



# Steward Observatory Newsletter

## February News



### U of A astronomers capture unprecedented view of supermassive black hole in action

"The Large Binocular Telescope Interferometer can be considered the first extremely large telescope, so it's very exciting to prove this is possible," said [Jacob Isbell](#), a postdoctoral research associate at the U of A Steward Observatory and lead author of the Nature Astronomy paper. [Learn more](#)



### Large and small galaxies may grow in ways more similar than expected

A team of astronomers led by University of Arizona researcher Catherine Fielder has obtained the most detailed images of a small galaxy and its surroundings, revealing features typically associated with much larger galaxies. The observations provide a rare, elusive glimpse into how small galaxies form and evolve, suggesting that the mechanisms fueling galaxy growth may be more universal than previously thought. [Learn more](#)



### Spectra from a carbon dioxide world: Astronomers unlock the atmospheric secrets of a 'new class of planet'

Peering with unprecedented detail at the Milky Way Galaxy, NASA's James Webb Space Telescope has allowed a team of astronomers co-led by a University of Arizona researcher to unlock answers about the composition of the most abundant type of planet in the galaxy. In the process, the researchers have unveiled a "new class of planet," according to Everett Schlawin, an assistant research professor at the U of A Steward Observatory. [Learn more](#)



### Steward Observatory's Marcia Rieke wins prestigious award for her influential career in astronomical research

This week, the American Astronomical Society (AAS) granted the 2025 [Henry Norris Russell Lectureship](#) to Steward Observatory's Regents Professor of Astronomy **Marcia Rieke**. [Learn more](#)



### Emeritus Professor Rodger Thompson named AAS Fellow for his groundbreaking contributions to the field

This week, the American Astronomical Society (AAS), named Steward Observatory's **Rodger Thompson** as AAS Fellow—an honor bestowed on less than 0.5% of AAS's membership each year. [Learn more](#)



### Tucson doctor wins national award for his second act as amateur astronomer

"University of Arizona has one of the premier astronomy departments in the world, so I thought I'd take a couple of courses after I retired," said Richard Donnerstein of the inception of what has become a more-than-decade-long role as a researcher at Steward Observatory. Donnerstein, a retired pediatric cardiologist, has won a national award for amateur astronomy after helping U of

A scientist develops a way to detect some of the faintest and most confounding galaxies in the universe. [Learn more](#)



**NASA's Pandora mission one step closer to probing alien atmospheres, with mission operations based at U of A**

"Although smaller and less sensitive than Webb, Pandora will be able to stare longer at the host stars of extrasolar planets, allowing for deeper study," said Pandora co-investigator **Daniel Apai**, professor of astronomy and planetary sciences at the U of A [Steward Observatory](#) and [Lunar and Planetary Laboratory](#) who leads the mission's Exoplanets Science Working Group. [Learn more](#)



**The Conversation: Extraterrestrial life may look nothing like life on Earth – so astrobiologists are coming up with a framework to study how complex systems evolve!** [m a new title block](#)

Chris Impey, University Distinguished Professor of Astronomy, University of Arizona [Learn More](#)



**The Science of Communication 2025 Lecture Series**

All lectures are free and open to the public. [RSVP here.](#)

Doors open at Centennial Hall at 6:15 p.m. The lecture presentation begins at 7:00 p.m.

The lectures will be livestreamed and recorded on YouTube.

[.More information](#)

**Astronomy Public Outreach Programs**

**Public Evening Lecture Series**

**Spring Semester 2025**

Monday, February 3

*The Discovery of Pulsars: A Guide to Unidentified Blinking Objects*

Maria Mutz, Dept. of Physics

Monday, February 17

*Volcanoes, Coronae, and the Dynamic Surface of Venus*

Dr. Wesley Tucker, Lunar & Planetary Laboratory

Friday, March 7

*The Accelerating, Expanding Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and Einstein's Cosmological Constant*

Dr. Bharat Ratra, Kansas State University

Monday, March 17

*Using Tree Ring Data to Find Solar Explosions*

Dr. Irina Panyushkina, Laboratory of Tree Ring Research

Monday, March 31

TBA

Monday, April 14

TBA

Dr. Mathieu Renzo, Steward Observatory

Location: Steward Observatory Lecture Hall N210

**Doors open at 7:00 pm and Lectures begin at 7:30 pm MST**

Nearest parking 2nd Street or Cherry Ave Garage

Telescope viewing follows at 8:30 PM - Weather Permitting

Watch via **ZOOM** link <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/4470189357>

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**If you miss a lecture -- [view the video here](#)**

[Astronomy Colloquia](#)

**Space Drafts: Astronomy Lectures**

The events listed above are off campus astronomy activities we want you to be aware of and enjoy, if interested. These events are not part of the Department of Astronomy or Steward Observatory public outreach. [Learn more](#)

**Public Mirror Lab Tours**

**Tickets are now available through June 2025**

This 90-minute tour provides a unique opportunity to learn how we produce the largest (8.4 meters / 27ft)

and most advanced telescope mirrors in the world. We hope to see you soon! [More information](#)

**Mt Lemmon SkyNights StarGazing Program.**

SkyNights is a 5 hour astronomy program on the summit of Mt. Lemmon. Your experience begins with a scenic drive up this Sky Island mountain which is a unique trip by its self. This will be followed by spectacular sunset phenomenon and

then on to stargazing using the Shulman 32" and Phillips 24" telescopes which are the largest public viewing telescopes in southern Arizona. No prior astronomical knowledge is required—just bring your enthusiasm and prepare to be amazed! This is a fun program for curious minds aged 7 and up. Come discover the wonders of the Universe with us!

[More information](#)

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### Friends of Steward Observatory



Image credit: SH2 106 also known as the **Celestial Snow Angel**, is an emission nebula and a star formation region in the constellation Cygnus. By Adam Block, Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter

[Your donation](#) provides astronomy students the chance to grow their skills, experience discovery and build the confidence necessary to take on the challenging problems of the future. These opportunities are priceless, but providing them requires funding.

Our students are extremely grateful for your investment in Astronomy.

To a student, every dollar is important. Your donation goes directly to help support our innovative students in the form of scholarships and summer research project needs. Students are working on cutting-edge research to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the universe.

These students are the next-generation of scientists who will be making the great discoveries in the future. Student

success builds our world-class astronomy program that continues to stand out from our peers and expands Arizona's research horizons.

**Your donation is tax deductible!**

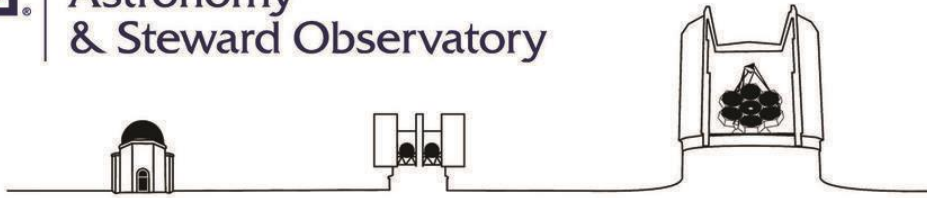
**Supporting the next-generation of science and discovery is the best reward.**

[Learn more](#)



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

**Astronomy  
& Steward Observatory**



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For more information or questions contact:

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