

# Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2024-25





American Association of Variable Star Observers

# Annual Report 2024-25

## AAVSO Annual Report, 2024-2025

Published March 2026

Cover image: Attendees of the AAVSO's 113th Annual Meeting await opening remarks in the U.S. Space & Rocket Center's Auditorium, in Huntington, Alabama. | Courtesy Whitney Armentor

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# Who's Who of AAVSO

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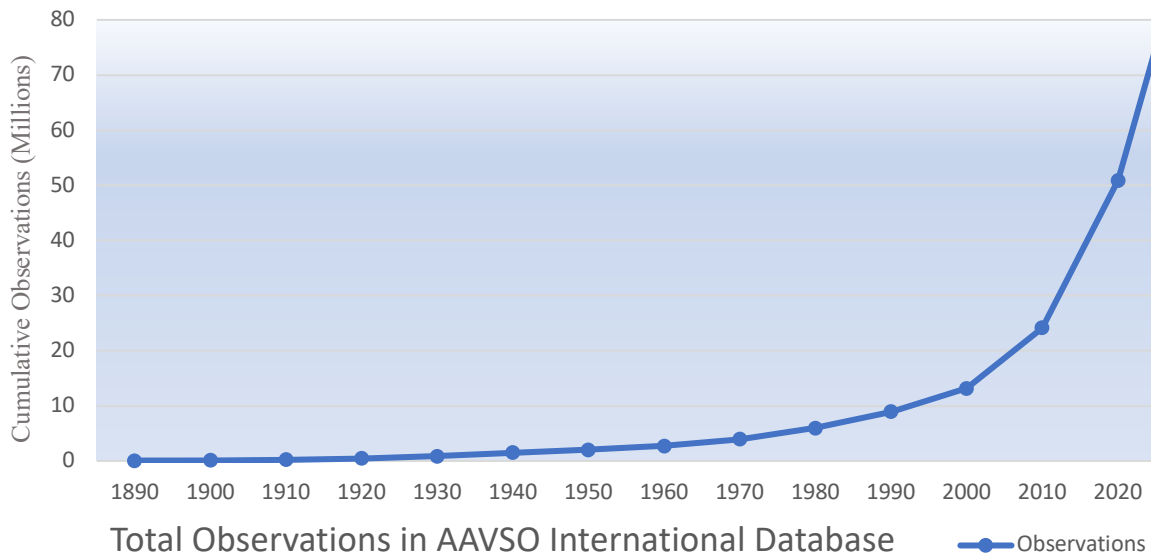
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Aru Bhoop Software Developer  
Lauren Herrington Webinar Coordinator, AVSpec Validator  
Sebastián Otero External Consultant, VSX Team  
Elizabeth O. Waagen Sr. Technical Assistant, JAAVSO Associate Editor

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## About the AAVSO

The American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) is a science-focused 501(c)(3) non-profit organization headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. Since its founding in 1911, the AAVSO and its members and observers from around the world have collaborated with the professional astronomical community to answer questions about stars and stellar evolution. Our mission is to provide amateur astronomers and students the opportunity to make real and direct contributions to astronomy.

The AAVSO accomplishes this mission by establishing relationships between professional and amateur astronomers, delivering educational services, curating the world’s largest database of variable star data, and publishing a peer-reviewed journal. In 2025, our engagement with researchers yielded 42 observing campaigns (of which 20 started in FY25), and our educational programming reached approximately 10,000 individuals.

Most of our efforts involve curation of four databases, including a photometric database with more than 74 million observations, a variable star metadata database containing information on 10.3 million variable stars and counting, a spectroscopic database with some 17,600 spectra, and an exoplanet database showcasing about 12,800 exoplanet transits thus far. In addition, AAVSO-directed professional-amateur collaborations yielded more than 200 peer-reviewed publications.

AAVSO has a staff of eight individuals that are supported by nearly 150 volunteers. We thank our board members, committee members, observers, and educators. You are each a vital part of our organization’s success.



