

REFLECTIONS / REFRACTIONS

REFLECTIONS \ REFRACTIONS

University Lowbrow Astronomers Monthly Newsletter

September 2024, Vol 48, Issue 9

Inside this issue:

**Astronomy at the Beach:
Maps and Information** 1

**New Observatory in
Michigan**
by Norbert Vance 2

My Best Astro-Blunders
by John Manney 5

Lowbrow Event Reports 6

Speaker Schedule 9

Monthly Minutes 10

Club Information 12

GLAAC NEEDS YOU AND YOUR SCOPE FOR ASTRONOMY AT THE BEACH!

Lowbrows, bring your telescopes, giant binoculars,
and other observing gear to this year's AATB

September 20 and 21

NEW ONE-TIME LOCATION CHANGE THIS YEAR!

MAYBURY STATE PARK

49601 Eight Mile Rd, Northville, MI



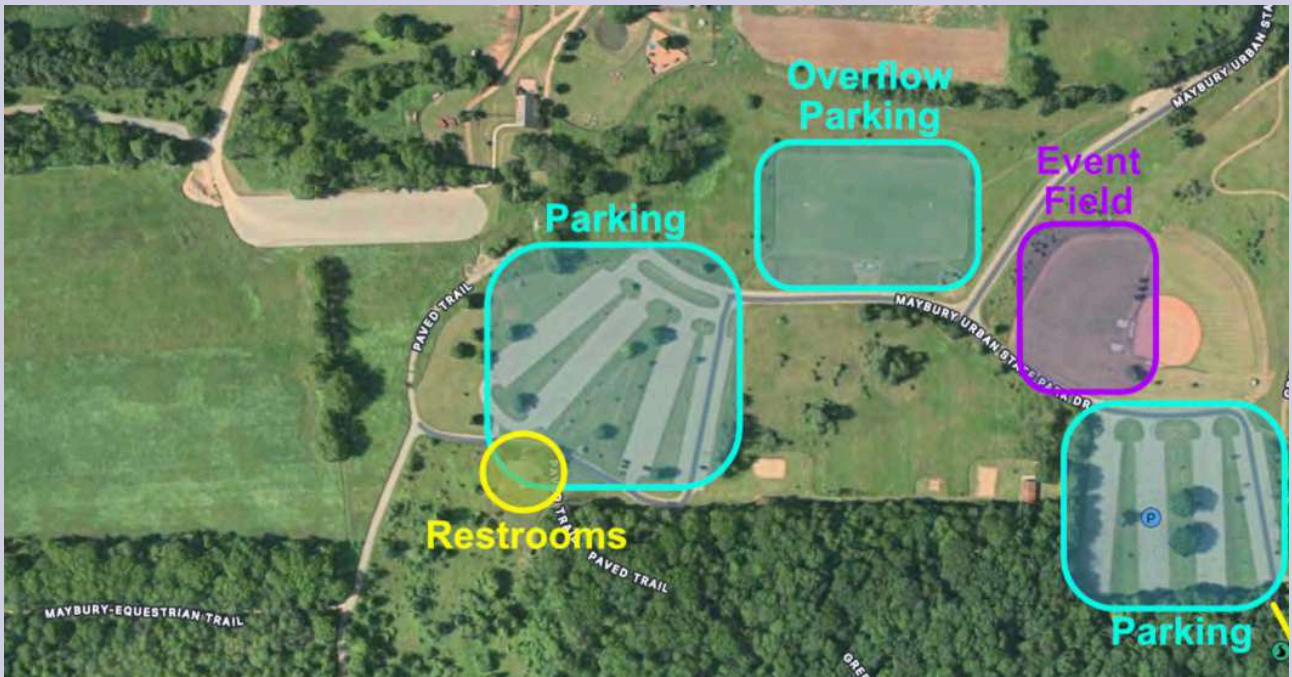
Astronomy at the Beach 2024 - Michigan's Largest Free Astronomy Event

Michigan's largest FREE public astronomy event! Our 28th year! Look
through different types of telescopes & talk with amateur astronomers!

