

CAPE FEAR Skies

Monthly Newsletter
Cape Fear Astronomical Society
Serving Wilmington, NC and Surrounding Areas

November 2025

*Cape Fear Astronomical Society is a
tax-exempt organization under Section
501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue
Code.*

President's Message

by Ben Steelman

Just another reminder: We will be taking nominations for Society officers at our regular November. Several of our Old Reliables are retiring, so we need new blood! Most of these jobs take little time, so it's not an onerous commitment.

Again, our officers are president, vice president, associate vice president, secretary and treasurer.

For a brief span before World War I, the American public was obsessed with the cosmos, as much as it was during the heady days of Mercury, Apollo and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

The primary cause was one guy -- a Boston Brahmin and thoroughly amateur astronomer named Percival Lowell.

It's a story that author David Bron recounts in his new book, "The Martians" (Liveright, \$29.99).

Part of Bron's narrative will be familiar: The Italian Giovanni Schiaparelli reports in the late 1800s that he can see lines he calls "canali" on the planet Mars. In Italian "canali" mean "channels," but the popularizer Camille Flammarion, and then Lowell, misread that as "canalsm: meaning that Something With a Brain built it.

Lowell was a millionaire, so he built his own observatory outside Flagstaff, Arizona. (It's still there, and well worth a visit.) Soon, he's churning out sketches of canal after canal and speculating about what those obviously advanced beings on Mars are up to. (Yes, H.G. Wells takes the hint ...)

Academic astronomers were wary, but it turns out that Lowell was a pretty good writer -- sort of like the Carl Sagan of his day. Soon, he caught the popular imagination, and article after article appeared in newspapers and magazines.

Bron has great fun recounting the frenzy (think UFOs), and "The Martians" reprints several period illustrations -- some hilarious -- of what the Martians might look like. (One came very close to E.T.)

Bron, a former science correspondent for National Public Radio, is also the author of "American Eclipse," a fascination account of American eclipse hunters in the Wild West in the 2800s.



Keep Looking Up!

Upcoming Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

01 Public Observing at Carolina Beach State Park from 06:30 PM to 08:00 PM

02 Daylight Savings ends @ 01:00 AM

05 Full Moon

Sunday, November 9

★ Gastronomy ★ - 5 PM - Watch your email for Location

★ Cape Fear Astro Monthly Meeting ★ 7:00pm – 9:00pm - 212 DeLoach Hall; UNCW

Program: Frank Rich, “Using Setting Circles”

Also simulcast via Zoom

12 Last Quarter Moon

14 Club Observing @ Club Observatory - 06:30 PM

15 Club Observing @ Club Observatory - 06:30 PM

17 Leonid Meteor Shower ; 0 UTC; ZHR 10; 3 days before new moon

20 New Moon

21 Club Observing @ Club Observatory - 05:30 PM

22 Club Observing @ Club Observatory - 05:30 PM

28 First Quarter Moon

Recent Library Additions

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

The club library continues to grow. Mostly, we've received some donations, especially from the estate of long-time, Lifetime member Ronnie Hawes. Here's a link with the items added to the library most recently:

<https://www.librarycat.org/lib/CFAS/search/collection/1>

If you haven't already seen them, you might be interested in the books by Fred Schaaf: Seeing the Sky; Seeing the Solar System; Seeing the Deep Sky; and 40 Nights to Knowing the Sky. You can find more information by searching the catalog for "schaaf", as in the following link:

<https://www.librarycat.org/lib/CFAS/search/text/schaaf>

Presentation Coordinator's Report

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

For November (our last Presentation of 2025) Frank Rich will discuss "Using Setting Circles". If they're on your scope, you can use them with the right ascension and declination of an object to find targets the old-school way.

December will be our traditional holiday celebration. Please come, and if you can bring some food or drink to share with the club that will be a bonus.

All 11 months of 2026 are currently available (the 12th is next year's holiday celebration). I have a couple of leads which I think you'll like if they work out, but we still need at least 8 more to ensure every month's meeting will have a good presentation.

