

The February Sky

Venus is the brightest object in the western sky after sunset. In mid-February it's about as bright as it can be, as seen from Earth. As Venus swings in its smaller, faster orbit between Earth and the Sun, its crescent becomes longer but thinner. Its apparent diameter peaks at 59.4 [seconds of arc](#) on March 25th. For several weeks around those dates, any quality optical aid will show its [apparent crescent shape](#). People with exceptional eyesight (the author not among them) can distinguish the non-spherical profile of Venus without additional optics.

Come and see the sky through many different telescopes at one of the [Blue Grass Amateur Astronomy Club](#)'s outings at [Raven Run](#). The (Saturday) dates in 2017 are:

March 25th at 8:15pm
April 22 at 8:30pm
May 27 at 9:00pm
June 24 at 9:15pm
July 22 at 9:00pm
August 19 at 8:30pm
September 16 at 8:00pm
October 21 at 7:00pm.

Call Raven Run an hour before sunset to verify that the weather will be sufficiently clear.

You will find an [all-sky finder chart](#) and the PDF of this flyer at [our web site](#).

UK MacAdam STUDENT OBSERVATORY

UK's MacAdam Student Observatory, designed and built in 2007, was officially opened in 2008. The Observatory is located atop Parking Structure #2 between the W.T. Young Library and the Chemistry-Physics Building, and its dome houses a high-quality 20-inch reflecting telescope plus a variety of state-of-the-art optical instruments. The Observatory is dedicated to serving UK students as well as astronomy enthusiasts of every age and experience level throughout Kentucky.

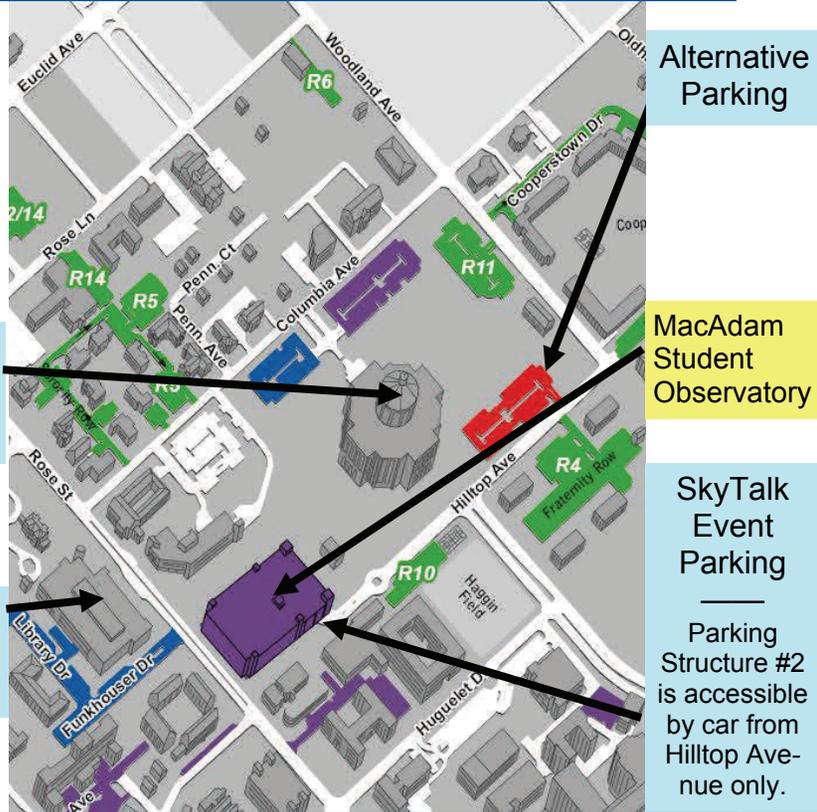
Are you interested in informal talks on astronomy and astrophysics? Are you curious about telescope design and operation? Would you care to take a look through the eyepiece?

The Department of Physics & Astronomy in UK's College of Arts & Sciences welcomes you! Join us to experience the excitement of stargazing through a powerful telescope. An up-to-date calendar of events can be found on our website:

<https://pa.as.uky.edu/observatory>



How to find the MacAdam Student Observatory



W.T. Young Library

Chemistry/ Physics Building

Alternative Parking

MacAdam Student Observatory

SkyTalk Event Parking

Parking Structure #2 is accessible by car from Hilltop Avenue only.

Monthly Meetings

The MSO hosts monthly public-observing sessions, each with a kick-off 40 minute presentation in the Chemistry-Physics Building. The presentations will take place even on cloudy nights. If the sky is clear, the observatory will open after the talk! Can't make the SkyTalk? Then come after!

Next month:

March 9, 2017 - **7:00 PM** - Chem-Phys Room 155

Kentucky SkyTalk



In this [image](#), hot gas is red, dark matter is blue, and nearly everything else is a galaxy, each containing billions of stars.

Image Credit:
[NASA](#), [ESA](#), J. Merten ([ITA](#), [AOB](#)), & D. Coe ([STScI](#))

Angela Collier— University of Kentucky

Thursday - February 9, 2017 7:00 PM

Chemistry-Physics Building Room 155

Pandora's Cluster: Abell 2744

The galaxy cluster [Abell 2744](#) contains so many unusual phenomena that astronomers have dubbed it "[Pandora's Cluster](#)," after the [mythological box](#) said to contain all the world's ills. A galaxy cluster is a large scale structure that contains hundreds to thousands of gravitationally bound galaxies. When galaxy clusters collide they can release energies equivalent to 10,000 [supernovae](#) per year for one billion years. By studying these collisions, astronomers can study the behavior of [dark matter](#) by its interaction with normal matter.

Tonight's *Kentucky SkyTalk* is part of an ongoing series. These are presented by the UK Department of Physics and Astronomy, and the MacAdam Student Observatory. Held every 2nd Thursday of the month, they are always free and open to the public.