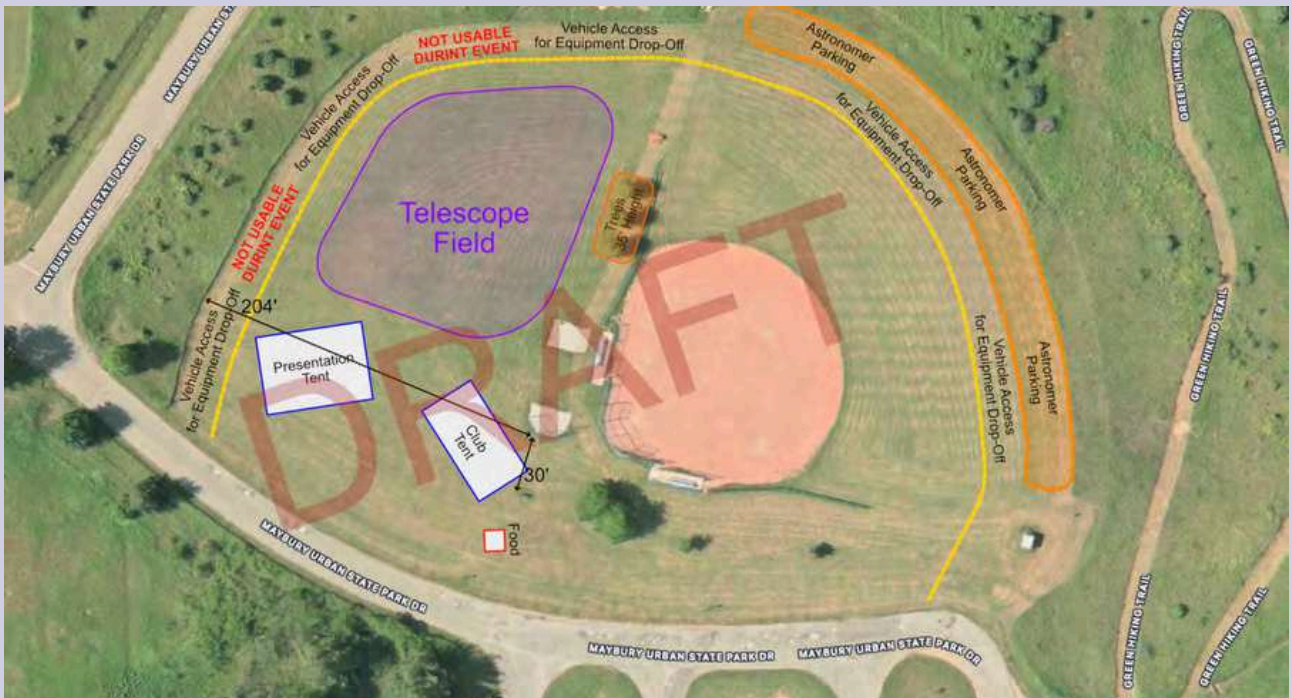
Great Lakes Association of Astronomy Clubs

Click the above image to visit the GLAAC site at
<https://www.glaac.org/> for more information.
A map of the park and additional information, page 2.





Preliminary map details as of Saturday, September 7.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MELISSA KAELIN

Melissa F. Kaelin is a writer, painter and Aurora Chaser residing in Michigan. She has led many community initiatives including founding the Michigan Aurora Chasers, creating the Social Gap Experiment, and co-founding the annual Aurora Summit.

NEW OBSERVATORY IN MICHIGAN

BY NORBERT VANCE

I returned from Saginaw on August 21 after spending a night with Kevin Dehne, Aurelian Balan, Joe Bruessow, Jim and Ryan Ehlers, Adam VanDyke, Dave Bonadure, and a team from PlaneWave (Cameron and Alex) putting the finishing touches on the installation of their PlaneWave .7-meter (28-inch) CDK700 telescope at the new Delta College Observatory, a project Kevin, an EMU alum that helped me with the Sherzer scope install in 1991, has overseen since its inception several years ago. Covid delayed the project and changed a few plans but it is now up and running.

