Saguaro Skies

Saguaro Astronomy Club, Phoenix, AZ
Volume 50, Issue 6
June 2026

The President's Corner

Summer is here and our two-month hiatus will occur July and August. That means you will have to find something to do, two extra Friday evenings. Maybe find a place further north where it is clear and cooler, for summer observing. Or maybe you will give considerable thought to becoming the club's newest Vice President. No matter what you do, let Rick Rotramel know so he can put it in the newsletter. I hope he will continue to put out editions in July and August. I will continue to write my monthly edict. Speaking of which:

These limericks I'm beginning to find,
Are really stressing my mind.
With a limited vocabulary,
Please don't call the constabulary,
When my endings start to unwind.

June is here and is hot,
But a VP we find is not.
All things being equal,
This sounds like a sequel.
We seem to be in a rough spot.

Summer's heat is here at last.
'hope not as intense as some past.
To the desert I go,
And sit hoping to know,
That the dark won't run out too fast.

Up north is where I shall travel,
As heat makes the desert unravel.
Despite getting dark,
And me getting stark,
Summer's rough like it was road gravel.

Report on the South Rim, Steve, please.
We heard that the event was a "breeze".
The wind was a dilly,
It blew hard and chilly.
Some things just don't go with ease.

OK, don't make me do this again. You know what you have to do. But to repeat, if you are doing something in the astronomy arena, let Rick Rotramel know for his newsletter, and don't forget Mike Wilmoth's SAC Facebook page for posting too.

As I said, you will hear from me next month, and I hope to see you ALL in September. Keep in touch over the summer. I'll miss you, especially our Vice President!

Clear skies, Tom Curry

Photo: Susan Trask

Inside this issue:

Quick Calendar

At the clubhouse, 3030 Mission Ln, Phoenix, AZ:
SAC meets **Friday, June 26th, @ 7:00 pm**

Note: No SAC General Mtgs. in July or August!

SAC on Facebook:
SAC has a Facebook moderator!
Mike Willmoth

* Scorpius setting in the southwest.

Editor Notes

Hi Folks,

Such-A-Deal has eight old ads, check them out.

Bits & Pisces has the May 29th SAC general meeting minutes.

SAC Observing has for you daily astronomy data from *The Astronomical Calendar.*

SAC Outreach has a grand report on the 2026 "Grand Canyon Star Party, South Rim" by Steve Rottas & Terry Shay.

SAC Sky has info on the stars and planet locations this month for you all.

Enjoy,

Rick Rotramel

< Left: SAC Webmaster, Terry Shay

Right: SAC ATM Leader, Paul Lind >

Photos (3): Susan Trask

Schedule of Events 2026

SAC General Meetings

Jan 9	Feb. 6	March 6	April 10
May 29	June 26	~~July 24~~ (Cancelled)	~~August 21~~ (Cancelled)
Sept. 25	Oct. 23 Nominations	Nov. 20 Elections	XmasParty Sat,Dec.12

Meetings held at the Heritage Heights Clubhouse
3030 E Mission Ln, Phoenix, AZ
(SE of State Route 51 and 32nd Street)
Meeting time: 7:00 PM
View video recordings of the ***past*** Zoom meetings here:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEKTfI0gwebABZXwKbhe9oA

Outreach

2026 Grand Canyon Star Party, South Rim Report
See *SAC Outreach* in this issue!

SAC Officers

President: Tom Curry >

Vice President: (Open Position) >

Secretary: Michael Poppre >

Treasurer: Jack Jones >

Properties: Ken Milward >

Photos: Susan Trask (2), Sandy Milward (2)

SAC-Forum Email Discussion Group

Join this email discussion group for all SAC business and newsletter release notifications.

Go to Groups.io, search for the group SAC-Forum (or "SAC Forum"). Click on the button down the page to join the group. Your application will be accepted in a day or so by the moderators. Alternatively, send an email to:

SAC-forum+subscribe@groups.io

After your membership is set, go to the Subscription tab on the left. Set your preference as to how you should receive messages.

Such-A- Deal

Ads placed here are free to SAC members and friends. SAC is not responsible for the quality of the items. If you wish to place an ad here to sell your telescope or an astronomy related items, contact the editor at: rrotramel601@gmail.com

For Sale - Meade LX200 GPS, 8" Telescope/Eyepieces

Good condition. Includes Autostar, UHC coatings and case of eyepieces.
Scope is about 10 years old, used sparingly.
Location: Phoenix area. Not interested in shipping.
Will deliver within local area or arrange for pick up.
Owner is motivated to sell.

