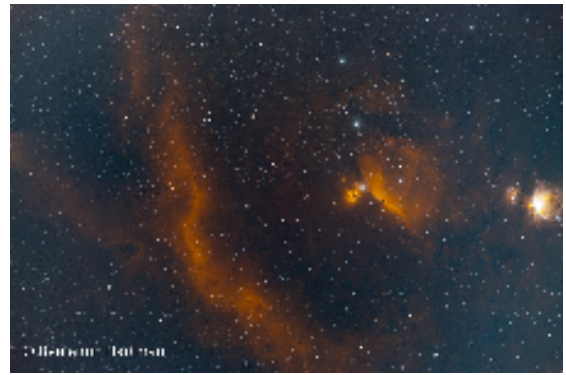




**Noah Winslow**



**Ben Hartman**



**Ben Hartman**



**David Thomas**