Conveniently located not far off I-75, exit to M-84 near Bay City, the observatory sits off to the west side of their campus near the athletic fields. The brick building sports a synced Ash dome, smooth block walls, a heated/cooled control room with window, special lighting, storage space and patio for placement of their stash of portable Dobs. The PlaneWave scope comes from here in Michigan, the Adrian HQ of this fine company so the team didn't have too far to travel. The periscope puts the eyepiece at wheelchair level, ADA compliant. Stars were tack sharp but the high haze and bright moon affected the view. Kevin's image intensifier worked well at overcoming that issue. T'was my first look through a PW scope! Finally!

Scope installation took place last week and calibration and "first light" that night (August 20). Kevin celebrated his wedding anniversary that night, so smartly he let his wife, Mary, have the honors of using the periscope eyepiece attachment to peer at M13 in Hercules as the first to see through the scope. Granted, Vega and a few other stars were centered via the ZWO 2600 on board for calibration first, but we'll grant the lookin' to Mary. :) M13 looked great via the SharpCap Liveview feature on the large interior wall monitor after just seconds of livestacking.

The telescope is similar to the one found at the Jackson College Observatory south of Jackson but the Delta facility has corners for plenty of elbow room for groups and students, plus the cozy ops room. I told Kevin, he and Aurelian have quite the new digs there. Contact him directly via email at ktdehne@delta.edu for information and look for their web page in the weeks ahead. This facility now compliments their downtown Bay City planetarium and its Digistar projector. Good job, guys!

<https://www.delta.edu/planetarium/>



NEW OBSERVATORY continues, p. 4.

NEW OBSERVATORY continues ...



Aurelian and Kevin pose with the CDK700 28-inch. You may recognize them from the Great Lakes Star Gaze.

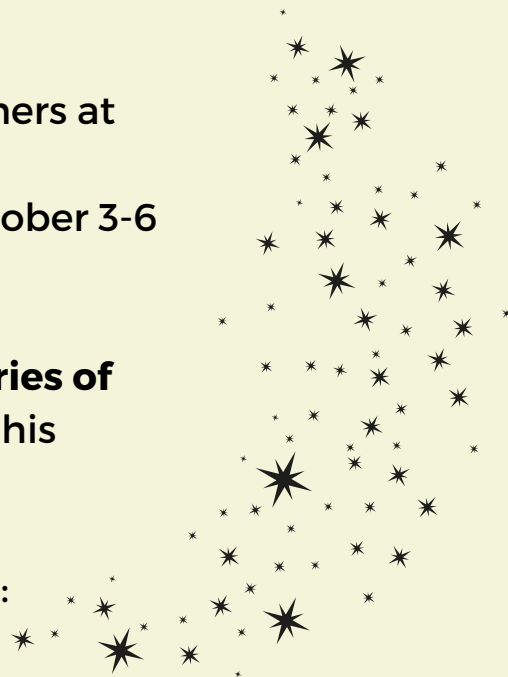
CLUB MEMBER NORBERT VANCE WILL BE THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THIS YEAR'S GREAT LAKES STAR GAZE!

Join Norb and other observers and astrophotographers at this year's Great Lakes Star Gaze, Michigan's largest amateur star party! This year's GLSG takes place October 3-6 in Gladwin, Michigan.

Norb's keynote address will be on the topic: "**Mysteries of the Southern Skies**" and will include an account of his recent Cerro Tololo expedition.