Dear friends of astronomy and the AAVSO,

Thank you for your support of the AAVSO! It's hard to say that strongly enough. As you will read in Brian's letter, the accomplishments highlighted in this year's Impact Report are remarkable. One in particular stands out to me—more than 250 peer-reviewed papers published last year cited AAVSO's data, products, or services. That is an extraordinary contribution to science!

This impact is the direct result of the dedication of our members, volunteers, observers, and staff and is made possible through the generous financial support of our many donors. Thank you. You enable the AAVSO to serve as a vital bridge between amateur astronomers and the professional research community.

To sustain and grow this impact, the AAVSO continues to evolve. In 2026 we will make several strategic hires. We will hire a Science Educator to build the next generation of training materials and grow our educational efforts serving our members. We will also be hiring a Volunteer Coordinator to better support and leverage our more than 150 volunteers and an additional Staff Scientist to develop new programs that expand how amateur astronomers can contribute to modern astronomical research.

A key focus of our efforts is ensuring that amateur astronomers can continue to make meaningful contributions in the era of space observatories and sky surveys. These facilities are discovering more objects than professional astronomers alone can follow, and they have inherent limitations in cadence and wavelength coverage. Amateur astronomers can help fill these gaps, and the AAVSO is uniquely positioned to help them do it.

I invite you to continue supporting the AAVSO. We are a dedicated community, united by a shared love of the stars and a commitment to advancing humanity's understanding of them. Your support ensures that this remarkable partnership between amateurs and professionals endures and thrives.

Clearest skies,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter R. Cooney, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Walt Cooney  
President, AAVSO Board of Directors  
wcooney@aavso.org



As I reflect on the past year, 2025 stands out as a pivotal moment for the AAVSO. In my presentations over the past several years, I've emphasized that astronomy is undergoing a profound transition. The rapid growth of sky surveys, space-based observatories, and data-driven research is changing how professional astronomers work and, in turn, how organizations like the AAVSO must operate to remain relevant. Our 2025-2029 Strategic Plan reflects this reality and sets a clear direction for how we must evolve. In 2025, much of our effort focused on preparing our programs, infrastructure, and community for this new landscape. While most of that work occurred behind the scenes, its impact is already visible in the science our community enables and the growing relevance of the AAVSO in modern astronomy.

One of the clearest outcomes of that work was a sharper articulation of the science we support. Last year, the AAVSO clarified and strengthened its scientific identity by formally recognizing four core areas of focus: stellar photometry, stellar spectroscopy, exoplanet photometry, and sunspot counting. This clearer articulation helped broaden how the AAVSO is understood by researchers, highlighting the full range of capabilities we bring to the table.

Your contributions, whether of time, expertise, or financial resources, **directly enable the science, training, and community** described throughout this report.

With these focus areas in place, we can now systematically track and communicate our impact across each domain. In stellar photometry, we completed a multi-year effort to define effective ways for students and amateur astronomers to contribute in the era of space telescopes and large sky surveys. We shared an initial preview of our recommendations at our 114th Annual Meeting and are preparing formal guidance to follow. Our stellar spectroscopy program continued its rapid growth, becoming the third largest repository of amateur spectroscopy worldwide among several well-established international archives. In exoplanet science, AAVSO-trained observers now account for 56% of the observers and 58% of the ground-based data supporting NASA's TESS mission, demonstrating how coordinated training and infrastructure enable participation at scale in modern, space-based research. Finally, we modernized our sunspot counting program by developing a new mobile-friendly web application that will make solar observing accessible to an even broader audience.



Lauren Herrington

Supporting a global community of observers and researchers required significant investment in our infrastructure. Over the past year, we modernized core systems, improved data submission applications, enhanced collaboration tools, and began introducing modern, standards-based APIs that allow researchers to interact with AAVSO data in much the same way they do with major sky surveys. We also made major progress toward a new website that emphasizes both the science being performed and the people who make it happen. This reinforces that anyone can contribute to astronomical research. Together, these systems now operate on modern, scalable platforms that are reliable and secure, ensuring AAVSO data and tools remain accessible and impactful as our community continues to grow.

