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The Nerdiest Video Game Ever

By Dr. Tony Phillips

NASA has a job opening. Wanted: People of all ages to sort, stack, and catalogue terabytes of simulated data from a satellite that launches in 2015. Agile thumbs required.

Sorting terabytes of data? It's more fun than it sounds.

In fact it's a game: Satellite Insight. The Space Place Team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory created the entertaining app for iPhones to get the word out about GOES-R, an advanced Earth science satellite built by NOAA and NASA.

Described by the Los Angeles Times as possibly "the nerdiest game ever," Satellite Insight may be downloaded for free from Apple's app store. Be careful, though, once you start playing it's hard to stop. Some reviewers have likened it to Tetris, one of the most popular video games of all time.

GOES, short for "Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite," is the workhorse spacecraft for weather forecasters and climate scientists. NOAA operates two (at a time) in geosynchronous orbit, one above the west coast

of N. America and one above the east coast. They monitor clouds, wind, rain, hurricanes, tornadoes and even solar flares. The GOES program has been in action since 1975.

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President's Corner

By Gordon Hansen

Happy New Year! This is the Twentieth anniversary of the club. If you haven't paid attention to our logo, the club was founded in 1992 by Greg Burnett. Thank you Greg!

Planning for this year's activities has started so please mark your calendars.

Beginner's Nights at Island Lake. A couple of these dates are somewhat tentative. As usual we pick a Saturday evening close to the first quarter moon. In May that falls on Memorial Day weekend. I would appreciate input if that's not a good choice for you.

- April 28th (Astronomy Day)
- May 26th (Memorial Day weekend)

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STAR STUFF

January 2012 - Vol. 22 No 1

STAR STUFF is published eleven times each year by:

FORD AMATEUR ASTRONOMY CLUB
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn MI 48121-7527

PRESIDENT: Gordon Hansen
VICE PRESIDENT: Jon Blum
SECRETARY: Doug Bauer
TREASURER: Chuck Jones
WEBMASTER: Greg Ozimek
NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jennifer Zdanowski

Club Information:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC) meets on the fourth Thursday each month, except for the combined November/December meeting on the first Thursday of December - at Henry Ford Community College Administration Services and Conference Center in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions (www.boonhill.net/faac).

The FAAC observes at Spring Mill Pond within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The club maintains an after-hours permit, and observes on Friday and Saturday nights, and nights before holidays, weather permitting. The FAAC also has a private observing site near Gregory Michigan and Lake Erie Metro Park. See the FAAC Yahoo Group* for more information.

Observing schedules and additional info are available on our website, or via the FAAC Yahoo Group.* Or call the FAAC Hotline, for info and leave a message, or ask questions: 248-207-2075. or send email inquiries to fordastronomy@comcast.net.

Membership in the FAAC is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The FAAC is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (F.E.R.A.). Membership fees:

Annual - New Members: \$30 (\$15 after July 1)
Annual - Renewal: \$25 (\$30 after January 31)

Membership includes the STAR STUFF newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake observing site.

Astronomy or Sky & Telescope Magazine Discounts

Obtain the required form from the FAAC club treasurer for a \$10 discount. Send the completed form directly to the respective publisher with your subscriptions request and payment. Do not send any money directly to the FAAC for this.

Star Stuff Newsletter Submissions

Your submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at jenzdanowski@yahoo.com. Email text or MS Word is fine. STAR STUFF will usually go to press the weekend prior to each general meeting. Submissions received prior to the 15th can be included in that issue.

* FAAC Members are welcome to join our Ford Astronomy Club Yahoo!Group. Messages photos, files, online discussions, and more! URL: groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub.

This month's background photos of the moon Page 1 courtesy of John Kirchoff. See more of John's photos at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/33926475@N06/with/4311533997/>

Presidents Corner

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June 23rd

July 28th

August 25th (Club Picnic)

October 20th

We will also continue to offer some hands on demos at the beginning of each night. If you have a topic you'd like some help with (e.g., collimation, star hopping, polar alignment) let me know and we'll put it on the list.

The 9th Annual Astronomy Show and Swap Meet will be held on March 10th once again at the Holy Cross Lutheran Church. We're adding a silent auction this year. If you only have a couple of things to sell this may be a better alternative than buying a sales table.

The club Annual Dinner is scheduled for April 14th at Karl's Cabin. This is a must attend evening. If you haven't attended in the past you need to make it this year. Planning is just starting, but, we will celebrate our 20th!

Astronomy Day is on April 28th. Usually we set up solar scopes outside the Detroit Science Center and at Kensington Metropark during the day and then onto Island Lake for Beginner's Night. The Science Center is still in limbo, so we will be moving all day time activities to Kensington. Let's hope the DSC re-opens.

