



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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STARGAZING MANITOULIN—A REPORT

By Terry Trees

JoAnne and I had not camped out at a star party for about five years. Our popup camper had sat untouched next to our garage for that long. So, a few weeks ago, we began to clean it and check its components. The outside looked almost brand new after being scrubbed with 409 and the inside was surprisingly clean and required little work. No critters had found their way into the popup and our maintenance consisted of filling a propane tank, replacing its ten-year-old tires, replacing two broken, small plastic fittings on table legs and getting the wheel bearings repacked

with grease. The stove, furnace and refrigerator were all working perfectly.

Always on the lookout for good dark sky observing sites, we decided to see what StarGazing Manitoulin was all about. It is held at Gordon's Park:

(<http://www.gordonspark.com/>), a private campground in the Ehkummah region of Manitoulin Island. If you've not heard of Manitoulin Island, it is a large, roughly triangular island in northern Lake Huron, approximately 100 miles long by 40 miles at its widest point. There are about 14,000 permanent residents including the native population; the population doubles in July and August during tourist season. Hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are some of its attractions. And, its light pollution map:

<http://cleardarksky.com/lp/GrdnsPkOnlp.html?Mn=telescope> looked very promising. The large hotspot on the map, looking somewhat like downtown Pittsburgh, is the city of Espanola, Ontario, on the mainland, about 60 miles to the NNE. Eastern Michigan and southern Ontario's Bruce Peninsula also show a number of smaller hotspots as well. None of these light pollution sources affected the observing site.

Manitoulin Island is a 9.5 hour - 11.5 hour drive from New Kensington, depending upon which route you use to access the island. I remembered StarFest as being 6 hours away. The route to the Manitoulin Island Ferry took us right past the StarFest site, and surprisingly, that took almost 7.5 hours to reach. It almost ruined my timetable. The ferry (<http://www.ontarioferries.com/chi/english/index.html>) was still two hours away and we made it with just 15 minutes to spare. Otherwise, we would have had a four-hour wait.

The ferry is rather expensive with the Canadian dollar's value currently about equal to the American dollar's. Fees for our minivan, trailer and the two of us totaled out at \$92 CDN. The ferry is also a slow ride, covering the 28-mile trip in about 2 hours. However, the campground was then just 15 minutes away. (You can also drive north from Toronto to Sudbury, then go west and enter the island by bridge. We used that route to come home because we left at a time when we would have to wait several hours to catch the ferry. That longer route cost about an additional \$45 in gasoline, making the ferry a more palatable \$50 fee when we included its fuel savings. (And making both routes cost nearly the same.)

So, we arrived at the campground, registered and drove down a bumpy, "long and winding road" to its dark sky sanctuary. It's a large field capable of comfortably holding more than 150 campers. The field is very flat and is surrounded by pine forest. It included five "privies" or pit toilets. Hot showers were available at the main camp and they are different. You adjust the water temperature to what you like using a sink spigot and then fill a bag with shower water. Next, you go to a shower stall, hoist the bag up using a rope and pulley and release a clamp to allow the water to flow through a sprinkler. Shower water is rationed because they are on a well water supply, but there was always plenty of shower water in my bag and I only filled it half way or so.

Stargazing Manitoulin was scheduled for Friday through Sunday, July 4-7. We arrived on Tuesday evening to maximize our chances for clear skies and were the first in the field, the first by 24 hours.

Tuesday night was looking spotty, so we didn't set-up our 17.5" Dob. But around 1:30 AM, Wednesday morning, it had cleared somewhat, leaving behind some cirrus. We went out and did some binocular observing. Even with the cirrus, M-13 was naked eye almost directly overhead. And, we saw the potential for the skies a clear night would produce.

Wednesday night was lost to clouds and a few sprinkles. However, a fellow from Barrie named Dan came on Wednesday and camped next to us with his Kendrick Observing Tent:

(<http://www.kendrickastro.com/astro/index.html>). We became friends and had a lot of fun together over the next several days. Dan also brought Crystal, his German Sheppard. She was very quiet, even among strangers. Dan had an 11-inch Celestron Schmidt-Cassegrain.

