

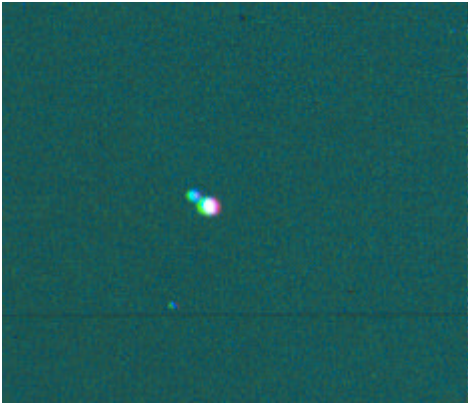


# The American Astronomer

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF  
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Volume 11, No. 4

September 1998



*Double Star Gamma Andromedae*

## Isaac Kikawada Earns Double Star Certificate

A hearty congratulation goes to Isaac M. Kikawada of Mountain View, CA, for earning the Astronomical League's Double Star Club Certificate. Isaac observed 100 double or multiple systems using a 70MM Pronto refractor. As you can see, Isaac got his certificate the hard way: he earned it.

Nice job, Isaac, we are proud of you.

## David Hasenauer Earns Double Star Certificate

Also this month, I would like to recognize AAAA member David Hasenauer of Pasadena, CA, for his being awarded the Astronomical League's Double Star Club Certificate.

David is an accomplished observer in many areas of amateur astronomy, and again proves this by observing 100 double star systems using a 17 and 1/2 inch Dobsonian. What is really impressive is that David has observed the triple system Gamma Andromedae using the 100-inch Hooker Telescope on top of Mount Wilson, CA.

We are proud to have David as a member of our club.



AAAA Vice-President Ed Flaspoeehler stands by his 12-inch f/5 Big Foot Newtonian telescope, awaiting his turn as speaker at the North Texas Skywatch Star Party on September 26. Texas amateur Preston Starr can be seen in the background giving his talk on astrophotography. AAAA promotional material is on the table ready for distribution.

Local star parties and public observing sessions are a good way to get the word out about the AAAA. Become the astronomy expert in your area. Please let us know if you need any materials or help on a presentation.

## AAAA Attends North Texas Skywatch

The 2nd Annual North Texas Sky Watch was held on September 26, 1998, at Cleburn State Park, south of Ft. Worth, TX. Over 300 amateur astronomers and the general public attended this event, which is organized each year by Michael Hibbs of Ft. Worth. Michael is an astronomy instructor at Tarrant County Junior College.

The North Texas Skywatch's Amateur Astronomer's Star Party is designed for the amateur astronomers in the DFW area to get together and share ideas, experiences, learn new techniques, swap equipment, test out new equipment, and observe in a dark sky location, within an easy drive from the Metroplex. The Star Party is also for those novices who are curious and want to learn more about astronomy, or have a chance to see the night time skies in a dark location through a wide variety of telescopes.

Starting at 4:00 PM, there was an open swap meet for amateur astronomers to sell and buy astronomical related goods, a new telescopes and accessories display, infor-

mation on local college and university astronomical programs, and information on local astronomy and science clubs.

Local astrophotographer Preston Starr presented an astrophotography seminar entitled *Backyard Tripod to Telescope and CCD: Affordable Applications for the Amateur Astronomer*

At 7:30, AAAA Vice-President Ed Flaspoeehler presented a 30 minute slide show, Introduction to Deep Sky Objects. The talk discussed representative deep sky objects visible that night, including a globular cluster, M13 in Hercules, a planetary nebular, M57 in Lyra, open clusters M6 and M7 in Scorpius, emission nebulas M8 and M20 in Sagittarius, and a galaxy, M31 in Andromeda. The beautiful double star gamma Andromedae was also included. Ed's talk covered not only pictures of the deep sky objects, but also showed how to find the objects on star charts handed out to audience members before the show. Ed also

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# AAAA

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The opinions expressed by contributors to the AMERICAN ASTRONOMER do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AAAA or the Editor. Articles representing supporting or opposing views will be published promptly after receipt.

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League



## Notes from the President

The first order of business is to congratulate AAAA members Isaac M. Kikawada and David Hasenauer, both from California, for earning the Astronomical League's Double Star Club Certificate. Both got a nice certificate and pin for their accomplishment. We are really pleased that they are members of the AAAA.

