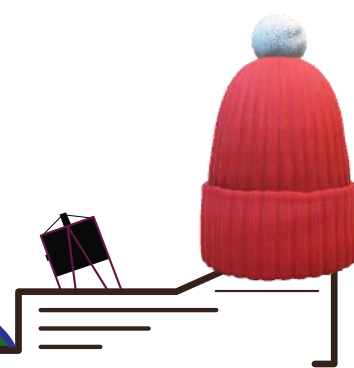


The Fremont Peak Observer

— Bringing Astronomy to the Public —



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Winter 2024

President's Message



Pat Donnelly

Yogi Berra once said, "It gets late early around here." This time of the year, that statement is quite appropriate. From approximately the middle of November to the beginning of January, the Sun sets before 5:00 PM. If you are like me (I hope not!!), you think it is time to retire for the night and then you realize its only 6:45 PM. The extremely early sunsets allow early evening observing. Right now, on 12/4/24, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are well placed for observing in the early evening. Also, Galaxy NGC 253 and globular cluster NGC 288 are high in the south and easy for observation. If they were farther north, I am sure Messier would have included them on his list of non-cometary objects. If you get a chance, go out outside and observe in the early evening. You can spend a several hours observing and not lose any sleep.

This autumn (2024), there was a spectacular naked eye comet. Comet C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS was visible in

the early evenings in October and the first half of November. I saw the comet for the first time on October 12 at the Peak, during the public program that evening.



2025 Program Dates

Saturday Evening Programs

March	22, 29 (8p)	July	19, 26
April	5, 19, 26	August	16, 23, 30
May	3, 24, 31 (8:30p)	Sept.	13, 20, 27 (8p)
June	21, 28	October	18, 25

Solar Programs (2-5pm)

March	29	July	19
April	19	August	30
May	24	September	13
June	28	October	25

Board Meetings (Zoom, 1pm)

January	25	July	26
February	22	August	23
March	22	September	27
April	26	October	No Meeting
May	17	November	1
June	14		

Star-B-Que October 11

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

Everyone who was present got to see the comet with naked eye, by camera, and through telescopes. The false nucleus, coma, and tail were visible to the unaided eye. Just before the comet's nucleus disappeared behind the trees, I estimated the tail to be approximately 10 – 12 degrees long. On October 24 the FPOA hosted a special program for the local Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) personnel and

their families. We were able to view the comet through the Challenger. It was an incredible view. An in-depth article on the comet is provided by Rob Hawley in this newsletter.

Our last scheduled solar program and evening program for the 2024 season was on October 26. A solid cirrus overcast caused us to cancel the evening observing program. However, the same cirrus layer of clouds caused the most intense and probably complete view of the various halos, glories, and arcs around the Sun that I have ever seen.

Around 4:00 PM, we noticed the amazing view, and Eric Egland presents some excellent photos of the phenomenon in this newsletter (see Gallery).



To begin, the 22° halo around the sun was quite visible. Most of the 360° ring was visible with a small section hidden behind Fremont Peak. There was some indication of two solar pillars just above and below the sun. On either side of the Sun, at the same altitude, and just outside of the 22° ring, both sundogs (parhelion lights) and the parhelic circle were visible. The parhelic circle extended east and west from the sundogs and bent up. On top of the 22° halo, the Upper Tangent Arc connected with the Suncave Parry Arc above it to form a Solar Corona. We could see the Suncave Parry arc for at least 180°. Above the Suncave Parry arc was the Supralateral Arc,

of which I could see about 120°. The supralateral arc was tangent to the Circumzenithal Arc at its highest point. The circumzenithal arc had all the colors of the rainbow in an arc around the zenith. All of these features are visible in Eric's photos (see Gallery). I am not sure, but this could be a once in a lifetime event.

For the record, Yogi Berra was a baseball player for the New York Yankees; not a Hanna-Barbera cartoon character.

See you at the peak in 2025. PD

Observations



Rob Hawley

Comet

Last year, we started following reports about C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS. Our annual *What's Up* page even hinted at the possibility of a great comet as early as January. But with comets you never know, so it wasn't until late September, when we received reports of the comet just before it passed of the sun, that we realized this was going to be something special.

On October 10, the comet made its closest approach to the Sun. That meant the first practical chance to see it as an evening comet would be on October 12, when we had a program.

Our lecture program is always flexible. We try to adapt to what's happening in the sky and, when appropriate, to what's in the news. October 12th was a night with an incredibly exposed moon, so I went to the hill with an updated version of my Moon lecture, expecting to show mostly the Moon. I had also prepared a lecture on the comet for our next program October 26, but did not expect to use it.

As the sun set, everyone headed out with cameras, telescopes, and binoculars, scanning the western horizon. The prediction was that the comet would only be visible for about 10 minutes; just above the trees in the direction of the ranger's house. We all waited patiently.

Around 7:15, people started calling in detections. I couldn't see it at first, but luckily, it was far enough north to appear through a gap in the trees. That gave us a couple more minutes to catch a glimpse.



As you can see it put on an impressive show. This was the best comet I have seen since possibly the comets in the 1990's. I presented my comet lecture during the program so guests could better understand what they just saw. The bright moon and

diving temperatures chased most folks off the hill shortly after the lecture.

The comet became brighter the next couple of nights as it got higher into darker skies. By Monday the 14th it was an impressive sight.



