Nicholas Saunders

NSF Graduate Research Fellow

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Research Interests

Detection and characterization of exoplanets, space telescopes, asteroseismology, stellar evolution modeling, gyrochronology, computational astrophysics, software development.

Education

MSc Astronomy expected June 2021
Advisors: Dan Huber, Jen van Saders
Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

BS Physics & Astronomy (with Honors) June 2018

BA Comparative Literature (emphasis: Cinema Studies) June 2018
University of Washington

Appointments

NSF Graduate Research Fellow Sept 2019 – present
Advisors: Dan Huber, Sam Grunblatt, Jen van Saders
Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Undergraduate Research Assistant Jan 2016 – Aug 2018
Advisors: Rodrigo Luger, Rory Barnes
University of Washington

Planetary Science Research Assistant Apr 2011 – June 2013
Advisors: Bernard Nordmann, Tom McCord
The Bear Fight Institute, Winthrop, WA

Relevant Employment

Kepler & K2 Training Materials Developer Apr 2020 – Sept 2020
NumFocus, STScI, The Astropy Project

Research Support Scientist, Kepler/K2 Guest Observer Office Aug 2018 – Aug 2019
NASA Ames Research Center

Data Visualization Analyst, UW Mobile Planetarium June 2018 – Aug 2018
University of Washington

Honors

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship	2021
Honorable Mention, National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship	2019
Departmental Honors in Astronomy, University of Washington	2018
1st Place: Best Online Photo Essay, Washington Newspaper Publishers Association	2016
2nd Place: Best Video, Washington Newspaper Publishers Association	2016
Washington NASA Space Grant, University of Washington	2013
Irving and Louise Donnergaard Endowment, University of Washington	2013

Publications

NASA ADS h-index: **7**

first author →

1. **Saunders, N.**, Luger, R., Barnes, R. (2019) The Pointing Limits of Transiting Exoplanet Light Curve Characterization with Pixel Level De-correlation. AJ, 157, 197

co-author →

9. Hedges, C., Angus, R., Barentsen, G., **Saunders, N.**, Montet, B.T., Gully-Santiago, M. (2020) Systematics-insensitive Periodogram for Finding Periods in TESS Observations of Long-period Rotators. RNAAS, 4, 220

8. Hedges, C., **Saunders, N.**, Barentsen, G., Coughlin, J., Vinícius de Miranda Cardoso, J., Kostov, V., Dotson, J., Cody, A.M. (2019) Four Small Planets Buried in *K2* Systems: What Can We Learn for *TESS*? ApJL, 880, 1

7. Feinstein, A.D., Montet, B.T., Bean, J.L. et al. **Saunders, N.** (2019) eleanor: A tool for extracting light curves from the TESS Full-Frame Images. PASP, 131, 1003

6. David, T., Cody, A.M., Hedges C. et al. including **Saunders, N.** (2019) A warm Jupiter-sized planet transiting the pre-main sequence star V1298 Tau. AJ, 158, 2

5. Mahabal, A., Rebbapragada, U., Walters, R. et al. including **Saunders, N.** (2019) Machine Learning for the Zwicky Transient Facility. PASP, 131, 997

4. Hedges, C., **Saunders, N.**, Barensen, G., Gully-Santiago, M., Cody, A.M., Vinícius de Miranda Cardoso, J. (2019) A Hot Jupiter Exoplanet Candidate towards the Galactic Center Identified in Kepler/K2 Campaign 9 Microlensing Survey. RNAAS, 3, 1

3. Barentsen, G., Hedges, C., **Saunders, N.**, Cody, A.M., Gully-Santiago, M., Bryson, S., Dotson, J. (2018) Kepler's Discoveries Will Continue: 21 Important Scientific Opportunities with Kepler & K2 Archive Data. arXiv:1810.12554