Another item that I would like to address is membership benefits. Many times, the benefits of membership pay for the membership dues themselves. As an example, a regular subscription to *Sky & Telescope* Magazine costs \$39.00, but you can get a new or renewal subscription through the club for only \$27.00, a savings of \$11.00. This savings represents 55% of your club dues. Ordering *Astronomy* Magazine's 1999 Calendar from us saves another \$4.00, which brings savings up to 75 per cent of club dues. As you can see, if you take advantage of the many club benefits, before long you have earned a free membership.

As a member of the AAAA, you should receive something from us every month. Four times a year you will get the Astronomical League's REFLECTOR magazine, four times a year you will get the AAAA Newsletter, *The American Astronomer*, and four times a year you will get something to enhance your amateur astronomy experience. Our "Primer for the Beginning Stargazer" was one, and S&T's "Getting Started in Astronomy" was another. As the months go by, we will add more and different items to our astronomy arsenal.

In September, through an arrangement with the University of Colorado, we sent you one of the best items we have come across in a long time. The International Halley Watch produced a coffee table sized book about Comet Halley with hundreds of photos in color and black and white. This book is a \$39.95 value, but we have been able to get some for our members for free. If you were a member of the AAAA by August 31, 1998, then look for a copy of this book in your mail box in the next two weeks. This is just another way we can serve you, our members.

Expect more new and unusual items from us in the months to come. Please remember to renew your membership so that you won't miss out on these membership benefits. As usual, if you have any articles, letters, poems, or whatever, please send them to us so that we can include them in your newsletter. Photos are also welcome. Best regards,

*John Wagoner, President - AAAA*

### Astronomy Magazine's 1999 Calendar Now Available

*Astronomy* Magazine's 1999 Calendar can now be ordered from the AAAA. This beautiful all color calendar is normally priced at \$12.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling, but is available from your club for \$10.00 plus \$1.00 postage. Please see the enclosed flyer for details. This is yet another benefit for being a member of the AAAA. To get your calendar, please send a check or money order made out to the AAAA for \$11.00 for each calendar and mail to:

**AAAA, 3131 Custer Rd., Suite 175/175, Plano, Tx. 75075**

We ask that you have your order to us no later than November 15, 1998, so that we can order them from *Astronomy Magazine* and get them to you in plenty of time for Christmas.

# Letters, We Get Letters !

## Where's my Magazine?

Hi!

Thanks so much for all you are doing for those of us who live in the middle of no where and have no other club to turn to. Of course, the middle of no where has its advantages at night!

I mailed a renewal to *Sky and Telescope* to y'all on June 16, 1998, to take advantage of the club discount.

I received today (July 28, 1998) a final notice from *Sky and Telescope*.

Did y'all get the renewal? Is there something else I need to do?

Thanks for your help.

Chris H. Deaton

Chris:

Your subscription to *Sky & Telescope* magazine was processed as soon as I received it. By now you should have received your first issue. Please let me know if you have any other problems.

Thanks for taking advantage of one of the AAAA's benefits.

John Wagoner - President, AAAA

## My Life as an Astronomer

Dear AAAA Members:

Good greetings friends and fellow Amateur Astronomers!! Sorry for not writing, there have been some ill circumstances lately. I have had to take a "small vacation" from our hobby of Astronomy. This has discouraged me greatly, and I am yearning to return. My Astronomy education has taken a turn for the worse, mainly because I can't return to school. For awhile now, my Family and Friends have opposed my goal of having a career in Astronomy, which I am beginning to doubt. This all stems from my culture, which I will say is Gypsy. I don't approve of the traditional ways. Because I am half American, I see the best of both cultures. Much of my generation is thinking like this. Sadly, the Gypsy traditions are fading. But, with the help of the Lord, I will fight tooth and nail, as well as to the ends of the Earth, to achieve this goal.

I will be turning 16 on Nov. 26. To me this is sad, for I'm supposed to be attending eighth grade. The reason I'm so far back is that I started school when I was 10, and then I was absent for a period of 5 years because my Family didn't want me to go back to school. But I went back and it turned out that I was tested at having a seventh grade level in everything except Science ... which I had a ninth grade level (except for the Math part of Astronomy which I am working hard on).