Registration is now OPEN. Visit the GLSG website at:

<http://www.greatlakesstargaze.com/register.php>



MY BEST ASTRO-BLUNDERS

BY JOHN MANNEY

Intrusive Lights

For many years, I lived in a rural setting in Southern Michigan. It was a pleasure to have a dark sky and freedom from nearby lights. At the telescope one night, I was bothered by a light from the cornfield behind me. I ignored it for quite a while, but it persisted. At last, I turned around and found that my annoyance was caused by the Northern Lights. A few seconds later, the aurora ended and did not return.

Don't forget...

When I was a brand-new observer, I heard many stories of people traveling to a dark-sky site only to find that they had forgotten to pack their eyepieces. I resolved not to make this mistake, so I always triple-checked this item when I packed the car. One night, I arrived at a club event and found that I hadn't brought the telescope.

Manney's Comet?

While searching for an object with my telescope, I was startled to find a bright, fuzzy ball. I hadn't heard any reports of a new comet. My breath slowed and my pulse picked up as I wondered how such a bold object could have been missed by so many experts. I checked my planetarium app and found that I was looking at a globular cluster. Over 200 years ago, Charles Messier had included it in his list of comet look-alikes. After a laugh, I realized that he had compiled this list to help people like me be a little more humble.

The Mystery of the Great Square

Some blunders are obvious, but this one was hard to solve. I was performing a "Two Star Alignment" which requires careful aim of the telescope at two known stars. This enables a digital system to locate numerous objects easily.

The Great Square of Pegasus was well placed, so I aimed at the brightest of the four stars. The system asked me the name of the star. Since it was the brightest of the four stars, I entered "Alpha Pegasi."

I was quite baffled when the system couldn't complete the alignment.

When I dug deeper into the problem, I had a surprise: Only three of the stars of the Great Square belong to Pegasus. I had picked the one which belongs to Andromeda!

Editor's note: The images at right were AI-generated from text prompts in Canva to accompany each section of John's article. Based on the results, I don't think we need to worry about AI taking over too soon. :)



LOWBROW EVENT REPORTS

AUGUST 3 OPEN HOUSE REPORT, from Don Fohey:

The Open House was a success. I counted 70 guests plus 7 Lowbrows working the event. Jack and Dmitri were in the observatory. Jim and Barry set up telescopes by the observatory. I set my 10" on the upper field and some folks returning to their cars about midnight stopped for a look at M31, M3, NGC6210, and M27. Mani helped with parking and set up his SeeStar. New member Jacoby, his first ever Lowbrow event, talked with arrivals while we were managing parking and distributed the light sticks along the route to the observatory. Adrian set up a photography rig.

I asked as many groups as I could, how they knew the event was on for tonight. Many said they had known about the Peach Mt star viewing for years and were waiting for an opportunity to align when they could make it. They said Google Calendar most often, followed by Facebook, website, and AnnArbor Observer.

About 1 pm I made it down to the observatory. Barry showed me a view of the double double that was well separated and Jim had a remarkable image of Saturn with a nearly edge-on rings. Saturn looked like it had a line through it. Jim said there were a lot of folks milling around the observatory area. Barry noticed there were many kids and I noticed there were folks of all ages. Managing parking was difficult. Cars showed up in batches and after dark it was particularly difficult to direct each to a parking spot. Cars arrived as late as 11 pm. The paved pads by both the large and small radio telescopes were full and the field along the road was full. I didn't think to count how many cars were there. Greeting folks, explaining how to conduct themselves, directing them to the observatory, and managing parking could not be done without the help of Mani. I needed to delegate to him better.

My suggestions for next time is to park small cars on paved surfaces, and trucks on sloping lawn surfaces. Place cones and/or tape on the field to prevent cars from parking too far into the field. Several pulled in and parked before we could greet them. Ideally, one person would stop a car and direct them to a second person who would show them the spot to park (particularly useful for the Big Dish lot) and a third person to instruct practices and direct them to the observatory.



From Adrian Bradley: a closeup of the Milky Way region between Scutum the Shield and Cygnus the Swan. Constellations bordering or represented here include Vulpecca, Hercules (barely), Delphinus (barely), Saggita, and Aquilla.

