

# First Light Lite Special Edition

September 10, 2022

Jim Lynch – Editor

## Urgent “All Hands” Message from the CCAS President

I hesitate to use the word “urgent” very often, but at this point in time, I think it is appropriate to use, for a few reasons. After being sequestered in the “Zoomiverse” for about two years, CCAS now has significant in-person events scheduled that are reaching out to the public and schools. (Indeed, we’ve already had one at Joint Base Cape Cod last month.) We need to have our members actively participate in these events, which takes a bit of effort, but should be fun!

To begin with, we have an event at the Cape Cod National Seashore (CCNS) on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> (rain date September 25<sup>th</sup>) where there will be afternoon talks by CCAS club members ( Jim Head, Larry Marschall, Mike Hunter and Jim Lynch), followed by an evening Star Party at the Marconi Beach CCNS site (during a New Moon, yay!). The afternoon is covered, but *we are still looking for a few more members to come out and help in the evening with the 8” Dobsonian scopes (which are very easy to use!), do “meet and greet,” and help with some logistics/transportation. The club will cover your meals and gas. Please contact Jim Lynch if you can help out. Jim will also arrange a Dobsonian scope training session in Falmouth for anyone interested (and also at WSO, if you live further out.)*

Our second priority item this fall is to help new Dennis Yarmouth HS (DYHS) teacher Ms. Ashley Garcia with her three astronomy sections (FR, SO, JR-SR). She is our new DYHS astronomy point of contact (POC), and we’d like to have as good a relation with her as we’ve had with Jim Mitchell and Dr. Sigalovsky in the pre-Covid years. A CCAS group (Mike Hunter, Jim Lynch, Gary Walker, and Charlie Burke) met with Ashley on 9/9/22 at WSO, to discuss some things we could do to help both in the long and short term. Helping her find “hooks” to attract the student’s attention (the Big Bang and black holes, for instance), some lecture material (of which we have a lot, and there is also a lot online), some in-person lectures by CCAS and friends, interesting apps for phones

and laptops (Stellarium, for instance), astronomy projects of various levels, and some in-person star parties (perhaps daytime solar viewing to start, as the students mostly do their work during class hours) were some of the immediate ideas floated. *If you have any other ideas, or some more along the lines discussed, please pass them along to me!*

Another topic that came up was the DYHS STEM week, which will be held in October. More coming on that in our regular, end of month newsletter.

We also mentioned our “books for students” program, and the fact that we would have our November speaker’s book distributed (along with others we have) to any students attending either in person (as November will be both live and Zoom). This also applies to any Sturgis Academy and Upper Cape Tech students who listen in. This is a “hook” we used during Covid, and hopefully with a live, in-person speaker, it might be a bit more effective. (We can’t do this every month due to costs, but maybe once a semester is possible.)

Ashley was also very interested in the automation of the WSO dome, and that is a project we’d like to start looking into soon at the planning stage, even before formally signing an extension contract with DYRSD.

Our third “major gig” being arranged is a series of talks (one hour) and star parties (two hour, following right after the talks) at Upper Cape Tech, which we are arranging as part of their adult education program. We are looking at five sessions, one per month, going through fall to early winter. *We need CCAS members to volunteer* for similar tasks to those mentioned for the CCNS event, i.e. lectures, leading the laser pointer/binocular sky tour, and running an 8” Dobsonian scope to show a few prominent sky objects.

As I mentioned, if you’d like to participate in these important events, which will kick start CCAS back into “real world” status again (vs. virtual), please email me at [jlynchwhoi@gmail.com](mailto:jlynchwhoi@gmail.com) or [jlynch@whoi.edu](mailto:jlynch@whoi.edu). We (myself, Charlie, other senior club members) will be happy to tutor newer (or rusty) club members in how to use the portable scopes and give a sky tour, at a time/place that is convenient for you. And, as an example of what a sky-tour would be, I’ve attached a fall sky tour “docent” guide. It has the type of material you would cover in giving such a tour,

hopefully is not too hard to navigate, and will save you the trouble of having to create such a tour yourself.