Club Picnic is scheduled for Saturday, August 25th. Doug Bauer volunteered once again to lead the event. Thank you Doug!

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New iPhone game is first NOAA app and only the second NASA game app. Just as with the real GOES-R, the challenge with Satellite Insight is to keep up with the massive influx of weather and other environmental data.

The Nerdiest Video Game Ever

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GOES-R is the next-generation satellite with advanced technologies far beyond what the older GOES satellites. It has sensors for lightning detection, wildfire mapping, storm tracking, search and rescue, solar imaging, and more. Many of the sensors are trailblazers. For example, the Geostationary Lightning Mapper can count and pinpoint lightning bolts over the Americas 24/7. It's the first such detector to fly on a geosynchronous satellite, and it could lead to transformative advances in severe storm warning capability. Other sensors are upgrades to instruments that have flown before. GOES-R high-energy particle detectors, for instance, will expand the range of energies and improve the sensitivity of sensors long used by GOES to monitor solar radiation storms.

All in all, GOES-R represents a "huge technological leap from the current GOES." We know this because Satellite Insight tells us so. The app has an informative "Learn More" feature where players can find out about the satellite and the data they have been sorting.

Which brings us back to sorting data. It's a bit like eating Cheerios; just don't tell the kids it's nutritious, and they love it. Helping GOES-R gather and stash data from all those advanced sensors is just as satisfying, too—a dose of Earth science wrapped in thumb-flying fun.

More information about Satellite Insight may be found on the web at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/satellite-insight/id463588902?mt=8>. The game also available in web form (flying thumbs optional) at spaceplace.nasa.gov/satellite-insight.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Treasurer's Report December 10, 2011

By Chuck Jones

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Balance Sheet As of December 10, 2011

	Dec 10, 11
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
CD 200599272	1,054.23
CD 89265268	1,098.74
Checking	1,393.24
FAAC Savings	458.67
Petty Cash Account	37.68
Total Checking/Savings	4,042.56
Total Current Assets	4,042.56
Other Assets	
Equipment	1,688.97
GLAAC	1,522.02
Scholarship	314.80
Total Other Assets	3,525.79
TOTAL ASSETS	7,568.35
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	8,439.30
Retained Earnings	-276.33
Net Income	-594.62
Total Equity	7,568.35
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	7,568.35

Club Wear

To our "New and Current Members" Our club has "FAAC" Official Club Wear with our Logo Embroidered.

Anyone with an interest or need in FAAC Club Wear, I will be placing an order in the next few months, for more information please call me - Diane at 248 980-7832. The FILES section in the Yahoo group has a form noting each ITEM with PRICES. The listing name - "FAAC Club Wear" - please do not hesitate to call me.

Diane Worth

Meeting Agenda - January 26th

HFCC – Berry Auditorium -Admin. Services & Conference Center <http://www.boonhill.net/faac>
5:30

Opening/Introduction/Member Observing

Main presentation:

Cosmology: Doomed, Insignificant and Ignorant-Dave Cinabro

Club Projects/Committees/Member Support

- March 31st: Lake St. Clair Metropark - Sidewalk Astronomy 6:00pm – 12:00am
- March 31st: Kensington Metropark Nature Center (8 pm)
- April 28th – Astronomy Day - Kensington Metropark
- May 19th & 20th – Kensington Metropark - Heron Day. Daytime club solar observing
- June 5th – Kensington Metropark East Boat Launch - Observe the Transit of Venus, 5:30pm – sunset

Club Business/Secretary/Treasurer/Equipment Reports

- Election of 2012 Officers

Items For Sale

Celestron 6x30 finder scope-\$25

Starter scope (similar to the Celestron power seeker) D=60mm F=700mm with tripod, and 3 lenses-\$50

For more information on these two items, please contact Lynn Spielman at: lynnscats@wowway.com

Orion 100 mm Achromat refractor, F6, with older CG4 equatorial mount. Diagonal and finder included. Asking \$250

Miscellaneous eyepieces and filters for beginners also available. Ask for \$\$

Call Tom Blaszak at 313.585.3351.

key_string_guy@yahoo.com

Meade Lightbridge Deluxe 12" – F/5, 1524mm focal length. Purchased new last year. Perfect condition mechanically, optically and cosmetically. Big, clear deep sky views. Built-in battery powered cooling fan, two-speed Crayford focuser (1.25 / 2-inch). Easy to transport, set up collimate and use - smooth as silk. Upgraded with Bob's knobs and heavier collimation springs. Includes shroud, cover, Telrad and secondary mirror heater. Over \$1000 invested, will sell for \$650.

