



# STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Volume 18, Number 10

October 2009

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## Staring at Lightning

There's something mesmerizing about watching a thunderstorm. You stare at the dark, dramatic clouds waiting for split-second bursts of brilliant light — intricate bolts of lightning spidering across the sky. Look away at the wrong time and (FLASH!) you miss it.

Lightning is much more than just a beautiful spectacle, though. It's a window into the heart of the storm, and could even give clues about climate change.

Strong vertical motions within a storm cloud help generate the electricity that powers lightning. These updrafts are caused when warm, moist air rises. Because warmth and lightning are inextricably connected, tracking long-term changes in lightning frequency could reveal the progress of climate change.

It's one of many reasons why scientists want to keep an unwavering eye on lightning. The best way to do that? With a satellite, 35,800 km overhead. At that altitude, satellites orbit at just the right speed to remain over one spot

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## FAAC Outreach

President's Corner

Doug Bauer, FAAC President

FAAC has always done a great job with community outreach. We have had another great year with over 20 outreach events. If you have not participated in an outreach event, here are the basic elements:

1. An optional presentation of the Astronomy 101 course which covers the basic types of telescopes, an overview of the solar system, a little bit on the constellations, an explanation of where the north star is and how to find it, and an overview of deep sky objects.
2. Setting up telescopes to allow people to look at various objects including the sun, if it is visible and various night time objects (These include distant street lights or exit signs in the event of cloudy or rainy weather).
3. Answering questions from the people who attend.

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# STAR STUFF

OCTOBER 2009- VOL. 18 - No. 10

*STAR STUFF* is published eleven times each year by:

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

PRESIDENT:	Doug Bauer
VICE PRESIDENT:	Chuck Jones
SECRETARY:	Lori Poremsky / Kevin Medon
TREASURER:	Steve Flessa
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Dale Ochalek

## 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, Administrative Services and Conference Center in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions ([www.boonhill.net/faac](http://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 use Richmond Airport, Unadilla, given prior permission, and Lake Erie MetroPark. 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](mailto: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 Member:	\$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 subscription request and payment. Do not send any money directly to the FAAC for this.

## Star Stuff Newsletter Submissions

Your submissions to *STAR STUFF* are more than welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at [dake00k@yahoo.com](mailto:dake00k@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 that weekend can be included in that issue.

\* FAAC Members are welcome to join our **FordAstronomyClub** Yahoo! Group. Messages, photos, files, online discussions, and more! URL: [groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub).

## President's Corner... (continued from page 1)

And who attends?

It varies, here are some examples:

1. Cub/Girl/Boy Scouts and their leaders
2. Museum patrons and their children
3. Detroit Science Center patrons
4. Boat Club members and their children
5. Elementary school kids and teachers
6. People visiting a park or other public place where we have set up
7. People attending a concert at Meadow Brook Music Festival
8. Families attending Astronomy at the Beach
9. You name them, they've attended

Some FAAC members have expressed a concern that they don't feel knowledgeable enough to go to an outreach event. Trust me, you will be knowledgeable enough!

Heck, look at me, I go to as many as I can fit in and I'm no expert. If you can setup a telescope or binoculars and find something in the sky, you're set (the moon is an easy object to find and one that everyone at an outreach event wants to see).

You'll enjoy the Oohs, Ahs, Oh My Gods, and Mom, You've got to see this!

It is a great social event for club members. We usually go out for dinner somewhere near the outreach site before we setup.

If you haven't tried it, take the step, you'll be hooked.

Thanks,

Doug Bauer

[dougbauer@comcast.net](mailto:dougbauer@comcast.net)

## Staring ... (continued from page 1)



*The Geostationary Lightning Mapper (GLM) on the next generation of GOES satellites will detect the very rapid and transient bursts of light produced by lightning at near-infrared wavelengths. This image was taken from the International Space Station and shows the Aurora Australis and lightning.*

on the Earth's surface while the planet rotates around its axis — a “geostationary” orbit. NASA and NOAA scientists are working on an advanced lightning sensor called the Geostationary Lightning Mapper (GLM) that will fly onboard the next generation geostationary operational environmental satellite, called GOES-R, slated to launch around 2015.

“GLM will give us a constant, eye-in-the-sky view of lightning over a wide portion of the Earth,” says Steven Goodman, NOAA chief scientist for GOES-R at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Once GLM sensors are flying on GOES-R and its sister GOES-S, that view will extend 18,000 km from New Zealand, east across the Pacific Ocean, across the Americas, to Africa's western coast.

With this hemisphere-scale view, scientists will gather unprecedented data on how lightning varies place to place, year to year, decade to decade. Existing lightning sensors are either on the ground — which limits their geographic range — or on satellites that orbit much closer to Earth. These satellites circle the Earth every 90 minutes or so, quickly passing over any one area, which can leave some awkward gaps in the data.