On Thursday another family came from Barrie; Dave, his wife and three small children. They had a 6-inch Dob. Then Doug and his wife came and it turned out that he had been stationed in Rural Valley, Armstrong County by the Lutheran Church some years ago. He had a 12.5-inch Meade Lightbridge Dob. Also on Thursday, the clear skies that would last the next five nights arrived. And I mean clear, no cirrus, no contrails. The skies were almost "Texas Star Party clear".

Friday saw more frequent arrivals and by Friday night, there were probably 40 people camped in the dark sky field. Friday night at 7 PM the Gordon's provided a wine and cheese welcoming party. That was followed by a presentation they had requested I do on "Observing Asteroids" and then a sky tour by John Albers, a knowledgeable local amateur astronomer.

Saturday, even more people arrived as we decided to leave a day early to come home. We were afraid that Sunday we would have had to fight Torontonians return-

ing home from their weekends in "Cottage Country" plus we were concerned about the possibility of backups at the border as Americans returned home after a long July 4 weekend.

THE OBSERVING

As I said, the skies rivaled those of the Texas Star Party. They were dark. There was a slightly noticeable glow that rose just a couple of degrees from the horizon in the northeast, probably caused by the village of Manitouwaning, ten miles away and another in the west about the same size, probably caused by the town of Mindemoya, 25 miles away. But they were minimal, literally hardly noticeable at all. You had to try to see them.

The skies are not quite as dark as those in Texas. The island air is more humid and Manitoulin is probably 3,500 feet lower in elevation. So, the skies are not quite as crisp as those of western Texas, but they are outstanding. I'd say 95% as good as Texas. They are definitely worth the long trip.

M-4 and M-22 were as spectacular through the 17.5" Dob as was M-13...even though we were 5 degrees of latitude north of Pittsburgh and M-4 and M-22 were 5 degrees lower in the sky. M-57 was available in blue skies after sunset. M-27 and M-17 looked like neon signs. And the small, dim M-globulars in the bottom of the teapot were still small, but were now extremely bright. The yellow star at the center of the Cat's Eye (NGC 6543) was not just there, it was obvious. The Milky Way and Jupiter were sources of light pollution but did not cast shadows as they did in Texas a month ago.

THE NEGATIVES

We had a wonderful time, making many new friends. The observing was outstanding. The only negatives I can think to mention are the rapidly falling temperatures and the insects.

Temperatures: Stealing Glen Sanner's idea, I installed a Radio Shack indoor/outdoor thermometer:

(http://www.radioshack.com/product/index.jsp?product_id=2049773&cp=&sr=1&origkw=thermometer&kw=thermometer&parentPage=search) on our Dob with the outdoor probe taped to the side of the primary mirror. It is interesting to see how the air temperature changes in relation to the mirror's as the night cools down. What surprised me at Manitoulin in July was that at sunset the air temperature would be 68 - 70 degrees but just 45 minutes later, it would be down to 41 degrees. The temperature dropped like a rock and the relative humidity simultaneously rose like a balloon from 31% to 89%. Thus, dewing was a problem till the equipment temperature reached equilibrium with the air...around 1:30 AM. But my Kendrick Dew Removers worked perfectly.

Insects: When we arrived early Tuesday evening, we immediately set-up the popup camper. It took about ten minutes and then JoAnne asked me if I had bumped my head while working under one of the slide-out bed frames. I was bleeding in three spots. I hadn't, they were black fly bites. I hate using Off, but it did work. However, I have probably a dozen black fly bites on my neck and a few on my head. Maybe a couple of mosquito bites as well. The folks who traveled up from southern Ontario were surprised by the black flies as well. They had disappeared from Barrie

three weeks earlier. They are usually gone in late June, not liking the heat of summer, but this year, it didn't get hot in the north till last Friday and Saturday. If you are not familiar with black flies, they are prolific blood suckers and are only about 1/10 the size of a house fly. You don't even feel the bite, but in my case, being on blood thinners, there was plenty of evidence even before the bite welts arose. The next time we go to Manitoulin, we will go to their August star party and avoid the black flies.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Michael Meteney

The following is a summary of Income and expenses for this year up to June 30.

