

The Fremont Peak Observer

— Bringing Astronomy to the Public —

Vol. 43, No. 3

Fall 2026

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President's Message

Pat Donnelly

September is my favorite month. The days are getting shorter and cooler, and the trees are starting to change colour. Astronomically, September is a month with many astronomical events. This September is no exception. The center of the Milky Way Galaxy is high in the southern skies in the evening, accompanied by a multitude of globular clusters. Along with these objects there are many other wonderful sights along the Milky Way. My favorites are M22, M16, M17, and M11. This year the planets also provide some good views. Venus reaches its greatest brilliance on September 18, and Neptune and Saturn reach opposition. Closer to home, September is the month of the Autumnal Equinox. This year, the equinox occurs at 5:05 PM on September 22 here in northern California. On this day, there are, geometrically, equal number of hours of daylight and night. However, the Sun is above the horizon for a bit more than 12 hours due to atmospheric refraction. Finally, the Harvest Moon occurs on September 26. Around the time of the harvest moon, the moon rises only about 20 minutes later each night for four or five days. This is important if one wishes to gather crops in the evening.

In case you did not notice, the FPOA cancelled activities this August. This is because the roads in the park were repaved. It is now much easier to drive around in the park. The only change

40th Annual Meeting & Star-B-Que ★ September 12

2026 Program Dates

Saturday Evening Programs (lecture start)

March	14, 21 (8 PM)	July	4, 11, 18
April	11, 18, 25	August	8, 15
May	9, 16, 23 (8:30 PM)	September	5, 19 (8 PM)
June	13, 20	October	3, 10, 17

Solar Programs (2-5pm)

March	21	July	18
April	18	August	15
May	6	September	5
June	20	October	3

Board Meetings (Zoom, 1pm)

January	10	July	11
February	14	August	8
March	14	September	10 - 7pm
April	11	October	10
May	9	November	14
June	13	December	No Meeting

Please check our web [Schedule](#) and [status](#) for updates before heading up.



that affects our activities is the height of the locks on the gate to the observatory. The repaved road is a few inches higher than before. One will have to bend over farther to open the gate. This also means that extra care is necessary when parking the car to open or close the gate, because of a higher drop off from the pavement to the ground. As I write this article the park is open again and all FPOA activities can resume.



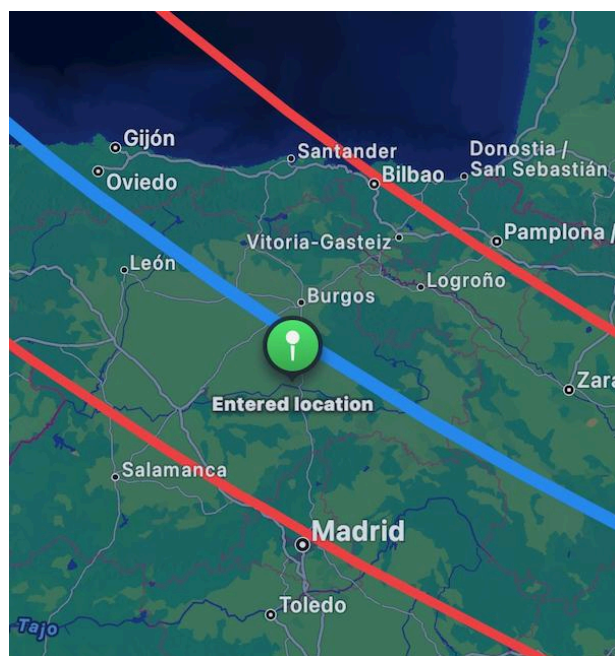
Our Star-B-Que was on Saturday, September 12. We had better attendance with Hartnell Students and a few attendees from local clubs. Overall, Well done!

