



Mingo Creek Park Observatory

The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon

Website: 3ap.org



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

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After hearing Ed Moss rave for ten years about the skies at the Texas Star Party, I had to make the pilgrimage. He wasn't lying! Oh my God! DARK AND CLEAR! It looks like a giant edge-on galaxy crosses the whole sky, because IT DOES! The Milky Way looks better than in pictures. I'm serious. The dust lanes are sharp and distinct, like on my poster of the Milky Way, but the stars are brighter!

I arrived late Monday night or early Tuesday morning and managed to find the other seven Pittsburghers in total darkness on a field of 500 star partiers by about 1:00 in the morning. I was greeted by cheers. Everyone was giddy over the amazing skies.

Yes, I saw Omega Centauri, but I was even more thrilled with Centaurus A, an irregular galaxy that looks like a giant elliptical galaxy with a thick dust lane cutting it in half. Must be two galaxies that ran into each other. Corresponds exactly to the pictures (well, of course it does) but it's so cool!

One of the great things about conventions is you travel halfway around the world to meet a few like-minded individuals. Well, I met them! I was so pleased to find myself in a bunkhouse of women more intense than myself about deep sky observing. Every night, after our group of 8 Pittsburghers would pack it up around 2:00 a.m., I'd go back to the bunkhouse and FIND NO ONE THERE. They all stayed up till 4:00 each night and slept all day. So I followed their example.

One woman had a tattoo that was a pale green circle with two eyes. I said to her, "Nice alien tattoo." She said, "It's not an alien." I said, "Oh, wait, wait! The Owl Nebula!" She lights up and goes: "Yes! You can be my new best friend."

Then there was a seventeen-year-old child prodigy in our cabin, a girl named Alecia. She was one of the few people at the party to complete the advanced observing program and get her pin. The program focused on the local group (of galaxies) like find globular clusters in the Andromeda Galaxy, find dwarf galaxies. She was a human "go to." If you pointed to a star, she could name it. She told me a funny story that one day she looked up and there was a new star in Corvus, and it just hung there looking exactly like a star for ten minutes, then faded away. She had the sky memorized, so she was astounded, thinking it might be a supernovae. It turned out to be a geosynchronous satellite that had caught some light.

TEXAS STAR PARTY REPORT

June 1 through 8, 2008

By Ann Norman



Photo by Ed Moss

Top Row: Dan Reed, Ed Kuzemchak, Bob Novack, Glen Sanner, Ann Norman, Ed Moss.
Bottom Row: Terry Trees, Bob Kepple

I did an observing list, called “Glorious Globulars.” I’m someone who usually does the Messier objects over and over. So at first I went, “I can’t”, and then after studying the charts for an hour and figuring it out, went “This will be easy”, and it was. I really enjoyed myself. After I was done, I kept stumbling over globulars everywhere as I searched for other objects. I learned something! I bought myself new charts and new astro cards and am ready to boldly go for those NGC objects the next clear night at Wagman or Mingo.

Speaking of astro cards, Bob Kepple was there! The guy who wrote the book on deep sky observing—literally. With his coauthor, Glen Sanner. I was tempted to go try to bump into the stars of amateur astronomy as featured in the book, “*Seeing in the Dark*”: Barbara Wilson, Larry Mitchell et al. but then I realized I was already observing with celebrities—very helpful celebrities. Thanks guys! Thanks also to Ed Kuzemchak, who loaned me some charts for my first brave foray into the forest of NGC objects.

There is one way in which the Pittsburgh star parties are far superior to the Texas Star Party. Pittsburghers know how to do “telescope humor” as my son Chris calls it—you know, mostly puns? Well I can’t do it, but Terry Trees, Bob Novak, and Dan Reed can. I spent a week with a very entertaining bunch.

The last object we looked at for the week was M101, like Terry said. In Pittsburgh, in my scope, it looks like a thumbprint on the lens. In Texas through Bob Kepple’s scope it looked like the Whirlpool Galaxy. Four spiral arms! It just sat there clear as can be. We all oooed and ahhed over it and then took down the scopes, like let’s go out with that one. Afterwards, I requested M101 from another scope and discovered that it is surrounded by little faint fuzzies, which are in fact star forming regions IN M101.

The next morning I told this amazing story to one of the women in my cabin as we are standing at the sinks brushing our teeth and she goes, I KNOW, that’s what I was looking at, and she pulls out her charts to show me, and there we are giggling about star forming regions in M101 in the women’s bathroom. Well, only at the Texas Star Party do these things happen.