Asking $1300.00 as a package.

For questions/inquiries call Stephan at 310-339-4586

For Sale - 1. LX200 8 inch telescope with tripod.

2. LX200 10 inch telescope, f6.3 with tripod

3. Losmandy mount with rings for 10 inch scope

4. Telrad

5. Meade 8X50 alignment (finder scope)

6. Mini-Borg 50, 50mm f5 finder scope

7. Dew shield with power

8. SBIG CFT-8A With filter wheel RGB

9. SBIG ST-i guide camera

10. Wedge for LX-200 10"

11. Extra power cords for LX-200s

Asking $3000 for all items as a package.

contact Frank (480) 882-3485

Astronomy Equipment Big Sale

For Sale (Ctrl+Click for info)

Contact me at eridanibrew@gmail.com for questions or to make an offer. I am pretty firm on these prices; I think they are pretty low.

- **See next page for start of ads for this *Big Sale***

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Contact me at eridanibrew@gmail.com for questions or to make an offer. I am pretty firm on these prices; I think they are pretty low.

SBig Guide Scope ***Price: $25 (Orig. Cost: $250)***

This is a small scope/lens similar to an St-i, with a mounting bracket and small USB camera. The product was intended to provide an easy autoguider in a small package. Unfortunately, the image scales did not work at all for my setup. I expect it should work OK with a main imaging camera with 3 or more arcsecond/pixel.

See the following pages for more items for sale.

Astronomy Equipment Big Sale (continued)

Cameras for sale:

SBig STF8300M ***Price $1500 (original cost $3500)***

Includes filters (Astrodon LRGB, Ha, Oiii, Sii) in 8 position filter wheel. Original ST-i guider failed, replaced with QHY5III290 (available separately). Added aluminum threaded rings to guide port to help focus.
Includes Pelican Case, cables.

QSI683-wsg ***Price $1400 (original cost $3000)***

Includes filter wheel with filters, guide port. Has a partial column of bad pixels, easily fixed with dark/bias frames

SBig ST2000XM ***Price $200 (original cost $1200)***

My first quality camera - it is wonderful. I used it for quite awhile. 100,000 e- well depth produces excellent contrast in images. USB connection. Image shows my camera with CFW10 filter wheel attached to a Takahashi Sky90. Only design problem - the guide chip is behind the filters, so I often can't guide with it (especially narrow band). The guide chip no longer works on this unit. Includes CFW10, with original LRGB filters. W/Pelican case & desiccant packs.

QHY5III290 ***Price $50 (original cost $250)***

SOLD!

I have used this as both a monochrome planetary camera and as a guide camera. It works very well. In the second image the camera is installed in the STF8300M guide port. The aluminum rings I made to help focus are visible.

ZWO ASI120M ***Price $50 (original cost $250)***

Monochrome camera used primarily as the guider for the QSI683. Worked very well.

ZWO ASI290MC ***Price $75 (original cost $350)***

SOLD!

Color planetary camera. Used very little (I stopped doing planetary).

Fishcamp Guide camera ***Price $10 (original cost $300)***

This was a very solid, well built guide camera. It uses the same chip as the original Orion guider, but does it much better.
Unfortunately, at Windows 7? 8? the driver didn't work anymore and I couldn't find a replacement driver.
This could be a fun project to write a driver for it. Or, at least it comes in a nice case.

Canon EOS Rebel 450D with Hotech Halpha mod for astronomy. ***Price $50 (original cost $500)***

Astronomy Equipment Big Sale (continued)

Mount for sale:

Software Bisque Paramount MX *Price $5000 (original cost $9000,* currently costs $12-18000 *)*

This is the original MX, not the Version II
It has sat for awhile, so it likely needs replacement of the two rubber drive belts. Here in Arizona I need to replace them every couple of years.
I have the original shipping boxes.
Includes TPoint, a truly magnificent tool. TPoint also handles alignment of the mount to great precision.
Includes 2 large counterweights and the shaft extension.

