



# SLAS

## SALT LAKE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

### Member Information

Updated 17 October 2024

[www.slas.us](http://www.slas.us)

The Salt Lake Astronomical Society, or SLAS, is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation formed in the state of Utah and composed of over 200 members wishing to enjoy "the pleasure and benefits of an association of persons interested in astronomy, promote the science..." and "encourage and coordinate activities with professional research". The Society was formed in 1971 and is governed by a Constitution and yearly elected Board of Directors consisting of a President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, and two Board Members at Large.

General Meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. These General meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month January through November, begin at 7:30 pm and generally end by 9:00 pm. In December the annual members-only Solstice Festival replaces the General meeting on the first Saturday of the month. The board meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 7:30 to about 8:30 pm. Board meetings are open to everyone.

Please check the [website](http://www.slas.us) for meeting locations. The website is located at [www.slas.us](http://www.slas.us) and provides information on most all SLAS activities. Club members may log in to the site's Members Only area and access information not available to the public.

NOVA is an official publication of the Salt Lake Astronomical Society and can be found at [slas.us/nova\\_archive.asp](http://slas.us/nova_archive.asp). NOVA contains minutes of meetings, Board member names & contact info, educational and instructional articles and photographs, activities, reports and special club events and is published to members and friends on the last day of a bi-monthly schedule. The editor of NOVA is appointed by the Board. Members are encouraged to contribute content.

## **2024 SLAS Board of Directors**

President	Don Abernathy
Meetings	
Vice President	Aleta Cox
Publicity, PR and Web Content	
Secretary-Treasurer	Krista Lemoine
Membership Dues & Renewals	
Board Member at Large	Marlene Egger
School & Special Star Party Coordinator	
Board Member at Large	Trevor Hebditch
SPOC Star Party Coordinator	

## **Appointed Positions**

Astronomical League Contact	Aleta Cox
Equipment Manager (primary)	Trevor Hebditch
Equipment Manager (alternate)	Aleta Cox
Historian	Patrick Wiggins
Library Loaner Scope Coordinator	Joan Carmen
NASA Night Sky Ambassador	Krista Lemoine
Newsletter Editor	Jenette Scott
Observatory Director	Jim Keane
Private Star Party Coordinator	Don Colton
Sun Party Coordinator	Louis Maez
ZAP Grant Writer	Jim Keane

## **SPOC Advisory Committee**

Chair through 01 FEB 2024	Jim Keane
Member through 01 FEB 2024	Bob Moore
Member through 01 FEB 2024	Patrick Wiggins
Member through 01 FEB 2024	Luke Moses
Member through 01 FEB 2024	John Drabik
Member through 01 FEB 2024	Bill Kennedy
Member while SLAS President	Don Abernathy
Member as Obser. Dir. Emeritus	Rodger Fry

SPOC Telescope Instruction Coordinators	
Refractor	Marlene Egger
Ealing	Jim Keane
Grim	Rodger Fry
Clements	Leslie Fowler

**All of the above can be contacted via <http://www.slas.us/ContactUs.asp>**

## **SLAS Activities**

### **Public Star Parties (see last 2 pages for additional information)**

Public star parties are scheduled at various times and sites throughout the year. Star parties are a long-time tradition at SLAS going back to the 1970s. Members are encouraged to attend, operate a telescope if they have one and answer questions from the public.

### **Public Sun Parties**

Public Sun parties are scheduled throughout the year. Special equipment is necessary for solar observing, some of which can be borrowed from the club.

### **Private SLAS Star Parties**

SLAS members frequently conduct private star parties for members and their guests. These may be late night or even all night events. Private events are not advertised to the public. Location & directions are typically listed in the Members Only section of the SLAS [website](#).

### **Special Star Parties**

Special star parties for schools, groups and special events are arranged through the Board of Directors. A Board Member (see the list above) is assigned to coordinate volunteers and arrangements. Volunteers are always welcome at these events.

### **Advanced Training Sessions**

A social activity nicknamed the "Advanced Training Session" or "ATS" follows most club events. These popular events always involve food (SLASers love to eat and socialize) and are held at restaurants close to the club events.

ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME AND ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND! Dutch treat of course. Attending ATSS is a great way to meet other club members and to feel more a part of the SLAS family.

### **Solstice Festival**

Another long time SLAS tradition is the annual Solstice Festival held the first Saturday of December in place of the monthly General Meeting. Funding for the party comes in part from membership dues.

Date, time and location of the festival will be announced at meetings, in the newsletter, and posted to the club's [website](#).

## **Yearly Events and Programs**

### **Messier Marathon**

All-night star parties occasionally held in March on or near new Moon. All through the night members observe objects from the Messier Catalogue. This is a private star party for SLAS members and their guests.

### **Astronomy Day**

Usually held once or twice a year. Activities typically include daytime and evening events for members and the public.

## **Loaner Telescopes for SLAS Members**

SLAS has several high-quality telescopes available for loan to current SLAS members. The program is administered by the club's Equipment Manager. See the list above for the current Equipment Manager.