Goodman explains: “Low-Earth orbit satellites observe a location such as Florida for only a minute at a time. Many of these storms occur in the late afternoon, and if the satellite's not overhead at that time, you're going to miss it.”

GLM, on the other hand, won't miss a thing. Indeed, in just two weeks of observations, GLM is expected gather more data than NASA's two low-Earth orbiting research sensors did in 10+ years.

The new data will have many uses beyond understanding climate change. For example, wherever lightning flashes are abundant, scientists can warn aircraft pilots of strong turbulence. The data may also offer new insights into the evolution of storms and prompt improvements in severe weather forecasting.

Did you miss another one? The time has come for GLM. Want to know how to build a weather satellite? Check the “how to” booklet at [scijinks.gov/weather/technology/build\\_satellite](http://scijinks.gov/weather/technology/build_satellite).

*This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with NASA.*

## September Meeting Minutes

Kevin Medon/Lori Poremsky

Attendance: 42+

The meeting was called to order by President Doug Bauer at 5:30 p.m.

The main presentation was given by Robert Naeye, Editor-in Chief of Sky and Telescope magazine. The topic was Asteroid Impact Threat to Earth.

After the presentation Gordon Hansen mentioned that there is an outreach event scheduled for this Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Edison Boat Club in Detroit. Doug Bauer and Gordon Hansen are currently scheduled to attend and are looking for additional volunteers.

Gordon Hansen went through the on-line survey results. The survey was sent out earlier in the year and completed by about 1/3 of the current membership.

### Club Business

Secretary's Report – Lori Poremsky noted that we have three new members this month. Motion & second to accept the September minutes; approved.

Treasurer's Report – Steve Flessa reviewed the balance of monies in the various club accounts. This month's report is published in Star Stuff. Steve is collecting money for membership in the Astronomical League. Dues are \$7.50 per membership. Steve has ordered 50 copies of the 2010 Astronomy Magazine Calendar. The calendars will be available for purchase at Astronomy at the Beach for \$10. \$7 is the breakeven on the calendars.

Equipment Managers Report – Doug Bauer announced that Diane Worth will be auditing equipment once a quarter. Equipment is now reserved through the database on the Yahoo Group. Individuals will be responsible for contacting the person who currently has the equipment to arrange for pick-up.

### Open Discussion

Greg Ozimek brought up the Yahoo Group and the trend to "reply to all." Greg suggested instead to copy sender's name off of original and respond to just the sender, especially if the response does not pertain to the rest of the group. Another option is to snip off everything (the e-mail chain) at the bottom and delete it.

Greg Ozimek noted that the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's publication of the 2010 Observer's Handbook is available for purchase. It is a paperback resource on anything about the sky, similar to an almanac. A group order would bring the cost down to \$20 per copy. Please preorder on the Yahoo Group site. A database has been set up for this purpose. If you do not have access to a computer, please contact Greg Ozimek directly.

Doug Bauer reported on the Great Lakes Star Gaze. About 16 FAAC members attended. There was clear sky three nights in a row. A great time was had by all.

John Schroer reminded everyone that Astronomy at the Beach is scheduled for this weekend, September 25 and 26, at Maple Beach in Kensington Metropark. To get in on a raffle, stop at the FAAC club table and register.

Gordon Hansen noted that SIG meetings are taking place the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month in the Berry Auditorium of Henry Ford Community College, located in the Administrative Services and Conference Center.

The first outreach at the Lincoln Park Observatory will take place on Tuesday, September 29. It is a scouting event starting at 8:00 pm with about 15 scouts scheduled to attend. If you would like to participate, please plan on being there around 7:00 pm.

Frank Ancona is interested in possibly doing some education around dark sky and light pollution during outreach programs in and around the Lincoln Park Observatory.

John Schroer reported that Brother Guy Consolmagno, Vatican Astronomer, will be speaking at three Detroit area venues. On Friday, October 11, at Lowbrows in Ann Arbor. On Monday, October 12, will be at the University of Michigan Dearborn campus; and that evening at the Detroit Science Center's Dassault Systems Planetarium for a 7:00 p.m. start.

The Detroit Science Center will also be presenting a Hubble Reveal presentation on Saturday, November 14. John also reported that no other information has come forth on the proposed Urban Star Party, so it may not be happening.

The cable show is progressing nicely. Our cameras will be at Astronomy at the Beach. The latest sponsorship has come from Dr. Spaulding

*...continued on page 5*

## Minutes ... *(continued from page 4)*

at Monroe Community College, allowing the show to be aired in the Monroe area.

