

Program - "The Detection and Measurement of Exoplanets"— Steve Powell	Volume 28, No.12 April 2023
Greg Smith – editor	Meeting: Wednesday 7pm April 19, 2023 ZOOM/R. A. Long Rm 130

Peacefulness of a night sky.

I've been thinking how much I miss sitting on my back deck and just looking up at the night sky. We've had clouds for so many days now, that I am getting anxious for some clear weather with not so chilly temperatures. What I miss the most is the relaxing feeling I get from just sitting and looking up and watching the stars so slowly cross the sky. I know it takes a while to tell if the stars are moving, but it is still a time of peacefulness. It is similar to sitting out in the forest and breathing all that clean air that the trees of the forest provide. A clear night can produce that feeling too. I remember a time camping at Spirit Lake long before the mountain blew, sitting on a small dock. I got both the clear sky and the fresh air of the forest at the same time. It was so calming. I was watching the Perseid meteor shower. When I saw bright flashes straight overhead, I soon realized that those pinpoint flashes were meteors coming straight at me. A little unnerving, but also knew that the earth was protecting me with its atmosphere. No splashes in the lake were heard and so nothing was getting through the atmospheric

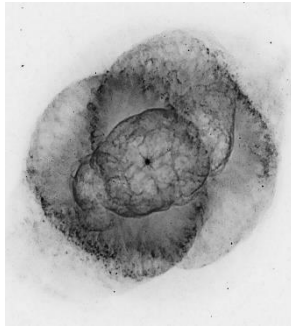
shield. I just relaxed and enjoyed the spectacle. I felt safe and protected.

How many of you have felt the peacefulness of just sitting and looking at the stars? I hope that most amateur astronomers have that feeling, as part of the reason they go out into the night to view the stars, planets and nebula.

It is a way to get away from all the hecticness of the world around us, either from the news or in the home. It helps put things into perspective of just how small we really are.

Once again let's remember that a clear sky can bring peace to our spirit if we just let ourselves let go of our worries and float into the night sky. A pair of binoculars can help us get up there a bit more quickly. We don't need much help.

Every Night is a Starry Night
Every Day is a Star Filled Day



Cosmic Coregulation BY: JENNIFER WILLIS [Sky and Telescope.com](http://SkyandTelescope.com)

You know how being around certain people just makes you feel better, and calmer? Or maybe there's an animal companion whose presence reduces your stress and makes the world feel more manageable.

Through the magic of coregulation, someone with a natural sense of ease can share their tranquility with someone in distress, by simple proximity.

Beginning in infancy, coregulation is a natural skill that helps us build relationships, deal with powerful emotions, and manage stress.

I'd argue the same holds true for the night sky.

Stargazing helps us to connect with the natural world and align with its rhythms. When I'm not encumbered by too much equipment or letting myself get frustrated about my neighbor's porch light, taking some time to decompress under the stars dissolves much of the stress of the day. Often, I don't realize how tense I am until the pressure subsides.

Studies show that your heart rate and breathing tend to synchronize with those you love when they're nearby. Pain and anxiety subside. Connection to others makes us feel safe and secure, and it's one reason therapy dogs and emotional support animals are effective.

But the reverse can also be true. I have a predisposition to reflect the moods of those around me, and to take on the tone of news and entertainment media. I don't know if that's due to empathy, autism, or just plain being human, but it's something I have to watch out for.

You know what's not full of drama, intrigue, and stress lurking around every corner? The night sky.

Under the open sky, I sense absolute acceptance. I am small and insignificant in the best possible way as the vast universe settles over my shoulders like a celestial weighted blanket.

The cool, clean air — when there's not an active firepit nearby or wildfire smoke drifting in — awakens and engages my senses. Sheltered from the overwhelming sounds of traffic and television, my breathing deepens. I wish I could taste starlight; I imagine it would be more palatable than the eponymous, limited-run Coca-Cola flavor, whose taste was variously described as cereal milk, burnt cotton candy, and “floor.”

The stars don't care about my social awkwardness when talking to a sales clerk earlier in the day. My busy brain can take a break from worrying about projects, client expectations, and deliverables. At least temporarily, that anxiety falls away.