The University is grass-cutting the property but not to the extent it has in past years. The Radio Dish field is cut. The area around the observatory seems to have had one pass. Jim and I used weed wackers to clear an area south of the observatory to set up telescopes and make it easy for guests to walk freely among the telescopes. The area along the entrance road where cars once parked has grown up to the point where I don't think we can ask people to park their cars there. I tried clearing some of the area with hedge trimmers and the bush-like stubble could puncture car tires.

August 24 OWOSSO AIRPORT, from Charlie Nielsen:

Last night was our second trip to Owosso Airport to help them celebrate a fly-in camping weekend for pilots and their families. The weather forecast was favorable, with clear skies indicated north of a line just south of the venue. It seemed luck was shining upon us...but was it? It certainly looked that way before dark. But as it was getting dark and the stars were coming out...they did not. The only thing we could see in the south was Antares, and that was not easy at times. We saw the Summer Triangle overhead and over half of Cygnus. The Big Dipper was difficult. Despite this, we did manage to show M13, M31, Alberio, and maybe a couple of other things, before we targeted Saturn. Saturn was well above the horizon before we could actually spot it, and never really became bright. We did get some good telescopic views, however. Despite our challenges, the campers and airport staff were very pleased, as they were last year. The food was good, and we had a fun time.

EVENTS REPROTS continue, p. 7

EVENTS REPROTS continues ...

Thanks go out to Jim Forrester, Jeff Kopmanis, Adrian Bradley, plus Mani and his son Sailesh. They made the long trip and helped us to extract what we could out of the sky. There were six Lowbows there, and I estimate about 20 campers and airport staff at most, joined us. Two of them had a telescope that Adrian helped them with.



Photo from Adrian Bradley



Photos above and at left from Jeff Kopmanis

EVENTS REPROTS continue, p. 8



EVENTS REPORTS continues ...

From Adrian Bradley: A favorite region of mine, featuring Barnard's 'E' Nebula low center, and above, the CoatHanger Cluster. Altair is the bright star at the bottom of the image, and Tarazed is the bright start near Barnard's E. Only about 20 mins on this one.

August 31 Open House, by Adrian Bradley:

Last night's open house went well, though there were fewer members of the general public than we thought would come out. We did have some competing events such as the Labor Day weekend travel, the U of M home game against Fresno State (won 30-10 by the Wolverines), and a clear night after two dismal days of storms. At last count, I heard 11.

I'm never good with names, especially because I wanted to thank the Lowbrow whose name escapes me, who brought three instruments to observe and to image the night sky. All of those instruments (a small refractor, a small Celestron SCT, and a SeeStar) provided great views of night sky objects. Please check in with your name to be added to this recap. And thank you and your wife both for coming and helping us with this open house.

The usual suspects, Jack Brisbin and Jim Forrester, were there. Jeff Kopmanis joined us again and that's always awesome! Ken Cook did an amazing job as OHC. Astro-Matter and his father Steve made the trip and were there on the upper field while we were all down by the McMath. We also had someone who had a homework assignment to sketch a Messier object. Hopefully, that happened without much of a problem.

As always we tend to look at the bright objects: M13, M31, M57. When Saturn appeared, all scopes pointed there

and provided great views of this planet whose rings are very VERY close to edge on - you can barely tell a gap in the rings where it's just slightly tilted.

My astro targets were Barnard's E (with an 85mm, I also got the CoatHanger at the top of the field), then I went for a wider shot with the 35mm at the whole Summer Triangle. Before all of that, I took an image of the galactic core where M8 and M20 reside, as a test to see if I achieved good focus and had good tracking. It didn't come out too bad. Before packing up for the night, I turned and took a set of images for a composite of the Aquilla/Scutum part of the Milky Way looming over some trees ... because why not?

Overall it was a good night to be outside, with not much interaction from the bugs (I did have some protection on me as well as a unit that helped keep them away).