The talks were good. I enjoyed Bob Berman’s rambling whatever-it-was, even if he did get booed (by me) for specifying “Now, I mean ‘cosmology’—not ‘cosmetology,’ for you women dragged here by your husbands.” Booo!!!! Hiss ...I also enjoyed the talk on the search for light echoes from supernovae. My favorite maybe was the talk on the Science of Wilson Observatory. I think the program at Star Cruise has been just as good some years, if not better.

I toured McDonald Observatory, but I’m probably wearing you out, so I’ll stop here. I had a great time. I’m glad Ed talked me into it.

I forgot to mention one important detail about the Texas Star Party: Dan Reed and Bob Novak brought all our telescopes down to Texas (and back) in an unair-conditioned van.

Here are some TSP related photos and videos that have been posted. Thought y’all would enjoy. TSP 2008 Video (Steve Clayworth):

<http://www.youtube.com:80/watch?v=u71F0Zg-kAs>

...and photos:



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sclayworth/sets/72157605528782275/>

LEO SCANLON’S HISTORICAL MARKER

By Flaccus Stifel

Photo by Dave Smith



After repeated attempts to remove corroded set-screws from Leo’s historical marker, which was hit and knocked over by McKnight Road, I contacted the Commission and arranged for them to authorize the repair and reinstallation of the marker.

Astronomers aren’t the only ones who do it at night! Yesterday about supertime, I got a call from the business near York, PA which does the marker work. They were on their way to a place near the Ohio line to do an “emergency” job. I agreed to meet them at the turnpike as they went by, because they were returning directly from the job to eastern PA at some early and unknown hour.

So I met them at the gas station by the Butler Valley exit at 1 AM. They have a trailer which they have designed to do marker work. It has a holder for up to 10 or so markers, room for the posts, an auger setup to drill the holes in the ground, a little cement mixer and everything else needed to remove/install historical markers. In a jiffy, we

loaded Leo's marker into the rack, and they will let me know the next time they're headed this way to install it. I sent them the exact location on Google Earth, but I will meet them there and bring the new aluminum post which is at my house. Just an update for those who are concerned with the absence of Leo's marker.

Special thanks to Flacc, one of the many unsung heroes of the AAAP for his dedication to the club.

THE PHOENIX HAS LANDED

By Trevor Lewis

I had the rare treat of watching the landing drama from the visitors gallery at JPL, overlooking the control room. I also had the chance to chat with several of the principals before and after the landing. The tension in the air was memorable, as was the relief with each new positive report. Most of the team there had invested several years of their lives into the Phoenix project, with memories of the MPL loss still fresh. The attention to detail in the planning was remarkable. The entire complex landing sequence was autonomous, and the lander was ready to address a plethora of off-nominal conditions that never came to pass. The hardware has not been touched by human hands in nearly a year. It's also noteworthy that many Phoenix components were leftovers from previous projects. It is an outstanding achievement by a very dedicated and talented group of scientists and engineers.

CIRCUMHORIZONTAL ARC

By Debra M. Banach

I was amazed to find this circumhorizontal arc over my neighbor's garage this afternoon in Shadyside. Atmospheric optics can be very fleeting, so I snapped this picture with my cell phone as soon as I saw it. This picture in no way does it any justice, but I still would like to share it.



RULES FOR NAMING NEW FEATURES ON MERCURY

By Bill Hayeslip

I found the rules for naming new features on Mercury interesting. It came in an email I get occasionally from the Messenger spacecraft people.

Mercury Features Receive New Names

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has approved new names for features on Mercury and agreed on a new theme for fossae on the planet. These newly christened features were discovered from images taken by the MESSENGER spacecraft during its first flyby of Mercury in January.

The IAU is the internationally recognized authority for assigning designations to surface features on celestial bodies. "We are very pleased with how quickly the IAU has responded to the need to name many of the prominent landforms on Mercury first seen in MESSENGER images", says MESSENGER Principal Investigator, Sean Solomon, of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. "The Science Team has just submitted our first scientific papers on the flyby observations, and this prompt action by the IAU has meant that we are able to refer to these features by their formal names".

Naming rules <http://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov/> exist for most features on planets, moons, and asteroids. Mercury's cliffs are named after the ships of famous explorers. One set of cliffs discovered by MESSENGER (called by the Latin name for cliffs, rupes) is named Beagle Rupes, after the ship on which naturalist Charles Darwin sailed around the world.