Dome for sale:

ExploraDome *Price $1500 (original cost $8000)*

This is the 8 foot dome with aluminum roof panels for a 10 foot square building. I used a pre-existing building.
Has an 8 foot pier (2 four foot sections) with Paramount adaptor plate to hold the mount high.
Originally automation hardware/software by Foster Systems to open the shutter and rotate the dome.
Replaced the tracking and shutter controllers with Arduino based systems. Image 4 shows the Arduino tracking controller (smaller black box) on top of a 12V power supply. Image 5 shows the Arduino Shutter controller.
Modified the tracking system to improve reliability and accuracy. Figure 3 shows an added fence on the rotation motor. Originally the dome position was determined by counting the holes in the track. This gives 1 cm precision on the dome position instead of the original 4 cm.
Wrote a VB.NET ASCOM driver to drive the 2 Arduino controllers.
Includes dome and 10' wide building panels around top of roof.
The Dome was painted with a special Arizona paint to reflect the sun, cooling the building. Originally the building was at 135 F.
Images 3 and 5 show Home Depot radiant barrier material fastened to the dome interior to further reduce Arizona heat. This stuff is amazing! The building is now down to 90 F, so the 2 air conditioners can get it down to 82 F.
Figure 6 shows someone else's dome, showing how the top shutter slides back over the dome and the lower shutter hinges open.
Buyer needs to remove dome, ship it to destination.

Astronomy Equipment Big Sale (continued)

Miscellaneous:

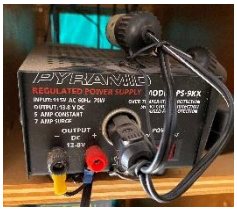
Optec Focuser *Price $300 (original cost $1200)*

2" Crayford style; very solid.
Includes adaptor to connect to Edge 11".
Connects via RS232 cable.
Edgeport USB to RS232 converter box available (See below).

EdgePort USB-RS232 Converter *Price $50 (original cost $250)*

Some equipment (especially older things) still use RS-232 connections. This box takes a single USB port and provides 4 COM ports.

Pyramid 12V 5 Amp Power Supply *Price $25 (original cost $100)*



Typical 12V power supply.

Has connector to run 2 cigarette plugs, or wire directly as seen in the image.

Samlex 12V 30 Amp Switching Power Supply *Price $150 (original cost $300)*

In the first image this is the larger black box under the dome rotation controller.
This is a higher 30 Amp power supply. I run the output through a RigRunner (visible on the right of the first image) to supply power to the dome rotation motor, the dome shutter motors, and a couple of other minor things. My dome motors require 10 Amps.
The RigRunner is included.

Optec Pyxis 2" Rotator *Price $250 (original cost $1200)*

This is the original Pyxis rotator from Optec.

Modjack RS232 input.

Edgeport USB to RS232 converter box available (See above).

WiFi DAP-1552 Bridge *Price $25 (original cost $150)*

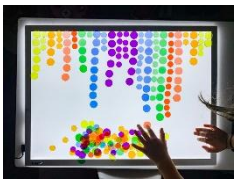
My dome is perhaps 60 feet from the router in the house. This is too far to get router WiFi reception. Instead of running a cable from the house, this bridge receives the router WiFi, amplifies it, and provides 4 ethernet ports to the systems in the dome.

Astronomy Equipment Big Sale (continued)

Home Built LED Light Panel *Price $50 (original cost $100)*

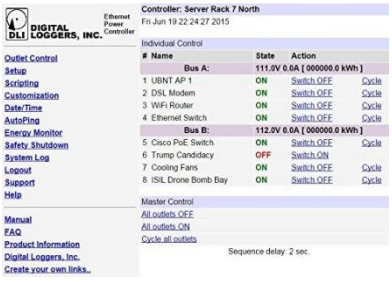
This is my fifth attempt at building a Light Panel to automate taking calibration bias and per-filter flat images. This one actually works pretty well. It is built around a 2 foot by 2 foot industrial LED lighting panel intended for ceilings of office buildings (like fluorescent light fixtures). The intensity of the light can be controlled by a resistor (a dimmer switch). The small pink box contains an Arduino and digital resistors (included). The Arduino connects to the computer via USB**.** The panel is mounted on a table fixture allowing adjustment in 3 axes to get it perpendicular to the OTA. This is important - the OTA needs to be perpendicular to the light panel, or you get off center frames. In a small dome you can't just hang the panel on the wall and be positioned appropriately relative to the telescope. The LED panel is very bright even at low settings. Two translucent 1/4" acryllic panels slide into the frame to dim it further. One or both panels can be removed as needed. I wrote a (VB.NET) software utility to determine the correct resistor setting and exposure for each filter (LRGB and narrowband) with about a 3 second camera exposure. Once these settings are determined they are re-used for each calibration run. Since I run ACP, these settings are easy to put into the ACP calibration script. The closed dome is dark enough that frames can be shot during the day, even on Arizona-bright days. I wrote a script to run calibrations during the day rather than waste darkness hours. Depending on the night's target, I typically run 25 bias and 25 of each filter needed for the night. I might need both 1x1 and 2x2 binning, so potentially I need 1600 frames although typically a few hundred. This takes 30-60 minutes. A PixInsight script assembles the individual frames into master frames for use that evening.

