

The University of Texas at Austin
McDonald Observatory and Department of Astronomy
Board of Visitors Meeting
July 16 – 17, 2010
Optional Events

FRIDAY, JULY 16
Nighttime

Special viewings at McDonald Observatory: BoV members and their guests are invited to join special viewings on the Harlan J. Smith 107-inch and 36-inch telescopes, starting at 9:15 p.m.

Please note this new format for special viewings: You are invited to come to the domes at any time between 9:15 and 10:45 p.m. However, there will be limits on the number of people who can be in the telescope domes at any one time, so some short waits may be required. No reservations or tickets are needed, but we do need a count of expected attendance for the viewings. Special viewings will end at 10:45 p.m.

Getting there: It is recommended that members ride shuttle buses to the special viewings. To do so, please meet on Texas Spur 78 at the parking-lot entrance shown on the attached Onsite Optional Events Map. Buses will run continuously, starting just before 9:15 p.m. Alternatively, if driving your own vehicle, please park in the Mt. Locke visitors parking lot (by the Stop sign near the top of Mt. Locke – also shown on the McDonald Observatory Optional Events map) and walk to the Harlan J. Smith 107-inch Telescope or catch the frequent shuttle buses to the 36-inch Telescope. Please do not drive directly to the Harlan J. Smith or 36-inch telescope, as headlights will disrupt the viewings.

Below are the times, objects to be viewed, and attendance limits for the two telescopes.

Harlan J. Smith 107-inch telescope

9:15 – 10:30 p.m.	Saturn	Limit: 35 at a time
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36-inch telescope

9:15 – 10 p.m.	Moon	Limit: 15 at a time
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10 – 10:45 p.m.	Messier 13	Limit: 15 at a time
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SATURDAY, JULY 17
Optional Events at McDonald Observatory (Afternoon)

Science Discussion Groups: This July's meeting marks the first time that Board of Visitors members will be able to engage in small-group discussions (10 to 30 attendees) on some of the most intriguing topics in current research and astronomical history, led by astronomers from UT Austin and Texas A&M University. There will be 11 separate discussion groups from which to choose (four at 2 p.m. and seven at 5 p.m.) at various observatory locations (shown on the attached Onsite Optional Events Map). Abstracts of talk topics and background on the science-discussion-group leaders can be found in the attached Science Discussion Groups document.

Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis and seating is limited. Please indicate if a given discussion group is your first, second, or third choice for its time period. If a particular discussion group is not available in one time slot, we'll do our best to find seats in the next highest choice available.

Parking will be very limited at many of the Science Discussion Group locations. To ride shuttle buses, please meet on Texas Spur 78 at the parking-lot entrance shown on the attached Onsite Optional Events Map. Shuttle buses will depart at 1:45 p.m. for the first Science Discussion Groups session and at 4:45 p.m. for the second session.

2–3 p.m.

Science Discussion Groups, Session One: (Four groups)

Discussion Group 1 Limit: 10

Host: *Fritz Benedict*

Topic: *The Impact of the Hubble Space Telescope on Astronomy
– Alien Solar Systems and Bloated White Dwarfs*

Site: *House A*

Discussion Group 2 Limit: 10

Host: *Mary Kay Hemenway*

Topic: *Galileo's Daughter*

Site: *House B*

Discussion Group 3 Limit: 30

Host: *Craig Wheeler*

Topic: *Black holes, string theory, and the holographic Universe*

Site: *The Mary Gibbs and Jesse H. Jones Classroom in the
Frank N. Bash Visitors Center*

Discussion Group 4 Limit: 10

Host: *Don Winget*

Topic: *Cosmochronology: The age of the Universe and its contents:
what we know and how we know it*

Site: *Otto Struve 82-inch Telescope Library*

4–4:30 p.m.

Dedication of the Wren-Marcario Accessible Telescope (WMAT) at the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center's Cullen Foundation Theater.