Now, for other matters. I have just recently received the August 1998 issue of the REFLECTOR. I was especially interested in the article titled *The Lone Wolf* by Brenda

Culbertson ( "Are You An Astro | Burn-out?, Pg. 12). The reason I was so interested in it was because she best describes me, a "Glory Hound", and one who wanted to do everything possible ... except that I HAVEN'T done everything possible!!

I was surprised that I even got this issue of the REFLECTOR because I've moved three times in the last 6 months!! We are planning to move out of the apartment which we are in now and move to a house here in Atlanta.

One | thing I have been trying to do is save for is a good, sturdy, 10 inch, LX200 Meade Telescope with the electric drive (I'm not very good at the coordinate system), especially now that Jupiter is above the Horizon. The planet I'd love to see with it though is Mars. I'm still very interested in the prospect of Terraforming Mars. I've recently done some calculations on it from the book *The Case For Mars* by Robert Zubrin. My calculations where unsuccessful (I came up with three different answers!!)

I have finally gotten access to the Internet, although it's very unreliable (it's a Web TV). I don't know how long I'll have it though, beings that I'm moving and all. But I'll gladly accept E-Mail at this address: Warlockpj@webtv.net. Hopefully this address won't change.

Well, I hope this finds you in good health, good body, and good spirit.

Your Friend And Fellow Amateur Astronomer;

PJ Mitchell.  
(Aug.29,1998)

P.S. I wish to say a very big "thank you" and "God bless you" to all the members in the AL and the AAAA for just loving our wonderful, wonderful hobby of Amateur Astronomy.

## The Arp Peculiar Galaxies - A CCD Image Gallery

Dear Mr. Wagoner,

I just found the AAAA Arp Page with the Knauss-Morton images. What a great thing!

I am in the process of auditing my Arp list and have found a number of corrections, after reviewing the Arp views in the Vickers' Atlas and the Carnegie Atlas, hunting elusive companion names and comparing with the Hickson list of Compact Galaxy Groups, as well as incorporating some appropriate Mitchell Anonymous Catalog entries. I will provide you with an update to the AL online materials, when I get done. Most corrections are to fainter galaxies.

Regards,

Dennis Webb

(You can visit the AAAA's Arp page at the following web address:

<http://www.corvus.com/arp/arp.htm>.)

## Magazine Subscriptions

Subscribe to *Astronomy or Sky & Telescope* magazine. Both magazines have regular monthly star charts, plus a calendar of what to view each month. A regular subscription to S&T is \$36.00 per year, but you can get it at the club discount through the AAAA for only \$27.00 per year. A regular subscription to *Astronomy* is also \$36 per year, but you can get it at the club discount for only \$24.00. To subscribe to either, or extend your current subscription, send a check for the correct amount, made out to AAAA, to:

AAAA

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## North Texas Skywatch

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make a brief mention of the mythological background of each constellation.

To end the scheduled activities, organizer Michael Hibbs awarded a valuable door prize: Starry Night Deluxe Astronomy Software for Windows and Mac donated by Sienna (value of \$89.95). To close out the evening, Mike then made a presentation called *Intro to Astronomy for the Novice and Curious*.

Starting at 9:00 pm, the attendees were treated to open telescopic observations and given help with constellation identification. Due to the clear skies, pleasant temperatures, and steady seeing, the event lasted well past midnight.

For more information on future North Texas Skywatch events, contact: Michael Hibbs 817-238-9883 or e-mail Mikehibbs@aol.com

North Texas Skywatch is not an astronomy club. It is a homepage dedicated to astronomy education and informing the North Texas area of regional astronomical events. For more information, please refer to the North Texas Skywatch homepage: <http://members.aol.com/Mikehibbs/Skywatch/skywatch.html>.

The next North Texas Skywatch Star Show for 1998 will be at Fossil Rim State Park, west of Ft. Worth, on November 21.