Our global community drives our growth. In 2025, our volunteers played extraordinary roles within the AAVSO by leading Special Interest Groups, building new applications, integrating large datasets into our systems, mentoring observers, and participating in Small Research Teams. At our 114th Annual Meeting, we celebrated these contributions and recognized individuals whose dedication exemplifies the best of the AAVSO community.

Throughout the year, the Board and Staff worked carefully to steward the organization itself. We maintained financial stability, redesigned our Annual Meeting to reduce costs



*AAVSO President Richard Berry introduces the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan at the 113th Annual Meeting. Image courtesy Lauren Herrington.*

while preserving scientific quality, updated data usage guidelines to reflect a broader and more diverse data ecosystem, and made decisions that position the AAVSO for long-term operational sustainability. These choices reflect a shared commitment to ensuring that the AAVSO remains strong, adaptable, and mission-focused.

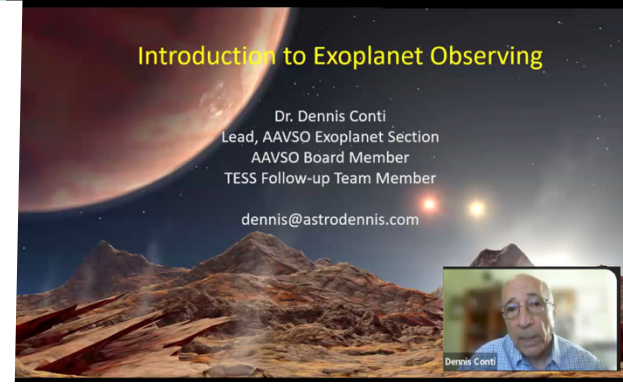
None of this progress would be possible without the generous support of our donors, members, and partners. Your contributions, whether of time, expertise, or financial resources, directly enable the science, training, and community described throughout this report. Your support allows us not only to respond to today's scientific opportunities, but to build the capacity needed for the decades ahead.

As we look ahead, the foundations laid in 2025 give me great confidence in what we can accomplish together.

As we look ahead, the foundations laid in 2025 give me great confidence in what we can accomplish together. Thank you for being part of the AAVSO and for helping ensure that people of all backgrounds can continue to make meaningful contributions to astronomy.

Clear skies,

Dr. Brian Kloppenborg  
Executive Director, AAVSO  
Email: [bkloppenborg@aavso.org](mailto:bkloppenborg@aavso.org)



## Your Donations at Work

### Collaboration with Professional Researchers

Your support allows the AAVSO staff to spend a considerable amount of time interacting with the professional astronomical community to find projects that are both scientifically interesting and well matched to the capabilities of our members. As a result of our collective efforts, AAVSO products, services, or data were used in 282 peer-reviewed publications in 2025. We also issued 27 Observing Campaigns, and provided hundreds of objects for our members to observe.

### Maintenance of Databases and Archives

Thanks to your contributions, the AAVSO maintains two of the world's largest databases on variable stars. The AAVSO International Database (AID) houses over 79.7 million observations of variable stars submitted by observers since 1891. Likewise, our Variable Star Index (VSX) is the world's most comprehensive database of variable star metadata, with information on more than 10.2 million stars.

### Outreach and Education

Donations allow the AAVSO to provide outreach and education to observers worldwide:

- a. We presented 12 webinars. These webinars saw more than 1,500 attendances on Zoom and approximately 5,000 unique views on YouTube.
- b. Our Annual Meeting and science conference enabled 77 in-person and 50 online attendees to learn about the most recent research in variable star astronomy. We look forward to seeing you in person this fall for our Annual Meeting in Sante Fe, New Mexico.

The AAVSO is recognized around the world as a significant contributor to variable star research. None of this would be possible without our community of observers, members, and donors.



Your support is making a galactic difference in variable star research

To donate to the future of observational astronomy, visit [aavso.org/donate-now](https://aavso.org/donate-now)

## User Contributions to Science

The year 2025 was an exciting one for the organization. Unfortunately, T Crb has yet to explode but while we were waiting, some excellent science was accomplished. Bert Pablo, our staff astronomer, gave a talk earlier this year at our annual meeting which you can find [here](#). Below are some highlights.

