



Newsletter of the  
Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston  
Including the Bond Astronomical Club  
Established in 1934  
In the Interest of Telescope Making & Using

Vol. 17, No. 10 November 2005

## This Month's Meeting...

Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at 8:00 PM

Phillips Auditorium  
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

*Parking at CfA is allowed for duration of meeting*

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER will be David Tytell from Sky and Telescope. David's talk will be "What's News in Planetary Science: Planets, Comets, Moons, and More." David Tytell joined the *Sky & Telescope* team in January 2000. Around the office, Dave is usually found editing and writing features or reporting on a breaking news story. Recently Dave was the first reporter in the country to report on the discovery of UB313, the solar system's "10th Planet." His background is firmly planted in astronomy and science writing with degrees from Caltech and Boston University. Dave has observed at some of the leading telescopes in the world including the Palomar, Lick and Keck observatories.

An amateur astronomer since he was 12 years old, Dave owns two telescopes: a 13-inch Dobsonian and a 4½-inch reflector. He has hosted dozens of star parties and has been sharing the wonders of the night sky with others for more than a decade. On the side he writes planetarium shows, including the new show *Far, Far Away: The Worlds of Star Wars* currently playing at the Museum of Science's Charles Hayden Planetarium.

Please join our speaker for a pre-meeting dinner at 5:45 PM (seating at 6:00 PM) at the Changsho Restaurant located at 1712 Mass Ave. in our fair city, Cambridge.

## President's Message...

I won't be at the November meeting as I'll be in Vancouver for the Internet Engineering Task Force ([www.ietf.org](http://www.ietf.org)) meeting. Virginia Renehan (Vice President) will fill in for me. Thanks Virginia. And, I'm sorry I'll miss David's talk.

For those that read this before November 3rd, please attend the open house for MIT, Lincoln Labs, and Harvard College Observatory at the clubhouse starting at 4:30.

While the weather has been relatively poor for observing (even by New England standards), it was amazing that the clouds opened up just as the Townsend star party started on October 26th. And, the clouds promptly came back as the star party ended. While I must admit that this is the first star party I've attended in some time, it was a fantastic experience. It is amazing to see and hear some of the kids' (and parents') reactions. While for some, you're not even sure if they are seeing anything (they likely expect to see what they've seen in pictures), there are plenty of others that are just amazed at the view and awed at the experience of seeing a galaxy millions of light years away. It is a neat experience and I encourage members to participate! I'm definitely participating more often!

It is time to start planning the January meeting on Total Solar Eclipses. There are two primary purposes for this meeting: 1) preparing those traveling to see the March 29th, 2006 eclipse for what to expect and observe and 2) sharing the magic and beauty of the experience to attract more of you to chase total solar eclipses. Mario Motta and I are working to get one or two "professionals" to speak on photography (digital and analog), but we want members to share their past experiences and plans for this eclipse. So, if you want to speak on a subject, show some photos from past trips, or share your plans for this eclipse, please contact me.

I'm beginning to schedule speakers for the February-June meetings, and would like to have a member speak and have a member's night. If you're interested in speaking (either as the main speaker for the meeting or just for 5-15 minutes), please get in touch with me.

Best regards,

- **Bernie Volz, President ATMoB** -

# October Meeting Minutes. . .

Bernie Volz opened the October meeting by introducing our speaker, Aaron Price. Aaron works at the AAVSO, and also is a principal at Slacker Astronomy, a web astronomy resource. His topic for the evening was "Drinking From a Firehose", or how to gather useful astronomy information from the web. Aaron started by motivating the discussion with statistics on the number of astronomy 'hits' from a simple Google search on astronomy: 137 million pages catalogued. Aaron's goal was to give us strategies for mining good information from all those pages.

