



**Wellington Astronomical Society  
2018-09 eNewsletter**

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**Wellington Astronomical Society Inc.  
email Newsletter for September 2018**

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**1. SEPTEMBER 2018 SOCIETY MEETING**

The next WAS meeting will be held on Wednesday 5th of September at 7:30 pm at Space Place, Carter Observatory, 40 Salamanca Rd, Kelburn.

The meeting will consist of:

1. The Night sky in September
2. Astronomy News
3. Main talk at 8:00 pm

**The Journey to Star Field - John Whitby**

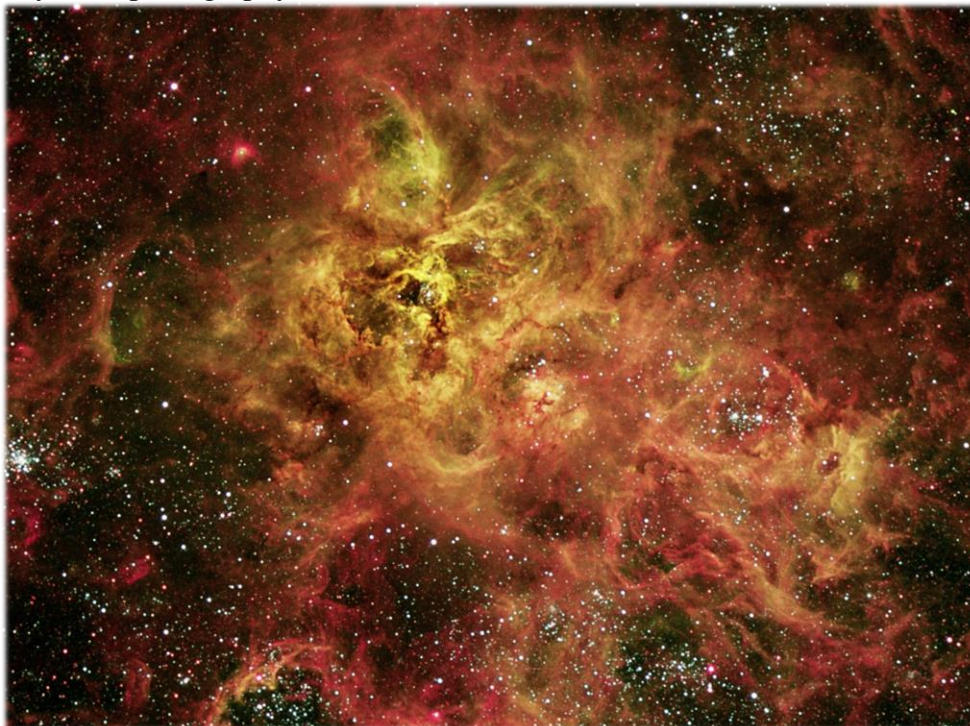
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*John at his dark sky site Star Field*

Our very own Practical Astronomer extraordinaire - John Whitby - will briefly cover parts of his journey with astronomy, where he is now and what he hopes to achieve in the near future. John has taken the idea of commitment to astronomy to a whole new level. This promises exciting times and benefits for locals and visitors to his dark sky site just south of Martinborough.

John Whitby is a practical amateur astronomer with around twenty years' experience under the stars. He started out doing visual astronomy then later specialised in video astronomy which included worldwide broadcasting of deep sky objects, live and in colour. More recently John started doing Deep Sky Astrophotography.



### *John's spectacular image of the Tarantula Nebula*

For many years John had an observatory in Taumata Island (rural Carterton) and held informal star parties with other fellow amateur astronomers in his gardens.

John decided that he wanted to have an dedicated observatory complex in a truly dark sky site that covered visual, video and imaging and that he could share with like-minded people and the public. For five years John took every opportunity possible to travel to some of the darkest skies available throughout New Zealand, in an effort to identify a truly dark sky with good seeing conditions and regular clear skies.

The search brought John back to his hometown of Martinborough where he purchased a unique property, just 10 minutes East of Martinborough, that had all the qualities he sought.

This is the story of John's journey to get to Star Field in Martinborough, an observatory complex currently under construction in the heart of the proposed Martinborough Dark Sky Reserve.

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## 2. EVENTS

**WAS Astrophotography group / Dark Sky Observing** - Saturday 8th September 7:00 pm, Star Field - John Whitby's dark sky site.

We have the opportunity to follow on from this month's presentation by John Whitby by having an astrophotography / observing session at his Star Field site, 10 mins outside of Martinborough. To attend and get directions to Star Field, please email Antony ([president@was.org.nz](mailto:president@was.org.nz)) as we need to keep track of numbers. Any updates will be posted on the [WAS Facebook page](#) closer to the time. For further details or cancellations contact Chris 021 890 222 or Antony 021 253 4979.

**WAS Observing Evening** - Saturday 15th September, 7:00 pm, Tawa College.

See many wonderful objects, star clusters, galaxies, dying stars and nebulae. We will be focusing on the area around the Southern Cross and Milky Way which lies high across the night sky. The planets Venus, Jupiter, Saturn and Mars are also visible.

Come and learn how to star-hop through the night sky to find many of the various astronomical objects using the Society's Dobsonian telescopes. Chris is often there on Friday evenings too so feel free to come along though it would be best to give him a ring on 021 890 222 to check on conditions.