Originally built in the 1990s to allow visual searches for supernovas, this telescope has been rebuilt and made wheel-chair accessible for use in public star parties. Please join us to celebrate the donors, volunteers, and staff who have created this new telescope, as well as to honor the memories of George B. Wren II and Michael Marcario, for whom the telescope will be named.

5 – 6 p.m.

Science Discussion Groups, Session Two: (Seven groups)

Discussion Group 5 Limit: 30

Hosts: *Bill Cochran and Sarah (Sally) Dodson-Robinson*

Topic: *Exoplanets: Theory and Observations*

Site: *The Mary Gibbs and Jesse H. Jones Classroom in the
Frank N. Bash Visitors Center*

Discussion Group 6 Limit: 20

Hosts: *Gary Hill and Darren DePoy*

Topic: *Science and technical discussion on the Hobby-Eberly Telescope
Dark Energy Experiment (HETDEX)*
Site: *Hobby-Eberly Telescope*

Discussion Group 7 Limit: 10
Host: *John Kormendy*
Topic: *Supermassive Black Holes and Galaxy Nuclei*
Site: *House A*

Discussion Group 8 Limit: 10
Host: *Kevin Krisciunas*
Topic: *The first McDonald Observatory director and his family's astronomical dynasty*
Site: *Otto Struve 82-inch Telescope Library*

Discussion Group 9 Limit: 15
Host: *John Lacy*
Topic: *What do astronomers know about climate change and what can we do about it?*
Site: *Astronomers' Lodge (downstairs)*

Discussion Group 10 Limit: 30
Host: *Edward L. (Rob) Robinson*
Topic: *Black Holes and Neutron Stars*
Site: *Harlan J. Smith 107-inch Telescope dome floor*

Discussion Group 11 Limit: 10
Host: *Don Winget*
Topic: *Cosmochronology: The age of the Universe and its contents:
what we know and how we know it*
Site: *House B*

OFFSITE Optional Afternoon Events (Registration Required)

All tours listed below are free for BoV members with name badges. All events require driving in your own vehicle. Please note the driving time from McDonald Observatory. Approximate locations are shown on the attached West Texas Area Optional Events Map. (Please also note further information, below, on self-guided tours for which no registration is needed.)

2 – 4 p.m.

Guided Tour, Fort Davis National Historic Site

Meet guide at Fort Davis National Historic Site; please check in by 1:45 p.m. Drive in your own vehicle; please allow 30 minutes driving time from McDonald Observatory.

Guided Tour, Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI)

Meet guide at CDRI; please check in by 1:45 p.m. Drive in your own vehicle; please allow 30 minutes driving time from McDonald Observatory.

2 – 5 p.m.

Guided Bird-watching Tour, Nature Conservancy

Limit 15. Visit includes a one-mile hike to a pond. Meet Nature Conservancy guides in front of the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center at 1:45 p.m., then drive to the Nature Conservancy reserve in your vehicle.

OFFSITE Optional Afternoon Events (NO registration required)

All tours listed below are free for BoV members with name badges. All events require driving in your own vehicle.

8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Self-Guided tour of the Fort Davis National Historic Site

9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Self-Guided tour of the Museum of the Big Bend

The Museum is located at the northeast corner of the Sul Ross State University campus and can be reached from Entrance Two on U.S. Highway 90 or Entrance Four from Harrison Street. Once on campus, follow the small brown signs for the museum.

1 – 4 p.m.

Self-Guided tour of the Nature Conservancy Reserve

Starting from the Lawrence E. Woods Roadside Park, on HWY 118, north of McDonald Observatory. Visit includes a 1.5 mile hiking trail with several hundred feet elevation gain. *Maps available at the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center Reception Desk.*

1 – 5 p.m.

Self-Guided tour of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute

Visit includes a 1.5 mile hiking trail. *Maps available at the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center Reception Desk.*

Anytime

74-mile Scenic Loop Drive

Pick up map and points of interests at the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center (allow 1.5 – 2 hours).

SATURDAY, JULY 17

Nighttime

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Below are the times, objects to be viewed, and attendance limits for the two telescopes.

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