

The Fremont Peak Observer

— Bringing Astronomy to the Public —

Vol. 42, No. 3

Fall 2025

President's Message



Pat Donnelly

It is that time of the year. The annual FPOA Star-B-Que & Annual Members Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 11, 2025. This year the FPOA is inviting some of the bay area astronomy clubs to attend, set up their telescopes on the FPOA premises, and provide photographs for a show and tell. In addition, the FPOA has invited the general astronomy class from Hartnell Community college to attend. The events will begin at 1:00 PM with a solar observing program, lasting until 4:00 PM. After that there will be a barbeque from 4:00 – 6:00 PM. The show and tell and the observing will commence at dusk and last until midnight. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP via the Star-B-Que 2025 link provided on the FPOA website home page. The FPOA will be providing hamburgers (and veggie burgers), hot dogs, buns, condiments, cold drinks, and eating utensils. If you do plan to attend, please bring a dish to pass around. Additional information is provided within this newsletter.

We would like to welcome our newest board member Tanveer Singh, who is already taking an active lead in equipment updates and is helping get the word out about our site to active local astronomy communities. He replaces our esteemed member Lenore Edman whose sound advice, dedication to volunteering, training of our new members, and flair for style will

Star-B-Que ★ October 11



2025 Program Dates

Saturday Evening Programs (lecture start)

Sept.	13, 20, 27 (8p)	October	18, 25
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Solar Programs (2-5pm)

September	13	October	25
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Board Meetings (Zoom, 1pm)

September	27	October	none
November	1		

Please check our web [Schedule](#) and [status](#) for updates before heading up.

be locally missed as she enjoys night skies in New York state.

Lately I have been getting up quite early, mostly due to my cats demanding breakfast. Since the Sun is rising about an hour later than in June, it is still dark at that time. As such, I have been able to do some observing of the morning stars, planets, and satellites. During the past two (2) weeks a fine configuration of Venus, Jupiter, the Moon, Pollux & Castor, and Mercury was visible. The peak of the configuration occurred on August 12, when the Moon was close to Venus and Pollux & Castor in Gemini. Jupiter was up to the west of Gemini, and Mercury to the east. Saturn

was high in the western sky, and the stars of Auriga and Orion filled out the view. The quiet, still morning enhanced the experience. I hope I can see something similar in the future.

Next year, 2026, will be the 40th anniversary of the start of the public programs at the observatory. The FPOA hopes to have some special events planned to commemorate the start of these programs. I joined the FPOA in June 1986, right after seeing Halley's Comet from New Zealand. I helped finish the construction of the observatory and began my long association with the FPOA. I would like each of you to start thinking of your most memorable astronomical object or event you experienced at the observatory. We will collect them and publish them on our website.

Let me conclude on a much, much lighter note. I know that astronomy is not a high interest topic to most individuals. However, there are limits to one's lack of knowledge of astronomy. Here are three (3) examples of statements made by college students about astronomy:

1. (Question asked during a science class) "If the Sun is a star, why is it not on the periodic table?"
2. "I did not know one could see the Moon during the daytime."
3. (My favorite – asked while the instructor was conducting a sky tour at night) – "Which of those lights up there is the Earth?" (This one scares me, because the questioner probably gets to drive a car above 70mph.)

I hope you enjoyed these. We obviously have a ton of work to do.

PD

Observations



Rob Hawley, Peter Natscher

New Tools for Weather Forecasting at the Peak

Rob Hawley

As I have described in my past articles, weather at the peak is frequently very different from weather in Salinas especially during the summer months. The height of the peak places it in a different weather zone. Civilian weather tools forecast for a location 2000 feet below us. A grey day in Salinas can be an excellent night at the peak. Similarly, almost every "astronomy" forecast assumes some giant stamped the peak flat.

Over the past 20 years I have tried to solve this problem by developing techniques to predict the weather at the peak instead of Salinas. In [August 2022](#) I described some, still useful tools, to get more visibility on the weather over Salinas. In [January 2023](#), I introduced our new ability to directly access commercial grade weather models at the time made available through different websites. As of that writing it was not clear which would produce the best results and which tool was the best to obtain an accurate forecast. In this paper I will present our experience over the last year and a half.