Craters on Mercury are named after famous deceased artists, musicians, or authors. The approved crater names are:

- ★ Apollodorus, after Apollodorus of Damascus, a second-century Greek architect credited by many with designing the Pantheon temple in Rome .
- ★ Atget, after Eugène Atget, a French photographer noted for his photographs documenting the architecture and street scenes of Paris .
- ★ Cunningham, after Imogen Cunningham, an American photographer known for her portraits, still lifes, and figure studies.
- ★ Eminescu, after Romanian poet Mihail Eminescu, considered to be the "godfather" of the modern Romanian language.
- ★ Kertész, after André Kertész, a Hungarian-born American photographer famous for developing the photo essay.
- ★ Neruda, after Chilean poet, Nobel laureate, and politician Pablo Neruda, most famous for his love poems.

- * Raditladi, after Leetile Disang Raditladi, a Botswanan poet and playwright who founded the first political party in Botswana, the Federal Party.
- * Sander, after German photographer August Sander best known for his portrait series.
- * Sveinsdóttir, after Júlíana Sveinsdóttir, one of Iceland's first woman painters and textile artists and a significant innovator from the 1930s to the 1950s through her approach to the landscape subject and color palette.
- * Xiao Zhao, after Xiao Zhao, a Chinese artist from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) who once served as Emperor Gao Zong's "dai zhao" (painter-in-attendance) with the honorary title "di gong lang" (gentleman for meritorious achievement).

MESSENGER discovered a striking set of graben (or fault-bounded troughs) that radiate out from a small area near the center of the Caloris basin. An individual graben is termed a fossa (plural is fossae) by the IAU. No previous fossae had been discovered on Mercury from the Mariner 10 images, so the IAU had to approve a new naming scheme—"significant works of architecture." Pantheon Fossae were named after the Pantheon, a still-used second-century Roman temple and later church. The ancient building and the fossae both feature a central circular feature and radiating texture.

Arizona State University's, Mark Robinson, who leads the development of global image products from MESSENGER, says he drew on a database maintained by the IAU, as well as requests from individuals, for nomenclature ideas. "There's a certain romance to these names," says Robinson. "But more practically, naming these features facilitates communication among scientists studying the planet. It's very cumbersome to write a scientific paper and say, 'that big crater just east of that really huge crater near Mercury's North pole.' It's much easier to name the features."

An image of Mercury showing the locations of the newly named features is available online at:

http://messenger.jhuapl.edu/gallery/sciencePhotos/image.php?gallery_id=2&image_id=181

During its first Mercury pass, MESSENGER's cameras imaged a large portion of Mercury's surface that had not been previously seen by spacecraft. (When Mariner 10, the only other space mission to visit Mercury, examined the surface 33 years ago, the Sun illuminated a different portion of the planet). As the MESSENGER Science Team continues to study the images of Mercury, more features on Mercury will be named.

"The naming process is an ongoing effort because as we get more and more science out of the data, we start finding more and more features," Robinson says.

MESSENGER will next fly past Mercury in October, viewing the opposite side of the planet. A third flyby is scheduled for September 2009, and the probe will settle into Mercury's orbit in March 2011.

MESSENGER (Mercury Surface, Space Environment, Geochemistry, and Ranging) is a NASA-sponsored scientific investigation of the planet Mercury and the first space mission designed to orbit the planet closest to the Sun. The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory built and operates the MESSENGER spacecraft and manages this Discovery mission for NASA <http://www.nasa.gov/>. APL meets critical national challenges through the innovative application of science and technology.

BLACK HOLE

Sent to listserver by Dan Peden

The information below is copied from a newsletter I receive.

WORLD WIDE WORDS, ISSUE 584, Saturday, April 19, 2008

Sent each Saturday to at least 50,000 subscribers by e-mail and RSS Editor: Michael Quinion, Thornbury, Bristol, UK ISSN 1470-1448

<http://www.worldwidewords.org>

Topical Words: Black Hole. The death of the famous American physicist, John Wheeler, raised an intriguing language question. Most of his obituaries say he invented the term "black hole" for the astronomical phenomenon; in most cases this was the headline or lead-in to the text.

For example, the New Scientist wrote about him, "With his flair for poetry, Wheeler coined the terms 'black hole' and 'wormhole', words that captured the imaginations of physicists and the public alike." The Daily Princetonian, at his old university of Princeton, said he was "a legendary physicist who coined the phrase 'black hole' and who left an indelible mark on the physics department in his four decades as a University professor". The Guardian's piece explained that, "in a talk at the Goddard Institute, New York, in 1967, (he) spontaneously came up with the name 'black hole' to describe it." The Oxford English Dictionary might seem to concur, as its first citation is from a 1968 article by John Wheeler in American Scientist.