Income:		Expenses:	
Donations	\$1,092.00	Raffle prizes	\$ 95.00
Interest	\$ 580.99	Guide Star printing	\$ 1,044.10
Memberships	\$4,863.00	Insurance	\$ 120.00
Sales	\$ 640.00	Postage	\$ 588.25
		Meetings	\$ 878.72
Total Income	\$7,175.99	Merchandise	\$ 858.00
		Misc.	\$ 641.35
		*Equipment	\$34,463.53
		Officers Expenses	\$ 426.10
		Planetarium	
		Service	\$ 600.00
		Star Finders	\$ 998.75
		Subscriptions	\$ 1,355.80
		Accounting	\$ 4,261.48
		Utilities	
		Mingo	\$ 967.05
		Wagman	\$ 1,236.98
		Total Expenses	\$48,535.11

Accounts Balances:

Checking	\$ 1,991.21
General savings	\$ 9,896.13
Valley View Savings	\$ 22,632.14
USX Savings	\$102,331.40

*The large expense for equipment is due to the purchase of the new Fork Mount for the 24-inch telescope at Mingo. We received a \$20,000 donation in 2007 for the mount, and we are to receive another \$20,000 donation later this year to help cover the cost of the \$53,000 mount. The remainder of the cost of the mount was covered by interest earned on accounts over the past several years.

Speaking of the new mount, it is a very impressive piece of equipment that was well worth the expense.

This report is only a summary. Due to the size of a detailed report, it is not reasonable to put it in the Guide Star. If anyone wishes to discuss the detailed report, you can contact the treasurer.

THE NEW TELESCOPE—THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE DEPRESSING

Ramblings of a Rookie Star Gazer
By Todd Kelly

I had a few issues setting up the Celestron 6SE for the first time. I was excited, and rushed a few things, and so the results were less than "stellar" (har har). My second and third attempts were also disappointing, and the following details the trials of getting this scope back to tip-top shape.

Part 1: Nags Head Glitch

My family spent a week in Nags Head, NC over the week of July 4th. Being a fairly dark observing site, I brought the scope along to show my family—some of whom are also into astronomy—some of the sights. I had purchased a new battery pack for powering the scope, and was anxious to try that out as well. Luckily, it came charged from the factory - nice!

I placed the scope on the concrete pool deck in the back of the house, and the sky was perfectly dark and clear. An amazing night to observe. I set about aligning the scope, and it was very easy this time around (read the manual, Todd, it helps). I slewed the scope to M4, a globular cluster in Scorpius. Gorgeous! So much more detail than the smaller reflector I had been using. My brother had trouble seeing it (I guess his eyes aren't that good?) so I decided to move to Jupiter, which had just risen in the south. And then it happened...the scope went NUTS. It began spinning freely on the alt axis, and the hand controller said "No Connection - Error 17". I tried restarting the scope, and then another alignment. This time, even that didn't work, and the scope went haywire again.

Thinking it was the battery, I decided to wait until the next clear night and drag a long extension cord out to the pool deck. I didn't get another chance for several days, due to clouds.

Part 2: Total Failure

Same setup as before, but the sky wasn't as nice. There was a bit of haze due to some swamp fires in the area, but it was still clear enough to try the scope again. I used the extension cord and the AC adapter, hoping for better results. No dice. In all attempts, the scope kept losing connection to the motor, and the error never went away. Thoroughly depressed, I packed the scope up for the remainder of the vacation and decided to hit the message boards for help. I also put in a trouble ticket with Celestron, hoping they could help.

Turns out, this is a fairly common issue, but is usually caused by a bad connection between the hand controller and the mount. I read a LOT of helpful information on [Cloudy Nights](#) (thanks guys!) and was directed to view the Nexstar website : (www.nexstarsite.com).

Part 3: MacGuyver at Work

After trying the hand control in the AUX port of the mount (rather than the typical hand controller port), I still had errors. I was not sure what the next steps would be, since I had done nearly everything recommended by the boards and the Nexstar site. I even updated the hand controller and motor control firmware (via an old Windows 98 laptop that I had in storage, gathering dust - come on, make a Mac version!!!). The only other thing to do, before sending it in to Celestron, was to take the entire mount apart. So I did.

