



# THE 2025 OZSKY "CLASSIC" STAR SAFARI

COONABARABRAN, NSW, AUSTRALIA

MARCH 23 – 30, 2025

WWW.OZSKY.ORG

## 12. OZSKY 2025: FINAL WRAP-UP REPORT

March 2025 represented the 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of running these unique Southern Skies Observing Adventures which originally started way back in 1993 at an event which we called "Operation Pacific Storm", morphing through time – and various name changes including "The Aussie Sky Safaris" and "The Deepest South Texas Star Safari".

It has since grown and changed significantly over the past 32 years into this amazing bucket-list astronomy event which is now very well-known across the world as "The OzSky Star Safari".

### THE PEOPLE

The 2025 OzSky "Classic" Star Safari had a total of six volunteers and we were joined by a total of 41 individuals (31 registrations) from across Australia, Canada, and thirteen States of the USA (MI, NH, CA, WA, CO, AZ, TX, GA, NM, HI, VA, FL, UT).

OzSky 2025 saw a very impressive line-up of major OzSky milestones:



**Tony Tanner** achieved his SIXTEENTH OzSky Star Safari milestone (*interestingly, it was also his sixteenth consecutive OzSky Star Safari – yes, that's 16 in a row!*) and as a veteran at more than five "Classic" and "Alumni" events each, Tony proudly and solely holds the title of OzSky "Grand Master". Congratulations!



**Matt Bielski** and **Vello Tabur** jointly achieved their EIGHTH OzSky Star Safari milestones and as veterans both the OzSky "Classic" and "Alumni" events, both proudly hold the titles of OzSky "Masters", in addition to being recognised as official OzSky Volunteers since 2023.



**Steve Gottlieb** and **Bob Rose** jointly achieved their SEVENTH OzSky Star Safari milestone and as veterans both the OzSky "Classic" and "Alumni" events, both proudly hold the titles of OzSky "Masters".

Additionally, a huge thank you goes out to Bob Rose who offered to step in as a volunteer at this year's event after two of our usual volunteers were unable to attend at short notice.



**Greg Halac** and **Peter Natscher** jointly achieved their SIXTH OzSky Star Safari milestone and with Greg being a veteran of both the OzSky "Classic" and "Alumni" events, and Peter a veteran of the OzSky "Classic" events, proudly hold the titles of OzSky "Master" and "Expert", respectively.



**Ramaswamy** and **David Linaker** jointly achieved their FIFTH OzSky Star Safari milestone and as veterans both the OzSky "Classic" and "Alumni" events, both have proudly become brand new holders of the title OzSky "Master"



**Dan Smiley**, **Jim Allewelt**, **Ken Tydeck** and **Teri-Jane Tydeck** all achieved their fourth OzSky Star Safari milestones, and as regular attendees of four or more OzSky events, all have proudly earned themselves the title of OzSky "Experts", with Dan also having experienced the OzSky "Alumni" events.



**Gordon Pegue**, **Ralph Marple**, **Michael Prochoda**, and **Lecia Burrow Roey** all achieved their third OzSky milestones, proudly reinforcing their reputations as OzSky "Veterans", with Lecia and Ralph also each having experienced the OzSky "Alumni" events.



**Peter Plumbohm**, **Karen Thomas**, **Phill Roey**, **Greg Marino** and **Mark Simonson** all achieved their second OzSky milestones, proudly gaining their reputable new titles of OzSky "Veterans", with Peter, Karen and Phill each having also experienced the OzSky "Alumni" events.



And although numerically appearing last in this list – but most certainly not least – **Penny Kunitani**, **Jeanne Lavin**, **Tiffany Wexler**, **David Pitre**, **Mazen Ataya**, **Tom & Barb Mozdzen**, **Barry & Lori Flansburg**, **Allen & Valerie Hwang**, **Jim Fordice**, **Dale & Alice Hooper**, **Mark Bratton**, **Stephanie Choquette**, **Jeff Martin**, **Gina Knight**, **Elena Averiyanova**, and **Eric Sieverling** all joined us for their first OzSky Star Safaris (*first of many, we hope*), this year as "First-Timers".

I personally loved meeting and getting to know each and every one of you, and I very much look forward to seeing you all again very soon – under clear skies!



## THE TELESCOPES

An unparalleled array of amazing Obsession Telescopes and a handful of other telescopes were made available to all OzSky attendees, potentially allowing everyone to get ample time on any telescope of their choosing – if only the weather had co-operated!

As usual, all of the telescopes were made available to the entire group, with every telescope accessible to everyone at any time.