But did he really invent it? Other obituaries said not. The Scientific American noted: "Wheeler recalls discussing such 'completely collapsed gravitational objects' at a conference in 1967, when someone in the audience casually dropped the phrase 'black hole.' Wheeler immediately adopted the phrase for its brevity and 'advertising value,' and it caught on." The Daily Telegraph obituary differed only in one detail: "A student at the conference called out 'black hole' as a suggestion, and Dr Wheeler made the name stick." This, not incidentally, is over a subhead that says that he coined the term.

John Wheeler himself never claimed that he invented "black hole". Stephen Hall wrote in an article in the New York Times in October 1992 that "The term, Dr. Wheeler said in

an interview, was actually suggested by someone else - he can't remember who - during a 1967 meeting at the [Goddard] Institute for Space Studies in New York and was intended as a substitute for 'gravitationally completely collapsed star.' 'After you get around to saying that about ten times,' Dr. Wheeler recalled, 'you look desperately for something better.'"

So he didn't coin it - he popularized it. But the chances are high he will go down in history as its creator. It raises an intriguing question about the way in which a tale that's denied by its central figure can still be widely believed.

There's some doubt even that the unnamed person at the meeting had invented it on the spot. Fred Shapiro, the editor of the Yale Book of Quotations, this week found an earlier example in the issue of the Science News Letter for 18 January 1964, in a report by Ann Ewing on a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS): "According to Einstein's general theory of relativity, as mass is added to a degenerate star a sudden collapse will take place and the intense gravitational field of the star will close in on itself. Such a star then forms a 'black hole' in the universe."

Whoever it was Ann Ewing heard use the term at the 1964 meeting might have been the one who suggested it to John Wheeler at the 1967 one. Or it may have been someone else who heard it or who had read the report. Or it could be a case of separate and unconnected inventions. The latter is certainly possible because of "black hole" having been at one time the official name for the lock-up in a barracks. The infamous appearance of the term in British history, the only reason the term in that sense is still remembered, is the incident in 1756 known as the Black Hole of Calcutta in which 146 Europeans were confined in a cell overnight, of whom only 23 survived until the morning.

Does it matter who invented "black hole" as a snappy alternative to the phrase "gravitationally completely collapsed star"? If we're happy to ascribe legends to our great men, probably not. If we prefer truth to fiction, then it's worth putting the record straight.

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BINOCULAR UNIVERSE COLUMN IN ASTRONOMY MAGAZINE

By John O'Hara

Heads-up AAPers. Check out the June 8th issue of *Astronomy Magazine* and look on page 74 for Phil Harrington's Binocular Universe column. This month is titled, "How to Observer Artificial Satellites", and is based on a talk given by our own Eric Fischer when he was speaking at my local club's Astroblast Star Party near Oil City, PA. Eric's talk was indeed interesting and it left an impres-

sion on Phil that he never forgot. I never knew how much you could discern by just watching the motion of these manmade "moons".

BISQUE SOFTWARE'S SEEKER

By Brandon McGarvey

I just picked up a copy of Bisque Software's Seeker 3D Solar System simulator (for PC and Mac) and I just want to provide a few words about this program for those of you interested.

First off, Seeker is an OpenGL 3D rendered application that requires a fairly powerful desktop to run, unlike your typical astronomy sky chart software. For example, a decent gaming computer should do the job. The requirements are listed at the Seeker info site:

<http://www.bisque.com/help/Seeker/SeekerInfo.htm>

Seeker simulates our solar system's planets and satellites using 3D models and images. This includes a selection of well-known moons, minor planets, comets, asteroids and even some of our own manmade satellites, such as the Hubble telescope and Voyagers. The planets and moons themselves are made of actual images mapped as textures on the bodies themselves. The view is from the cockpit of your spacecraft. You have a full set of controls to navigate your way around. It took me a little bit of time to understand the thrust/acceleration controls.