To be honest, there are not a lot of parts to this mount. I removed the OTA tube from the mount, then removed a few screws on the inside face. I then removed a few more under the battery door, pulled off all of the plastic casing, and the innards were exposed. Just a bunch of ribbon cables and two tiny circuit boards, stacked on top of one another. And then I saw it - a connector on the bottom board was slightly loose, and it felt wobbly when I tried to reseal it. I plugged the scope in, powered it up, and went through the actions of aligning it to the Moon (totally fake, as this was indoors - I just wanted to give it a place to start from, to give it a realistic test). Trying to slew to M4 caused the error again, until I touched the loose connector, after which it worked perfectly. Voila! I tested this over and over, and this was definitely the issue. I reseated the connector and went about putting the plastic casing back on. It wasn't easy—nor was it easy to remove. It should have come right off, and gone right back on, but it was stuck. I then realized that the board assembly was crooked - and that this was the reason the connector was coming loose. I bent the boards forward a bit, and the cover went right on. I tested the scope again, and all went well. Finally!

Part 4: An Actual Observing Night

With the scope back together, I marched it out to the driveway for a real test. It aligned perfectly using an auto 2-star method, and hit M13 dead on. Amazing!!! Everyone at my house was in bed, and I wanted to wake them up to see M13—a true dazzler of a star cluster, and this view was nothing like my old scope. This was in my light-polluted driveway as well! Then I slewed to M57, the Ring Nebula. Dead center in the eyepiece, and brighter than I had expected. I spent the next hour slewing all over the place—to asterisms like the mini coathanger, double stars in Lyra, more clusters like M3—what a night. Dew prevented me from staying out past midnight (which was probably a good thing!), so I packed it in. I could barely get to sleep afterwards, as it had been SO nice to finally have the scope working.

I can't wait to use the scope in darker skies with better views (my driveway is blocked by trees in many directions).

Thanks again to everyone that helped me with ideas, links, and good wishes!

CONGRATULATIONS DENNIS MORTON AND AAAP WINNERS OF NIGHTSKY NETWORK QUARTERLY PRIZE



The Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh won the quarterly prize with the Evening With the Stars event. Dennis Morton tells us: "The Pittsburgh Philharmonic introduced a musical theme based on the heavens. While the orchestra played, a PowerPoint presentation of stars, planets, and galaxies were shown. As guests arrived, they were treated to a display of telescopes and photos by club members". The members who participated were Bill and Maureen Moutz, Fred Klein, and Dennis Morton.

The quarterly prizes were two Rigel Systems mini red lights and five of "The Night Sky" David Chandler ten-inch planispheres. Winners were randomly chosen from all event logs using NSN materials. Night Sky Network members reported nearly 600 events between April 1st and June 30, 2008.

COSMOPOLITAN PITTSBURGH STAR PARTY REPORT

By Dave Smith



Bill Moutz and I took part in this event put on by The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust on July 11. It was held on the top level of the Theater Square Garage at 7th and Penn Avenues. There was a band, drinks, food, city police and a lot of people. In addition to this event, the streets and sidewalks were filled with people for the Gallery Crawl. This included galleries on Penn and Liberty Avenues. I wonder if it was a garage band!

We packed our two telescopes, displays and literature in my VW Vanagon since we were only given one parking space. A lot of the southern sky was blocked by buildings so we couldn't show people Jupiter, Saturn or Mars. The Moon was the main attraction. Later in the evening, it went behind the Highmark Building, so we looked at a couple of doubles and a great painting on an

eye in one of the Highmark offices. The Moon did reappear later near the end of the event.

We had some people from England, Scotland, plus two girls from Russia. Several people asked what "the dark line" on the Moon was. That did give us a chance to explain the phases. Bill gave an NSN demonstration about Uranus. We handed out information on the observatories in addition to showing pictures.

Near the beginning of the evening, we had almost front row seats to the fireworks at PNC Park. We could see the image in the telescopes shake from that and sometimes from the band. There was an official photographer that came around to take our pictures.

HANOVER PARK STAR PARTY REPORT

By Bill Moutz



In spite of the Moon, we had a successful star party for the girls scouts at Hanover Park. AAAP members present were Frank Pastin, Fred Klein, Mike Fisher and Bill Moutz. Fred had Jupiter in his scope just a few seconds after 9 p.m. It was not yet visible naked eye. The girls and their adult supervisors were very appreciative of our involvement in their campout. There were 32 girls from ages 7 to 17 and 8 adult supervisors.