Dennis Salliotte reported on Lake Erie Metro Park; we are waiting for final approval from Park management of our proposal to allow FAAC members after hours access to observe inside the Park. Lake Erie Metropark has requested that anyone using the land set aside for the Ford Amateur Astronomy club be on a park list. If you are not on this list and wish to use the property set aside, please contact Dennis Salliotte.

The question was asked – what happens to the monies collected during each meeting, specifically referring to the scholarship fund and the equipment fund canisters. It was noted that the scholarship fund goes directly to Henry Ford Community College as a once a year donation to the Henry Ford Foundation through Dr. Jacobs. This entitles the club to use the facilities free of charge. The equipment fund has been accumulating recently. In the past it has been used to purchase the projector and the audio speaker system. Funds are being accumulated for possible future equipment purchases and maintenance to existing equipment if required.

John Schroer noted that he would contact the Hands of God Astronomy Club in Wyandotte now that school has started again for the New Year. He will report back at a later meeting.

Ben Kline reminded the group that there is a club library located on the HFCC campus in the Science Building. He is considering posting a list of those items available for check on on the Yahoo Group.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

### Recurring Events

2009 is the International Year of Astronomy (IYA 2009) celebrating 400th year of the Galileo's telescope. American Astronomy Society (AAS) and Astronomical League are celebrating "International Year of the Telescope." All year long, expect speakers. We may get additional support for our Astronomy at the Beach (AATB).

DSC, Cranbrook, FAAC, and GLAAC plan to bring more astronomy to the general public. Set up telescopes in your local community or neighborhood. Eric Rasmussen will be planning events at University of Michigan (Dearborn and Ann Arbor) and HFCC.

U of M will have Saturday Morning Talks. John Schroer, the FAAC chairman, passed out several handouts at the board meeting to show national intentions. Plastic replicas of Galileo's telescope with real glass lenses will sell for \$16.50, and you will be able to see Saturn and Jupiter with it. Additional scope orders can be placed on the Galileo Scope website.

The SIG meetings are the second Thursday of each month (next one September 10) at 5:30 pm in the HFCC Berry Amphitheater Auditorium in the Administrative Services and Conference Center building Topic – TBD. Pizza will be provided.

FAAC General Meetings are the fourth Thursday of each month, 5:30 pm, with the next one August 27 in the HFCC Berry Amphitheater Auditorium.

The FAAC Board meetings are usually the first Thursday of each month, 5 pm (next one October 1) at Senate Coney Island, Rotunda at Greenfield Rd., Dearborn, (313) 441-1027.

Beginners nights continue in 2009 on first quarter moon Saturdays (August 29 and October 24), with the intent to help people use their equipment (not public outreach).

John Schroer is putting together the handouts for Beginners Night at Island Lake State Park (Spring Mill Pond) and also Lake Erie Metropark (Cove Point Picnic Area). Bring your telescope or binoculars, or look through others.

Events will be posted in the Park Bulletin board, Metropark Quarterly Newsletter, Ford World, and [astromichigan.org](http://astromichigan.org).

FAAC Club Wares with embroidered five color club logo can be ordered through Diane Worth (prices are estimates heard by the secretary, and there may be additional cost for shipping):

Ottoman "official" club short sleeve shirt (black or white), \$43; patch, \$9; flex-fit cap, black with silver, \$19; legacy jacket, black, \$58; casual club polo shirt, royal blue, \$41; star presenters shirt, French blue, \$52; hooded sweat shirt, black, \$46; hooded sweat shirt, full zip, black, \$49; star gazer blanket, reversible, royal blue or black, \$38; weekender duffel, new larger size, royal blue or black, \$38; expanded brief case, royal blue, \$28.

Diane Worth said she will bring filled orders to AATB. Contact Diane Worth at [dianewsky\\_night@yahoo.com](mailto:dianewsky_night@yahoo.com).

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## Minutes . . . *(continued from page 5)*

The FAAC Library and DVD collection is in HFCC Science Building Room 109. The list of 100+ books and brief descriptions is available at the FAAC Yahoo site; books can be signed out for one month, with extensions allowable. President Doug Bauer and VP Chuck Jones are backup key holders for returning and signing out books.

Seeking speakers for 30-60 minute Presentations, or the 15-20 min. Tech Talks. Contact Doug Bauer: dougbauer@comcast.net or call 313-828-7385.