Contact John Johnson at jjohnsonpub@yahoo.com

or (248) 515-0014.

Astro Imaging SIG

Gordon Hansen

The August meeting was held at HFCC in the Berry Amphitheater in Dearborn

All are invited to join us in the Astro Imaging SIG meetings, to share and discuss images, experiences, and techniques.

We always have a good time, with lively discussion, and sharing of valuable information.

Next meeting is February 9th. The meeting room location - HFCC Admin. Services and Conference Center (same building), Berry Amphitheater Auditorium.

Topics invited. Pizza served.

FAAC Events 2012

February 9th-Astro Imaging SIG group

February 2nd-FAAC Board Meeting

February 28th-Plymouth Astrophotography

March 10th-Ninth Annual FAAC Astronomy Show and Swap Meet

Background Photo from Lunt Solar Scope Image taken at the Hector J Robinson Observatory, June 28, 2010

One FAAC members blog

<http://hjrobservatory.blogspot.com/>

A few updates on the observatory, quick articles and photos. I'll try to improve my writing on this blog. Also, I try to keep daily updates on this blog. - Greg Knekleian, HJRO volunteer.

Items For Sale

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MEADE Telescope and Tripod 6 years old - in excellent shape **LXD 75** - Series Schmidt - Cassegrain 8" f/10 SC-8AT (Super Coated, Autostar Guided) - Focal Length 2000 mm Telescope weight = 24 lbs - with MEADE EMC Super Multi-Coatings and with optional Ultra-High Transmission Coating Tripod weight = 45 lbs - Die cast Aluminum German-Type Equatorial Mount with Variable-Height Field Adjustments Autostar Controller guides to 30,223 objects

Includes a Sun Filter, Overnight Protective Cover, Transportation Containers. Contact phone no. 248-851-5053, e-mail robertboswell@comcast.net

Presidents Corner

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This is only a partial list of activities: stay tuned to Star Stuff and announcements at the monthly meetings for events as they come up. Also, if you have an interest in Astrophotography, don't forget the club Astrophoto SIG meeting on the second Thursday of each month and the Plymouth Astrophoto Club meeting on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

One last piece of business: the board is going to re-visit our club mission and what, if any, changes we should make. If there is an area or activity you think we're not pursuing or something that we should discontinue, please let me or one of the other officer's know. I will pass out index cards at this month's meeting for members to jot down thoughts.

Don't forget - this meeting is our annual elections. If you want a say in the officers, you need to show up and vote. All of the current officer's were re-affirmed by the nominating committee and are standing for re-election. If you want to throw your name or someone else's

FAAC General Meeting Minutes December 1st, 2011

By Doug Bauer, Secretary

Opening:

- The meeting was called to order in the Berry Auditorium at 5:30 pm by FAAC President, Gordon Hansen
- All attendees introduced themselves. There were 35 people present.
- Members contributed their observing experiences.

What's Up In December/January:

John Schroer gave the What's Up in the Night Sky talk. He included:

- Total Lunar eclipse on December 10th – we will see the moon entering the umbra in Michigan (provided it is clear)
- Moon Phases in January: 1 – 1st Quarter, 9 – Full, 16 – Last Quarter, 22 – New
- Venus begins to appear low in the western sky at sunset
- Jupiter well positioned both months
- Neptune is in Aquarius
- Uranus will be Mag 6
- Mars is in Leo
- Saturn is an early morning object in Virgo
- Pleiades and Hyades are visible in the evenings
- Comet 2009 P1/Garrad is in Hercules (low in the west at sunset)
- December 14-15 – Geminids Meteor Shower near full moon best after midnight
- December 22nd – Winter solstice
- January 3rd – Earth is at Perihelion (closest to the sun)

Main Program:

Bob Clubb led the meeting attendees to the newly refurbished Henry Ford Community College Planetarium. The dome has been repaired and repainted and a new all dome LCD projector installed. He treated us to a planetarium show and a some videos.

Business Meeting:

Secretary's Report was printed in the StarStuff and approved as printed. Treasurer's Report was printed in the StarStuff and approved as printed.

Upcoming Project and Events:

The Club Telescope is available for use.
Dec 14th – Garden City Outreach – 9 AM – 11:00 am
Jan 21st – Lake Erie Ice Daze

New Business:

The FAAC Nominating Committee (Jim Frisbie, Frank Ancona and Bob FitzGerald) presented the roster of candidates for FAAC Offices for the January Elections: President – Gordon Hansen, Vice-president – Jon Blum, Treasurer – Chuck Jones, Secretary – Doug Bauer. Doug Bock will run the elections at the January Meeting.