**Astronz International Lecture** - Thursday 27th September, 7:00pm, Horne Lecture Theatre, Level 12 Ward Support Block, Wellington Hospital. ([See directions](#))

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## **The Golden Age of the Solar System: What's Up in Space – Emily Lakdawalla**



Many people think of the glory days of space exploration as being in the past, culminating in Apollo, but we are living in the golden age of planetary exploration right now. Twenty-odd robots are exploring worlds big and small throughout the solar system. Emily will show highlights of current space exploration activities, feature lots of amazing pictures, and explain how you can follow along with these missions every day.

Emily Lakdawalla is an internationally admired science communicator and educator, passionate about advancing public understanding of space and sharing the wonder of scientific discovery. Emily came to The Planetary Society in 2001 to oversee a portion of the Society's Red Rover Goes to Mars project, an education and public outreach program on the Mars Exploration Rover mission funded by LEGO. She ran worldwide contests that selected and trained high school students to travel to Pasadena to participate in rover operations training exercises in 2002 and then in actual Mars Exploration Rover mission operations during January and February of 2005.

She was awarded the 2011 Jonathan Eberhart Planetary Sciences Journalism Award from the Division for Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Society for her blog entry about the Phoebe ring of Saturn. Asteroid 274860 was formally named "Emilylakdawalla" by the International Astronomical Union on July 12, 2014. She received an honorary doctorate from The Open University in 2017 in recognition of her contributions in communicating space science to the public.

This free public lecture is sponsored by [Astronz](#).

**2018 Beatrice Hill Tinsley Lecture** – Tuesday 9th October, 7:00pm (Venue to be confirmed)

**The Dawn of Gravitational Wave Astronomy – Dr Paul Groot** (Professor of Astronomy, Radboud University, The Netherlands)

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The Beatrice Hill Tinsley Lectures are administered by the RASNZ Lecture Trust.



More details about Dr Groot and his presentation will be in next month's newsletter.

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### 3. SOCIETY NEWS

#### 2018 – 2019 Subscriptions

We are at the start of the new Financial Year beginning on the 1st September. Membership subscriptions are now due. Please continue supporting our Society's activities by renewing your membership. As part of our mission of promoting astronomy through education and public outreach, we endeavour to keep our activities free for everyone to attend.

However, as a Society, we do retain a number of fixed costs. Every year we pay out for insurance, affiliation to the Royal Astronomical Society of NZ, post-office box, venues and costs incurred when we host an international speaker, and telescope equipment. We are also looking to fund a solar telescope as part of our outreach programme.

Your commitment to supporting our Society through renewing your 2018 – 2019 subscription is very much appreciated.

Renewal forms can be found on the website, but a summary follows:

Adult/Waged: \$50.00

Student/Unwaged: \$30.00

Associate (outside the Wellington region): \$20.00

Family: \$70.00

Payment methods:

- Direct Deposit or Internet Banking - use Acc No: 03-0502-0508656-00, please include reference so we know who is making the payment
  - Cheque - make out to Wellington Astronomical Society Inc, and mail to PO Box 3181, Wellington 6140
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- Cash - please bring exact amount to meeting.

### **Annual General Meeting - 7th November**

As we approach our next AGM, we are looking for more **members to join the Council**. If you are interested in being more involved with the Society's activities and help steer the future direction of the Society, please put your hand up and let us know. You are free to come along and join in our Council meetings 5:30 – 6:45pm on the 1st Wed of the month at Space Place, prior to our monthly Society meeting.

We are also looking for someone one to take over the role of the **Newsletter Editor**. The person has the responsibility for producing the Society newsletter once a month (except for January). As can be seen, the format is straightforward with a template set up in MS Word. Essentially it is taking a copy of the previous month's newsletter and updating it with the latest events and astronomy news. It takes a few hours a month to complete with most of the information supplied by others. The Newsletter Editor is a position on the Society's Council.

Please contact Antony (President) or any other Council member if you are interested in the Newsletter Editor position or have any questions about being a Council member.

**Nominations for Council positions** have to be received no less than 10 days prior to the AGM. Nominations are required to be signed by a mover and a seconder.

**Resolutions to be moved at the AGM** have to be received 28 days prior to the AGM. Resolutions are required to be signed by the mover and a seconder.

Names of the candidates for Council, any resolutions and a statement of performance will be sent out to all members 7 days before the AGM.

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#### **4. ASTRONOMY NEWS**

Up to date Astronomy News and Society events is available on the Society's Facebook page: [Wellington Astronomical Society](#).

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#### **5. NIGHT SKY FOR AUGUST 2018**

The [Night Sky for September 2018](#) courtesy of the University of Canterbury.

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#### **6. CONTACTS**

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The following members were elected to Council at the Nov 2017 AGM

President: Antony Gomez ([president@was.org.nz](mailto:president@was.org.nz)) - 021 253 4979

Vice President: Duncan Hall ([vice-president@was.org.nz](mailto:vice-president@was.org.nz))

Secretary: Becky Bateman ([secretary@was.org.nz](mailto:secretary@was.org.nz))

Treasurer: John Homes

Membership Secretary: Janine Bidmead ([membership@was.org.nz](mailto:membership@was.org.nz))

Website: Peter Woods ([webmaster@was.org.nz](mailto:webmaster@was.org.nz))

Telescope custodian: Chris Monigatti

Council: Andrew Fuller, Chris Monigatti, Frank Andrews, Janine Bidmead, Murray Forbes, Peter Woods, Roland Idaczyk

Postal Address:

Wellington Astronomical Society,

PO Box 3181,

Wellington 6140, New Zealand

Website: [www.was.org.nz](http://www.was.org.nz)

Facebook page: [Wellington Astronomical Society](#).

Facebook group: [WAS – Wellington Astronomical Society](#) (for members)

Facebook Astrophotography group: [WAS Astrophotography Group](#) (for members)

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