Since it is late in the observing season, I can now say that the FPOA has completed 40 years of providing astronomical outreach to the public. It has been a wonderful experience being at the observatory for that amount of time. Surprisingly, the observatory is, in my opinion, in the best shape ever. There are many individuals responsible for putting the observatory in its best condition. These include Greg Bosler, who designed many of the upgraded external features of the observatory; Loren Dynneson, who supervised the construction of the walkway upgrades on the east and west sides of the observatory; Eric Egland, for his work upgrading the south shutter and numerous other minor additions, upgrades, and changes; Rob Hawley, who worked on multiple changes and additions to the observatory, and the rest of the volunteers, who helped making the major upgrade to the observatory a success. Finally, I want to give a special thanks to anyone who helped with the painting of numerous areas of the observatory. I, personally, consider painting the least desirable of all of the work tasks.



I want to conclude this article by relating an astronomical mystery, to which I became reacquainted recently. In 1726 Jonathan Swift wrote a political satire called "Gulliver's Travels." In this book Gulliver travels to various lands and people. One of the lands he visited is called "Laputa." It seems that the Laputans discovered that Mars had two small moons that orbited in circular orbits very close to Mars. These moons also orbited Mars in a matter of hours. The real moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, were not discovered until 1877, and their parameters were essentially the same as those described by Swift. How did Swift know about the moons of Mars? Don't make anything about this. It is just a very, very, lucky guess, but it is something to ponder.

Eclipse In Basque Spain

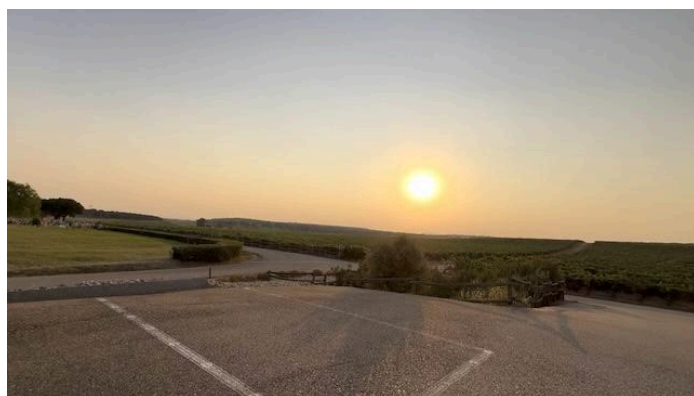


After the disappointment of 2024, where I had a better view of rain drops instead of the Sun, we were ready for a successful eclipse. The 2026 track started in Greenland (where I hear they were clouded out), past the west side of Iceland (ditto), and finally ending up near sunset passing between Bilbao and Madrid before ending in the Mediterranean. Our group elected to see it in Basque Country in northern Spain at a winery near Aranda de Duero.

The weeks before leaving were filled with stories of major fires filling the skies with smoke and temps in the low 40's. Fortunately Spain got their fires under control, but it was still toasty. The good news is that the heat

kept the clouds from the Bay of Biscay in check. A high pressure system was over Spain the day of the eclipse, but it brought with it some Saharan dust. That combined with the low sun angle meant the corona was a tad red.

This trip rekindled my over two-decade-long relationship with TravelQuest International. The trip was led by Gabrielle Kaprielian, the owner's daughter.



By the time the shadow reached Spain it was near dusk. This is our view west towards the setting sun. Our group of about 100 people was mostly in the open field in the left of this picture. I chose an area away from them and higher under a carport on a small hill hiding from the 37° C sun.