## **Member Activities and Retention (Part II)**

In last month's newsletter, the following five paragraphs appeared (in quotes):

"I think that one area that has suffered most during Covid, and maybe even a bit before, is the member contact and mutual astronomy activities that we shared previously. We've thankfully have been able to have great monthly talks via Zoom, but our in-person interactions (star parties, equipment "fixing and learning" days, work with students) have been minimal, to put it nicely. Sharing an interest with others is what makes clubs such as CCAS work, and in-person interactions are an important piece of the equation. I have 1-2 ideas about how to improve that area, which I'll put out here next.

One thought is that we have twice per year member meetings at both WSO and in Falmouth (where we have a large concentration of members) to both have a meal (could be lunch or dinner) and a session where a member shows others how to work with various pieces of amateur gear (e.g. astrophotography, solar scopes, spectroscopy, go-to mount equipment, the main scope at WSO, etc.). Having a standard "technical agenda item" will help (re)develop the overall skill level of club members, which is desirable from all angles.

Another possible in-person activity is to have a few "road trip" events, like going to NEAF (Northeast Astronomy Forum), Stellafane, or an eclipse. We've done this individually – perhaps doing it on a club-wise basis would be interesting.

Not all personal interaction needs to be in person, however, and I think we can use the web to good advantage as well. I would suggest adding a "CCAS Doings" section to the site where people can describe what they are up to on an individual basis, and share their experiences and results. Maybe this could be a reshuffle of the (never used) "Blogs" section.

Also, some more talks by members (once we get back to doing more activities) would be good, and well worth pursuing. We used to do a bit more of these in the past.”

As we didn't have a September 1<sup>st</sup> “Guest Speaker,” we took part of the hour as an opportunity to collectively brainstorm on possible future CCAS activities that can be fun for our members, as well as benefitting others. Some of what we came up with above and beyond what was mentioned above (and I thank our new CCAS Secretary Jonathan Hatch for the notes) was:

- Informal star parties/social gatherings for club members
  - These could be at various locations, and not just at WSO. An interesting possibility raised was Crane Reservation in Falmouth (wide open spaces, used by other clubs). Jonathan Hatch is looking into possible access for us.
- Dinner or pizza/beer event
  - An interesting suggestion was Cape Cod Beer in Hyannis, which already hosts club meetings. Jim Head suggested a Moon/Planet program there, which could be a fun event!
  - We also did a few dinners at Bobby Byrnes in years past, which were a lot of fun. (Many decent places available on the Cape.)
  - One thing that I think is a “must” for our club is to have a dinner somewhere on Cape with Sandy Cashen as the Guest of Honor. Sandy was our prime facilities POC with the DYRSD for many years, a great friend to Werner Schmidt and CCAS, and deserving of our thanks for all she has done for the club and the schools.
- An astronomy plus music event.
  - Perhaps a local HS music group could be entrained. Ken Brink suggested music by PDQ Bach, as well. Janice Marks and Ashish Dutta are looking into possibilities.

My personal take is that having such events occasionally will help keep the club together on a personal level, which has been lost a bit during Covid's peak, as well as re-sharpening our observing skills.

# **Speakers**

## **October**

In October, we have James Lowenthal from Smith College speaking about gravitationally lensed distant starburst galaxies, and what the JWST might have to say about them. This will be a remote-only talk via Zoom.

## **November**

In November, Martin Elvis from HSCfA will talk about his recent book, “Asteroids: How love, fear, and greed will determine our future in space.” This book will be distributed to any students attending the talk. It will be both live at DYHS and linked via Zoom.

## **December**

In December, we will have Nathan Whitehorn from Michigan State University speaking to us about Neutrino Astronomy, a topic we haven’t heard about in our talks in the last few years. Zoom only.