LEDLightTable *Price $10 (original cost $150)*



I originally bought this for one of my earlier attempts for a light panel for exposing calibration images (like the Light Panel above). It didn't work - it is too bright and not controllable from the computer. In addition, it runs the screen by scanning down the LEDs by row, so an exposure shows the panel partially lit depending on where you caught the scanning process.
It is intended to be used as a children's toy, and to do tracing work.
Includes power cable.

DLI Internet Power Controller *Price $150 (original cost $500)*



OK, you need one of these. This lets you power up/down equipment from *ANYWHERE* on the Internet.
There are 16 switchable standard outlets in the back of the unit, 8 banks of 2 outlets (second image). Each bank is switchable; for example, perhaps you have a camera and its focuser plugged into one bank. A single command will turn on both devices.
The unit has an ethernet port in front which attaches to your local network (first image). It also has switches to manually control each bank of outlets.

From a browser you access the device by its IP address (i.e., 192.168.2.100). You get the screen in the third image (there are several screens to configure the device). Now you can access all of the devices through the network. For example, I can be in Los Angeles and power everything up for the night. When I am running from the house it is easier to turn things on and off rather than running out to the observatory.

There are more “miscellaneous” other items for sale, you can find them on my website.

Copy and paste this link into your web browser:

For Sale (brewsky.space) (Ctrl+Click to follow link))

eridanibrew@gmail.com Robert Brewington

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mailto:rrotramel601@gmail.com

Telescope Equipment For Sale

** Ads on this page were submitted through the SAC Website*

Meade 8" LS8-8ACF

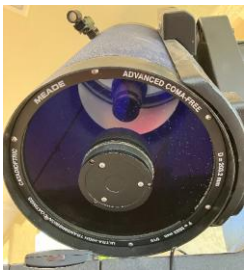
- ACF (Advance Coma Free) optics with UHTC coatings (Ultra High Transmission Coatings)
- LightSwitch Technology: Once the scope is turned on, it permits the scope to automatically level itself and find north (Meade calls this Level/North Technology), then with the use of its internal ECLIPSE CCD camera and on board GPS, alight itself to the night sky without any user intervention. The steps are simple, flip the switch. Once the scope is turned on, you're greeted by the "Astronomer Inside". The "Astronomer Inside" gives you a brief introduction to the LS 8, and informs you of each and every step of the way during the alignment process.
- Eyepieces: Meade 8.8mm and 24mm UWA Series 5000, 82° apparent field of view
- Tele Vue Qwik Point Finderscope
- Tripod
- 602 736-9221
- I'm near 7th St. and Thunderbird. Buyers pick up.
- ***$ Best Offer $***

Email Contact – Click Link Below:

mailto:lorraine.drobny@cox.net

Lorraine Drobny

602 736-9221



Orion 80mm ED Refractor with case

- Orion 80mm, f/7. 5, F.L. 600mm Telescope
- With hard case
- **$ Best Offer $**

Lorraine Drobny, 602 736-9221 lorraine.drobny@cox.net

Celestron Focus Motor, Meade Imager, Eyepieces & Misc. Attachments

- Focus Motor for SCT and EdgeHD Telescopes Sold!
- Several Eyepieces and Misc. attachments Sold!
- Meade Flip Mirror System, Model 644 Sold!
- Meade Deep Sky Imager, Mono CCD Camera
- **$ Best Offer $**
- Lorraine Drobny , 602 736-9221

lorraine.drobny@cox.net

Such-A- Deal

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mailto:rrotramel601@gmail.com

Telescope For Sale:

Vintage Unitron 60mm f15 Telescope

- OTA with four eyepieces, rotating eyepiece mount, barlow, finderscope and wooden carrying case.
- WITH tripod.
- "I think it is the 114 model from the late 1950's or early 1960's with the original box..."
- Paul Jorgenson, KE7HR
- Email Contact: ke7hr@cox.net
- **Asking $250.00**

Celestron C-14 on a Losmandy G11GT Mount

- It is in excellent working condition with very good optics. The Gemini ll was recently upgraded to the latest firmware by Losmandy.
- The OTA is on a Losmandy dove tail and it comes with the heavy duty folding tripod.
- It sadly sits in my garage more than under the stars.
- I know the GC Star party is coming up. Since I live in Mesquite, NV, I can bring it to the North Rim if there is someone interested in purchasing it. They can inspect both the mount and optics with no pressure to purchase.