The first web topic considered was Blogs. Blogs are online publications which may be written by one person or a group of people. They can range from quite informal diaries, to 'play by play' recording of events like the shuttle returning to Florida. Blogs (as most things on the web) vary widely in quality. Aaron warned the group to read critically, and when you find one you are comfortable with, stay with it. Some recommended Blogs include:

[www.badastronomy.com/bablog](http://www.badastronomy.com/bablog)  
[www.msnbc.msn.com](http://www.msnbc.msn.com) - search for Cosmic Log  
[www.nasawatch.com](http://www.nasawatch.com) - watchdog group  
[www.livejournal.com/community/astronomy](http://www.livejournal.com/community/astronomy) - mostly grad. students

An index and recommended starting point for Blogs can be found at

[www.blogcritics.org](http://www.blogcritics.org)

I poked around the bad astronomy blog, and lost an hour of time. Interesting short essays on this and that around science, and links to other interesting places.

The next topic Aaron covered was RSS, Real Simple Syndication. RSS allows creating custom news services. With his motivation, prior to writing this, I signed up for a news aggregator (BlogLines) on my Linux machine, and was instantly drowning in more information than I could read.

Think of an aggregator as skimming the 'top' stories from any site, and delivering them to your desktop. It allows reading of blogs from all over, and will take rss feeds as well. For example [www.astromart.com/rss](http://www.astromart.com/rss) will allow for feeds from the Astromart site. Aaron recommended [www.universetoday.com](http://www.universetoday.com) as another good source for rss astronomy feeds. Any website with [xml|rss] in its corner will allow an rss feed. This certainly is interesting, but will take some practice gleaning useful information from all the chaff.

Aaron went on to podcasts as a source of astronomy information on the web. A podcast is an mp3 audio file, and although associated with iPod, does not require one to play. I have recently listened to Aaron's podcast from the Connecticut Star Party using RealPlayer on my Linux box. Not quite like being there, but interesting none the less. A

podcast will allow what Aaron called guerilla journalism where anyone will be able to instantly create an audio report of almost any event. Some podcasts which Aaron recommended included:

[www.astronomy.ie](http://www.astronomy.ie) - from Ireland - go to the Radio Show link [science.nasa.gov/podcast.htm](http://science.nasa.gov/podcast.htm) - to setup podcasts  
[www.spitzer.caltech.edu](http://www.spitzer.caltech.edu) - a podcast link (and rss) at bottom  
Another source (found in Google) was [www.podcast.net/tag/astronomy](http://www.podcast.net/tag/astronomy) - lot's of interesting podcasts listed. Finally the ipoders.org site, and the itunes site both list podcasts.

Aaron next gave a demonstration of the web's ability by being joined in the lecture by Dr. Phil Plait, the host of the badAstronomy web site (and various books). He has his own blog on the site, and likes using it because it allows short essays (paragraphs) rather than write a full column on a topic. It also allows a sense of community to be developed as folks interact with the blog. A tip he provided, echoed by Aaron, was to be skeptical whenever reading the web.

Aaron went on to discuss Wiki's on the web. Wiki's allow collaborative development of documents. The document becomes an open source knowledge base, where virtually anyone can edit what anyone else has written. Wiki's are in use in a variety of settings, and are now finding use within astronomy. An example of this is [www.skyinsight.net/wiki](http://www.skyinsight.net/wiki) found (again) with a Google search of astronomy and wiki.

Aaron briefly mentioned the various discussion forums we know and love (such as the atmob listserv). He then concluded with a discussion of online journals. A clearing house for professional journals is arxiv.org, listing all kinds of articles.

Aarons talk was well received by those attending. I will admit that I arrived jaded to another talk about the web, and I left energized to try new things. The questions asked by others indicated interest as well.

We then went on to our business meeting. Highlights included:

- normal secretary, membership, and treasurer reports
- upcoming star parties announced
- clubhouse report: big news is that roof has not been started, but is anticipated in November. The open house and picnic for the professional astronomers associated with Haystack, Millstone, and Wallace is planned for November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Members are encouraged to make this a nice event as we want to express our appreciation to them for allowing us to use the clubhouse on their grounds, and to introduce them to what we do as a club.
- Dick Koolish gave a report on the Antique Telescope Society meeting in Cincinnati. Very interesting slides.
- John Boudreaux wowed the club again with his excellent images of Mars. Good job!