I handed out AAAP and NSN flyers, told them about Mingo's upcoming campout and showed Jupiter, the Moon, the double double, Albireo, Mizar and Alcor. I also explained how a Dob telescope works and discussed several websites such as heavens-above.com. I also placed a detailed map of the Moon on the ground and discussed it with several of the youngest students and one adult. Also, I read to them "The Universe In Eleven Steps" from Terence Dickinson's book, *NIGHTWATCH*.

Fred Klein showed them Saturn, Jupiter, the Moon, M81, M31, M57, Antares, Albireo, and the ISS pass. Mike Fisher showed Jupiter, Saturn, the Moon, M13, M51, M57, NGC 869 and 884, Vega, Arcturus and Polaris. Frank Pastin showed Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, M27, M13, M57, M51, M81 and Albireo. In addition to the ISS pass, we also saw an Iridium flare.

SOURCES/CHARTS FOR VIEWING EXTRAGALACTIC CLUSTERS AND NEBULAE/HII REGIONS

By Tom Reiland

I found two sources/charts of extragalactic clusters and nebulae/HII regions. The November, 1997 *Sky & Telescope* has a nice chart of the brightest clusters in M31 on pages 106-109. The Webb Society, *Deep Sky*

Handbooks, Volume 4, Galaxies, has a chart for M33's objects on page 215. There is a chart for regions in M101 in *S & T* in the late 1980's to 1990's. I haven't located it yet. There is a relatively bright Globular Cluster in the Fornax Dwarf Galaxy listed as NGC 1049. I've never observed the galaxy, but I have observed the GC, even from Wagman Observatory. I've located fifteen objects in M31, six in M33, five in M101 and one in NGC 2903 in Leo.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER—JIM BLOCK



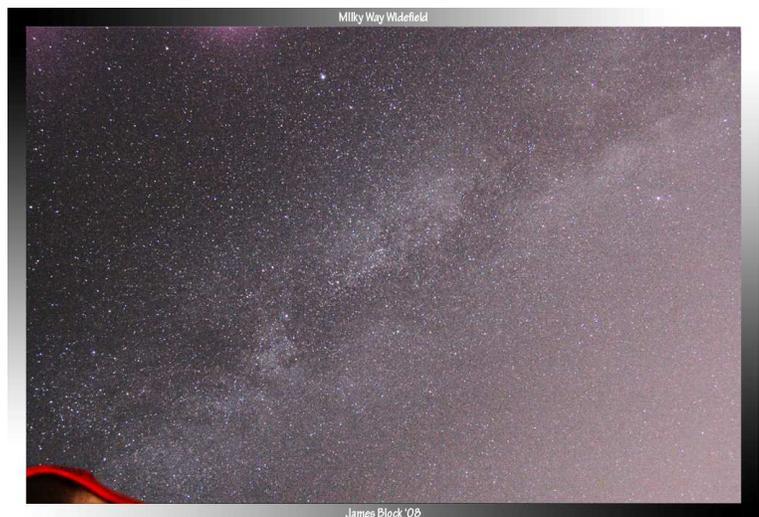
Photo by Fred Klein

Photo of Jim Block with the astrophotography setup he used for the for the following pictures.

Jim recently joined the 3AP. He is 16 and has been interested in astronomy for about 15 months now. He lives in Monroeville. His equipment includes: In 2007, he got a 114mm Bushnell Reflector on an alt/az mount. In late 2007, he bought a Meade ETX-105, a DSI, and a Zhumell EP and filter kit. The ETX seemed to be defective so instead of waiting for Meade's "6-month" fix, he returned it to telescopes.com (He kept the DSI and the kit). In early 2008, once the ETX-105 was returned, he purchased a Zhumell 8-inch Dob and a Meade ETX-80BB. In mid 2008, he bought a Nikon D40 with the stock lens (18-55mm). He then started to talk to Fred Klein, who lives near him, and he then let him borrow an equatorial mount (eq-1 or so) with a tracking drive (to use with his D40 for some wide fields and some DSOs with the lens he will soon be buying). He purchased a Nikkor AF-S 55-200mm lens for normal photography and some DSO work. Now he is thinking about purchasing a used SCT along with a goto mount equivalent "or better" to a CG-5 (to use with the SCT) (anyone wanna sell?)