We have a winner for model and tool

After playing with the various alternatives clear winners have emerged. The best tool to access it is [windy.com](#) (not windy.app). The ECMWF 9 km model is the clear winner. Note that access to this model requires a paid subscription. The American short-range model HRRR is good, but if the two differ I

have found ECMWF 9 km is more likely to be correct.

How to do your own predictions

I decided rather than create a long dissertation here that could never be updated, only superseded, I created a [webpage](#) that can be maintained. This shows the latest information on how to use [windy.com](#) and other tools I have previously introduced to get a fairly accurate picture of what the weather is likely to look like along with the risk that your notion may be wrong. I've also included links on the [member's page](#) to this material for future reference.

The 48 Hour Limit

One topic that keeps coming up is the 48 hour notice for Observing that has been our practice for at least 25 years (and is now a part of our contract). It is true that the "astronomy" forecasts (which I have hopefully convinced you that you should not be using anyway) only give relatively short duration forecasts. My experience with ECMWF 9 km is that at 3 days out I can get at least a good green, yellow, red level forecast which is good enough to know whether to make a reservation. At 2 days out I can narrow the yellow range. By 18 hours I have access to the short-range forecast to confirm, but usually ECMWF is the most accurate anyway. Even at 5 days ECMWF is pretty good unless the weather is very dynamic.

I offer a service to members who are not comfortable with doing their own forecasts. Just email me and I will read the tea leaves for you.

RJH

Snakes out and about

Peter Natscher

Last month while observing on the Pads, at 11pm, I saw a beautiful and long California King snake slowly sliding across the gravel roadway between the observatory east steps and the wood fence, east side of observatory. I almost stepped on it as I was walking back to my SUV to get something. I always point my red flash light to the ground as I walk in the darkness and fortunately saw it. Snakes move slowly. Looks like he came out from under the observatory. I pointed it out to Dave Cooper and Jamie Dillion who were also there and we enjoyed its visit.

More recently, while leaving the FPOA pads the morning of August 30th, I saw a 3 ft. rattlesnake crossing the driveway half way down from the observatory.



PN

Operations



Rob Hawley, Eric Eglund

Life Membership Now Comes with Observer Privileges

In an effort to simplify our membership system, FPOA has decided to discontinue the annual Observer fee for Life Members. Life members are still required to execute

our [Membership Contract/Liability forms](#) to schedule time on non-public nights or to participate in Public Programs. Annual service in one of FPOA's public programs is still required for Challenger access.

There may be some tax implications... Previously, FPOA Life membership was entirely a contribution in accordance with our 501(c)(3) status. FPOA cannot give tax advice regarding the implications of bundling Observer access. FPOA is unable to provide a dollar value for this access since the member is still required to pay all park entrance fees on a non-public night.

Using the New Bathroom Locks

We have had several cases this year where guests have locked everyone out of the bathrooms. Those with building access now have access to a key which unlocks the bathrooms. Our best defense is understanding how the locks work and sharing with visitors.



The lock can be locked in two ways:

- If the tab is pushed in vertical then the lock resets when the door opens.
- If the tab is pushed in and turned horizontal then the door will stay locked when it closes.

Save yourself and others some grief by being careful. Don't turn the button.

RJH

Program Staffing sheet

We now have a Program Staffing sheet in our cloud workspace and available for review on our website in [Members/Private Resources](#). It helps us ensure our evening programs and events are staffed and allows volunteers to see where they've committed their time.

A christmas tree helps us easily see where we need extra help with staffed programs in blue and those needing more staff in red.

A1	Date	Status	Program	Volunteers	FPOA Coord.	Group	Group #	Lecturer	Ob
2	8/30/25	Blue	Evening Program	Pat, Rob, Eric, Tom, Rick, Jeff, Chris, Tanveer, Narendra				Rob	
3	8/30/25	Blue	Solar Program	Pat, Rob, Tom					
4	9/13/25	Blue	Evening Program	Pat, Rob, Tom, Eric, Mark, Muriel, Jeff		Cub Scout Pack 444	20	Rob	
5	9/13/25	Blue	Solar Program	Pat, Rob		Cub Scout Pack 444	20		
6	9/20/25	Red	Evening Program	Pat, Rick, need 2				Rob	
7	9/27/25	Red	Evening Program	Pat, Eric, Tom, need 1 (Jeff)				Rob	
8	10/11/25	Red	SBQ			Hartwell students			
9	10/18/25	Red	Evening Program	Pat, need 3 (Jeff)		Hartwell backup		Rob	
10	10/25/25	Red	Evening Program	Pat, Tom, Rob, need 1				Rob	
11	10/25/25	Blue	Solar Program	Pat, Rob					
12									

ETE

Facilities



Eric Egland, Rob Hawley

New draw tube

Our third 30" telescope draw tube, proposed by Rob, is finally finished and installed on the telescope so we no longer need to go hunting to fill open focusers. The draw tube is built from two turned pieces of 6061 aluminum pressed together, with a knurled shoulder, and fitted with a 1/4-20 nylon thumb screw.

