



# Galloway Forest Astronomical Society

**Newsletter #34, October 2019**

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## Back at work for the Winter

We are well and truly back in harness now after the summer break. Early in October we took the planetarium to Belmont Primary School in Stranraer for two morning sessions with 45 Primary 6 pupils to top-off their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) lessons on the solar system. We had two superb groups of youngsters and it was clear that they had gained a lot from their work in class.

Then on the 17<sup>th</sup> we took two telescopes and the projector, although not the dome, down to the Mull of Galloway to join in with the RSPB “Stargazing Spectacular” Event on Scotland’s most southerly location. A foul night it was, fully overcast with vicious sleet showers and a very stong wind, so we stayed indoors with no hope of any live observing. The visitors enjoyed presentations from Chris Walker on the solar wind and the aurora borealis, with lots of his own aurora images, and from GFAS using stellarium to show some of the recent discoveries in the solar system, the local galaxy group and the Kepler space telescope discoveries of stars with exoplanets between the constellations Cygnus and Lyra.

Shown in the picture are Eleanor Barr (centre), RSPB Community Engagement Officer, with her RSPB colleague (left), and GFAS Chairman Antony Berretti (right), at the end of our presentation. Many congratulations to Eleanor and her staff on their organisation of the event in a stunning but remote location and under the worst weather conditions imaginable.



## School visits past and to come

Last school session we put on 6 planetarium events in the Kilgallioch Fund Area, 5 to schools and 1 to the Wigtown “Big Bang” event. We also put on 2 shows outside the area, to the Dumfries & Galloway Family Science Festival and to the Ayr Home Education Group. This school session we hope to reach our target of 10. We have 3 more school visits planned before Christmas - Glenluce / Castle Kennedy at Glenluce, Creetown/ Minnigaff at Creetown, and finally Sandhead Primary in December.

## GFAS AGM 2019

The 2019 Annual General Meeting will be held on **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November at 10:00 am** in the Newton Stewart Centre. Office bearers’ reports will be presented for the members’ approval and all the office bearers’ positions fall to be elected. Also, members can propose amendments to the constitution of the society. Please email the secretary with nominations of office bearers, proposed amendments to the constitution, or any other business for the AGM soon so that these can be included in the agenda in good time.

Members’ subscriptions can be paid to the Treasurer at the meeting. Non-members welcome - bring a friend!



## Galloway Forest Astronomical Society

Registered Scottish Charity SC035033.

Hon President: Prof. John Brown D.Sc., Astronomer Royal for Scotland

Chairman: Antony Berretti;

Secretary: Doug Snell, 5 Elm Grove, Newton Stewart, DG8 6JT

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## Brian strikes again

Brian Leighton is carrying on with his astrophotography work out at the 3 Lochs caravan park between Newton Stewart and Glenluce. Although this is well west of the official Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park Area, it is still an excellent location for astrophotography. He doesn't use a telescope, just a camera with a tracking system to let him lock on to his target and build a stack of exposures which he then runs through an image stacking program to reduce the signal-to-noise ration and so sharpen up the images. The results are stunning. You can see some of his recent material on the Frugaldom facebook page, at

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/Frugaldom/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=1590881924384766](https://www.facebook.com/pg/Frugaldom/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1590881924384766)

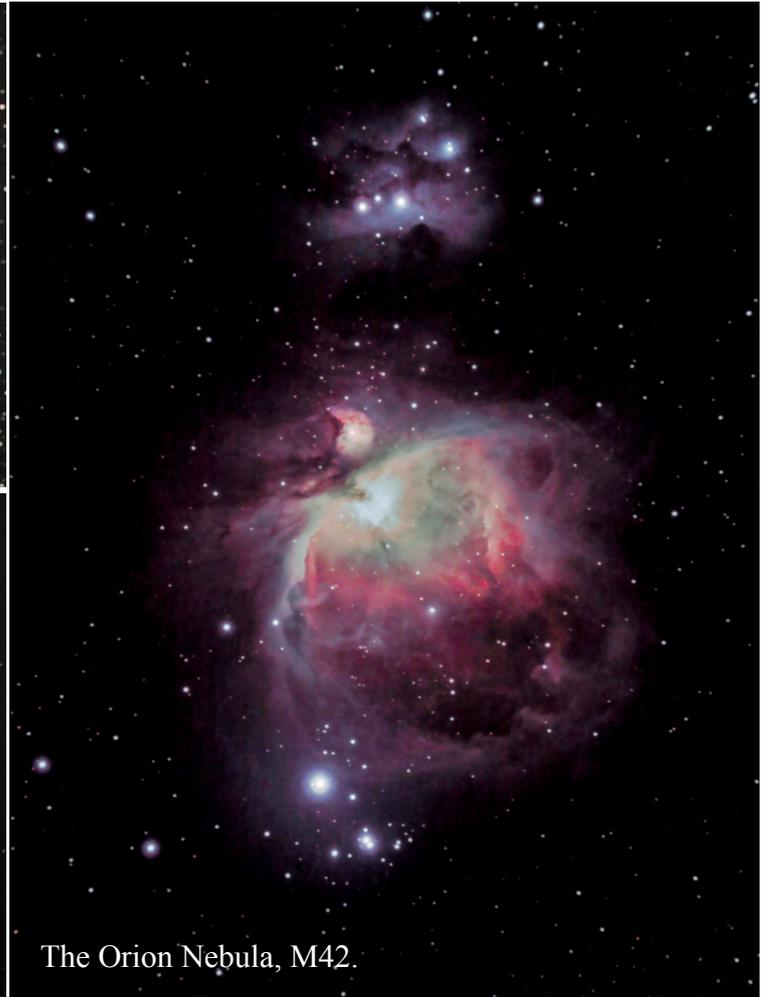
Meanwhile here are three more examples of his work for your delectation.



The Cocoon Nebula, IC5146



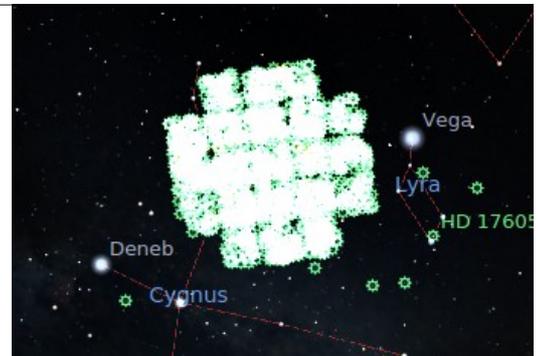
The Northern Triffid Nebula, NGC1579.



The Orion Nebula, M42.

## Stellarium: Kepler and Exoplanets

The Kepler Space Telescope's job was to find planets outside our Solar System. It flew for nearly 9 years, from March 2009 to Nov 2018. By then thousands of exoplanets had been discovered, most of them between the size of Earth and Neptune. Many of them were found orbiting stars near the constellation Cygnus, where Kepler was pointed for the first four years of its mission. They have now been plotted on Stellarium - CTRL-ALT-E reveals them - with amazing results as you can see in the screenshot opposite.



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