 AAVSO by the numbers

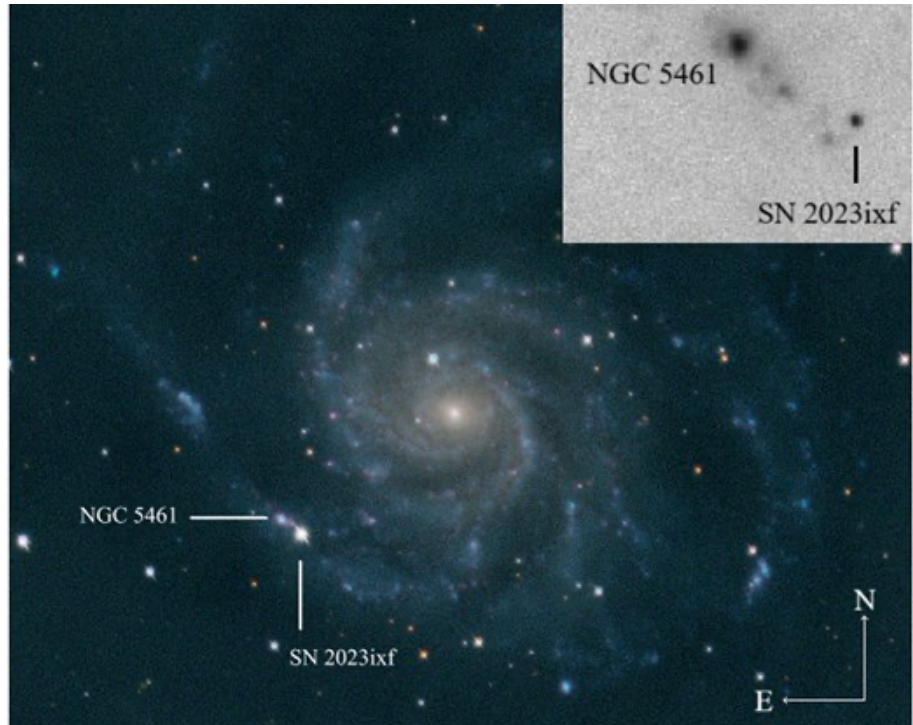
**398**  
Publications  
282 Peer-Reviewed

 AAVSO by the numbers

**1,098**  
Members

 AAVSO by the numbers

**1,525**  
Active  
Observers



*Philip Michel captured this image of a supernova in M101 from his backyard using a 9.25-inch SCT. Credit: P. Michel. Inset courtesy Liverpool Telescope.*

### Explosive Follow Up: SN 2023ixf



SN 2023ixf is one of the closest type II supernovae in recent years, making it an excellent candidate for both spectroscopic and photometric follow-up. Michel et al. 2025 (MNRAS, Vol. 539, Issue 2, May 2025, P 633–649, did an in-depth analysis, using multicolor AAVSO data to help determine the amount of nickel the star contained. Additionally, they were able to determine from its spectral composition that the star is unusually low mass, around 15 times the sun when it exploded. This led the authors to conclude binary mass loss may have played a role not only in this supernova, but in all supernovae of this type.

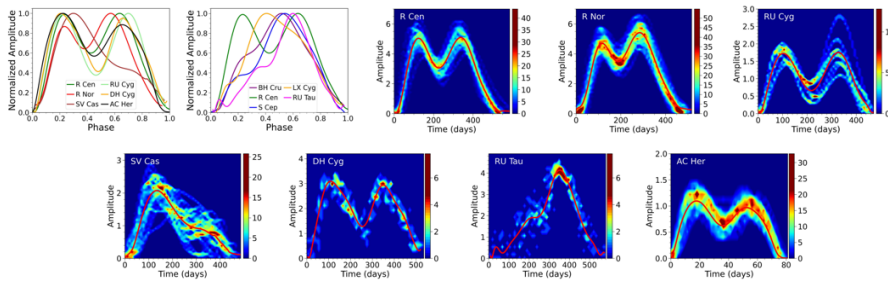


Figure 9 from “From the light curves of Long Period Variables to their evolution along the AGB.” The left two panels compare the normalized light curves of R Cen to several different stars. The remaining panels are light curve heatmaps of well-known LPV variability types, such as HBB RV Tau. Courtesy Pham Tuyet Nhung, Do Thi Hoai and Pierre Darriulat.