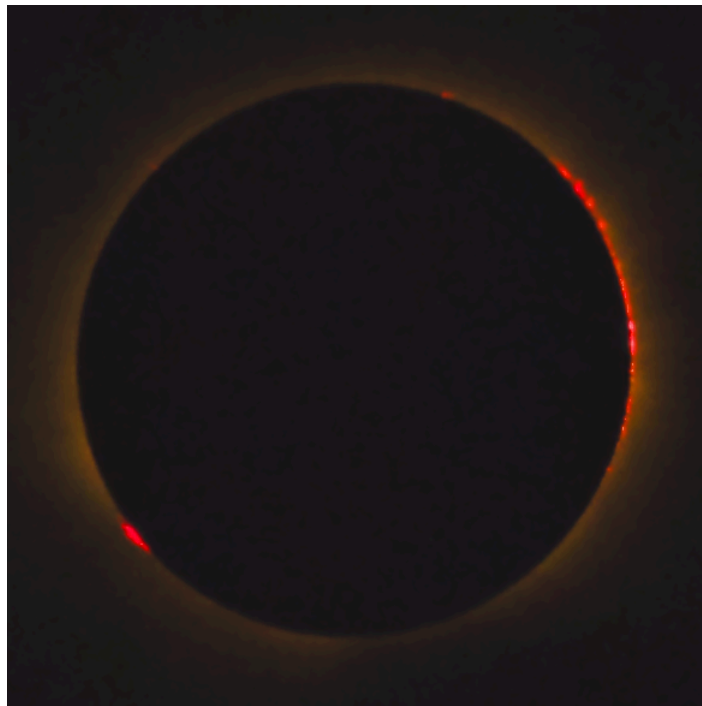
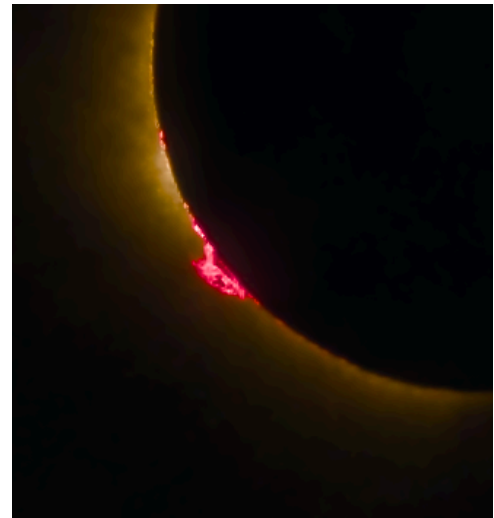
This was the fourth eclipse that I used my program CaptureEclipse (depending on how you count Texas)

to automate the camera. That allowed me to view the eclipse with binoculars while the camera fired away in the background. It left me with a lot of data to turn into pictures.

My website <https://robhawley.net/2026-Spain/> presents a complete report along with technical details, a movie of totality, and several more pictures. Let me here present a couple of the more notable ones.

At right is a photo near the start of totality. A huge prominence was visible that remained in view for the entire 102 seconds.

Below, is the beginning of the end of the eclipse. The Chromosphere is now just peaking out from behind the moon. The prominence at the start of the eclipse is still peeking out as the moon moves over it.



All the prominence and chromosphere images (below) can be viewed with a good H-alpha scope from your front yard. However, what I've traveled the world to witness is the corona. Even the Soho Sun satellite can only glimpse the outer parts of this structure. To see the entire corona, a total solar eclipse is required. Some general observations about the August 26 corona. If you revisit my

[2017 images from Oregon](#) , you can see very intricate structures within the corona. You can also observe distinct solar brushes following the lines of the magnetic fields emanating from the poles. None of these structures were visible in 2026. As you listen to me describe the corona in the iPhone video on the website, you can hear me mention the absence of such structures, except for a faint wave as part of the prominence at 7 o'clock.



That concludes a brief peek at my photos from Spain. Next August while the crowds will be heading to Egypt we are headed to Tunisia where we can view the eclipse close to the cooling waters of the Mediterranean instead of baking in the 40+ weather of Luxor.