The telescopes which were made available for everyone to use at OzSky 2025, many of which were equipped with the premium Argo Navis Digital Telescope Computer (designed and built right here in Australia), included the following:

- 2× **25" f/5.0** Obsession Telescopes
- 1× **20" f/5.0** Obsession Telescope
- 3× **18" f/4.5** Obsession Telescopes
- 1× **18" f/4.2** Obsession Ultra-Compact Telescope
- 1× **25×150** Giant Fujinon Binoculars on a joystick controlled SkyRover Digital Sky Chair



*A small selection of the OzSky Star Safari equipment*

Plus numerous privately-owned telescopes which were offered by their respective owners for use by OzSky participants, including:

- **4" TeleVue Renaissance NP101**
- **10" f/5.6** Dobsonian
- **Coronado PST** Solar Telescope
- **Trico Machine "Sky Window"** Binocular Mount

Almost all the official telescopes available at the OzSky Star Safari are owned by the **3 Rivers Foundation** in Texas, along with a few personal instruments provided by some of the OzSky volunteers themselves.

Special thanks are expressed to both **3RF** and the **OzSky volunteers** who continue to donate their valuable time (*and some amazing telescopes*) to the OzSky cause simply to make these amazing skies and equipment available to you all.

Be sure to pay a visit to 3RF and the **Comanche Springs Astronomy Campus** near Crowell in north central Texas if you are interested in volunteering for astronomy outreach activities or just looking for a great dark sky observing site.

## THE OBSERVING

Unfortunately, the first six nights of this year's event were completely clouded out, with rain falling on many of those nights.

However, for the 27 people who remained for the final night, at around 8:00pm on Saturday night, the heavens finally provided us with six (6) jaw-dropping hours of clear, dark skies (with some fleeting clouds for a short part of that time). It was MOST welcome!

At rather short notice, the remaining volunteers were able to quickly get a bunch of telescopes set up, including a **25" f/5**, **20" f/5**, **18" f/4.5**, **18" f/4.2**, **10" f/5.6**, and **4" TeleVue NP101**, plus lots of binoculars.

The final observers eventually retired to bed just after 2:00am in readiness for the long drive home the following morning.

The average SQM readings (using multiple SQM and SQM-L devices) on that one clear night ranged between **21.4 – 21.68 mag/arcsec<sup>2</sup>**.

As is usually the case at this observing site, it was difficult finding a part of the southern sky that was not full of bright stars or Milky Way from which to take an accurate SQM reading.

## THE DAY TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Our scheduled events this year consisted primarily of impressive talks, presentations and workshops offered by our dedicated team of OzSky Volunteers.

Some folks also took part in several of the commercially operated guided tours of **Siding Springs Observatory** and the **3.9m (150") Anglo-Australian Telescope** as well as a couple of guided and self-guided scenic hikes to the Warrumbungles National Park, **Sculptures in the Scrub** in Timallallie National Park and a local geological feature known as the **Sandstone Caves** in Pilliga State Forest.

## THE MEALS & CATERING

Upon arrival this year, many guests took advantage of the convenience of a delicious motel-catered dinner making their arrival and check-in much less stressful.

Two complimentary Aussie BBQs dinners were served to all OzSky participants on the second evening (Welcome to OzSky BBQ) and on the last evening (Farewell from OzSky BBQ Hamburgers).

The Aussie beef sausages and the juicy hamburgers were all cooked to perfection by our team of volunteers with fresh salads and some tasty dessert enjoyed by all, to finish off those tasty meals.

During the rest of the week, the motel staff worked hard to offer daily dinner meals to many guests, while some others dined in town, prepared their own meals in their rooms, or took advantage of the convenient on-site BBQs.



## THE TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

The choice of talks and presentations at OzSky 2025 were quite wide and varied, and included the following topics:

- **Shooting Stars Part I: “Nightscapes – A Journey into Darkness”** by Andrew Murrell & Matt Bielski
- **How to Align and Use the Argo Navis™** by Matt Bielski
- **Ladies of the Night** by Donna Burton
- **Unlocking the Universe: Advanced Plate Solving on a Dob** by Bob Rose
- **Shooting Stars Part II: Processing your Astro-Images** by Andrew Murrell
- **Horror Objects and How to Observe Them** by Andrew Murrell
- **Intensity Interferometry and the Birth of Quantum Optics** by Tom Mozdzen
- **Indigenous Astronomy** by Donna Burton
- **OzSky Trivia Quiz** – A fun opportunity to test your knowledge on a range of subjects by Lachlan MacDonald
- **Cosmic Journeys: An Astronomer’s Travelogue** by Matt Bielski
- **Blowing Bubbles: A Talk on Wolf Rayet Stars** by Andrew Murrell
- **Navigating the Universe with “Deep Sky Orienteering”** by Vello Tabur
- **Experiment to Detect Global Epoch-of-Reionization Signature (EDGES)** by Tom Mozdzen
- **All About Globular Clusters** by Jim Fordice
- **SeeStar Demonstration** by Greg Marino
- **The Hector Galaxy Survey** by Tom Woodrow, ANU
- **Observing Variable Stars** by Greg Halac
- **The NGC / IC Project** by Steve Gottlieb
- **Mount Stromlo Observatory and the Canberra Bushfires** by David Batagol
- **Cosmic Alchemy: Unveiling the Secrets of Carbon Stars** by Matt Bielski
- **Celestial Collisions: Meteorite Craters of Australia** by Tony Buckley
- **Exploring the Small Magellanic Cloud** by Andrew Murrell
- **Advanced Observing Projects** by Steve Gottlieb
- **Stormscapes: The Art & Science of Storm Photography** by Andrew Murrell
- **The Rocket Man: Wernher von Braun and the Space Race** by David Batagol
- **A Brief History of Australian Astronomy** by Tony Buckley
- **Challenge Lists and Technology: Exploring the Cosmos with Digital Tools** by Matt Bielski
- **The Discovery of Spiral Nebulae** by Steve Gottlieb

## THE ASTRONOMY WORKSHOPS

This year, participants were once again treated to the premium, comprehensive astrophotography workshops presented by our very own in-house astrophotography expert and professional photographer, Andrew Murrell and Matt Bielski.