Before departing I noticed how much more intense the light seemed to be coming from the Dexter/Pinckney area. Many long-time Lowbrows remember how much darker it used to be at Peach Mountain. Last night showed a good enough transparency to just detect the Milky Way going through Cassiopeia, yet most of the sky was still washed out. For some in attendance, the sky yielded more stars than they were used to seeing. We wish we could show them an even darker sky.



From Adrian Bradley, taken at the August 31 Open House: "The best SQM-L reading I got was 20.3 magnitudes per square arc-second. Usually, a reading that gets to 20.49 mpsas is considered Bortle 4. So this image, which is about 30 mins of footage inside the Summer Triangle, had to be processed to get some of those features out. I believe the greenish tones to be skyglow, which is entirely possible given our active sun."

UPCOMING MEETING SPEAKER SCHEDULE

October 18: Club members Ed Hernandez, Adrian Bradley, and Doug Nelle

Topic: *Memories of the Eclipse*

November 15: Dragan Huterer

Topic: TBA

December 20: Club member Gary Nichols

Topic: *How Smart Are They? A Comparison of the New Breed of All in One Smart Telescopes*

January 17: TBA

February 21: Jeff MacLeod, NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador

Topic: TBA

March 21: Dr. Richard Goodrich

Topic: *Fear and Loathing in the Heavens*

University Lowbrow Astronomers - Revised Meeting Minutes July 19, 2024 7:30pm

Meeting was called to order by Charlie Neilsen at 7:42 PM.

Our July meeting was held at Eastern Michigan University, and graciously hosted by Norbert Vance. (If you have not been to one of our July meetings then you really should come and see the planetarium and Sherzer observatory at EMU, both are worth the trip) Pizza, drinks, and deserts were enjoyed before the main presentations

Miles Mercier discussed his building a backyard scale radio observatory that could be a fun DIY project for lowbrows with some electronics experience.

Norb and VP Brian Ottum gave a great presentation on their trip to study the viability of the University of Michigan Curtis Schmidt Telescope at Cerro Tololo, Chile in South America. They worked under the direction of Pat Seitzer. Everything was backwards in the sky. Everything rotates the wrong way down there! But the night sky was unbelievable, with both large and small Magellanic clouds visible to the naked eye.

Norb then showed a video "Big Astronomy in Chile" which discussed the many observatories there.

Our business meeting began at 9:25 PM

Our August 18th meeting will be a picnic at the Hillig residence. Please RSVP via email if you will be attending.

Observatory Director Jack Brisbin reported that the McMath observatory door lock is still not repaired. July 29th is the date for Michigan Math and Science Students (MMSS) with the 31st as a rain date. We have open houses coming up, please volunteer and support them. Every lowbrow member should help with at least one open house per year. We have telescopes at the observatory and others know what to look at if you don't.

Newsletter editor Amy Cantu had no report.

VP Ken Cook had nothing to report.

Kurt Hillig made a motion to adjourn, Doug Warshow seconded.
Business meeting adjourned at 9:29 pm

Note: Our September 20th meeting coincides with Astronomy At The Beach (AATB), so it is canceled.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

University Lowbrow Astronomers - Meeting Minutes

When: Friday, August 16, 6:30 PM. Some arrived earlier and some between 6:30 PM and 7 PM.

Where: We met at the home of Kathy and Kurt Hillig, who graciously hosted us, as they also did several years ago.

Attendance: We had 16 club members or about to be club members there, both very veteran, and brand new. We did not do a hybrid meeting...it would be impolite to eat in front of the online attendees after all. Well, unless they were eating too; it would just be different food. Hey, am I on to something?

Report: This was a club potluck picnic. The food was excellent and of course we ate heavily. The weather forecast indicated we would have nearly zero chance of clear skies, but we did. Despite the high humidity, killer mosquitoes, and very bright Moon...we set up two telescopes and viewed a few Messier objects and Albireo.