IC1318 Image—ISO 1600 55-200mm Lens at 200mm Nikon D40



Milkyway Widefield Image—ISO 1600 Nikon D40 Eq-1 mount 2 minutes total exposure 18-55mm Lens at 18mm f/5.6



Satellite Near Corvus image—Nikon D40 ISO 1600 15 second exposure 18-55mm lens at 5mm f/5.6

NOTES OF INTEREST

From U\$X Federal Credit Union®

All members of the Amateur Astronomers Assoc. of Pittsburgh and members of their families are eligible for membership in U\$X FCU. Here's a look at another great benefit of credit union membership exclusively from **YOUR** Credit Union.

The word "SIZZLING" is written in a bold, blue, 3D-style font with a brown shadow underneath, giving it a sense of heat and intensity.

Summer New & Used Auto Loan Rates!

New Auto Rates as low as **3.75%** APR*

Model Years 2008 - 2006

Used Auto Rates as low as **5.00%** APR*

Model Years 2005 – 2003

GREAT Rates on Older Model Years TOO!

To apply for your new or used vehicle loan and get Pre-approved please visit our website, our Cranberry Twp branch office location or call one of our member service representatives for assistance at (724) 776-3550.

*APR = Annual Percentage Rate. Rates are subject to change without notice. Rates shown include all available discounts and a maximum term of up to 48 months. Other rates and terms are available. Rate given will be based on individual credit worthiness. All loans are subject to normal loan underwriting guidelines.

POLARIS NEWS

By John Cheng

Polaris, besides being an attractive visual double is also a unique Cepheid variable with a four-day period whose swing in variation has steadily decreased over the last century.

Currently, the star varies between a minimum magnitude of 1.86 and a maximum of 2.13 - a relatively small change. The following article mentions that Polaris has now "come to life again" and the difference between minimum and maximum magnitudes is now on the rise.

<http://www.physorg.com/news135871831.html>

FOR SALE

I have a never used eyepiece from Orion for sale. It is a 32mm, Wide-Field (Apparent field of view = 70 Deg). PLEASE NOTE: this is a 2-inch eyepiece!! If interested, call or email Ron Pollack at rpollack1@gmail.com. Phone (412) 823-8268 Price is \$75.00. Eyepiece can be viewed here:

http://www.telescope.com/control/product/~category_id=eyepieces/~pcategory=accessories/~product_id=08828

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ashley Aftanas
Leonard M. Aftanas Jr.
Michael Coelho
David Stein
Rosalia Munne
George T. Newman
Jason Herring
Timothy Hoffman

FERN HOLLOW STAR PARTY REPORT

By Dave & Aly Conte

About 40 people and 11 AAAP members attended the Fern Hollow Nature Center Star Party in Sewickley Heights on Wednesday, July 23. Despite a thick cloud layer, the guests had a good time, wandering among the telescopes and learning about astronomy.

George Guzik started it off by presenting his entertaining and informative "Introduction to Astronomy." Along with George and coordinators Dave and Alison, Don Hoecker, Fred Klein, Dave Smith, Bill and Maureen Moutz, Mike Nizinski, Bill Hayeslip and Ed Moss came and brought their telescopes, showing visitors Saturn and Jupiter, the ring nebula and other objects during the brief holes in the clouds.

A couple young men who attended were especially delighted with George's green laser pointer.

Many of the guests had heard about the club, our observatories and star parties and were delighted to have a star viewing opportunity in the North West suburbs. A number of children came, including some bright youngsters who will no doubt be future members. Bill brought a lot of Night Sky Network literature and AAAP flyers. We also gave away some Hubble photo posters. We brought a donation box and raised \$35.

The AAAP members who were there had a good time and felt that this could be a great viewing spot during clearer weather. If anyone has a desire to check it out, please call Samantha McClain-Capezuto, Director, or April Claus, Naturalist at 412-741-6136 or email fhnc@verizon.net during the day so they can inform the local police that your visit is authorized.

The directors of Fern Hollow supplied punch and star-shaped cookies, and were very cooperative, dousing all lights and allowing cars to drive onto the field to set up the scopes. They would be very happy to have us back, and we may want to arrange another party in the fall.