## Library Loaner Telescope Program

Started by Marc Stowbridge of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society in 2008, the Library Loaner Telescope Program makes a beginner sized quality telescope (4.5"/114 cm f/4 Newtonian) available through public libraries to be checked out just like a book. Cost of parts is borne by the libraries or other funding sources and SLAS members volunteer their time to modify the telescopes to be patron friendly. Included with the modified telescope is a fanny pack containing an instruction manual; a book on objects to look for by constellation; and a red-light head lamp. The local society supports the telescopes with needed repairs (minimal) and educational opportunities. SLAS started this program in 2016 and has over 130 telescopes available in Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, Summit and Tooele Counties. There is still plenty of room for growth. A great way to give back to the community and expand your own knowledge and spread astronomical interest to people of all ages.

## SLAS Image Gallery

SLAS members may post and display their astronomical images on the [SLAS Gallery](#).

## Facebook

SLAS-Talk is where members and non-members can socialize, ask questions and more.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SLAS.Talk/>

The official SLAS Facebook pages.

<https://www.facebook.com/UtahStarParty>

<https://www.facebook.com/UtahSPOC>

## SLAS History

A very detailed look at SLAS's history, authored largely by now retired SLAS historian Ann Blanchard and updated by the current SLAS Historian is available [here](#).

## The Stansbury Park Observatory Complex (SPOC)

[The Stansbury Park Observatory Complex](#) (SPOC) is the crown jewel of SLAS and is located west of Salt Lake City in Stansbury Park, Utah. This premier amateur facility consists of three buildings housing four telescopes. Owned and operated by SLAS, SPOC is located in the Ken Sagers Memorial Park on land generously provided by the Stansbury Park Service Agency through a land-use agreement.

The club uses SPOC to host public star parties as well as members-only star parties. The club also conducts training programs at SPOC so that members can learn to use the SPOC telescopes on their own. The land around SPOC is available for members to set up their own telescopes.

The Harmons Observatory was built between 2001 and 2005 in large part through generous donations from the Harmons grocery store chain as well as many others. The observatory contains two telescope bays connected by a central office with two desks, microwave oven, refrigerator, and space heater. The east bay houses a 1960s vintage 40cm (16") Ealing reflector which has been restored to mint condition by club members. The west bay houses the computer controlled 80cm (32") Grim Scope which was designed and built by Observatory Director Emeritus Bruce Grim with optics made by SLAS member and professional optician Steve Dodds. These telescopes are at their best when viewing deep sky objects (nebulae, galaxies, and star clusters). They are also capable of delivering remarkable views of the Moon and planets. The building is also used to house a portable, tripod mounted Celestron 14.

Immediately to the west of the Harmons Observatory is the Donna Pease Wiggins Refractor House. It was built and equipped between 2002 and 2006 primarily through the generous donations of

club member Patrick Wiggins and is named for Wiggins' mother. It has a single telescope bay with a slide-off dome (one of very few slide off domes in the world). It houses the 200mm Bogdan Refractor which was named for late SLAS member Andy Bogdan. The telescope pier was made in 1915 by the world famous telescope manufactures Alvan Clark & Sons and donated by late SLAS member Siegfried Jachmann. This telescope provides exquisite views of solar system objects.

A small garage attached to the Refractor House is used to store many of the club's loaner scopes which can be borrowed and taken home by club members.

To the north of the other two buildings is the Kolob Building. Built in 2016 and 2017 using funds from an anonymous donor it houses the 1.8 meter Clements reflector. Thought to be the world's largest amateur built optical telescope, it was designed and built by SLAS member Mike Clements. Unlike the other scopes at SPOC which are owned by SLAS the Clements is owned by its builder.

## **Telescope Operator Training at SPOC**

All SLAS members are eligible and encouraged to learn to operate the observatory telescopes!

The club conducts the following training classes at SPOC, typically starting very early in the SPOC observing season. All classes are free. To sign up for a class reply to any of the various notifications emailed out during the year or contact an Instruction Coordinator. See above for a list of the current Instruction Coordinators.

### **Bogdan Refractor**

Provides hands-on training for students wanting to learn to operate the Bogdan Refractor on their own. The number of sessions required by a student is determined by the instructor.  
Prerequisites: Current SLAS membership.

### **Ealing Reflector**

Provides hands-on training for students wanting to learn to operate the Ealing Reflector on their own. The number of sessions required by a student is determined by the instructor.  
Prerequisites: Current SLAS membership and completion of Bogdan Refractor training.

### **Grim Reflector**

Provides hands-on training for students wanting to learn to operate the Grim Scope on their own. The number of sessions required by a student is determined by the instructor.  
Prerequisites: Current SLAS membership, completion of Bogdan and Ealing training, recommendation of an Ealing instructor and have current SPOC key-holder status.

### **Clements Reflector**

Training on this scope is handled differently from the others as unlike the other scopes at SPOC which are owned by SLAS, the Clements is privately owned by member Mike Clements. Requests for training on the Clements can be made to Leslie Fowler.

## **SPOC Key Holder Status**

To become a SPOC key-holder you must successfully complete at least Bogdan telescope training, pay the annual SPOC fee, and have been a member of SLAS for at least 6 months.