Last Public Observing Session for 2025 on Saturday, November 1st

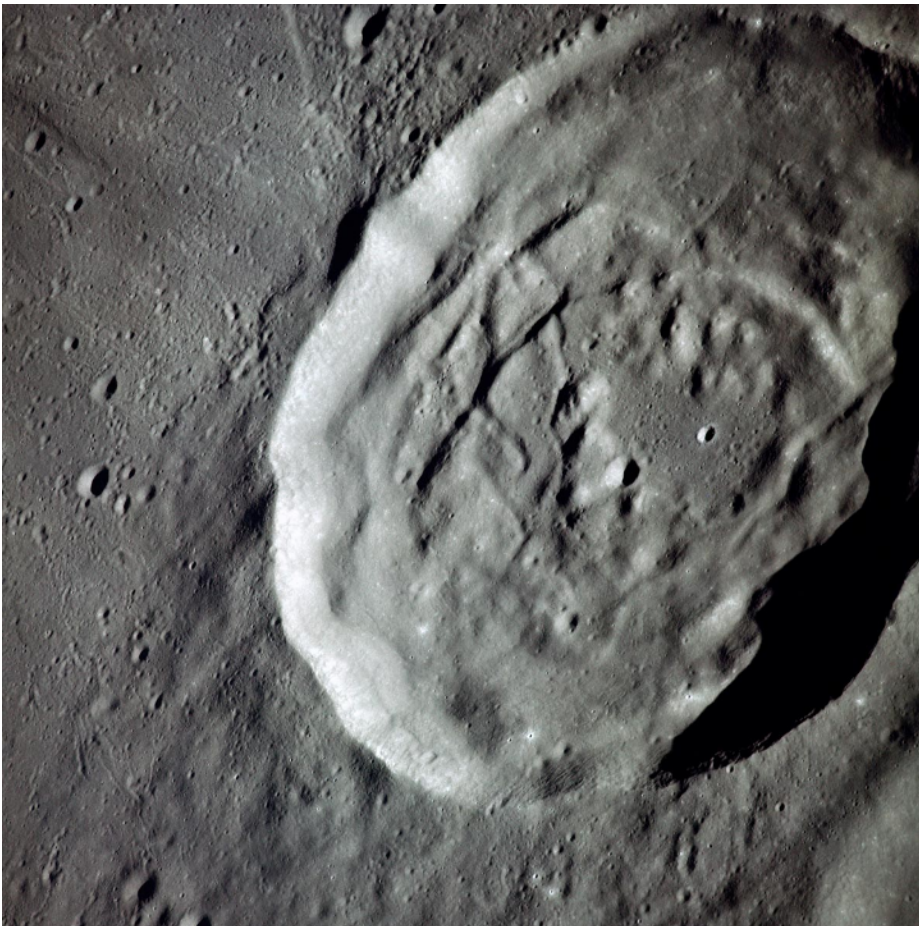
by Jon Stewart-Taylor

Because of the way the phases of the moon and daylight savings time interact this year, we get an extra Public Observing session in 2025. The last one is on Saturday, November first, at Carolina Beach State Park as usual.

The current forecast is for quite decent skies, so even though we'll have the (a bit past) first quarter moon, we should also be able to share Saturn and the brighter open clusters, double stars, and maybe even the Andromeda Galaxy with visitors. I plan to be there about an hour before sunset. I hope some of you will be able to join me and share the night sky with the park visitors.