- I am **asking $6000**
- Thank you for reading this,
- Vince Clements
- (209) 224-1894
- teachu2ride@gmail.com

Bits and Pisces

SAC General Meeting, May 29, Meeting Minutes

Report by SAC Secretary, Michael Poppre

- Meeting opened at 7:05 by President Tom Curry
- 20 attendees including 2 visitors and 2 former members.
- Jack Jones submitted a Treasurers report as follows:
  $4,137 in the Chase account
  $951 in the PayPal account
- Tom reported on the *Spring Star Party and Messier Marathon*. He estimated around 40 people in attendance. He also showed some photos. He also mentioned the club did have to pay an "attendance" fee to the BLM on top of the normal permit fee.
- Tom also mentioned an outreach opportunity at an elementary school in Surprise. Unfortunately, it was scheduled for early evening around sunset. More of an "topical presentation" event to support science rather than an observing opportunity.
- Paul Lind gave a report of ATM activity. Topics included:
  14" mirror grinding
  10" mirror Foucault testing (the mirror tested excellent after some follow up testing.)
  Making a cowling for a 3" scope.

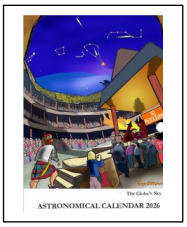


Images (3) supplied by Michael Poppre

- Tom Polakis gave a nice presentation of various activities he has undertaken over the past 10 years. These included: Time lapse videos of planetary motion, lunar shadow changes, the moons of Uranus (from 2016 to 2025), Barnard's star movement over 10 years, various supernova, the launch of *Artemis II*, changes in airglow as the night progresses, the setting crescent moon and rising full moon from various locations.
- Next meeting scheduled for June 26th at the "clubhouse".
- Tom reminded everyone there is **NO** meeting in July and August.
- The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

SAC Observing

Astronomical Calendar 2026



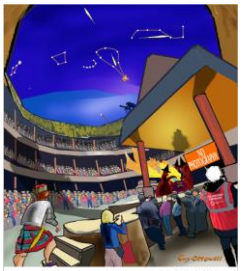
2026 JUNE

1192.706	Jun	1	Mon	5	Moon at apogee; distance 63.71 Earth-radii; only 20.2 hours after full Moon
1193.304	Jun	1	Mon	19	Mercury at northernmost declination, 25.60°
1194.438	Jun	2	Tue	23	Mercury 1.26° N of M35 cluster; 20° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -0.4 and 5.3
1197.225	Jun	5	Fri	17	Venus at northernmost latitude from the ecliptic plane, 3.4°
1198.763	Jun	7	SUN	6:19	Moon at ascending node; longitude 332.9°
1198.917	Jun	7	SUN	10	Daytime Arietid meteors; ZHR 30
1199.5	Jun	8	Mon	0	Venus 4.7° S of Pollux; 36° and 37° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -4.0 and 1.2
					_____
1199.918	Jun	8	Mon	10:02	Last quarter Moon
1201.167	Jun	9	Tue	16	Moon 4.0° NNW of Neptune; 75° from Sun in morning sky; magnitudes -9.5 and 7.9
1201.354	Jun	9	Tue	21	Venus 1.61° NNE of Jupiter; 37° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -4.0 and -1.9
1201.813	Jun	10	Wed	8	Moon 5.6° NNW of Saturn; 67° and 66° from Sun in morning sky; magnitudes -9.1 and 0.9
1204.292	Jun	12	Fri	19	Moon 5.4° NNW of Mars; 33° from Sun in morning sky; magnitudes -7.2 and 1.3
1204.520	Jun	13	SAT	0	The equation of time is 0
1205.083	Jun	13	SAT	14	Moon 1.00° N of Pleiades; 23° from Sun in morning sky
1205.200	Jun	13	SAT	17	Moon, Uranus, and the Pleiades within circle of diameter 5.22°; about 21° from the Sun in the morning sky; magnitudes -6, 6, 3
1205.250	Jun	13	SAT	18	Moon 5.2° N of Uranus; 20° from Sun in morning sky; magnitudes -6.1 and 5.8
1205.688	Jun	14	SUN		Earliest sunrise, at latitude 40° north
1206.472	Jun	14	SUN	23:20	Moon at perigee; distance 56.01 Earth-radii; only 3.6 hours before new Moon
					_____
1206.621	Jun	15	Mon	2:55	New Moon; beginning of lunation 1280
1207.188	Jun	15	Mon	17	Moon 3.5° N of M35 cluster; 9° and 8° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -5.0 and 5.3
1207.328	Jun	15	Mon	20	Mercury at easternmost elongation; 24.5° from Sun in evening sky; magnitude 0.6
1208.354	Jun	16	Tue	21	Moon 6.7° SSW of Castor; 25° and 27° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -6.5 and 1.5
1208.375	Jun	16	Tue	21	Moon 2.56° NNE of Mercury; 25° and 24° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -6.5 and 0.7
1208.5	Jun	17	Wed		1st day of Muslim year (1448 A.H.)
1208.583	Jun	17	Wed	2	Moon 3.6° S of Pollux; 28° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -6.7 and 1.2
1208.854	Jun	17	Wed	9	Moon 2.47° NNE of Jupiter; 32° and 31° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -7.0 and -1.8
1209.375	Jun	17	Wed	21	Moon 0.37° ENE of Venus; 39° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -7.5 and -4.0