2. Cody, A.M., Barentsen, G., Hedges, G., Gully-Santiago, M., Dotson, J., Barclay, T., Bryson, S., **Saunders, N.** (2018) A catalog of 29 open clusters and associations observed by the Kepler and K2 Missions. RNAAS, 2, 4

1. Luger, R., Kruse, E., Foreman-Mackey, D., Agol, E., **Saunders, N.** (2018) An Update to the EVEREST K2 Pipeline: Short Cadence, Saturated Stars, and Kepler-like Photometry down to Kp = 15. AJ, 156, 99

Software

			GitHub ★'s
Lead Developer	→	scope – simulated K2 CCD observations to test noise removal	6
Core Developer	→	lightkurve – time series analysis tools for Kepler, K2 & TESS	220
Core Developer	→	eleanor – photometry pipeline for TESS Full Frame Images	32
Contributor	→	everest – K2 noise removal pipeline	60

Teaching & Outreach

Graduate Outreach Representative — Aug 2020 – present

Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Science Pen Pal — Sept 2020 – present
LETTERS TO A PRE-SCIENTIST

Project Mentor, "HI STAR" High School Summer Research — July 2020
INSTITUTE FOR ASTRONOMY, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI AT MĀNOA

Graduate Teaching Assistant — Aug 2019 – Jan 2020
INSTITUTE FOR ASTRONOMY, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI AT MĀNOA

Planetarium Organizer — Jan 2018 – Aug 2018
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Teaching Assistant — Jan 2017 – June 2018
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Astrobiology Mobile Planetarium Presenter — Mar 2018
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Undergraduate Liaison, Astronomy Department Faculty Board — Sept 2017 – Aug 2018
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

NASA Total Solar Eclipse Outreach Event Volunteer — Aug 2017
WASHINGTON NASA SPACE GRANT CONSORTIUM

UW Planetarium Volunteer Presenter — Nov 2015 – Aug 2018
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

TALKS

science talks →

Saunders, N., "Revealing the Mysteries of Planets Around Evolved Stars with TESS," AAS 235, Honolulu, HI, Jan 2020

Saunders, N., "A Catalog of Uniform Exoplanet Parameters," CIPS Seminar, University of California, Berkeley, CA, Apr 2019

Saunders, N., "Analysis of Simulated Kepler/K2 Exoplanet Transit Parameters," AAS 233, Seattle, WA, Jan 2019

Saunders, N., "Simulated CCD Photometry: An Application for K2 Sputtering," Kepler/K2 Science Office, NASA Ames, Moffett Field, CA, May 2018

Saunders, N., "Searching for Exoplanets with Sputtering Space Telescopes," UW Undergraduate Research Symposium, Seattle, WA, May 20182

Saunders, N., Luger, R., Barnes, R., "De-trending K2 Exoplanet Targets for High Spacecraft Motion," AAS 231, Washington DC, Jan 2018

Saunders, N., Luger, R., "Sputtering Effects on K2 Systematics Removal," Kepler/K2 Guest Observer Office, NASA Ames, Moffett Field, CA, Oct 2017

Saunders, N., "Effects of Pixel Sensitivity Variation on K2 Systematics Removal," UW Undergraduate Research Symposium, Seattle, WA, May 2017

outreach talks →

Saunders, N., "Putting the Science in Science Fiction," Astronomy on Tap, San Jose, CA, May 2019

Saunders, N., "Putting the Science in Science Fiction," Astronomy on Tap, Seattle, WA, Apr 2018

Saunders, N., "The Search for Habitable Worlds," Astrobiology Mini Talks, Museum of Flight, Seattle, WA, Apr 2018

POSTERS

Saunders, N., Luger, R., "Quantifying Biases with Simulated Kepler/K2 Exoplanet Light Curves," Kepler SciCon V, Glendale, CA, Mar 2019

Saunders, N., M. Gully-Santiago, C. Hedges, G. Barentsen, J. Dotson, "Exoplanet Science with the Lightkurve Python Package," AAS 233, Seattle, WA, Jan 2019