There can only be one key holder per membership. So if two members of the same family wish to have keys each must have their own SLAS membership. The annual SPOC fee is \$25.00.

Note that members trained to use any of the SPOC telescopes need not pay the SPOC key fee if they only want to help run the scope(s) at star parties. Members need to pay the fee only if they wish to receive a key and use the scopes(s) on their own.

## Star Party Etiquette

Last revised 6 6 2023

If you have never been to a star party, here are some tips:

- ✓ Star parties are informal family events. Please feel free to approach any telescope operator and ask what they are observing and if you can “take a look.” Join in on the fun and introduce yourself to others.
- ✓ Taking a picture of what you see in a telescope with your cell phone is difficult. The device may damage expensive eyepieces if it touches or scrapes the surface. Its light can interfere with people’s night vision. It is a good idea to keep the mobile devices stowed away.

### Quick Summary Guide:

- Please use red lights, not white lights nor cell phone lights.
- All children must be accompanied by an adult.
- Please respect the safety of others and don’t participate if you are feeling ill or are contagious.
- Please respect the social distance needs of others.
- No smoking, vaping, eating, drinking, aerosol sprays near the telescopes. They can damage the lenses.
- If you must leave early, please park away from the telescopes and turn off your inside/outside car lights if possible.

Known Hazards: Please avoid them and ensure that your child(ren) avoid(s) them.

- Telescope wiring may be a hazard. Please use your red light to watch your step!
- Telescopes generally involve a ladder or chair. Getting on and off can be a hazard. Please steady yourself or your child, holding the ladder rail, before looking through the telescope.
- Green laser pointers: Do not point a green laser in anyone’s eyes or at an airplane---it could blind them and pointing at an airplane is illegal (a Federal offense).
- *At the Stansbury Park Observatory Complex (SPOC):*
  - The nearby pond at SPOC is a water hazard.
  - Mosquitoes: please use bug spray as needed, but not within 100 feet of telescopes--- the propellants and chemicals can damage the surface of lenses and mirrors. There is a can of bug spray in the Clements observatory.
  - The skateboard park can be a hazard if you turn the wrong way in the dark.

### Around the telescopes:

- No smoking or vaping around telescopes – the smoke can damage optical surfaces.
- No use of any aerosol spray within 100 feet of telescopes – the propellants and chemicals can damage the surface of lenses and mirrors.
- No food or drinks in hand when looking through telescopes.
- Do not touch the telescope unless invited by the operator.
- For the safety of all please do not attend a star party if you or your child have a cold or other contagious illness that could be transmitted to another attendee. We cannot sanitize the eyepieces, because their special coatings would be ruined.
- Any telescope operator may decline to allow a person access to their telescope who appears ill or not behaving in a safe manner.

## SPOC Star Party Operators' Safety Guide

*last revised 9 14 2023*

Telescope Operations during star parties require great care to ensure the public safety, and the following guidelines should be observed at all times.

### For both SPOC Operators and Individual Telescope Operators:

- For insurance reasons:
  - Please register at the start of the event. Sign-in on a SPOC telescope log meets this requirement.
  - Please ensure the safety of your equipment. SLAS is not responsible for breakage of your personal equipment.
  - Statements you make at this star party are your opinions and do not represent official positions of SLAS.
- Please, if you are feeling ill please be respectful of others and do not attend the Star Party.
- Any telescope operator may courteously decline to allow a person who appears ill or not behaving in a safe and courteous manner to look through the telescope.
- Operators need to be especially vigilant with children to ensure that they do not get in a high risk situation around the telescopes. Parents or guardians need to be advised to hold on to their children at all times when on the ladder or chair.
- Operators should never physically assist anyone to look into a telescope. As soon as you put your hands on someone you are opening yourself to a potential lawsuit because the person could claim you touched them inappropriately or injured them somehow, etc. We understand the desire to be helpful, but in today's environment, it represents too much risk.

### Additional Guides for SPOC Telescope Operators:

1. The public is prohibited from entering the observatory bay while the telescope and auxiliary equipment in the bay are being readied for star party operations.
2. There should be a minimum of two (2) SPOC Operators in each scope bay at all times during a public star party.
3. Operators should restrict the number of individuals entering the bay at any one time for the purpose of viewing through the telescope, and as needed, in order to maintain a safe environment.
4. Operators must have sufficient red light illumination of the bay to allow clear perception of the telescope and auxiliary equipment.
5. If the Operators want to bring more individuals into the bay for the purpose of pointing out features of the observatory the red lights need to be brought up to a high light level. After the tour revert to rule #3.
6. Whenever the telescope or ladder are moved the individuals within the bay should be directed by the Operator to a safe location to stand until the equipment is properly set for the next object.
7. Operators should use the provided cones & rope as a means of funneling the crowd into the observatory.
8. Periodically announce to the incoming public what is being observed so they do not waste their time waiting to see something they have already seen.
9. If people with physical disabilities cannot access the eyepiece, courteously make them aware of our ADA Scope, if it is available that night.