



THE 2024 OZSKY "ALUMNI" STAR SAFARI

SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 7, 2024

BINDA, NSW, AUSTRALIA

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OZSKY "ALUMNI" 2024: FINAL WRAP-UP REPORT

2024 continued the celebrations of our 31st Anniversary of running these unique Southern Skies Observing Adventures which originally started back in 1993 at an event which we called "Operation Pacific Storm", morphing through various name changes including the "Aussie Sky Safaris" and "Deepest South Texas Star Safaris".

It has since grown and changed significantly over the past 31 years into what is now an amazing bucket-list astronomy event known across the world as "The OzSky Star Safari".

It has always been our intention to run the "Alumni" edition of the OzSky Star Safari as a laid-back, relaxed gathering of friends under some dark skies with some great telescopes, and without all the usual rigid schedules of regular star parties or even those less rigid but still well-known schedules of the OzSky "Classic" Star Safaris for that matter – I think we achieved that this year (and hope you all do too).

THE PEOPLE

The 2024 OzSky "Alumni" Star Safari had a total of eight avid observers from **four US States** and **two Australian States/Territories** plus six OzSky volunteers (*significantly more than our traditional "Alumni" events where we typically have only two or three volunteers*) and one Greyhound. We also had a brief visit by some guests from Sydney join us for a night or two.

- **Matthew Bielski** from Niles, MI
- **Vello Tabur** from Wanniasa, ACT
- **Tony, Lorraine & John Tanner** from Mosman, NSW
- **Dan Stapleton** from Birdsboro, PA
- **Mike Heydt** from Missoula, MT
- **Don Pensack & Pam Diefenbach** from Los Angeles, CA
- **David Linaker** from West Pennant Hills, NSW
- **Lachlan, Annette & Bonnie MacDonald** from Strathfield, NSW
- **Tony Buckley** from Denistone, NSW
- **Andrew Murrell** from Umina Beach, NSW
- **David Batagol** from Kincumber, NSW & **Amanda Burrell** from Cronulla, NSW
- **John Bambury** from Nowra, NSW
- **Gary Kopff & Mai Tran, Rachelle Tran, Josh Vo, Annaleise Tran & Sean Nguyen** from Mt Ku-Ring-Gai, NSW

THE OBSERVING

We were incredibly lucky to enjoy beautifully clear, dark skies on six out of the seven observing nights during the week, however despite ample opportunities for severe cases of "Photon Fatigue", some of the observers continued throughout the night right up until sunrise on the final day.

Most nights saw several people observing right through until the morning Sun started to interfere, with about half of the group retiring before 01:00AM most nights, leaving several telescopes unused and fully available thereafter.

The average SQM readings (using a combination of SQM and SQM-L devices) across the week ranged between the superb values of 21.48 – 21.77 mag/arcsec².

2024 OZSKY "ALUMNI" GROUP PHOTO

The official Group Photo has now been published on the OzSky website and can be found on our [OzSky Photo Gallery page](#).

A small version is also included at the end of this PDF for your convenience.

It can also be found on our [Facebook photo album](#) for those of you who use [Facebook](#) – or even if you don't use it, you can still view them there

THE TELESCOPES

An unparalleled array of amazing Obsession Telescopes was made available to all OzSky attendees, allowing everyone to get ample time on any telescope of their choosing, at any time of the night.

All the telescopes were made available to the entire group, with every telescope accessible to everyone at any time.

The telescopes available at OzSky "Alumni" 2024 included the following:

- 2 × 25" f/5.0 Obsession Telescopes
- 2 × 18" f/4.5 Obsession Telescopes
- 1 × 18" f/4.2 Ultra-Compact Obsession Telescope

All the telescopes available at the OzSky "Alumni" Star Safari are owned by the 3 Rivers Foundation (3RF) in Texas, USA and made available for your use during these unique events.

Special thanks are expressed to both **3RF** and the **OzSky volunteers** who continue to donate their valuable time to the OzSky cause to make these events even better for you all.

MEALS & CATERING

Upon arrival this year, the group was able to take advantage of the convenience of a simple, yet tasty Aussie BBQ and salad dinner, making their arrival and check-in a little easier.

Some folks took turns cooking for their housemates throughout the week, whilst others conjured up delicious single-serve meals to fuel their observing appetites each night, whilst other nights were spent experiencing the delicacies of some of the local restaurants and pub bistros. BBQ ribs were definitely a recurring theme this year!

And who could forget the delectable roast lamb meal prepared by Andrew and Matt – or the deliciously more-ish fruit cake cooked on-site by Annette (*appropriately supervised by our unofficial OzSky mascot, Bonnie*).

I suspect it may also be worth mentioning the varieties of traditional Mead and Ginger Beer which mysteriously found their way around the OzSky observing site and acted as anti-freeze for the first few nights of the week.

DAY TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Despite having no scheduled day trips or activities, the group did enjoy a few impromptu outings during the week, including:

- Road trip to the Murrumbateman Wine Region and Chocolate Shop
- Several hikes around the 6,310-acre sheep station to some of the hilltops
- Visits to the award-winning Edna Walling Garden at Markdale
- Road Trip to the Taralga Wildlife Sanctuary

FINAL REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK

I have started going through the feedback received so far, and despite the overwhelming number of delightful comments to the effect that you all loved your experience at OzSky, a few opportunities to further improve OzSky in the future have already been identified.

I am pleased to advise that those suggestions are already being implemented into the planning process for OzSky "Alumni" 2025, so thank you all!

Each and every suggestion, compliment and complaint received (no matter how big or small) is thoroughly considered and most are usually implemented directly or indirectly into future events, wherever possible.

If you have left any suggestions for ways we can improve OzSky, I hope to be in touch with you in the coming weeks to find out more details if necessary.

For those of you who have not yet had a chance to provide any feedback, or if you have something further to add to your existing feedback, you can use this link to complete the [2024 OzSky "Alumni" Star Safari Feedback Form](#).

The feedback is entirely anonymous, however if you choose to leave an optional Testimonial, you do have the option of including your name and contact details.

Please take the time to let me know your thoughts, especially if you can think of any areas for improvement (*no matter how minor – or extreme!*), because your feedback is what has helped shape these unique OzSky events into what they have become today.

Alternatively, feel free to just drop me an email with your thoughts or suggestions – or a testimonial! ☺

OZSKY "ALUMNI" 2024 GROUP PHOTO