Read more about the North Texas Skywatch on the AAAA's web page, at <http://www.corvus.com>

# A u t u m n O b s e r v i n g

by Brenda Culbertson  
stargazr@mail.holton.k12.ks.us

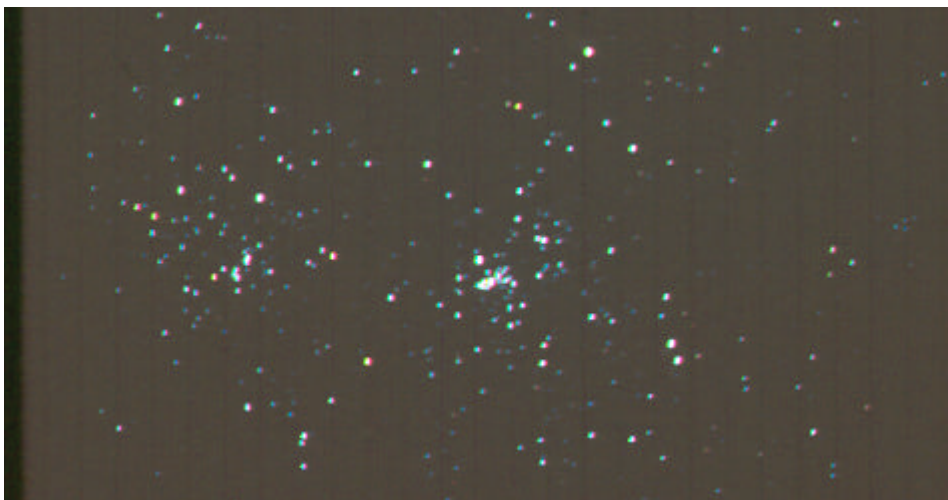
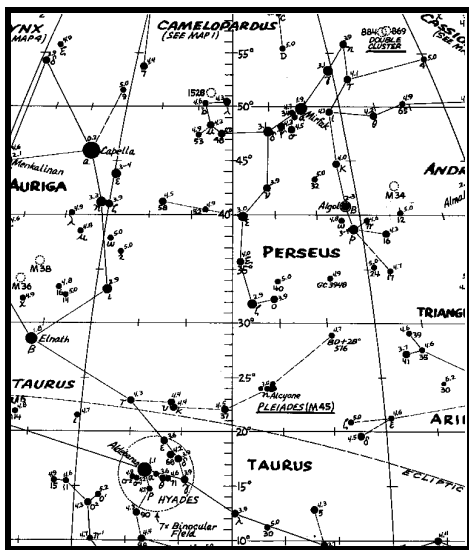
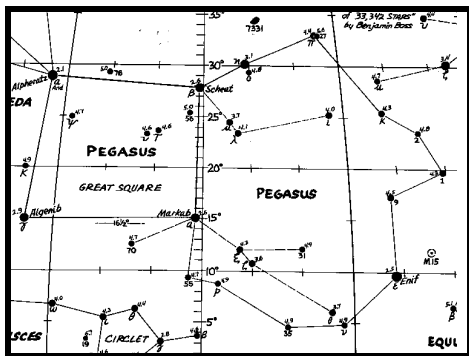
Cooler temperatures are in the air, along with many different objects in the heavens. This summer was pretty miserable for many of us, so we look forward to a change in season. Although the days are still hot across the country, the nights are becoming cooler and longer. We will soon get relief and, hopefully, an opportunity to do more viewing of the night sky.

## DEEP SKY OBJECTS

### Easy Objects

The most famous and perhaps the easiest object to see this season is the **Pleiades Star Cluster**. The Pleiades Star Cluster leads the way for the winter sky. As Taurus climbs to its dominance of the Autumn night sky, this cluster of bright, blue stars is unmistakable. Without using optical aid, try counting the number of members. Then, use binoculars to count again. Finally, use a telescope of any size aperture to see how many members there are.

The constellation Pegasus has such



The Great Perseus Double Cluster, NGC 869 and NGC 884. Amateur astronomers have been wondering for years why these two are not included on the Messier list. But they are on the Herschel 400 list.

a wide range of objects, we could view objects in this area several nights in a row. One of the easy to see objects is **M 15** (NGC 7078), a globular star cluster. It is about 4 degrees NW of Epsilon Pegasi and is about 6.5 magnitude. You should be able to see this object in binoculars, but it may appear as a bright, fuzzy star.

Move on up to the constellation Perseus and find some objects which do not require any visual aid to see on a dark night. Look between Cassiopeia and Perseus and you will see two star clusters in close visual proximity of each other. Without optical aid they appear as one large, fuzzy patch in the sky, but with any optical aid observers will see individual star fields. Low power will individualize each cluster, but both will be in the same field of view. The designation for these clusters are NGC 869 and NGC 884, **The Great Perseus Double Cluster**.