Something About the Moon

by Karl Adlon



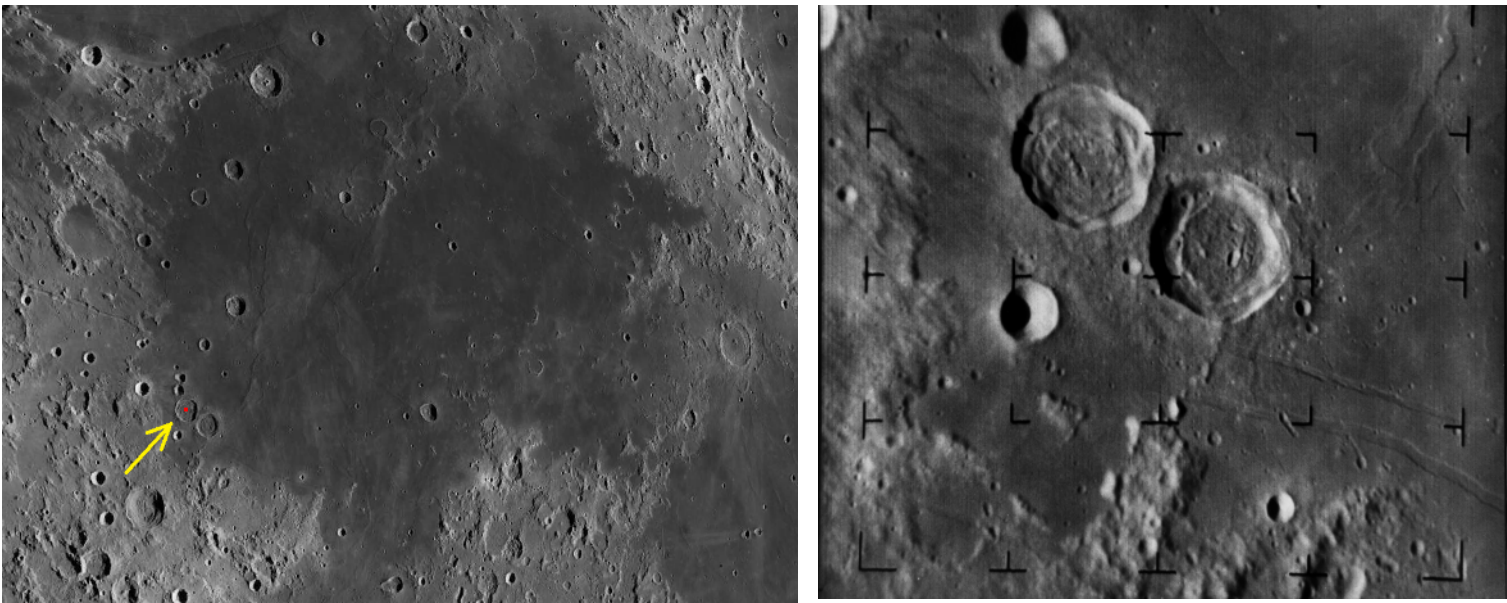
I'm hoping this will be a monthly item. We shall see. And if you want to do one, let me know.

The image at left is image Number AS10-34-5160 from the Apollo 10 mission. NASA SP-246, "Lunar Photographs from Apollos 8, 10, and 11" says this:

This is the Crater Ritter (German geographer, 1779-1859), located on the western edge of Mare Tranquillitatis and approximately 18 miles in diameter. The interior floor of Ritter shows sharp fracturelike lineaments, which are emphasized by the heavy shadows cast at low Sun elevations.

If you want to observe Ritter for yourself, it's the crater pointed out below, left with the yellow arrow. Don't confuse it with Sabine to the right of it. (*Ritter's first name is Karl.*)

Before it impacted the Moon, Ranger 8 sent back the below, right image.



I did a bit of research on Crater Ritter. Prior to space exploration it was debated whether craters were of volcanic (most popular) or impact origin. Today we are confident that most are of impact origin, though some claim the origin of Ritter as volcanic. Take a look at the first image and ask your self: "volcanic or impact?"

I got my first telescope, a 3" reflector, in 1964 and I mainly looked at the **Moon**, planets and just a few other things. Then college, the Army, college, work and marriage put astronomy on the back burned until 1980 when I built a 10" Dobsonian. With the bigger scope, I started look at deep sky objects more and other objects less, including the Moon; we'd walked on it!