The 2012 Swap Meet needed some people to lead it, Frank Ancona, Jim Frisbie and John Schroer volunteered.

The new FAAC Website (fordastronomyclub.com) was updated by our Webmaster (Greg Ozimek) to include links to other local astronomy clubs.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

Thanks to Greg Ozimek for bringing the pizza and to Gordon Hansen for bring the pop!

Hector J Robinson Update

by Greg Knekleian

During the holidays we had fewer viewing opportunities. This was mostly due to weather conditions and a lack of clear nights. Some aches and pains and holiday opportunities with family kept me away from HJRO most of the past month.

Monday the 10th of January was clear, but the wind made it feel like it was colder than the 33 degree temps on the thermometer. It was supposed to hit 45 degrees during the day January 11th. After visiting a friend at a local hospital, I called some FAAC members and put out a last minute post that I would be opening the observatory. Five or six members seemed interested but only three of us actually showed up. Rick Arzadon, Brian Kutcher and I braved the cold to view starting at 9:30PM.

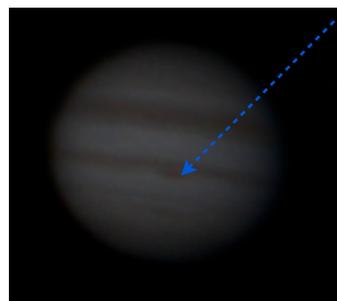
I chatted with George Korody a bit before opening up and also called Harold Thomason. I like to call up Harold to chat a bit about telescopes and give him more compliments on Big Bertha (the 10 inch Schmidt Newtonian). This becomes a common theme, because each time I look out through Big Bertha, I'm always impressed. While talking on the phone with Harold, we fell into discussion about various telescope configurations. I told him I was looking at used Questar telescopes on Ebay and almost placed a bid on one but resisted the temptation. We discussed the construction of a Dob and other topics, mostly Astronomy related. I continued to talk to Harold when Rick arrived at the observatory and eventually handed the phone to Rick. Rick ended up talking with Harold for about 40 minutes, about all kinds of topics, except astronomy.

During the phone conversation Brian arrived and we started viewing Jupiter. A dark spot on the southern equatorial belt looked like a shadow of one of the moons.

The shadow became longer over time and eventually turned into a thin long band. We made some casual remarks and guesses as to what this was and took a few photographs. It wasn't a shadow and photos showed it to be more of a reddish cloud band. Perhaps half the length of the Great Red Spot.

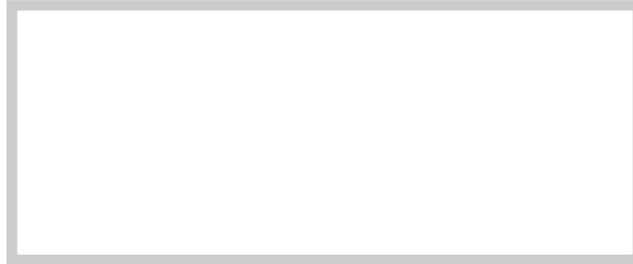
One of the moons was starting to transit the Planet, but we didn't see a shadow during our outing. We also looked at M42 and a couple of Galaxies, in spite of an almost fully illuminated moon. Part of the time I was using a heating pad to heat a chair. The thermal interference of the heating pad was much worse than what we've experienced with the IR heat lamp. We usually use the heaters at the end of the session, but I was underdressed for the weather. The bright moon and cold weather put a bit of a damper on observing and we spent most of the time looking at Jupiter or chatting.

I created a menu like list of options on the observing blog. Basically it's a list of options, based on equipment we either have at the observatory, or may bring to the observatory from time to time. Some options include, low light photos of visitors inside the observatory, or 3d photos with flash at the observatory. Low resolution spectroscopy. We can perform prime focus photography with a Canon EOS, or using a Meade Deep Sky imaging camera. We can view the moon through my Vixen binoculars. We can record video with the Stellacam and stack the images in the computer.



At first, this band looked like a shadow to our eyes. A quick exposure through the 25mm eyepiece (C14 3911mm) using the Canon T1i. (No stacking or major image processing.)

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Star Stuff Newsletter
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn MI 48121-7527



REMINDER: FAAC membership renewals are due by January 31, 2012.

Annual – New Member: \$30

Annual – Renewal: \$25 (\$30 after January 31)

Send your check for \$25 to:

FAAC
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Or bring your money to the next FAAC General Meeting on January 26th at 5:30 PM in the Berry Amphitheater Auditorium in the Administrative Services and Conference Center on the campus of Henry Ford Community College.

Membership includes the STAR STUFF newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake and Lake Erie Metropark observing sites, use of the FAAC Yahoo Group, and mentoring program.