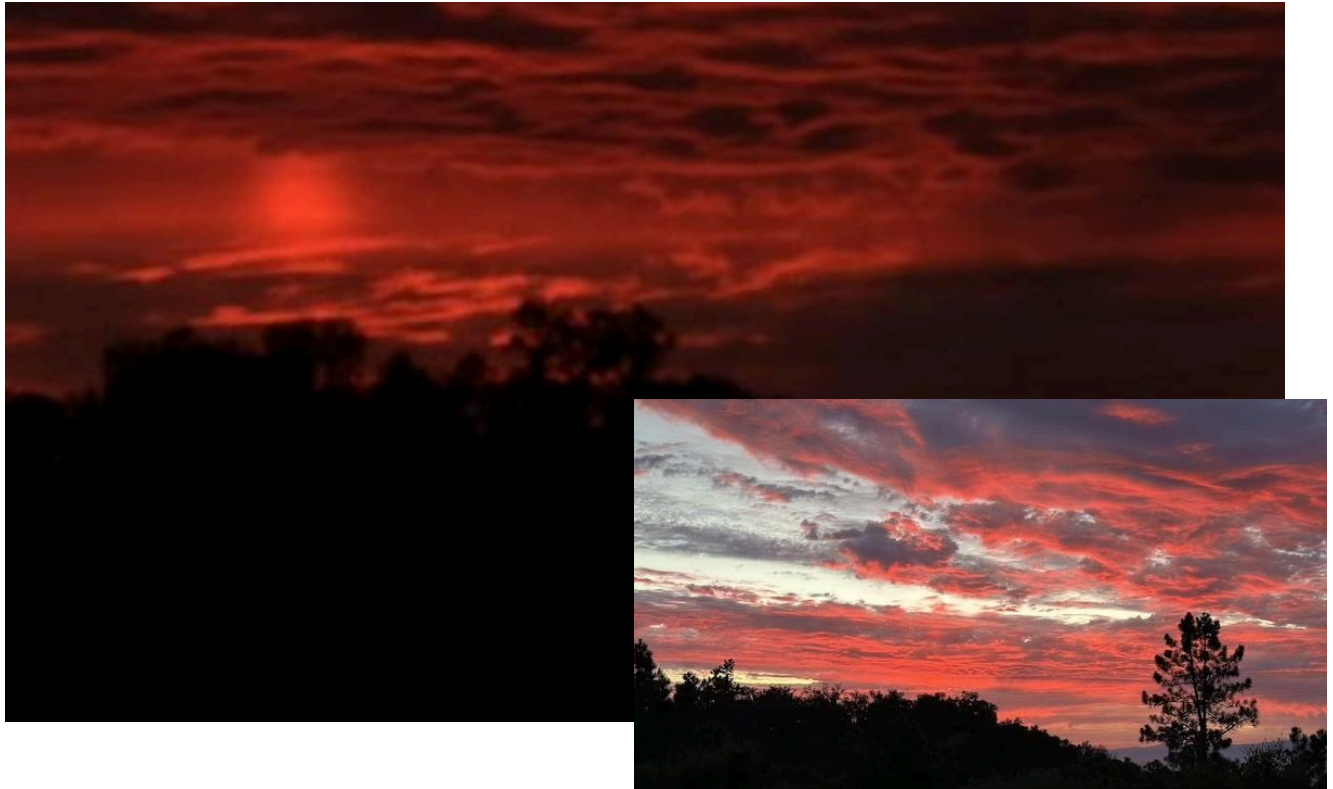
RJH

False Sun

Eric Egland

At sunset, before our July 11th evening program, Pat caught a subtle phenomenon appearing just above the horizon.

A reflection of the sun below the horizon off of ice crystals in the upper atmosphere created a false image of the setting Sun.



Lunar Eclipse

Eric Egland

We had a 96% total lunar eclipse of the full Sturgeon Moon August 27th. Although viewing from SJB was a bit overcast, the clouds always present a chance for artistic license beyond the usual flurry of precise captures. The clouds played with the composition until finally obscuring totality.



Summer Work Wrap Up

After last winter's storm damage, and in light of historic El Niño predictions from warming water in the central Pacific, we've been working all summer securing the building and grounds.

With siding reinforcements and improved turnbuckle anchors installed, we're finishing up with a fence repair project. A group of us got together to prime and paint fence boards we left up on the peak to dry and cure. We hope the careful attention to fence rail prep will ensure a longer service life for the paint. The conditions up on the Peak are harsh with high temperature and humidity swings magnifying the UV coating degradation.

We'll schedule an end-of-year work party soon.



Support

Thanks to those who renewed. FPOA receives most of its income from our memberships. Most annual members are now Observers. We still need your support. Contributions cover publications, phone, insurance, rent, etc.

