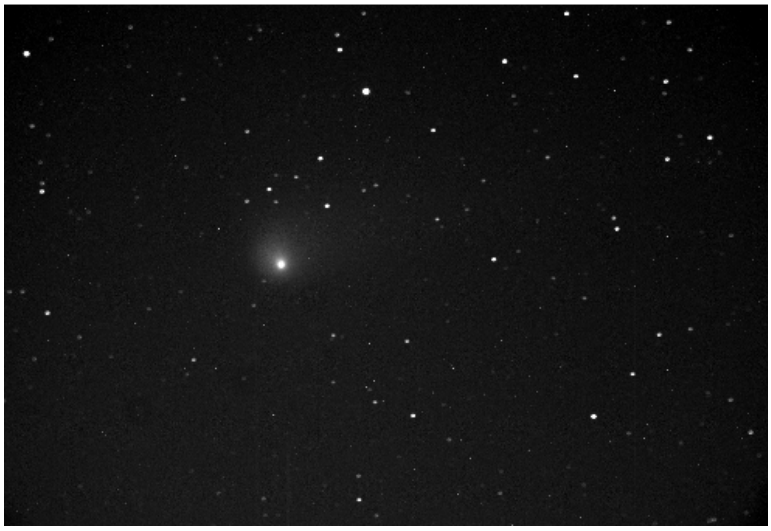
I am Bob Aloisi, a 3rd year Astronomy graduate student at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. I am a non-traditional student who quit my job in my 50s and returned to school to pursue my passion for Astronomy. In my research projects, I search for exoplanets, which orbit stars other than the Sun. There are currently more than 5000 confirmed exoplanets.

Last year, I joined a team called TFOP SG1 that helps other astronomers confirm exoplanet candidates by observing using local telescopes. These candidates are typically discovered using a space telescope called TESS, which measures the amount of light received from thousands of stars and detects dips in the light received when a planet passes in front of a star, which is called a transit. Ground observations of transits are needed to confirm exoplanet candidates. Fortunately, relatively small local telescopes can be used for these observations.



I have been a frequent user of the Bell Burnell Observatory (BBO) since November 2021, when Bill Linton gave me access to use the recently refurbished facility and its modern 16” aperture Meade LX200 telescope. It is an awesome place to observe the night sky. I applied for and received a grant in 2022 from the Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium to purchase a filter wheel and filters to enhance our observations at BBO. As part of this project, I am teaching several undergraduate students to observe exoplanet transits. Our observing team helped with an outreach event observing comet C/2017 K2 at BBO in July and plans to help with another observing event in September. I also am involved in a lot of outreach activities like open nights at Washburn observatory, Universe in the Park events at State Parks, and virtual stargazing events in which astronomers from SoutEast Wisconsin share deep sky views from our telescopes over the internet. I will be writing occasional blog posts to provide updates on my work at BBO.