Continued next page…

SAC Observing

1209.5	Jun	18	Thu	0	Moon, Venus, and Beehive within circle of diameter 2.51°; about 40° from the Sun in the evening sky; magnitudes -8, -4, 4
1209.563	Jun	18	Thu	2	Moon 0.87° NE of Beehive Cluster center, 41° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -7.7 and 3.7
1210.479	Jun	18	Thu	24	Mercury 6.5° SSW of Pollux; 24° and 27° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes 0.8 and 1.2
1211.146	Jun	19	Fri	16	Moon 0.45° SE of Regulus; 62° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -8.9 and 1.4
1211.249	Jun	19	Fri	17:58	Moon at descending node; longitude 151.9°
1211.604	Jun	20	SAT	3	Venus 0.70° NNE of Beehive Cluster center, 39° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -4.0 and 3.7
1212.522	Jun	21	SUN	1	Mercury at descending node through the ecliptic plane
1212.849	Jun	21	SUN	8:23	Sun enters the astrological sign Cancer, i.e. its longitude is 90°
1212.849	Jun	21	SUN	8:23	June (northern summer) solstice
1213.404	Jun	21	SUN	22	Sun enters Gemini, at longitude 90.53° on the ecliptic
1213.413	Jun	21	SUN	21:55	First quarter Moon
1215.313	Jun	23	Tue	20	Moon 1.98° SSW of Spica; 112° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -10.8 and 1.0
1217.021	Jun	25	Thu	13	Mercury 3.7° WSW of Jupiter; 22° and 25° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes 1.5 and -1.8; quasi-conjunction
1219.146	Jun	27	SAT	16	Moon 0.47° SE of Antares; 154° from Sun in evening sky; magnitudes -11.9 and 1.0
1219.315	Jun	27	SAT		Latest sunset, at latitude 40° north
1219.777	Jun	28	SUN	7	Moon at apogee; distance 63.69 Earth-radii
1220.578	Jun	29	Mon	2	Mercury stationary in right ascension; starts retrograde motion
1220.875	Jun	29	Mon	9	Mars, Uranus, and the Pleiades within circle of diameter 5.34°; about 36° from the Sun in the morning sky; magnitudes 1, 6, 3
1220.917	Jun	29	Mon	10	Mars 4.4° SE of the Pleiades; 37° and 38° from Sun in morning sky
1221.230	Jun	29	Mon	18	Mercury stationary in longitude; starts retrograde motion
1221.498	Jun	29	Mon	23:57	Full Moon



SAC Outreach

The Grand Canyon Star Party, June 6-13, 2026

Report By: Steve Rottas, Star Party Coordinator for SAC

Photos & Images By: Terry Shay

Smartphone Milky Way photo from the upper lot

Visitor's "Smartphone Tripods" at dusk, note each has red lights

Steve & Terry setting up

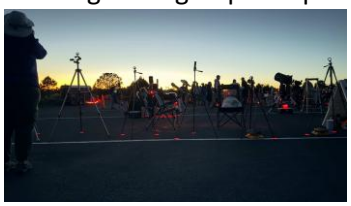
Steve Rottas in the upper lot

It is Sunday, June 29, 2025, and the 2025 version of the Grand Canyon Star Party (GCSP) on the North Rim has just wrapped up. We are packing our gear and heading home. We had just wrapped up one of the most successful star parties on the North Rim in several years. A total of 21 volunteers combined to log 575 hours and logged 10,296 visitor contacts. All the while we had no clue that in 5 days a lightning strike would start a fire just north of the rim. That fire was named the *Dragon Bravo fire* and would not be declared 100% contained until September 29th of that year. The fire would eventually burn 145,504 acres. Included in those acres would be a large portion of the critical infrastructure required to operate the North Rim, several cabins, including the high dollar cabins that sit on the rim, and the North Rim Lodge, not to mention the burnt trees that became significant safety hazards. The entire North Rim was closed for the remainder of the 2025 season and just recently reopened for minimal operations.

