



**Wellington Astronomical Society
2018-12 eNewsletter**

**Wellington Astronomical Society Inc.
email Newsletter for December 2018 / January 2019**

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1. DECEMBER 2018 SOCIETY GATHERING

WAS Christmas BBQ - Wednesday 5th December, 7:30 pm, Wellington Collegians Cricket Club, Anderson Park, Botanical Gardens.



Join us for The WAS Christmas BBQ, our last gathering for 2018.

Bring something to BBQ or a dish to share, plus either a salad or dessert. And bring something for yourself to drink, either alcoholic or non-alcoholic. There will be additional sausages, snacks and non-alcoholic drinks provided.

This will be followed by a fun group quiz with some prizes.

If it is a clear night, we will have a telescope pointed up at comet 46P/Wirtanen.

Come along and have some fun. All welcome!

2. EVENTS

New Zealand Astrophotography Weekend 2018 - December 7th - 9th, 2018, Foxton Beach Bible Camp, Foxton Beach, Horowhenua.



The Horowhenua Astronomical Society is hosting the sixth New Zealand Astrophotography Weekend. Held in the lower North Island it is an annual event dedicated to astrophotography in a wonderful dark-sky location. It is open to everyone interested in astrophotography - from beginners to advanced. Come along and share your knowledge, tips and experiences.

All sorts of astrophotography can be undertaken - solar-system / nightscapes / deep-sky.

The weekend shall consist of:

- Practical astrophotography. There are plenty of safe areas for people to set up their equipment and leave it in situ for the whole weekend.
- Image Processing: There is a huge room with long tables available which is perfect for people to set up computers. If you have one then please bring an external monitor to attach to your laptop as this is very useful for other people to observe what you are doing.
- Presentations: There shall be talks on astrophotography related topics held in the large hall (see below).
- Bring-and-buy: Feel free to bring along any equipment that you are no longer using and wish to sell.
- Fish and chips dinner: Saturday night. Please pay when you book.
- Late-night movies: Should the weather not be kind then movies can be shown on the big screen.

Everyone is encouraged to bring along their own telescopes / mounts / cameras etc, however basic they might be.

For more information and booking details go to

<http://www.horoastronomy.org.nz/upcoming-events/astrophotography-weekend>

Central Starparty 2019 - January 3rd – 7th, 2019, Tuki Tuki Camp, Hawkes Bay.



The fourth Central Star Party will be held from Thursday 3rd January to Monday 7th of January 2019 and will be held at the Tuki Tuki Camp site in the Hawkes Bay. This is the site of many previous star parties.

Central Star Party has been established to hold annual star parties in the central North Island for the benefit of the astronomical community of the North Island of New Zealand. The goal of the organisers is to provide a fun social astronomical gathering laced with talks and activities.

If you are interested in going or have any questions please email president@was.org.nz or ring Antony on 021 253 4979.

Bookings and more details are available at <https://censtar.party/>

3. SOCIETY NEWS



Just a reminder that there is no Society meeting in January and the next newsletter will be for February 2019. If there are any relevant astronomy news or events that pop up, we will send you an email.

Wishing you all a safe and relaxing holiday break. Thank you for supporting the Society during 2018.

2018 Annual General Meeting minutes

The minutes of the AGM are attached with this email newsletter in a pdf document.

2018 – 2019 Subscriptions

This is a final reminder to renew your membership for the 2018/2019 year. We started the new Financial Year on the 1st September. 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.

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 and please include your name as a reference so we know who is making the payment
- Cheque - make it out to Wellington Astronomical Society Inc, and mail to PO Box 3181, Wellington 6140
- Cash - please bring exact amount to meeting.

ASTRONZ - Buying astronomy equipment

[ASTRONZ](#) is a non-for-profit online astronomy shop owned by the Auckland Astronomical Society. It reinvests everything earned back into astronomy and science education throughout New Zealand.

If you are interested in purchasing a telescope, binoculars or other astronomical items for Christmas (or at any other time during year) from ASTRONZ, please indicate in the Order Notes that you were referred by the Wellington Astronomical Society (WAS). WAS will then receive a commission on your purchase.

If you bring your telescope or binoculars to one of our Observing evenings, we can show you how to get the best out of it and help you locate some of the spectacular objects in the night sky.