Bernie adjourned the meeting to a time of refreshments and fellowship. - *Dave Siegrist* -

## Membership Report...

This month we have 9 new members:

LLOYD ALDERSON from Harvard  
TYLER ALDERSON from Harvard  
WESLEY HIRSCH from Arlington  
JOSEPH KRISTL from Acton  
GEORGE PAQUIN from Chelmsford  
ROBERT SAVAGE from Natick  
MARK SCHLACK from Cambridge  
JEREMY SCHMIT from Watertown  
JIM WATTERS from Billerica  
**- Dan Winchell -**

## Clubhouse Saturday Schedule

November 5	Brian Maerz	John Small
November 12	Rick Burrier	Gary Walker
November 19	Brian Leacu	Phil Rounsville
November 26	Rich Nugent	Jim Suslowich

## Club Fund Raiser

ATMoB member Dr. Fred Ward, has made a very generous donation of many computer accessories which are being made available to club members at well below retail price. All proceeds will go to the club's general fund. Choose from Monitors, Printers, Web Cams, Storage and Networking equipment, most New In Box (NIB). First-come, first-served and quantities are very limited. Check out the list at the ATMoB web site at the URL:

<http://atmob.org/atmequipmentsale.htm>

If an item has already been sold the successful buyer's name appears in the right hand column. I will have many of the items not yet sold with me at the November meeting if you would like to purchase something on the list. Payment may be in the form of check or cash.

**- Bruce Berger -**

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**December *Star Fields* deadline  
Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Email articles to Mike Hill  
at [noatak@aol.com](mailto:noatak@aol.com)**

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**POSTMASTER NOTE:** First Class Postage Mailed November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston, Inc.  
c/o Dan Winchell, Membership Secretary  
20 Howard St.  
Cambridge, MA 02139-3720

## FIRST CLASS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD 2005-2006

PRESIDENT: Bernie Volz (603) 968-3062  
[president@atmob.org](mailto:president@atmob.org)

VICE PRES: Virginia Renehan (978) 283-0862  
SECRETARY: Michael Hill (508) 485-0230  
MEMBERSHIP: Dan Winchell (617) 876-0110

TREASURER: Gary Jacobson (978) 692-4187  
MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Bruce Tinkler (781) 862-8040  
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PAST PRESIDENTS:  
2004-05 Bruce Berger (978) 256-9208  
2002-04 Eileen Myers (978) 456-3937  
2001-02 Bob Collara (781) 275 9482

### COMMITTEES

CLUBHOUSE : Paul Cicchetti (978) 433-9215  
John Reed (781) 861-8031  
Steve Clougherty (781) 784-3024

HISTORIAN: Anna Hillier (781) 861-8338

OBSERVING: Virginia Renehan (978) 283-0862

## How to Find Us...

### Web Page [www.atmob.org](http://www.atmob.org)

**MEETINGS:** Held the second Thursday of each month (September to July) at 8:00PM in the Phillips Auditorium, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 60 Garden St., Cambridge MA. For INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATION listen to WBZ (1030 AM)

**CLUBHOUSE:** Latitude 42° 36.5' N Longitude 71° 29.8' W

The Tom Britton Clubhouse is open every Saturday from 7 p.m. to late evening. It is the white farmhouse on the grounds of MIT's Haystack Observatory in Westford, MA. Take Rt. 3 North from Rt. 128 or Rt. 495 to Exit 33 and proceed West on Rt. 40 for five miles. Turn right at the MIT Lincoln Lab, Haystack Observatory at the Groton town line. Proceed to the farmhouse on left side of the road. Clubhouse attendance varies with the weather. It is wise to call in advance: (978) 692-8708.

## Heads Up For The Month . . .

*To calculate Eastern Standard Time (EST) from Universal Time (UT) subtract 5 from UT.*

November 1 New Moon  
November 7 Mars reaches opposition at 0800 UT  
November 8 First Quarter Moon  
November 15 Full Moon  
November 17 Leonid meteor shower  
November 23 Last Quarter Moon