As early as late July I had conversations with local *Park Service* management. I was told that they were considering moving volunteers from the *North Rim Star Party* out to *Desert View* on the South Rim temporarily while the *North Rim* is rebuilt. Despite several people floating that idea, it never came to fruition, instead we were asked to join the *Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association (TAAA)* program on the *South Rim*. That gave us two choices, join *TAAA* or sit out the *Grand Canyon* program until the *North Rim* is ready to bring us back. Rader Lane, the *Night Sky Ranger* for the Park put me in touch with Bernie Sanden, my counterpart for the *South Rim Star Party*. He invited us to join them and, as *GCSP SAC coordinator*, I took him up of the offer and joined their coordinating committee as a representative for SAC and the *North Rim* group.

I have always known the *South Rim* version of this event is quite a bit larger than the north side of the canyon, but this year was DIFFERENT. Word has been spreading about the *South Rim* event through many channels, word of mouth, astronomy magazines, mainstream media and, or other sources. This event is growing very, very fast among potential volunteers from all over the country and even the world. Numbers over the last three years have shown a significant increase in the number volunteers registering to participate. Yearly totals on next page. *Continued next page…*

Upper lot at dusk



"Smartphone Class" tripods @ dusk

Upper lot scopes @ dusk

Pam Rottas, Tammy Straub & Rosemary Shay

SAC Outreach

2023 / 2024	2025	June	2026
	5	5th	73
57 / 59	88	6th	118
62 / 63	96	7th	118
64 / 70	95	8th	125
49 / 64	87	9th	133
59 / 65	84	10th	128
55 / 64	79	11th	130
53 / 60	71	12th	126
47 / 58	67	13th	93

For 2026 the North Rim group accounted for 10 additional volunteers over 2025. This level of growth does not come without its challenges. A shift in how TAAA typically set up scopes was needed. Where telescopes used to take up one parking lot for most of the week, this year, both parking lots behind the visitor's center were filled with scopes. This significantly reduced the amount and location for astronomer parking compared to past years. When an impromptu poll of astronomers was taken just before one of the final evenings event most astronomers preferred the extra field space over the more convenient parking. Most growing pains were able to be corrected on site; the more difficult ones will be corrected through the planning process for next year's star party.

I would like to thank Pam Rottas, Tammy S, and Rosemary Shay. During my first meeting with TAAA I was asked to talk a little about the kinds of things we did up on the North Rim. When I got to the part about the Cellphone night photography program we did up there, I described how popular it was with visitors on the North Rim because that gave them "something to go home with." Some on the committee thought that sounded like a nice addition to their program and asked if we could provide it there. Of course, I said "sure" without asking them. On the North Rim this program was set up on the veranda with our scopes. Since the observing field on the South Rim is so immense it took some time for people to figure out they were even there. When the volunteer visitor guides found them and saw what they were doing they started guiding visitors over to them. By the end of the week, it was very difficult for them to keep up with the demand.

Finally, over my years on the North Rim I was always given the impression that the South Rim was more like Disneyland than a star party. To be honest, I think the North Rim was more like Disneyland because we were confined to such a small observing field. When I compare the number of visitor interactions per volunteer between the North and South Rim they are essentially identical. Possibly the recent addition of so many volunteers on the South Rim has decreased the crowding we expected, or maybe, our expectations were skewed. With the two parking lots worth of volunteers versus one veranda worth of volunteers, we certainly were far more crowded on the North Rim every night than we were on the south rim this year.

Tim Straub

Tammy Straub

Late night activity

Solar Viewing: Steve Rottas Terry Shay

Continued next page…

SAC Outreach, conclusion.

TAAA puts on a great event on the South Rim, I would like to thank them for including us this year and hope to work even closer with them in the future, even after we eventually return to the North Rim. After all we are all participating in the Grand Canyon Star Party, not the South Rim Star Party, the North Rim Star party, or the Kaibab Lodge Star Party. I guess that will depend on what the rebuild ends up looking like on the North Rim and whether we will be able to better spread more scopes in different locations throughout the park. If we do have the capability to add viewing locations we will also need to provide accommodations for the additional volunteers.