Seekers starts you off in Earth's orbit. I didn't spend too much time at Earth, but I imagine you can hunt down some satellites on your own. I decided to try out the ship's thrust/acceleration power, so I set controls to Venus. It was then that I realized I did not have any understanding of space travel, in regards to speed and distance. I believe Seeker compensates for Earth's gravity, making it very hard to escape. It mentions something about that in the manual. When I realized it was probably going to take me an entire day to get to Venus at the rate I was going, I knew there had to be another way to get to Venus much faster. Fortunately, Seeker includes pre-defined "Fly To" scripts. You simply select the object you want to navigate to in your control panel, click the "Fly To" button and away you go. The script kicked my spacecraft into warp speed and in a matter of seconds, I was at Venus. You can move around through the planet's orbit, visiting both the day and night sides. The time is synchronized to your computer's clock, so you are really experiencing the planet in real time. I cannot attest to the accuracy of time for some planets due to the surface features, but Earth seems to be right on. You can also adjust the clock/calendar to your desired time. Once I passed around Venus briefly, I used the "Fly To" action to take me to Mercury. I stopped by there briefly and decided to "Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun". By this time, I figured out the controls well enough that I was able to fly myself to the Sun, rather than using the scripts. Heading towards the Sun was actually an interesting experience. The Bisque developers made the Sun extremely bright until you reached a certain point. I thought that I was going to need to put on some sunglasses. Fortu-

nately, as you approach the Sun, a solar filter kicks on, allowing you to view the sphere itself, as well as sun spots. After circling the Sun, I decided to head home (Earth). I kicked the thrusters on max and throttled the engine up to 6x, the speed of light. It was then I realized just how small we really are on Earth, in regards to distance. And I thought traveling to my mother's is a journey! Traveling at 6x the speed of light, I was at Earth in a reasonable amount of time (maybe around a minute, you do the math). I was also at the end of my journey for the day.

Seeker seems to be accurate in regards to distance, time and I guess speed (I'm no rocket scientist). I am looking forward to checking out Saturn's rings, Jupiter's moons and everything else that Seeker has to offer. The larger objects, like planets, are only images of the surface. I thought how cool it would be to actually go into Mars and fly through its "Grand Canyon", Valles Marineris, or what would be really neat is if it would simulate an actual shuttle launch from Earth. Maybe in a future version. The smaller objects do not use images, so they are textured using computer-generated graphics. You can actually dock your craft on the ISS.

For more information about Seeker and how to order, check out Bisque Software's website at:
<http://www.bisque.com/>.

STAR PARTY REQUEST FOR FERN HOLLOW NATURE CENTER

July 23, 2008

By Alison Conte

AAAP has been asked to host a star party at the Fern Hollow Nature Center in Sewickley. Any members who live in the North Hills will find this a convenient event and are urged to come and help out. It will be from 9:30 to midnight on Wednesday, July 23 (Rain date, July 24).

The Fern Hollow Nature Center has a very nice, flat, dark, open high plateau in the middle of the countryside. They do a lot of nature programs and want to introduce their members to the joys of the night sky. This should be a great place to do some observing, just a short drive up I-79 or Route 65.

(See directions at <http://www.fhnc.org/directions.html>)

Alison and Dave Conte are coordinating the event, but we need members and telescopes, to educate and enlighten folks in the Sewickley area. Please contact Dave or Alison at 412-741-3216 or allybiz@verizon.net if you can participate. We would also like someone to give a short talk inside the nature center, at 9:30, and share some tips on basic observing and what will be visible after dark.

BLACK FOREST STAR PARTY SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2008

By Joe

BFSP 2008 will be held on September 5-7. Registration is now open. Check www.bfsp.org for updates and details.

As the summer begins, BFSP 2008 preparations are getting off the ground. We will soon be soliciting prizes for our raffle. We have most of our speakers lined up. The webpage will be updated as more information becomes available.

For this year's event, we are planning to add two additional features. First, we are planning two kid's programs. These astronomy-related activities will be in parallel to the regular talks, however, will be geared specifically to our younger astronomers. Second, we are going to purchase a cell phone repeater and antenna so we can (hopefully) have cell phone coverage on part of the field. This will be our first year experimenting with this, so there may be bugs).

We currently have 137 people registered for this year's event. I'll try to post updates to that information as we get it on the web page, however, with this being the beginning of summer, a number of club members are going on vacations.

STAR PARTY REQUEST PASSAVANT RETIREMENT COMMUNITY AUGUST 15, 2008

By Bill Moutz

Kathy Reed of the Passavant Retirement Community in Zelienople has inquired as to having a Star Party August 15, 2008 in the parking lot of the Passavant Retirement Community in Zelienople. The address is 401 South Main Street, Zelienople, PA 16063. It is just off Route 19. Kathy has invited us for a cookout after the observing session. If the sky is not clear, we will hold an impromptu indoor star party in the auditorium. If you can come, please reply to me at sailboat25@verizon.net.