This photo was from my home in south San Jose with my iPhone 15. In darker skies an "anti-tail" was visible. I've never heard of this, but it happens with bright comets when Earth is positioned so light reflects toward us from its orbital debris trail.

On October 24th, we organized a special program for the Parks folks who handle our contract. I went out on the 22nd to check what was still visible. By then, the comet had disappeared from sight. However, you could still spot it easily with binoculars and even take a photo of it.

The comet was too low on the 12th to see in the Challenger (below). By October 24th, that was no longer the case. It was a moonless night, and the comet was now high enough for us to put the Challenger on it! This was also a fantastic opportunity to show the state how we run our programs. They enjoyed the same lecture that I had planned for our concluding 202 public program on Saturday October 26th.



The weather took a turn for the worse on Saturday. Despite the gloomy skies, we still managed to attract around 60 people to our program. But the clouds were so thick that we couldn't see a thing. Unfortunately, the weather that night had other plans. The Challenger was locked up tight. Fortunately, I had planned a second lecture at 6:30p to encourage folks to come early and make sure everyone had a chance to attend the lecture (and safety briefing) before we got a peek at the comet in the Challenger. So, I gave two lectures at each scheduled time. One was on the comet, and the other was on a different topic. It was a bit of a

consolation prize, but I thought it would show our guests how much we appreciated their interest.

By the time the weather cleared up several days later, the comet had already faded. I might have it captured on my iPhone in early November, but that's just a bit of wishful thinking.

IT



Rob Hawley

[FPOA.net migration to Google](#)

Due to multiple issues with our current email vendor, we migrated our email system to Google Workspace. All of the familiar email addresses still operate, and do so better than they did before.

FPOA always encourages members to stay involved in our association's operations. To facilitate this, we invite you to join our board@fpoa.net mailing list. However, due to our Google transition, we needed to recreate the board list. Initially, only current board members will be members of the board@ list. Consequently, all non-board members will lose their membership during this transition. We will resume accepting requests to join the board list once the transition is complete and stable. We anticipate being ready to accept non-board members around the 2nd week in January.

In late January, the board will discuss status of the programs@ mailing list. The programs@ list was created to encourage more members to actively participate in running our programs, but it has not achieved the desired outcome.

Facilities



Eric Eglund

The building is holding its own and with a La Niña winter, we may have more time to tinker with some rolling roof sealing issues.

We're also relocating our key box to a more ergonomic spot, and re-designing the key fob to fit the new enclosure.

Rob's new Challenger finder is working well, and soon we'll have an additional draw tube to serve 2025 programs.

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:

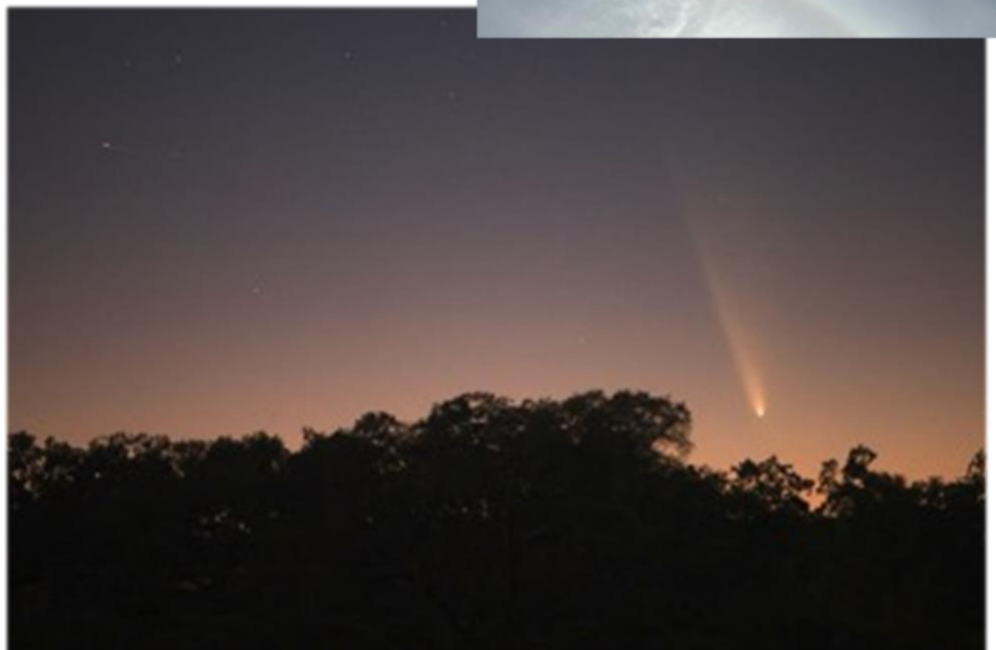
FPOA Membership
c/o Rob Hawley
1233 Hillcrest Dr.
San Jose, CA 95120



Gallery



Calendar background: Oct. 10 aurora from San Juan Bautista; Below, from top: Sundogs at the peak, a closeup of the circumzenithal arc and solar corona, C/2023 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS. (photos Eric Eglund)





Tsuchinshan-ATLAS visits our October 12th public program

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

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Special Programs Coord.	Jeff Shapiro
	Chris Angelos
	Rick Mazzarella
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	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.