Try **M 34** (NGC 1039) if you want another easy object. This is a bright, open star cluster in Perseus, about 5 degrees WNW from Algol. The stars do not appear many in number, but present a nice object to observe. Give it a try.

### Moderately Difficult Objects

Pegasus has a few more moderately difficult and difficult objects than it does easy objects. One of these moderately difficult objects is **NGC 7331**. It is located about 4.3 degrees north and slightly west from Eta Pegasi. It is a spiral galaxy about 10th magnitude and is the model of what astronomers think the Milky Way looks like.

Another object in Pegasus which is moderately difficult to view, although some find it very difficult to find, is **Stephan's Quintet**. This is a galaxy grouping of five members, the brightest of which is NGC 7320. The other members, NGC 7317, 7318A & B, and 7319 make up the fainter members. The group is about half a degree SSW from NGC 7331. The average magnitude of the group is about 14. This group can be seen on a good night by an experienced eye with a 6" aperture.

Go fishing for **M 74** (NGC 628) in the constellation Pisces. This is a nice, face-on, spiral galaxy about 1.5 degrees ENE of Eta Piscium. It has a low surface brightness and may be found easier when averted vision and a wide field of view are used. This is one of the faintest Messier objects of about 10th magnitude.

### Difficult Objects

**M 76** (NGC 650-1), the Little Dumbbell Nebula, is a challenge for most people. Once it is found, however, it is quite the treat. M 76 is located just less than a degree NNW from Phi Persei and about 8 degrees SW of the Perseus Double Cluster. This cluster is in the extreme western portion of the constellation.

Try to view **NGC 1275** in Perseus. It is a galaxy, but is quite puzzling in appearance and emissions. NGC 1275 lies about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  east of Algol and just north. It is about 13th magnitude and may have been part of a collision with another galaxy.

## Observing the Planets

### Jupiter

Jupiter comes up in the evening and keeps us company pretty much all night. Jupiter is hard to miss. Just look for the biggest, brightest star-like object in the sky a short while after sunset. It will, of course, rise earlier each night. The Great Red Spot, Jupiter's permanent storm, can easily be seen in a telescope with an 8-inch aperture.

Jupiter's Galilean satellites dance around their master to give us all a terrific show. As the moons pass across the face of the planet, watch for the dark spot of the shadow. You will be able to follow the shadow and see the moon as it reappears from the lighted planet's disc.

### Saturn

Not long after Jupiter rises, Saturn can be seen. Saturn does not appear as big or bright as Jupiter, but it is still easy to see. Binoculars will reveal a bright disc of light, but it will have bulges on each side as you look at it.

Any size telescope should provide a good look at Saturn and its ring system. If you get a steady, dark night to view Saturn, you should see the Cassini Division in the ring system and atmospheric bands on the planet. If you like shadows, you will be able to see the shadows cast by the rings onto the surface of the planet on the front side, and shadows cast by the planet itself onto the rings on the back side.

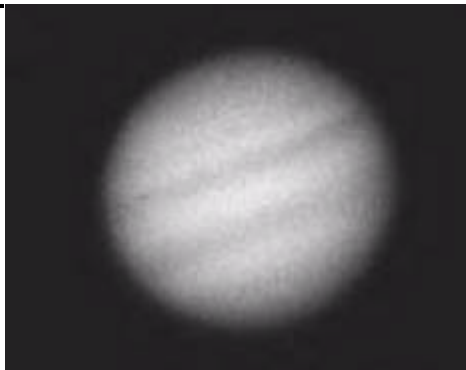
### Mercury

Mercury will be an evening object

### Other Things to See

There is so much to see in the sky this season, so get out your books, charts, and other materials to hunt down those special objects. While you are doing this, though, don't forget the meteor showers.