The only deadline comes from Earth's rotation. If I don't manage to make out all the stars in Vulpecula or successfully star-hop to the Hercules Globular Cluster before it sets in the West — or before I have to drag myself to bed — I can try again the next clear night.

Better still, I have a new astronomy companion. We adopted a massive senior dog who doesn't wander off, even in the dark. On the one clear night we've had recently, I dragged my zero gravity chair outside along with a pair of 7×35 binoculars for some low-stress, medium-bliss stargazing; Jax the dog was content to take a nap on the ground beside me. In both stellar and canine company, my heart slowed. My busy brain mellowed. My dog's snoring blended with a chorus of singing frogs to create the perfect soundtrack for sedate, low-power sweeps across the sky.

It wasn't until the last few years that I pondered the soothing nature of starry skies. This rediscovery of “celestial therapy” was one of the blessings of the pandemic. Now, as the world lurches toward a new normal, I sometimes struggle to hold on to the serenity of stargazing. The pain, confusion, and elevated stakes of daily living edge me ever closer to my limit, and a fortnight or two of overcast skies can wear me down even more.

When I'm tense, I'm liable to make things more complicated. Maybe, I think I'll relax if I have more control. I can derail my night-sky viewing with overly ambitious plans. I'll carry too much equipment outside and exhaust myself trying to wrangle everything in the dark. Or I get caught up researching nebula filters or EAA tools during the day and find that I don't have any energy left once night falls.

Which is to say, stargazing can be as easy or as challenging as we make it out to be. For me, the highest joy to effort ratio comes from keeping things simple.

Stargazing provides an even keel when I'm feeling anxious or overwhelmed. Just as my dog is an instant mood stabilizer, so too I can count on the stars for cosmic coregulation. If these interminable clouds would just go away now, please, I know I can find steadiness and balance under a starlit sky.

☞ **April 2023 Meeting** ☞

DATE: April 19, 2023

TIME: 7:00pm

PLACE: Hybrid in person / Zoom - originating from R, A. Long H. S. Rm 130

PROGRAM: "The Detection and Measurement of Exoplanets" – Steve Powell

Moon Phases

New: May 19th, Fri. **1st Qtr.:** May 27th Sat. **Full:** June 3rd Sat. **3rd Qtr.:** Jun. 10th, Sat.

End of twilight - when the stars start to come out.

Fri May 19th 9:17p.m. Wed May 31st 9:31p.m. Fri June 9th 9:39pm Sat Jun 17th 9:44 p.m.

The Star Report is posted on the clubs website. It is listed in the blog portion of the website.

Minutes of the March FOG Meeting

We had eight attendees at the meeting at R A Long High School, which was a good attendance. nine others attended by Zoom.

Dr. Becky Smetherst was presented in a YouTube video on some of the great new discoveries by the James Webb Telescope. As it is performing better than expected, it is giving us views in better detail and showing us that we do not really know what is making things happen like: large galaxies forming too early in the universe than we expected.

Earth Day will be April 29th from 10 to 2:30pm, we will need to have a couple of volunteers for a 2hr shift 10 am to 12:00pm and 12:00pm till 2:30pm. 10 am to set up and till 2:30 to take down. The city is providing tent space and a table if we need it. Hope someone can bring a table. I'll have some handouts. We just need people to talk to the people to answer questions. So read up on the latest stuff on Sky and Telescope.com, Astronomy.com. or Space.com

We have been invited to have a star party at the Pomeroy Vineyards in Yacolt, WA.6 On Sat. July 15th.

It looks like we will be helping out at the Longview Public Library's instructional meeting on the upcoming Annular Eclipse. The meeting will be in the last half of September while the Eclipse will be on Saturday October 16th, this will be a morning Eclipse around 9 a.m. So get those sun viewing glasses out and have them ready.

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Next Month's Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for items in next month's newsletter is:
Wednesday: seven days before next meeting.

Please feel free to send in your thoughts and experiences about your astronomical adventures.

Submit your material by E-mail to: grlyth@msn.com

I just found a new favorite astronomy website. Its called Why We Look Up by Jennifer Willis, she is a fellow Pacific Northwesterner. I found that I enjoy her stuff.

<https://Skyandtelescope.org/astronomy-blogs/stargazing-why-we-look-up/>

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