I thought that my amateur astronomy experience was the way it was. Then I found this article by **BrooksObs** on this page, 7th down: <https://www.cloudynights.com/forums/topic/495802-what-did-amateur-astronomers-persue-in-the-3950s-and-3960s-and-even-before/> If it interests you, have a read!

So now I'm thinking that my experience was environmental - Barberton, Ohio was an industrial town, with all that implies, including no astronomy mentor or astronomy club (they probably wouldn't know what to do with a kid anyway) or internet. But you know, that's what made me me, and I wouldn't change it if I could.

?

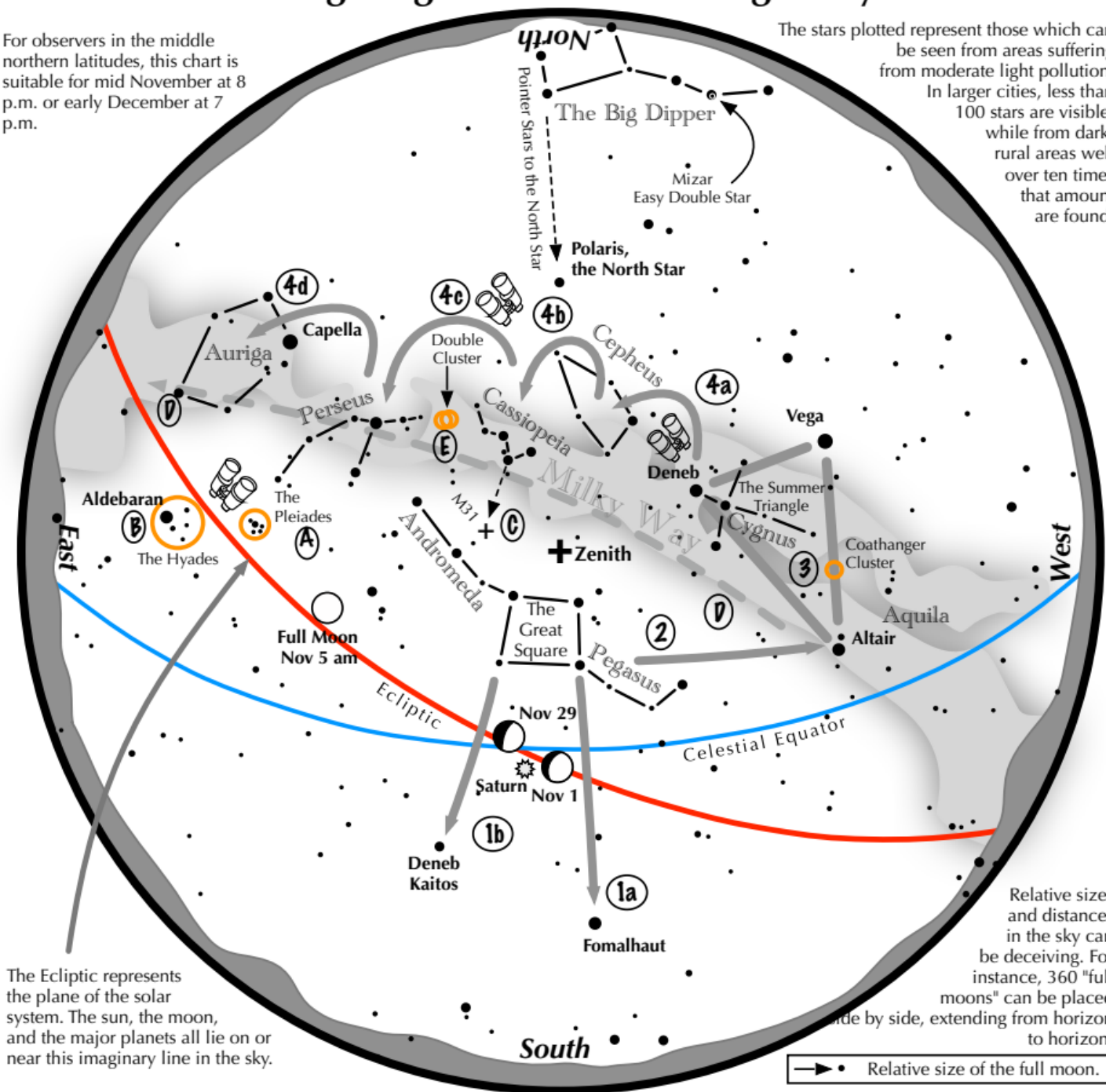
by ?