**Dates To Remember:** *October 4* - Lunar occultation of Jupiter. *October 5* - Full Moon. *October 8-9* - Draconid Meteor Shower Peak. *October 9* - Lunar occultation of Aldebaran. *October 12* - Columbus Day. *October 15* - Lunar occultation of Regulus and Lunar occultation of Mars. *October 20* - New Moon. *October 21-23* - Orionid Meteor Shower Peak. *October 25* - Daylight Saving Time ends (Yahoo!!!!). *October*



**Now is the time to go out and get a great view of our planetary neighborhood. Jupiter and Saturn are two popular objects to view, although Mars is at the top of the popularity list. Venus outshines almost everything when it is up, but Mercury is elusive. These two seem to play "hide-and-seek" with observers over the months. The other planets are still there, but you really have to know where to look and at what time. Neptune's and Uranus' hues will amaze you when you get a good close up view of them. Pluto? Well, if you can determine which star-like object Pluto is, you're doing a fantastic job!**

for a while, but this one is never around for very long. Look for it soon and start looking around the time of sunset.

Venus will be a morning object for a while. Watch it go through the phases as you view this super bright planet.

### Mars

Mars rises in the morning a few hours before sunrise. The red planet is accompanied by Regulus in Leo for quite some time. Look for the duo as you observe the round of planets.

Uranus still hangs close to Neptune in the area of Pisces. Uranus has a very unusual hue, which looks to be between green and blue. Check it for yourself and see what color you think it is.

Neptune and Pluto are visible after sunset. Check your charts for exact

positions.

### Trivia

Neptune is currently more distant than Pluto, but that will change in February of 1999 when things will get back to "normal".

Planets will be available during each night this season, and it will not matter if there is a Moon up or not. Several of the planets will be easily seen even during a Full Moon. You will be able to observe at least one any time of the night.

Speaking of Moons and trivia, did you know ... The Full Moon nearest the Autumnal Equinox is called the Harvest Moon? It is designated such because farmers, as the autumn days get shorter, use the light of the Full Moon to help them see during a long day of harvest that runs into the night.

*31* - Lunar occultation of Jupiter.

*November 2-4* - Taurid Meteor Shower Peak. *November 4* - Full Moon. *November 5* - Lunar occultation of Aldebaran. *November 11* - Veterans Day & Lunar occultation of Regulus. *November 16 - 18* - Leonid Meteor Shower Peak. *November 18* - New Moon. *November 26* - Thanksgiving Day. *November 27* - Lunar occultation of Jupiter.

*December 3* - Full Moon & Lunar occultation of Aldebaran. *December 9* - Lunar occultation of Regulus. *December 13* - Hanukkah. *December 13-15* - Geminid Meteor Shower Peak. *December 18* - New Moon. *December 21* - Winter solstice. *December 25* -

Christmas Day & Lunar occultation of Jupiter. *December 30* - Lunar occultation of Aldebaran

Check for your local times for event occurrences. Not all areas will see all events.

If you would like the author to check to see if any particular event will be observable for your particular location, please send the date and event, along with your longitude and latitude to the e-mail address: stargazr@mail.holton.k12.ks.us or mail it to Brenda Culbertson in care of this publication. If you use standard mail, please include a self addressed, stamped envelope.

**Welcome to  
The American  
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*The American  
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*SWRAL The Southwest Region of  
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*REFLECTOR The Astronomical  
League Newsletter*

**TAKE a TRIP to the UNIVERSE !**

Have you visited the AAAA's web page lately? Lots of changes have taken place since the last edition of *The American Astronomer* Newsletter. For starters, we've changed the look of the page, with our logo on a dark blue background displayed prominently.

The site is easier to navigate, too. On the title page, there is a short table of contents, which takes you quickly to your area of interest. Then, sub-menus help you navigate around.

We've added several new areas of interest. The most important is the page entitled Arp Peculiar Galaxies - *A CCD Image Gallery*. Our friends Terry Knauss and Mike Morton, from Houston, gave us permission to publish their images on our web page. The results are spectacular.

The Constellation Home Page is also growing, along with the number of links to other astronomy sites, and helpful hints for amateur astronomers. And you can buy books from Amazon.Com through our own AstroMax on-line book store.

We've been noticed by others, too. The Astronomical League's newsletter, the REFLECTOR, now has its internet presence alongside the AAAA. And the Southwest Region of the Astronomical League is developing its own page with us.

We've also added the capability to renew your membership, or welcome new members, through our own credit card service, provided by an internet credit card company called CCNow.

So sign on to <http://www.corvus.com>, go visit, and take a look, as we continue to expand the presence of the American Association of Amateur Astronomers on the World Wide Web.

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