Clearance around the tube is slightly greater than the other tubes, so please support the tube and any attached lenses when releasing the draw tube lock screw.



For further improvement, Rob proposes all drawtubes could get 35mm extensions providing better eyepiece security and feel with televue-style copper rings to hold those secure. Eyepiece thumbscrews on the draw tubes could then be replaced with set screws.

Support



Thanks to those who renewed. FPOA receives most of its income from our memberships. Most annual members are now Observers. We still need your support. Contributions cover publications, phone, insurance, rent, etc.

Please consider volunteering, it's great fun and a service to our community. Please see the [back page](#) for details.



Membership Renewal



To join or renew, please select from the list of options on our [Membership page](#) and pay via PayPal or mail a check to:

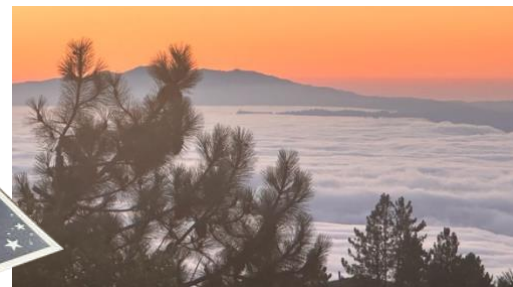
FPOA Membership
c/o Rob Hawley
1233 Hillcrest Dr.
San Jose, CA 95120



Gallery



From top: Evening red lights, correct assembly of the H α solar scope, California quail stroll in the amphitheater, evening over a strong inversion, a Thank You from a school group.





A very territorial butterfly warns me off with close passes

Observing Reservations

Please send the following information
48 hours in advance to:

schedule at fpoa.net

- Member name
- Reservation date
- Estimated arrival time
- Duration of stay
- Number in party
- Vehicle description and license plate
- Specific observing site request (pad)

**Reminder – 48-hour notice for Observer
Access is non-negotiable**

Please, No ‘last minute’ requests

We lease access to the FPOA area from the State. Our agreements with the State require we give 48 hours’ notice for all visitors. Observer members agree to the 48-hour notice per the liability contract.

Public Program Volunteers

- Complete the updated [2023 liability waiver](#) and return to *membership at fpoa.net*.
- Also, please email name, vehicle, and the program date to *schedule at fpoa.net*.

Fremont Peak Observatory Association

Box 1376, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

Inquiries *info at fpoa.net*

Schedule *schedule at fpoa.net*

Membership *membership at fpoa.net*

Editor *editor at fpoa.net*

Treasurer *treasurer at fpoa.net*

Website: fpoa.net

Facebook: [fpoa.observatory](https://www.facebook.com/fpoa.observatory)

X (Twitter): [fpoa_info](https://twitter.com/fpoa_info)

Observatory: (831) 623-2465

Officers and Directors 2025

President	Pat Donnelly
Vice President, Programs	Eric Egland
Treasurer, IT, Membership	Rob Hawley
Instruments, Schedule	Ron Dammann
Secretary	Tom Kellogg
Editor, Social Media	Eric Egland
Special Programs Coord.	Jeff Shapiro
Facilities	Eric Egland
	Chris Angelos
	Rick Mazzarella
	Tanveer Singh
 Directors Emeritus	
	Kevin Medlock
	Denni Medlock
	Loren Dynnesson

Dates and Delivery

Members, The *Observer* is now sent by email and posted on our website at [FPOA Observer online](#). Please send email updates to *membership at fpoa.net*.

The *Fremont Peak Observer* publishes four times a year following Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. We welcome articles and photos from our members. Please email those to *editor at fpoa.net* by Feb 25th, May 25th, August 25th, and November 25th in plain text or Word format.