Results: A fun time was had by all!

Adjournment: The small group that hung out with the telescope packed up about 10 PM

Treasurer's report, from Doug Scobel

- We have 207 memberships.
- Paid our usual monthly payments to AT&T for our Open House "hotline" and the cost for printing/mailing the newsletter.
- Sent \$388.00 to the Astronomical League for our annual membership. 42 Lowbrows joined or rejoined.
- Sent \$500.00 to GLAAC for Astronomy at the Beach.
- Paid Norbert and Charlie \$294.41 for food and refreshments at the July meeting at EMU.
- Paid Don Fohey \$42.39 to replace the focuser on the 8-inch Cave Dobsonian.

PLACES & TIMES

Monthly meetings of the University Lowbrow Astronomers are held on the third Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. The location is usually the Judy & Stanley Frankel Detroit Observatory. The Observatory is located at 1398 E. Ann St., Ann Arbor. The Ann Street Parking Structure (M86), the Catherine Street Structure (M5), the Glen Street Structure (M61), and the School of Public Health II Lot are usually open after 6:00 p.m. Mon-Fri. The M86 structure is closest to the Detroit Observatory.

Peach Mountain Observatory is the home of the University of Michigan's 25-meter radio telescope and McMath 24" telescope, which is maintained and operated by the Lowbrows. The entrance is addressed at 10280 North Territorial Road, Dexter MI, which is 1.1 miles west of Dexter-Pinckney Rd. A maize and blue sign marks the gate. Follow the gravel road to the top of the hill to a parking area south of the radiotelescope, then walk about 100 yards along the path west of the fence to reach the McMath Observatory.



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE / STAR PARTIES

Public Open Houses / Star Parties are generally held on the Saturdays before and after the New Moon at the Peach Mt. Observatory but are usually canceled if the forecast is for clouds or temperatures below 10 degrees F. For the most up-to-date info on the Open House / Star Party status call: (734) 975-3248 after 4 pm. Many members bring their telescope to share with the public and visitors are welcome to do the same. Mosquitoes can be numerous, so be prepared with bug repellent. Evenings can be cold so dress accordingly.

Lowbrow's Home Page

<http://www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/>

MEMBERSHIP

Annual dues are \$30 for individuals and families, or \$20 for full time students and seniors age 55+. If you live outside of Michigan's Lower Peninsula then dues are just \$5.00. Membership lets you access our monthly newsletter online and use the 24" McMath telescope (after some training). Dues can be paid by PayPal or by mailing a check. For details about joining the Lowbrows, contact the club treasurer at: lowbrowdoug@gmail.com

Lowbrow members can obtain a discount on these magazine subscriptions:

Sky & Telescope - \$43.95/year

Astronomy - \$34.00/year, \$60.00/2 years or \$83.00/3 years

Newsletter Contributions:

Members and non-members are encouraged to write about any astronomy-related topic. Contact the Newsletter Editor: Amy Cantu cantu.amy@gmail.com to discuss format. Announcements, article, and images are due by the 1st day of the month as publication is the 7th.

Telephone Numbers:

President:	Charlie Nielsen (734) 747-6585
Vice President:	Don Fohey Brian Ottum Ken Cooke Dmitri Tsahelnik
Treasurer:	Doug Scobel (734) 277-7908
Observatory Director:	Jack Brisbin
Newsletter Editor:	Amy Cantu
Key-holders:	Jim Forrester Jack Brisbin Charlie Nielsen
Webmaster:	Krishna Rao
Online Coordinator:	Jeff Kopmanis

A NOTE ON KEYS: The Club currently has three keys to the Observatory and the North Territorial Road gate to Peach Mountain. University policy limits possession of keys to those whom they are issued. If you desire access to the property at an unscheduled time, contact one of the key-holders. Lowbrow policy is to provide as much member access as possible.

Email to all members

Lowbrow-members@umich.edu



University Lowbrow Astronomers



www.youngastronomer.org