Please consider volunteering, it's great fun and a service to our community. Please see the [back page](#) for details.

Membership Renewal

To join or renew, please select from the list of options on our [Membership page](#) and pay via PayPal or mail a check to:

FPOA Membership
c/o Rob Hawley
1233 Hillcrest Dr.
San Jose, CA 95120



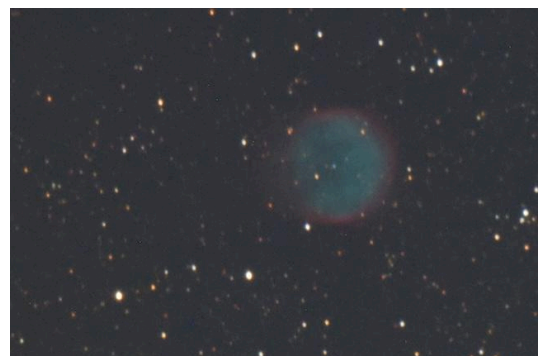
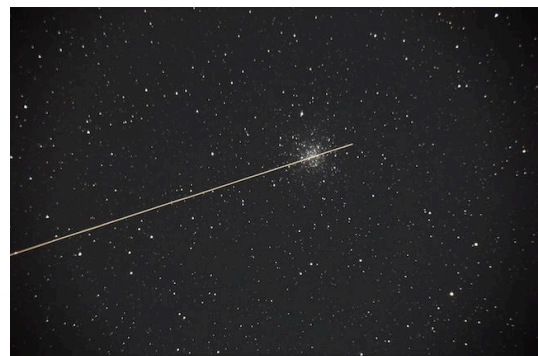
Gallery

From top right CW, The new PiFinder helps find difficult objects fast:

M13 Hercules Cluster always reminds me of a Space Invader, Vandenburg



SpaceX launch, satellite flies through M54, Snow Globe nebula, Pillars of Creation in M16 Eagle Nebula, M27 Dumbbell Nebula closeup, California King snake (non-venomous). ETE





Fremont Peak Observatory Association

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Schedule *schedule at fpoa.net*

Membership *membership at fpoa.net*

Editor *editor at fpoa.net*

Treasurer *treasurer at fpoa.net*

Website: fpoa.net

Facebook: [fpoa.observatory](https://www.facebook.com/fpoa.observatory)

X (Twitter): [fpoa_info](https://twitter.com/fpoa_info)

Observatory: (831) 623-2465

Observing Reservations



Please send the following information
48 hours in advance to:

schedule at fpoa.net

- Member name
- Reservation date
- Estimated arrival time
- Duration of stay
- Number in party
- Vehicle description and license plate
- Specific observing site request (pad)

Reminder – 48-hour notice for Observer Access is non-negotiable

Please, No 'last minute' requests

We lease access to the FPOA area from the State. Our agreements with the State require we give 48 hours' notice for all visitors. Observer members agree to the 48-hour notice per the liability contract.

Officers and Directors 2026

President	Pat Donnelly
VP, Editor, Social M., Facilities	Eric Egland
Treasurer, IT, Membership	Rob Hawley
Instruments, Schedule	Ron Dammann
Secretary	Tom Kellogg
Special Programs Coord.	Jeff Shapiro
	Chris Angelos
	Rick Mazzarella
	Tanveer Singh

Directors Emeritus	Kevin and Denni Medlock
	Loren Dynnesson

Dates and Delivery

Members, The Observer is now sent by email and posted on our website at [FPOA Observer online](http://fpoa.net). Please send email updates to *membership at fpoa.net*.

The *Fremont Peak Observer* publishes four times a year following Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. We welcome articles and photos from our members. Please email those to *editor at fpoa.net* by Feb 25th, May 25th, August 25th, and November 25th in plain text or Word format.

Public Program Volunteers



- Complete the updated [2023 liability waiver](#) and return to *membership at fpoa.net*.
- Also, please email name, vehicle, and the program date to *schedule at fpoa.net*.