If you have any questions, email president@was.org.nz or ring Antony on 021 253 4979,

4. ASTRONOMY NEWS



This article is distributed by NASA Night Sky Network
The Night Sky Network program supports astronomy clubs across the USA
dedicated to astronomy outreach. Visit nightsky.jpl.nasa.org to find local
clubs, events, and more!
(Editor: Adapted for the WAS newsletter)

NASA Night Sky Notes:
Observe Apollo 8's Lunar Milestones
By David Prosper



Figure 1. Caption: Earthrise, 1968. Note the phase of Earth as seen from the Moon. Nearside lunar observers see Earth go through a complete set of phases. However, only orbiting astronauts witness Earthrises; for stationary lunar observers, Earth barely moves at all. Why is that? - Credit: Bill Anders/NASA

December marks the 50th anniversary of NASA's Apollo 8 mission, when humans first orbited the Moon in a triumph of human engineering. The mission may be most famous for "Earthrise," the iconic photograph of Earth suspended over the rugged lunar surface. "Earthrise" inspired the imaginations of people around the world and remains one of the most famous photos ever taken. This month also brings a great potential display of the Geminids and a close approach by Comet 46P/Wirtanen

You can take note of Apollo 8's mission milestones while observing the Moon this month. Watch the nearly full Moon rise just before sunset on December 21, exactly 50 years after Apollo 8 launched; it will be near the bright orange star Aldebaran in Taurus. The following evenings watch it pass over the top of Orion and on through Gemini; on those days five decades earlier, astronauts Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders sped towards the Moon in their fully crewed command module. Notice how the Moon rises later each evening, and how its phase wanes from full on Dec 22 to gibbous through the rest of the week. Can you imagine what phase Earth would appear as if you were standing on the Moon, looking back? The three brave astronauts spent 20 sleepless hours in orbit around the Moon, starting on Dec 24, 1968. During those ten orbits they became the first humans to see with their own eyes both the far side of the Moon and an Earthrise! The crew telecast a holiday message on December 25 to a record number of Earthbound viewers as they orbited over the lifeless lunar terrain; "Good night, good luck, a merry Christmas and God bless all of you - all of you on the good Earth." 50 years later, spot the Moon on these holiday evenings as it travels through Cancer and Leo. Just two days later the astronauts splashed down into the Pacific Ocean after achieving all the mission's test objectives, paving the way for another giant leap in space exploration the following year.



The Geminids, an excellent annual meteor shower, peaks the evening of December 14 through the morning of the 15th. They get their chance to truly shine after a waxing crescent Moon sets around 1:20 am on the 14th. Expert Geminid observers can spot around 100 meteors per hour under ideal conditions. You'll spot quite a few meteors by avoiding bad weather and light pollution if you can, and of course make sure to bundle up and take frequent warming breaks. The Geminids have an unusual origin compared to most meteor showers, which generally spring from icy comets. The tiny particles Earth passes through these evenings come from a strange "rock comet" named asteroid 3200 Phaethon. This dusty asteroid experiences faint outbursts of fine particles of rock instead of ice.



You can also look for comet 46P/Wirtanen while you're out meteor watching. In early December, it is high in the sky in the constellation of Eridanus moving towards Taurus. Its closest approach to Earth brings it within 11.6 million kms of us on December 16. That's 30 times the average Earth-Moon distance! While passing near enough to rank as the 10th closest cometary approach in modern times, there is no danger of this object striking our planet. Cometary brightness is hard to predict, and while there is a chance comet 46P/Wirtanen may flare up to naked eye visibility, it will likely remain visible only via binoculars or telescopes. You'll be able to see for yourself how much 46P/Wirtanen actually brightens. Some of the best nights to hunt for it will be December 15 and 16 as it passes between two prominent star clusters in Taurus: the Pleiades and the V-shaped Hyades. Happy hunting!

Catch up on all of NASA's past, current, and future missions at nasa.gov

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

5. NIGHT SKY FOR DECEMBER 2018 AND JANUARY 2019

The [Night Sky for December 2018](#) and [January 2019](#) courtesy of the University of Canterbury.

6. CONTACTS

The following members were elected to Council at the Nov 2018 AGM

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

Vice President: Andrew Fuller (vice-president@was.org.nz)

Secretary: Matt Boucher (secretary@was.org.nz)

Treasurer: Duncan Hall (treasurer@was.org.nz)

Membership Secretary: Shazia Gazi (membership@was.org.nz)

Newsletter Editor: Shelly Frost (editor@was.org.nz)

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

Telescope custodian: Chris Monigatti

Research Group coordinator: Roland Idaczyk

Council: Shazia Gazi, Shelly Frost, Peter Woods, Chris Monigatti,
Roland Idaczyk, Murray Forbes, John Homes, Becky Bateman, Gaby
Perez

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PO Box 3181,

Wellington 6140, New Zealand

Website: 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)