### An In-Depth Study of LPVs



This next study by Nhung, P. T. T., et al., “From the light curves of Long Period Variables to their evolution along the AGB” (arXiv Preprint: 2507.18936) shows the true power of the AAVSO’s long observational history. Using the extensive history of LPV data in the AAVSO archive they sought a method to quantify their light curves. They found that the light curves could be parameterized using 5 key quantities: period, amplitude, asymmetry, irregularity, and maxima / minima width. What this has allowed them to do is to develop a framework for determining evolutionary information about a star’s path along the asymptotic giant branch, purely using light curve morphology. The authors note, both the importance of this discovery as well as the critical role the AAVSO played, saying:

*“To the extent that the analyses presented in the present article may have contributed some progress, the credit belongs to the innumerable observers around the world and to the AAVSO, without whom none of the results could have been obtained. We are accordingly deeply indebted to them: to the many observers for the high quality of their observations and to the AAVSO for the outstanding handling and reduction of the data that makes their use particularly easy and efficient.”*

AAVSO by the numbers

8 CHOICE Courses  
194 Participants

AAVSO by the numbers

12 Webinars  
1,500 on Zoom  
5,000 YouTube Views


AAVSO by the numbers



**74 million**

Observations in AAVSO International Database

AAVSO by the numbers



**17,619**

Spectra in AVSpec Database

AAVSO by the numbers



**13,098**

Exoplanet Transits Observed



*Rho Cassiopeiae (center) and its surrounding star field, captured on September 26, 2020. Image courtesy David J. Ritter under the CC BY-SA 4.0 license.*

### Hypergiant Outbursts: Rho Cas



In this February 2025 *Astronomy & Astrophysics* paper, “Investigations of the pulsations, outbursts, and evolution of yellow hypergiants,” the importance of a longtime baseline was again displayed as was again displayed as van Genderen et al. used over 100 years of data on Rho Cas. With this data they were able to determine that as the system approaches outburst there is a quantifiable increase in pulsation amplitude, highlighting the predictive power of long-term photometric monitoring. This study not only makes extensive use of AAVSO data but was carried out in close collaboration with AAVSO observers, three of whom, Erwin van Ballegoij, Martin Sblewski, and Giorgio Di Scala, are listed as coauthors, underscoring the critical role that coordinated professional–amateur efforts play in time-domain astronomy.



### Supernova Early Warning System

The AAVSO continues its long-term work on the Supernova Early Warning System (SNEWS), which monitors potential supernova progenitor stars. The program has collected more than 45,000 observations of 192 targets, with participation from over 325 observers. While these stars evolve very slowly and definitive scientific results are not yet apparent, the growing dataset lays essential groundwork for future discoveries.

The program also conducts periodic “fire drills” to test observer readiness. More than 60 participants now receive alerts, and during the most recent exercise in August, observers were on sky within an hour—demonstrating strong preparedness for the next Galactic supernova.

### Legacy Eclipsing Binary Program

Another longstanding AAVSO initiative is the legacy eclipsing binary program, which tracks changes in the orbital periods of selected eclipsing binaries over decades. These long-term results are compiled and published semi-annually in JAAVSO by Gerry Samolyk, co-chair of the Eclipsing Binary Special Interest Group. The detected period changes underscore the scientific value of sustained, long-baseline observations—an area in which the AAVSO has long excelled.

A blue rounded square graphic with a white icon of a graduation cap and a computer monitor. To the right of the icon, it says "AAVSO by the numbers". Below that, the number "34" is displayed in a large white font, followed by "Observing Campaigns" in a smaller white font.

A blue rounded square graphic with a white icon of a sun with a central dot. To the right of the icon, it says "AAVSO by the numbers". Below that, the number "291,557" is displayed in a large white font, followed by "Sunspots Counts Recorded" in a smaller white font.



