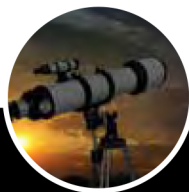


## Moonstruck Astronomy Club

Cammie Fairburn



I was up all night wondering where the Sun had gone, and then it dawned on me.

Speaking of the Sun, solar activity, such as sunspots and solar flares, rises and falls in an eleven-year cycle. In 2025, solar activity reached its peak, also known as a solar maximum. This increased solar activity included a giant sunspot, AR 4294-4296, which is about eight times the size of the Earth. This giant sunspot is made up of two sunspot groups, AR 4294 and AR 4296. They appear as two large sunspots, side by side, near the Sun's equator.

Sunspots were first recorded in China around 700 BCE. They are regions of strong magnetic fields that emerge from the Sun's interior. Sunspots tend to emerge near the Sun's equator during solar maximum. They appear dark because they are cooler in temperature than their surroundings. Sunspots can be viewed and imaged through telescopes, binoculars, and cameras equipped with solar filters. Also, be sure to wear solar glasses when viewing the sun.

Photo by Larry Isenberg

Sunspot AR 4294-4296.

On Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025, we had a Christmas party organized by Barb and Steve Hovlid. We played "Name That Astronomical Tune" by guessing the name of a song with just a few musical notes. The songs included "Bad Moon Rising" by Creedence Clearwater Revival, "Total Eclipse of the Heart" by Bonnie Tyler, "Space Oddity" by David Bowie, "Shining Star" by Earth, Wind, and Fire, and, of course, "Rocket Man" by Elton John.

We also voted for the club's board members for 2026. They are President Jim Di Paolo, Vice President Larry Isenberg, Treasurer Beverly Bergmann, and Secretary Shari Schopp. Individual club members were also recognized, including Doug George for his night-sky presentations and Glenn Cohen for his moon-minute presentations. And thanks to Ed Hayes, our "weatherman," who alerts us to the best nights for our telescope viewing events.

Besides attending club meetings, you can also learn more about astronomy at Master the Possibilities. There are classes on introductory astronomy, the planets, the constellations, and the universe.

Regular meetings of the Moonstruck Astronomy Club are on the first Thursday of every month from 11:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. in the Hobby Building Event Room. There will not be a meeting in January because the first Thursday is

a holiday. All residents are welcome to join the club, and new members are welcome! Club dues are only \$20 per year, and they include a subscription to the quarterly Reflector Magazine.

For information or club registration, please contact club President Jim Di Paolo at [moonastroclub@gmail.com](mailto:moonastroclub@gmail.com).

More information is always available at [moonstruckastronomyclub.org](http://moonstruckastronomyclub.org).

Keep looking up!