**Shooting Stars: Using a DSLR for Nightscapes (3-Part Workshop Series)** by Andrew Murrell and Matt Bielski

- Part I: Nightscapes: A Journey into Darkness
- Part II: Using your DSLR for Nightscapes (*this part cancelled due to the weather*)
- Part III: Processing your Astro-Images

## OZSKY 2025 DOOR PRIZES

Once again, several generous vendors offered some great prizes to award to OzSky guests as Door Prizes. This year’s prizes included, in no particular order:

- 2x **Amateur Astronomy Magazine** digital subscriptions – Won by Alice Hooper and Barb Mozdzen
- 2x **Southern Night Sky Ursa Major Stencils** – Won by Jeff Martin and Pat Hellman
- 1x **TeleGizmos Gift Voucher** – Won by Phill Roey;
- 1x **Fred Watson signed Book** donated by “Donna the Astronomer” – Won by Mark Bratton;
- 1x **Nightscapes Workshop Full-Colour Printed Manual** donated by Andrew Murrell Photography – Won by Allen Hwang;
- 1 x **Henbury Meteorite** donated by OzSky Co-Founder Tony Buckley – Won by Barry Flansburg
- 1 x full-sized **Tektite** donated by OzSky Co-Founder Tony Buckley – Won by Lori Flansburg
- 8 x **Limited Edition OzSky 2020 T-Shirts** – Won by Lecia Roey, Michael Prochoda, Steve Gottlieb, Dale Hooper, David Pitre, Greg Halac, Stephanie Choquette and Valerie Hwang

The Grand prize (*winner gets to have first choice from the entire prize pool*) was selected by way of a “People’s Choice” vote for the best photograph taken during OzSky, as voted by you all.

Subsequent Door Prizes were drawn by way of names from a hat from a pool of everyone who attended OzSky 2025, regardless of whether they entered a photo in the competition, or not.

To be eligible for the grand prize, entries in the competition could have been an Astro-photo, a tour photo, a people photo or any other photo, image or sequence taken during the OzSky week (*or at any past OzSky Star Safari*), with all submissions potentially published in future publications about OzSky.

A special thanks to Greg Halac who coordinated the vote counting on my behalf whilst we were desperately re-setting up the telescopes (at very short notice) for that final night’s awesome observing run.



## PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

A total of 49 amazing photos and videos were submitted for the competition this year and the feedback to date suggests that everyone enjoyed this style of prize draw, so we will run it like this again next year!

The People's Choice prize this year was a draw, awarded to **Barry Flansburg** and Phill Roey for their stunning wildlife photos of an **Emu** (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) and an Eastern Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) respectively, both taken during OzSky 2025.

Congratulations to everyone who entered the People's Choice Award competition – there were some spectacular images submitted this year, despite the obvious lack of astro-photos, courtesy of the unprecedented weather system.

Those photos will be showcased on the OzSky 2025 Galleries on both our [OzSky 2025 Facebook Gallery](#) and a selection will also be available on our [OzSky Website Gallery](#) as well as being selected for use in promoting this amazing not-for-profit event.

Please feel free to share the links to those photo galleries with your friends so they can share in the experiences you all had during your week at the 2025 OzSky Star Safari.

## DOOR PRIZE DONORS

I would like to offer a big thank you and shout-out to all our amazingly generous door prize donors and sponsors (in no particular order):

- [Amateur Astronomy Magazine](#)
- [TeleGizmos Telescope Covers](#)
- [Andrew Murrell Photography](#)
- [Donna the Astronomer](#)
- [Ursa Major Night Sky Stencils](#)
- [Matt Bielski](#)
- [Dragan Nikin](#)
- [Tony Buckley](#)

## OZSKY 2025 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 public [facebook photo album](#) even if you don't use [facebook](#).

## 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, despite the unfavourable weather conditions, 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 2026, so thank you all!

For any feedback relating specifically to the motel, the catered meals and the venue itself, I have started forwarding that anonymous information to the motel, and they have already advised that next year they will be bringing in a professional catering company to manage the meals and catering so that the motel staff can focus on managing the property and motel. That in itself is already a big win and is directly thanks to your feedback so far.

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 [2025 OzSky Star Safari Feedback Form](#).

Just a reminder that your feedback is entirely anonymous, however where a Testimonial is left, 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 better still, a testimonial! 😊