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## Meeting Agenda - October 22

**5:30 pm – HFCC – Berry Amphitheater Auditorium - Admin. Services and Conference Center**

(Map can be found at:

[http://www.hfcc.edu/contact/campus\\_maps.pdf](http://www.hfcc.edu/contact/campus_maps.pdf))

### Opening/Introduction/Member Observing

**Presentation:** Astro-Gadgets Part Two – FAAC's own Jon Blum, self-proclaimed Gadgetaholic

**Tech Talk:** Okie-Texas Star Party – Mark Deprest, U of M Lowbrows

### Club Business/Secretary/Treasurer/Equipment

### Club Projects/Committees/Member Support

- Outreach at Hartland's Cromaine Library – Nov 18
- Astronomy Session at Camera Mart – Dec 4 & 5
- Astro-Imaging SIG
- Dark Sky Committee
- International Year of Astronomy 2009
- Open Discussion

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## Astro Imaging SIG

Gordon Hansen

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 November 12. Note the new meeting room location – HFCC Admin. Services and Conference Center (same building), Berry Amphitheater Auditorium.

Topics invited. Pizza served.

## Items for Sale

**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](mailto:jjohnsonpub@yahoo.com) or (248) 515-0014.

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**Schmidt-Newtonian 10" – F5.35, 1360 mm focal length with 2" focuser, 60 mm guide scope, Thousand Oaks Full aperture solar filter (Mylar). Cooling fan, extra set of "O" rings, Optron Corrector plate. Crestliner mount (on wheels) available. Scope made by Nelson Lewis of Detroit Astronomical Society in 1962. Purchased 1981. Selling telescope for \$325. Mount for \$200. Contact Harold Thomason 313-584-7465.**

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## Treasurer's Report

Steve Flessa

### 8/20/2009 Balance

#### Bank Accounts

Checking	\$1,244.87
Savings	\$549.90
<b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$1,794.77</b>

#### Cash Account

Cash	\$95.00
<b>TOTAL Cash Account</b>	<b>\$95.00</b>

#### Investment Accounts

CD 1	\$1,076.18
CD 2	\$1,043.01
<b>TOTAL Investment Accounts</b>	<b>\$2,119.19</b>

#### Asset Accounts

Equipment	\$1,284.46
Scholarship	\$541.05
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,825.51</b>

**TOTAL** **\$5834.47**

#### Memo:

GLAAC	\$2,727.40
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,561.87</b>

## FAAC Sirius Award

Last year, FAAC initiated the annual Sirius Award. Every year FAAC presents one member with the Sirius Award plaque. It is presented to the Brightest Star in the Ford Amateur Astronomy club at the annual FAAC Banquet. Last year, Bob FitzGerald was selected for this honor.

I am accepting nominations for the award for the 2010 Banquet.

If you have a FAAC member who you think has distinguished themselves in their efforts in FAAC over the time of their membership (it doesn't have to just be in 2009), please send me a note with the member's name and the reasons that you believe they should be honored.

At the end of 2009, the FAAC Board will review the nominations and select one person to be honored at the Banquet.

Nominations will be known only to the Board Members and the submitter. Only the winner will

be announced to the membership. Current Board Members are not eligible to be nominated.

Please submit your nominees to me (DougBauer@Comcast.Net), or telephone: (586) 915-8459.

## Dues Reminder

Annual Ford Amateur Astronomy Club membership renewals are due by January 31, 2010. The cost is:

- \$25 if paid by January 31, 2010
- \$30 after January 31, 2010

Pay Steve Flessa at the Club Meetings, or mail your renewal to:

FAAC  
PO Box 7527  
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Be sure to include your name when mailing renewal.

**October 24, 2009**

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club *presents*

*Beginners Nights 2009*

with: New Detroit Science Center and Rider's Hobby

*Last One of 2009!*

**Do you have a new telescope that you are learning to use? Do you want to see samples of what the night sky has to offer? Consider coming out to **Island Lake State Recreation Area** on **Beginner's Night**. These Saturday nights are dedicated to providing equipment and observing assistance to new astronomers (**weather permitting**). The events will take place regardless of sky conditions; **if it is raining, the event will be cancelled.****

**The Island Lake site is at the "Spring Mill Pond" parking lot/picnic area, at the Island Lake State Recreation Area, on Kensington Road, south of I-96 between South Lyon and Brighton. See <http://www.boonhill.net/faac/other/observe.html>**

**Gordon Hansen, 734-675-6137 or [fordastronomy@comcast.net](mailto:fordastronomy@comcast.net).**

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club  
Star Stuff Newsletter  
P.O. Box 7527  
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**A full selection of Meade telescopes and accessories in stock and on display!**

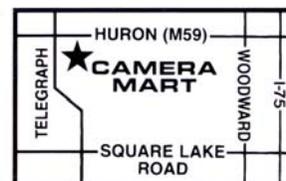
**Also visit us at [MichiganScopes.com](http://MichiganScopes.com)**

**Ask about our October / November Specials!**

**And don't forget! Astronomy Sessions here, on –  
December 4 and 5!**



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Pontiac, Michigan  
1-800-536-6278



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