MORAINES PRESERVATION FUND STAR PARTY REQUEST JULY 25, 2008

By Bill Moutz

Ruth Roperti of the Moraine Preservation Fund has asked for a Star Party on July 25 (Friday) from 8:00 until midnight at the bicycle rental area, north shore of Moraine State Park. We will do a short introduction before we observe. If anyone can make it, please respond to me at sailboat25@verizon.net. The location is just off Route 422 approximately 16 miles west of Butler. Email me for directions.

RAYSTOWN LAKE REQUEST FOR STAR PARTY AUGUST 30, 2008

By Bill Moutz

Melissa, a ranger from Raystown Lake Army Corp of Engineers, is requesting a star party for August 30th (new Moon). She will be able to arrange free campsites for members willing to make the trip. Please respond ASAP to us via email. As usual, in addition to observing at night, we will be doing solar observing and an indoor presentation. If you can go, call her to make arrangements for a campsite at 814-658-6812. Her email address is melissa.j.herheim@usace.army.mil. Keep an eye on the weather at Raystown. If the skies are not favorable for observing, AAAP member, Ted Kominsky, who lives near the lake will be doing the presentation. Members of CPO and SAC (two other astronomy clubs near the lake) will also be there with their scopes to share the sky with the public.

ASTRONOMY MAGAZINE AND REI CAMPOUT AT MINGO

By Ed Moss

The Astronomy-REI Campout With The Stars will be held August 8th through the 10th.

Due to a misunderstanding as to who would be handling registration, we will be doing things a bit differently than might be expected. There will be registration, but no fees.

Registration will consist of sending Ed Moss the names of those attending, to Ed's e-mail address:

Edward.moss@verizon.net. I would like to know about how many members will be attending, and on what days they might be attending. The purpose in this is to not have a lot of unexpected public attending the event. Even if you don't register, if you show your membership card, you will be allowed to attend the event. Please bring your telescopes, and your camping gear, trailers, or motor homes if you would like. We have camping Friday and Saturday nights. Just a reminder, there are no hook-up facilities at the observatory.

There will be a club picnic included in this event on Saturday. It will start around 5PM.

What I really need to know is how many people intend to come to the picnic, and what food they would bring. This would be handled similar to the Christmas party. The club would provide the hamburgers, hot dogs, bratwurst, buns, condiments and whatever picnic items people don't bring. We need coleslaw, potato salad, bean salad, macaroni salad, soft drinks and the like. Those not bringing any food items will be charged ten dollars to eat. When you register, please indicate if you will attend the picnic, and what if any food or drinks you will bring.

There will be three talks on Saturday: 1PM; 2:30PM and 4PM. Club members Terry Trees, Eric Fischer, and Glen

Smith will be giving the talks. There will also be an update in the August Guide Star to finalize everything. Please let me know before then.

GIRL SCOUT REQUEST FOR STAR PARTY AT HANOVER PARK JULY 18, 2008

By Rebecca Skrabski

Our Girl Scout community is organizing a sleepover at Hanover Park (near Pittsburgh Post Gazette Pavillion, aka Star Lake) on July 18-19, 2008. We are planning to help the girls earn a Sky Watch badge. Even though it's the night of a full Moon, we hope to help them identify some constellations. We are asking anyone in attendance who has a telescope to bring it.

I am wondering if any of your members would be available to assist us that evening. We are by no means experts and would appreciate any help you can provide. I tried to organize a similar event a couple years ago, which had to be cancelled because of the weather. I think I still have some handouts from that planning. Let me know if there's anyone interested at skrabskr@co.washington.pa.us. Thanks so much!

2009 STAR PARTY SCHEDULE WAGMAN OBSERVATORY

By Tom Reiland

Here's the potential schedule for next year's star parties at Wagman Observatory. I forget the date that Pete and I discussed for Winterfest. I have three possible dates for it in my book: February 7, February 28 and March 7. I'll be discussing the schedule with the Observatory Committee in the very near future.

Regular Star Parties:

April 3 & 4
May 1 & 2 and May 29 & 30
June 26 & 27
July 24 & 25
August 28 & 29
September 12 Dark Sky and 26 regular night
October 10 Dark Sky and 24 regular
Total events for 2009 = 17

There are no evening Total Lunar Eclipses in our region until September 27/28, 2015.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Leonard M. Aftanas, Jr.
Kent Buckles

OBSERVATIONS

James Schultheis: Sent to the listserver June 13, 2008. It was an absolutely beautiful night with the temperatures in the upper 70's and clear skies with just a hint of haze, which I prefer for high power Lunar observing. I set the 15" f/4.5 up and collimated it to perfection for some serious high magnification Lunar observing. I started off following along the Terminator looking for interesting features with my 9mm Nagler at 190x and ~.5 deg. AFOV and finding some mountain ranges and prominent craters. I identified my location on my Orion Lunar Atlas. From there I "crater hopped" around the Terminator identifying all kinds of neat-looking wrinkles, hills, and craters. I settled in on observing Copernicus:

<http://www.moon-phases.com/map-of-the-moon/moon-map-d5.html> with 686x mag. (5mm N and Barlow) and watched the sunlight illuminate the side of the crater. What was cool, was watching the sunlight climb down the wall of the crater and at the same time start to illuminate the mountain tops inside the crater over a period of time! This is something I have never done before and it was very interesting to observe. I then went into observing some VERY small mini craters that were not plotted on my maps (need more detailed maps). I also observed Gay Lussac, Fauth and The Carpathian Mountains. Sometimes I was almost putting myself down there on the Moon surface; how fascinating! Observing the Moon with such high magnification with my 15" was absolutely great last night, although sometimes it did look like I was looking through water due to some seeing issues but a great observing session nonetheless.

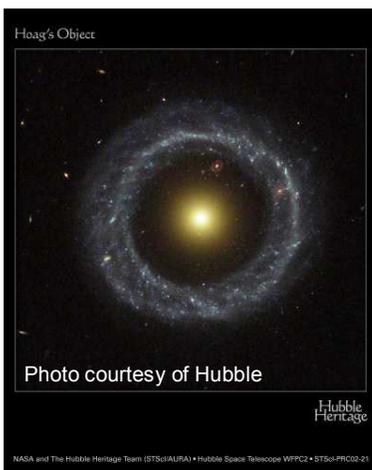
James Schultheis: Last night Sue, Ivan and I were out observing and one object that I have become interested in called Hoag's Object in Serpens Caput, which was the focus of Sue and my observations. In preparation to try and observe, I printed out at least four finder charts of various FOV's from my Skytools 2 program and a picture from the Digital Sky Survey. The object is located just adjacent to an asterism that looks like a "3" and assumed to be easy to locate. We knew that observing the "ring" was out of the question, but the

central core was fair game for Sue French was able to observe it in her 10" Dob. Sue lead the search using her 12.5" Obsession with the 24mm Panoptic @ 1.2 *AFOV and I with my 15" started to excavate the sky. Sue identified the star field and suggested that I look near the "house roof" looking asterism and I thought ?.....what the he.. is

she talking about . I went over to her scope and she was right on the area shown in the charts, but where was the "3" asterism? We collectively searched the area and found that the "3" was VERY faint and small. The EXACT location of Hoag's object was isolated in both of our scopes but no sign of the core was evident with any power or FOV that we threw at it. In retrospect, I believe we were not able to see HO due to the light pollution in association with the conditions for sky glow which were pretty bad down here in Scottsdale last night. Jim Chandler was able to observe the ring at the TSP on Wednesday night with his 30" Dob as posted on another list so it can be seen. I thought this object and our exploits might interest some of the group. We are not done with Mr. Hoag's object just yet!

Tom Reiland: Sent to the listserver June 9, 2008. I wasn't sure if I would find anyone at Wagman Observatory when I arrived just after midnight, but Jeff Kearns was there. I decided to use the Manka scope instead of my 16" Dob tonight to save some time. I set the scope on a star near NGC 4319, 4291 and Markarian 205 while I waited for it to cool down and get my logbook and charts set up. When I looked in the scope, I saw both galaxies immediately and a third one, NGC 4386, to the NNE. I had observed 4291 and 4386 before, but this was my first time for 4319. I increased the magnification to 282X with the 9 mm Nagler and I had no trouble spotting Markarian 205, a 14.5 mag Quasar in Draco. I pointed it out to Jeff. He was interested in observing Comet Boattini 2008 J1, which I observed Sunday, June 1/2. He gave me the coordinates and I was able to locate it in Cygnus. I could see its motion over ten minutes and I showed him the comet and he was able to find it in his scope. I went through my usual objects for this time of year and checked out some old friends I had not seen for a while. Stephan's Quintet was one grouping. I spent some time identifying all five galaxies, along with the nearby grouping around NGC 7331 to the NNE of the Quintet. I finished the night with NGC 7789, the Ghost Cluster in Cassiopeia and my favorite variable/double star, WZ Cassiopeiae, which I list in my log as a V/D.