Sorry, I must have lost your article.

Navigating the November Night Sky

For observers in the middle northern latitudes, this chart is suitable for mid November at 8 p.m. or early December at 7 p.m.

The stars plotted represent those which can be seen from areas suffering from moderate light pollution. In larger cities, less than 100 stars are visible, while from dark, rural areas well over ten times that amount are found.



Navigating the November night sky: Simply start with what you know or with what you can easily find.

- 1 Face south. Almost overhead lies the "Great Square" with four stars about the same brightness as those of the Big Dipper. Extend a line southward following the Square's two westernmost stars. The line strikes Fomalhaut, the brightest star in the south. A line extending southward from the two easternmost stars, passes Deneb Kaitos, the second brightest star in the south.
- 2 Draw a line westward following the southern edge of the Square until it strikes Altair, part of the "Summer Triangle."
- 3 Locate Vega and Deneb, the other two stars of the Summer Triangle. Vega is its brightest member, while Deneb sits in the middle of the Milky Way.
- 4 Jump along the Milky Way from Deneb to Cepheus, which resembles the outline of a house. Continue jumping to the "W" of Cassiopeia, then to Perseus, and finally to Auriga with its bright star Capella.

Binocular Highlights

A and B: Examine the stars of the Pleiades and Hyades, two naked eye star clusters. **C:** The three westernmost stars of Cassiopeia's "W" point south to M31, the Andromeda Galaxy, a "fuzzy" oval. **D:** Sweep along the Milky Way from Altair, past Deneb, through Cepheus, Cassiopeia and Perseus, then to Auriga for many intriguing star clusters and nebulous areas. **E:** The Double Cluster.



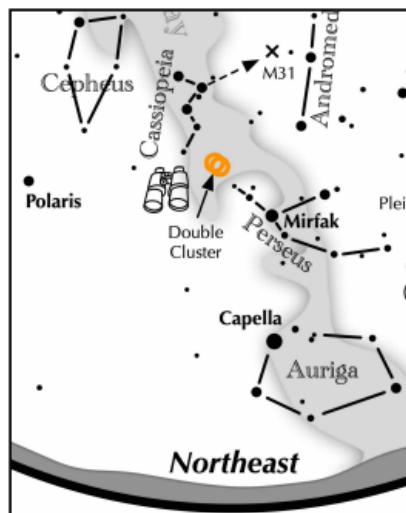


Can you easily find this open cluster showpiece?

Every Curious Skywatcher should know how to find the Double Cluster



Visible in the early evening sky from late October through late March.