Total number of registered volunteers reporting contacts, 109

The total number of sessions reported was 650

The total number of individual contacts reported for 2026 was 70,251

* Each of these numbers may increase slightly as not all volunteers had reported yet.

See you next year May 29th through June 5th for the 2027 version of the Grand Canyon Star Party.

M8, The Lagoon Nebula

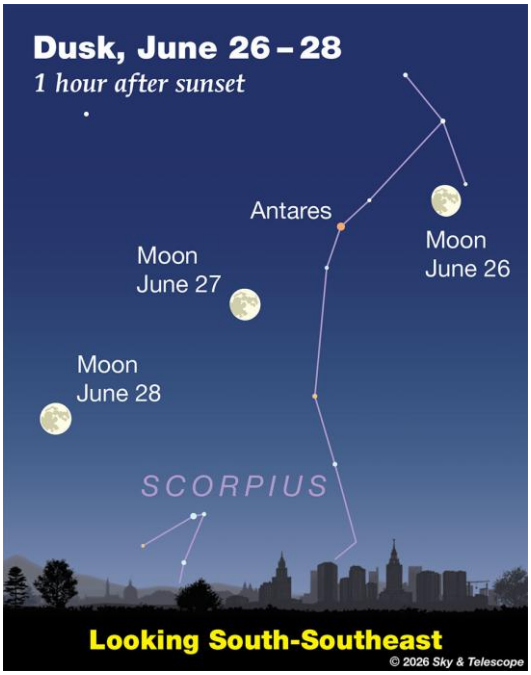
M51, The Whirlpool Galaxy

Note: Images (2) above: Vespara Pro scope/imager; 50mm, 1:37 and 2:03 acquisition times.

Left: Venus and Jupiter visible at dusk

Right: Tripods for guest use with Smartphones Class

SAC Sky



2026 SAC Officers and Contacts

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President	Tom Curry	mailto:president@saguaroastro.org
Vice-President	Open	
Treasurer	Jack Jones	mailto:treasurer@saguaroastro.org
Secretary	Michael Poppre	
Properties	Ken Milward	mailto:properties@saguaroastro.org

Non-board Positions

Novice Leader	Steve Dodder	mailto:fester00@hotmail.com
Newsletter	Rick Rotramel	mailto:rrotramel601@gmail.com
Outreach	Sandy Milward	
Webmaster	Terry Shay	mailto:webmaster@saguaroastro.org

SAC on Facebook:

Moderator, Mike Willmoth mailto:mwillmoth@compuserve.com

2026 Board Meetings:

* Board meetings will be called by the SAC President and will contact the board members for the meeting time and date.

Saguaro Astronomy Club

Saguaro Astronomy Club (SAC), Phoenix, Arizona, was formed in 1977 to promote fellowship and the exchange of scientific information among its members-amateur astronomers. SAC meets monthly for both general meetings and star parties and regularly conducts and supports public programs on astronomy. Membership is open to anyone with these interests.

Saguaro Skies is posted as a pdf file monthly on the SAC website,

https://www.saguaroastro.org/newsletter/

for browsing or downloading for SAC members and friends of SAC. A email announcement of the monthly newsletter release is included with membership.

Direct all membership inquiries to the SAC Treasurer by using the membership form found in this newsletter. For editorial and SUCH-A-DEAL advertising inquiries, contact the Saguaro Skies Editor.

Meeting Location: The Clubhouse, 7:00 PM, 3030 E. Mission Lane, Phoenix, AZ

Contacting This Issue's Authors

If you wish to write to an author in this month's issue, contact them by sending your message to the editor of Saguaro Skies, Rick Rotramel, at: rrotramel601@gmail.com

I will then forward your questions or comments to the author.

Saguaro Skies Staff

Editor: Rick Rotramel;
Photographers: Tom Curry, Sandy Milward, Tom Polakis, Michael Poppre, Rick Rotramel and Susan Trask.

2013-2025 Contributors: Bob Christ, Mike Collins, AJ Crayon, Tom Curry, Paul Dickson, David Dillmore, Steve Dodder, Richard Harshaw, Dean Ketelsen, Kevin Kozel, Joan McGue, Sandy Milward, Andrew Perry, Tom & Jennifer Polakis, Michael Poppre, Jimmy Ray, Rick Rotramel, Steve Rottas, SAC Imagers & Observers

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