One guest was interested in buying a used telescope from any AAAP member planning an upgrade - call Barb Petalino at 724-266-2696.



IMPORTANT DATES

(Check web calendar for other dates
not included here)



MINGO PICNIC AND CAMPOUT

It is still not too late to sign up for the Mingo picnic and/or campout. Email Ed Moss at: president@3ap.org so we know how much food to supply.

August 2—Keystone State Park Star Party 9:00 p.m.

August 8—Wagman Public Star Party

August 9—Wagman Public Star Party
Mingo Picnic and campout with the stars

August 15—Passavant Star Party

August 22-23—Mingo Star Parties

August 29—Murrysville Park Star Party

August 30—Raystown Lake Star Party

September 5-6—Mingo and Wagman Star Parties

September 12—Tentative Carnegie Science Center Business Meeting

September 27—Mingo Star Party

RAYSTOWN STAR PARTY

August 30, 2008

Three astronomy clubs will be showing the public the wonders of the day and night skies starting at 3 p.m. Saturday, August 30, 2008 at the Raystown Lake Visitors Center.

There will be special telescopes set up to view:

STORMS ON THE SUN
MOON
PLANETS
STARS
CONSTELLATIONS
INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION
SATELLITES

There will be telescopes that children can use. There will be handicapped accessible telescopes. In the auditorium, there will be short talks about:

BASIC ASTRONOMY
BASIC TELESCOPES
HANDS ON TELESCOPE PRINCIPLES
MOVIES
SLIDES
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Come rain or shine, there will be lots to see and hear.

For more information, contact: Park Ranger Melissa Herheim at (814) 658-6812. Coordinator Ted Kominsky (814) 627-0022.

OBSERVATIONS

Mike Fisher: Posted to listserver July 12, 2008. The sky conditions at Mingo were mighty iffy early on and I set up the CPC to observe the Moon if nothing else. Luna was stunning even under the unsteady atmosphere but as the evening progressed, the skies cleared and conditions became much more steady. I tried to view Mars and Saturn in the same field of view using a 30mm wide field Stratus EP but it just missed. Gene loaned me a 55mm tele-vue from the observatory. What an eyepiece! There sat Mars and Saturn in the same field of view (darn it, now I have to get one of these EPs). It just proves you are never done shopping. There's always going to be that new must have item or gadget. Gene and I were observing asterisms picked out by the CPC tour program. Most notable was the kite asterism in Ursa Major. It did look like a kite with five trailing stars as the string. Gene left around midnight. I could not leave because the Moon set behind the trees at 1:00 a.m. and the southern sky just came to life with its new found darkness. The Lagoon Nebula was fantastic with the Lumicon OIII filter. I observed around Sagittarius for the rest of the night 'til I pulled out of Mingo at 3:30 a.m.

Tom Reiland: Posted to the listserver July 21, 2008. I decided to go up to Wagman Observatory to check for any storm damage and to do some observing with the Brashear Scope if the conditions permitted. I got there about 8:45 PM and everything was in good shape. I opened up the roof for the 11-inch and prepared to observe the planets and whatever else that came to mind. This time I was able to find Venus—thanks to the finderscope being in focus. It was an atmospheric rainbow blob. I moved over to Jupiter and the four Galilean moons before I took one of my last glimpses of Saturn and Mars in the evening sky. I thought I'd give Antares a shot at high power to try to see its companion. I used the Meade 8.8 mm eyepiece at 470X and the diffraction rings were very prominent and I had no trouble locating the greenish secondary star. I dropped the magnification down to 159X with the Nagler 26 mm eyepiece and I could just make out the companion at moments of steady seeing. I moved NNW to one of my favorite doubles, Beta Scorpii. There's been an ongoing debate about the color of the companion star. I think it depends on the scope and the conditions. Smaller scopes and normal conditions show it as greenish to me. I decided to go after some deep sky objects before Moonrise and I hopped from M5 to M11 onto M17. I followed that with M51 and NGC 5195. I finished with M27, M22 and 61 Cygni before I closed up. I wasn't able to see the Moon rise because of the haze and clouds on the eastern horizon. It was visible by 10:30, almost twenty minutes after it actually rose. I left just before the dampness became a problem and clouds started to roll in about the time I got home just after 11 PM.

Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

*Founded June 9, 1929 by
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