November in the northeast



January facing south
looking past the zenith



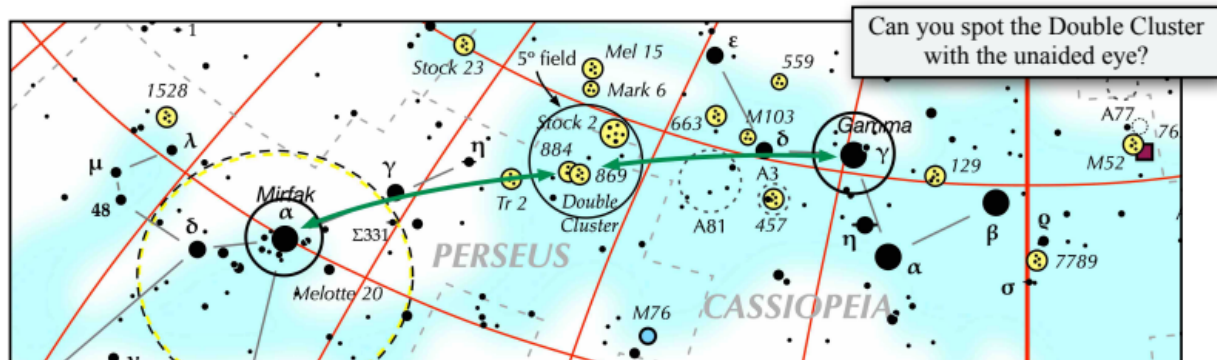
March in the northwest

The **Double Cluster** can be spotted with unaided eye from a dark sky as a dim glow in the Milky Way between Perseus and Cassiopeia. Through 10x50 binoculars, it is an obvious sight, revealing its brighter glittering lights. The neighboring cluster, **Stock 2**, can be seen as a much dimmer and more spread out grainy glow.



How to find the Double Cluster (aka NGC 869 & 884, and Caldwell 14):

1. Find the "w" shaped constellation Cassiopeia and the neighboring constellation to its southeast, Perseus. Identify Perseus' brightest star, 1.8 magnitude Mirfak.
2. Mid way between the center star of Cassiopeia's "w" (Gamma Cas) and Mirfak lies a soft glow.
3. Binoculars aimed at the glow reveal the famous Double Cluster, also called NGC 869 and 884, Caldwell 14, and h Persei and Chi Persei.
4. Place the Double Cluster near the southern edge of the field. Near its center lies Stock 2, the Muscleman Cluster, which appears as a large, dim grainy glow.





Get to Know YOUR Astronomical League



The Astronomical League (Astroleague or AL) is one of the largest amateur astronomical organizations in the world. The organization serves to encourage an interest in astronomy (especially amateur astronomy) and promote the science of astronomy by:

- ✓ *fostering astronomical education;*
- ✓ *providing incentives for astronomical observation and research;*
- ✓ *assisting communication among amateur astronomical societies.*

CFAS is one of over 300 member societies affiliated with the Astroleague. Your membership in CFAS allows you take full advantage of this relationship so periodically review the AL links below to see how the Astroleague can support your astronomical interests and endeavors.

Astroleague Home Page

www.astroleague.org

Astroleague YouTube
Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/...>

AL Observing Programs
(Alphabetical Listing)

<https://www.astroleague.org/alphabeticobserving/>

Night Sky Tools

<https://www.astroleague.org/navigating-the-night-sky-guides/>

Astroleague Store

<https://store.astroleague.org/>

Current and Past Issues of
Reflector Magazine

<https://www.astroleague.org/reflector/>

Information: Click [HERE](#) for the Astroleague News Page and be sure to check the Astroleague Home Page weekly for new and important posts.

AL Related News, Information and Reminders

As seen in the recent [What's Up with the Astroleague](#), don't forget to see November A.L. Live "Traveling to Great Sky Sites" via live web stream on November 14th at 7pm EST.

Now that the holidays are around the corner, keep in mind there are great gift opportunities at the Astroleague Store!

Contact Hank Lyon, hlyon8448@gmail.com, for any changes to your Reflector delivery preferences (US Mail, Email or Both).

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CFAS Correspondence:

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***Cape Fear Astronomical Society is a tax-exempt organization under
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CFAS Officers:

President:	Ben Steelman
Vice-Pres:	Jon Stewart-Taylor
Associate VP	Karl Adlon
Secretary:	George Pappayliou
Treasurer:	Bill Cooper
ALCor	Hank Lyon

Dues: Dues for 2025 are \$25 for Individual and \$32 for Family Membership. Students dues are \$5 per year. Mail to: CFAS, P.O. Box 7685, Wilmington, NC 28406 Or you can pay electronically by following this link: <https://www.capefearastro.org/payment.htm>

Contact Us:

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