

Announcing the 2024 ASPB Stargaze

The ASPB Stargaze had been the premier annual observing event of the Astronomical Society of the Palm Beaches for many years. In most years, the Stargazes were held at George DeBarros' "Milky Way Ranch" in Venus, Florida. The sky is exceptionally dark at Venus with 6th magnitude stars visible with the unaided eye on clear nights, providing wonderful views of a bright, easily visible Milky Way and remote galaxies. Not only are the usual winter sky highlights of Orion, Auriga, and Gemini visible, but many highlights of the southern sky, such as the huge globular cluster Omega Centauri (visible to the unaided eye), the active galaxy Centaurus A and the beautiful spiral galaxy M83 may also be seen. After a break due to the Covid pandemic, we resumed this event in 2022 and are scheduling a new Stargaze for 2024. Shown below is Quin Travers' drone photo of the observing field.



We will hold our 2024 Stargaze at George's Milky Way Ranch on the new moon weekend of Thursday, March 7th to Sunday morning, March 10th. About 15 spots are available for telescope/camping set ups. This will not be a public event but is open almost entirely to paid ASPB members. If there is sufficient room after our members have registered, we may invite certain non-members who have attended this event in the past. The observing field will be located on the field adjoining the south side of George's barn and electricity will be available. Vehicles and camping will be on the north side of George's house. Since this is a private residence and not a camping facility, separate port-o-lets will be provided for men and women and there will be cold running water. Attendees should bring their own food (or most of it) since the nearest restaurants are in Lake Placid, about 20 miles (about a 30-minute drive) north of Venus. For those who do not wish to camp, there are hotel/motel accommodations available in and around Lake Placid. In past years, some of our participants stayed at the Ramada Inn about 15 minutes from the Milky Way Ranch on Rt. 27 just south of Lake Placid.

Venus is located west of Route 27 between Moorehaven and Lake Placid. Detailed directions will be provided to those who register. There isn't much in Moorehaven, but there are a variety of restaurants and stores in Lake Placid and Sebring, a bit further to the north of Lake Placid. Several of us have made trips to Lake Placid during past events, particularly to visit the particularly good local pancake house, as well as to other restaurants for dinner. The isolation at the Milky Way Ranch not only provides us with dark skies, but also nice countryside for walking, bird watching and photography.

A registration form is included in this issue of *Stars & Scopes* and can also be printed from the ASPB website or the ASPB files on our io group. In order to make it easier for members (especially those who have never been to a Stargaze) to participate in the 2024 Stargaze, we will not charge a registration fee this year. Simply complete and sign the form and send it to our post office box or turn it in to our treasurer, president, or me if we resume in-person meetings before next March. Reservations will be taken on a first come, first served basis. Space for this event is limited, so don't delay. Remember, we must have your form by the March 4th deadline for you to attend. Please join us for what may be one of your most memorable astronomical observing experiences.

Jay Albert