The group picture of Annual Meeting attendees is a custom dating back to 1916. Here, attendees pose for the 114th meeting photograph. *Inset:* The Oregon Museum of Science & Industry in the heart of Portland. Group photograph courtesy Bob Stephens.

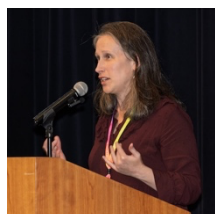
## AAVSO Events

### AAVSO 114th Annual Meeting



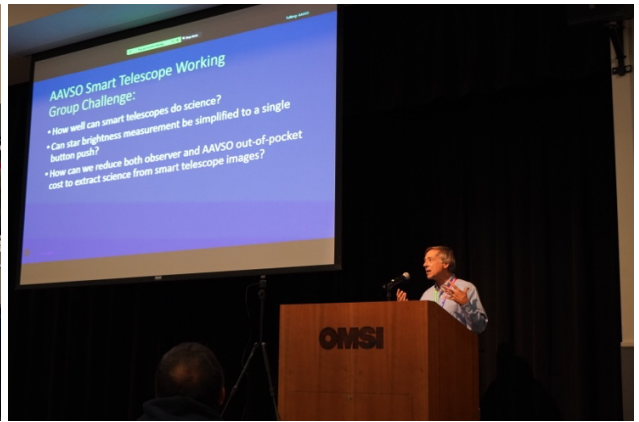
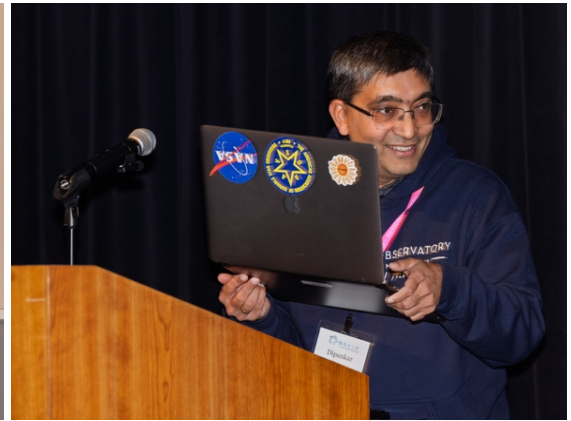
*Peter Plavchan*

On November 1–2, 2025, the AAVSO gathered members, observers, researchers, and enthusiasts at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland, Oregon, for its 114th Annual Meeting. Held over two days at this engaging science venue on the Willamette River, the meeting featured an excellent program of keynote lectures, oral and poster presentations, and networking opportunities spanning variable star research, observing techniques, education, and outreach.



*Melissa Graham*

Highlights included talks by esteemed speakers such as Dr. Peter Plavchan, who discussed NASA’s LANDOLT mission, and Dr. Melissa L. Graham, who described the Vera C. Rubin Observatory’s Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST). The meeting fostered lively discussions on current research and provided ample opportunities for



attendees to connect and exchange ideas. The event, supported by long-time sponsor Chroma Technology Corp., also incorporated the annual Membership Meeting, featuring reports from AAVSO leadership, recognition of awardees, and community updates—extending the organization’s long tradition of fostering collaboration and scientific discovery within the variable star community.



“Still one of the biggest highlights of my year. I hope to attend the next meeting in Sante Fe.”





# Testimonials

## CHOICE Course Testimonials

I definitely enjoyed the [Observational Best Practices] course, despite—or maybe because—it was challenging at times.

Helmar Adler

I really enjoyed the [How to Use VStar] course, and I learned a lot of new things as a result.

Tim Cooper

## Webinar Testimonials

This [webinar] was excellent! Dr. Collins' work is admirable, as is her dedication to the TESS Follow-Up program.

John Downing

It was great to see professional-community-driven project that is a such a good fit for a wide range of AAVSO observers.

Gary Billings



## Webinars

In 2025, the AAVSO hosted 12 astronomy-focused webinars, continuing a successful educational program from the previous year. The 2025 webinar series was generously sponsored by Boyce Astro.