Gene Kulakowski: Sent to the listserver June 8, 2008. We had another good Star Party at MCPO last night. We had a smaller but a very enthusiastic group enjoying the very warm evening on the observatory hill. The skies were a little more hazy than the previous night but everyone got to see their favorite objects that they requested. We also had a very special member visiting us last night, Ms. Altigracia Lara of the Dominican Republic, who is visiting her daughter who lives in the area. She was so thrilled to see the observatory and to talk to our members also taking many photos to show her friends back home. Many of the visitors (60) and members (13) stayed past 1:00 A.M. Thanks again to all the members who helped in last night's event.



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IMPORTANT DATES

July 3—New Moon 10:19 p.m.
July 4—Independence Day
July 6—Moon, Mars and Saturn within 5° in the west at dusk
July 9—Jupiter at opposition—visible all night
July 10—Mars within 1° of Saturn in the west
 First quarter Moon—12:34 a.m.
July 11—Wagman Star Party
July 12—Wagman Star Party
July 18—Full Moon 3:59 a.m.—Grain Moon
 Girl Scouts—Hanover Park Request for Star Party
July 23—Fern Hollow Star Party
July 25—Mingo Star Party
 Moraine Preservation Fund Star Party
 Last quarter Moon—2:42 p.m.
July 26—Mingo Star Party
July 30-31 through Aug 3—Mason Dixon Star Party
July 31 to Aug 3—Almost Heaven Star Party
July 31—Stellafane Star Party
August 1—New Moon—6:13 a.m.
August 2—Keystone Star Party
 Saturn, 3° above Moon in west at dusk
August 3—Moon 4° below Mars in west at dusk
August 8—Wagman Star Party
 First quarter Moon—4:20 p.m.
August 9—Wagman Star Party
 Camp out with the Stars
August 11 & 12—Perseid Meteor Shower
August 12—Perseid Meteor Show peaks 1:30 a.m. and dawn
August 14—Mercury, Venus, Saturn form a triangle in west at dusk
August 15—Passavant Retirement Community Star Party
August 16—Full Moon 5:17 p.m. (Fruit Moon)
August 22—Mingo Star Party
August 23—Fern Hollow Star Party
 Mingo Star Party
 Last quarter Moon 7:50 p.m.
August 29—Star Party Murrysville
August 30—Raystown Lake Star Party
 New Moon 3:58 p.m.

COOL WEBSITES

This is cool. You can watch images in real time from Landsat:
http://earthnow.usgs.gov/earthnow_app.html?sessionId=91372627c2670dd03c534bb22d6>>a834794904

Earth and Moon from Mars:
<http://photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov/jpeg/PIA10244.jpg>

A nice article about the February Lunar eclipse was posted at the link below under the addendum to Selenology Today #9 link, which is a PDF file:

<http://digilander.libero.it/glrgrup/journal.htm>

Nice images, and some photometric information about the event. Video camera, and bandpass filters were used to capture the photometric data. DSLR photos are included also. Selenology Today is worth exploring if you have an interest in the Moon.

Here's a copy of the report on the Variable Star Web page: <http://www.aavso.org>

Gamma burst from naked eye object:
http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2008/21mar_nakedeye.htm?list802291

Lou Coban wrote, "I've produced a short video that went with the public lecture that we did. It's just some brief scenes of the 30-inch Thaw Refractor and its related hardware cobbled together and set to a very familiar soundtrack". Follow the link:
<http://www.pitt.edu/~aobsvtry/Finished.wmv>

Al Paslow wrote, "I shot these heading home from work June 23, 2008 from the mall at South Hills Village":
http://al-paslow.smugmug.com/gallery/5241896_QB3qM#P-1-12

Lou Coban is in the Tribune-Review June 23, 2008:
http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/tribunereview/news/s_574090.html

Dan Peden has a nice rainbow on YouTube from June 19, 2008 as seen from Brookline:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7bJEWxVwmE>

Here's the webpage address for the company that sells the NPB Filter:
<http://www.omegafiltersebuyer.com/servlet/StoreFront>

Circumzenithal Arc:
<http://epod.usra.edu/archive/epodviewer.php3?oid=415648>

Astronomy: Another Major Revision:
<http://www.astronomynow.com/080604MilkyWaylosestwoarmsbutgainsaspire.html>

Both of these sites are very useful for serious deep-sky work and research:
http://www.ngcic.org/dss/dss_ngc.htm
<http://simbad.u-strasbg.fr/simbad/>

NAMN Notes is a monthly newsletter produced by the North American Meteor Network and is available both via email and on the NAMN website at:
<http://www.namnmeteors.org>

Some websites may need to be copied and pasted in your browser to view them.

Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

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