The core program consisted of seven science webinars: Practice Makes Perfect: Getting Ready for the Next Galactic Supernova; Deciphering Eclipsing Binary Systems; M Dwarf Starspots & Transiting Exoplanets; Pandora’s Box: How NASA and Citizen Scientists Help Avert Disaster; Betelgeuse: An Enigmatic Red Supergiant; Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite Follow-Up Observing Program: Contributing to TESS Exoplanet Discoveries; and Taking the Pulse of the Stars.

Section leaders presented introductions to their AAVSO Special Interest Groups over three webinars. In June, Dennis Conti, Kris Larsen, and Mike Poxon presented on Exoplanets, Solar, and Young Stellar Objects. In July, Damien Lemay, Peter Bealo, and Eric Hintz presented on Eclipsing Binaries, Instrumentation & Equipment and Short Period Pulsars. In November, Arne Henden, Walt Cooney, and Scott Donnell presented on AAVSONet, Cataclysmic Variables and Spectroscopy.

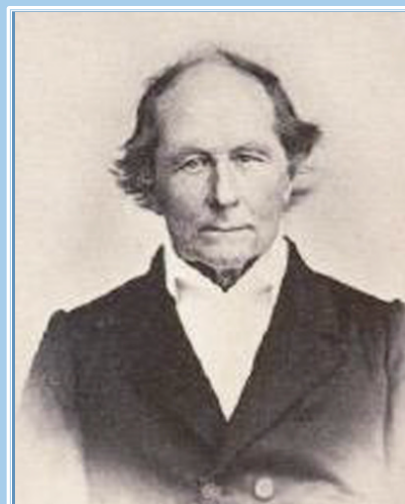
As in prior years, the Nominating Committee hosted a “Meet the Candidates” event to help members learn more about the FY26 Board candidates.

## The AAVSO Argelander Society

Named for Friedrich Argelander, considered “the father of variable star astronomy,” The Argelander Society offers membership benefits to individuals who have given a certain level of substantial financial support to the AAVSO over many years. Once a benefactor has donated a cumulative total of \$35,000 to the AAVSO, they are eligible for a lifetime membership in the organization, free registration to Annual Meetings, invitations to special events, special awards, and tokens of the association’s appreciation.



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Gordon Myers  
Richard S. Post  
William L. Stein  
David J. Sworin  
Theodore H. N. Wales  
Gary Walker  
Thomas R. Williams



Above: Friedrich Wilhelm August Argelander (1799–1875). Photograph courtesy of the Mary Lea Shane Archives of the Lick Observatory, University of California-Santa Cruz

Friedrich Argelander was the first astronomer to begin careful study of variable stars. Argelander is probably best known for the Bonner Durchmusterung, the largest and most comprehensive of the pre-photographic star catalogs. He began mapping the exact positions of the stars in the northern sky in 1852, a monumental task before the use of photographic plates. When finally completed in 1863, it listed the positions of 324,198 stars down to 9th magnitude.

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Igor Chekalin / Getty Images

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# Treasurer's Reports

October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025

Robert D. Stephens, Treasurer, AAVSO, 185 Alewife Brook Parkway, Suite 410, Cambridge, MA 02138, U.S.A.

## AAVSO Statement of Financial Position

September 30, 2025

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
Cash	\$ 384,914	\$ 410,970
Investments	19,570,045	18,405,948
Other Current Assets	21,167	22,234
Fixed Assets	12,160	21,685
Operating lease right-of-use assets, net	131,859	205,710
Security deposit	13,000	13,000
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 20,133,145</b>	<b>\$ 19,079,368</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>		
Current Liabilities	\$ 45,395	\$ 91,422
Deferred Revenue: Membership & Meetings	70,967	81,537
Operating lease liability	138,433	213,039
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 254,795</b>	<b>\$ 385,998</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Without donor restrictions	16,191,902	15,083,675
With donor restrictions	3,686,448	3,609,874
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>19,878,350</b>	<b>18,693,549</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 20,133,145</b>	<b>\$ 19,079,368</b>

## Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

Year Ending September 30, 2025

### Changes in net assets without donor restrictions:

#### Revenues, support and other gains

Contributions and grants	\$ 362,467
In-kind contributions	17,313
Membership dues and fees	111,915
Meetings, courses and other fees	40,954
Sales of publications and related material	1,870
Dividends and interest, net	326,306
Unrealized (depreciation) appreciation on investments	1,612,153
Realized gains on sale of investments	80,037

**Total Revenues, support and other gains** \$ 2,553,015

#### Expenses

Program Services	754,329
General and administrative	337,956
Fundraising	130,828

**Total Expenses** \$ 1,223,113

**Increase (Decrease) in Unrestricted Net Assets** \$ 1,329,902

#### Changes in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions

Contributions and grants	5,875
Dividends and interest, net	6,138
Unrealized (depreciation) appreciation on investments	30,327
Realized gains on sale of investments	1,506
Expenses	(10,687)

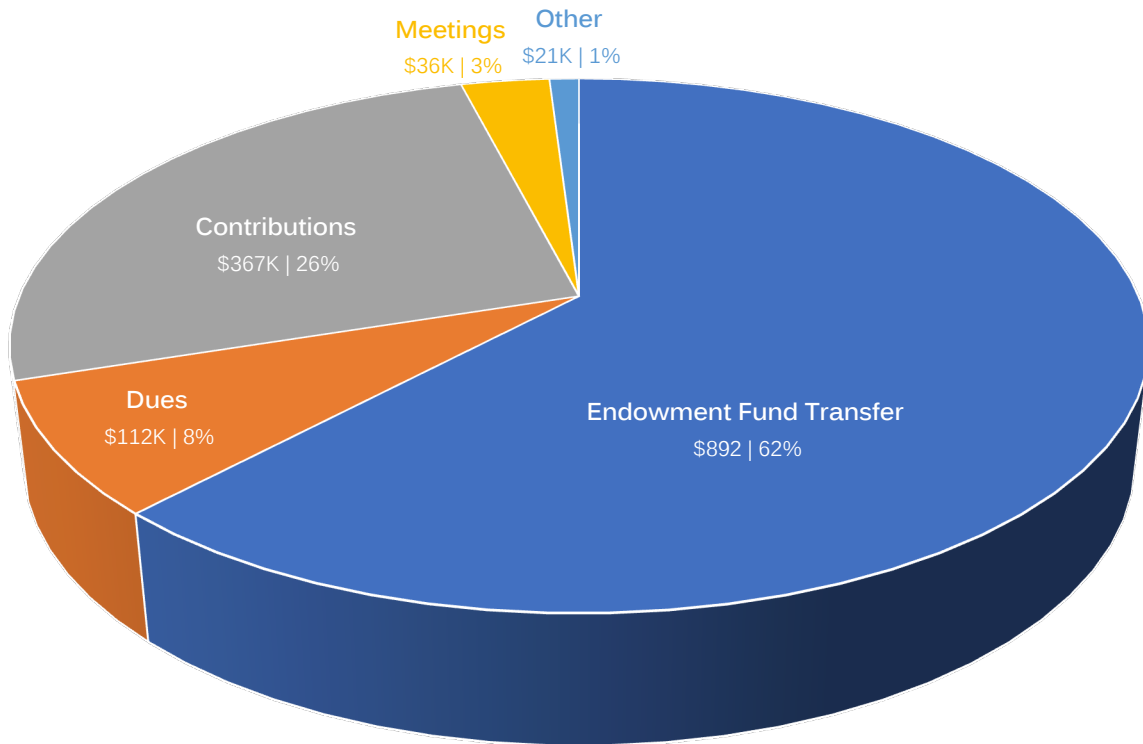
**Increase in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets** \$ 33,159

**Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets** \$ 1,363,061

**Net Assets – Beginning of year** \$ 18,693,373

**Net Assets – End of year** \$ 20,059,434

## AAVSO Revenues Used in Operations | FY24-25



Above: Revenues by type used to fund AAVSO operations. The Endowment Fund transfer is the sustainable draw from the Endowment Fund. Below: Expenditures of the AAVSO by type.

## AAVSO Expenses | FY24-25

