



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

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The Gray Cubicle You Want to Work In

By Dr. Tony Phillips

It's another day at the office. You're sitting in a gray cubicle, tap-tap-taping away on your keyboard, when suddenly your neighbor lets out a whoop of delight.

Over the top of the carpeted divider you see a star exploding on the computer screen. An unauthorized video game? No, this explosion is real. A massive star just went supernova in the Whirlpool Galaxy, and the first images from Hubble are popping up on your office-mate's screen.

It's another day at the office ... at NASA.

Just down the hall, another office-mate is analyzing global temperature trends. On the floor below, a team of engineers gathers to decode signals from a spaceship that entered "safe mode" when it was hit by a solar flare. And three floors above, a financial analyst snaps her pencil-tip as she tries to figure out how to afford just one more sensor for a new robotic spacecraft.

These are just a few of the things going on every day at NASA headquarters in

Washington DC and more than a dozen other NASA centers scattered around the country. The variety of NASA research and, moreover, the variety of NASA people required to carry it out often comes as a surprise. Consider the following:

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President's Corner

It's October and most of the year's events are behind us. We have one more outreach event planned at the Ann Arbor Hands On Museum on Wednesday, November 16th, from 6 - 8 PM. We will set up scopes outside the museum for the kids and family to enjoy. In past years a steady stream of people have enjoyed the views through our scopes. Please join us if you can.

A big thanks to those who made it out the Wayne Public Library. A total of about thirty big and little kids came out for Astro101 and views of the heavens.

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STAR STUFF

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STAR STUFF is published eleven times each year by:

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SECRETARY: Doug Bauer
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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 use 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.

Presidents Corner

(continued from Page 1)

Reminders:

There is no general meeting in November. The November and December meetings are combined and it is on Thursday, December 1st, at 5:30 PM in the Berry Auditorium.

Every year we present the club's Sirius Award to one of the shining stars in the club. Previous recipients were Bob Fitzgerald, Tim Dey, and George Korody. If you would like to nominate someone for their current or past contributions to

FAAC please send an email to me at FordAstronomy@comcast.net. Please include a description / list of accomplishments of the person. Current club officer's are not eligible. The recipient will be honored at the club dinner in the spring. Nominations will be known to only the current officers and only the winner announced.

The election for the 2012 club officers will be held at the January meeting. Jim Frisbie, Frank Ancona, and Bob Fitzgerald agreed to serve on the nominating committee. If you are interested in running for office or would like to suggest someone, please contact one of them. They will announce their slate of candidates at the December meeting. You can also nominate someone at the January meeting.

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

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



Some of the employees of NASA's Science Mission Directorate may work in gray cubicles, but their jobs are anything but dull. They get to study Earth, the Sun, the Solar System, and the Universe!

The Gray Cubicle You Want to Work In

(continued from Page 1)

NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) supports research in four main areas: Earth Science, Heliophysics, Astrophysics, and Planetary Science. Read that list one more time. It includes everything in the cosmos from the ground beneath our feet to the Sun in the sky to the most distant galaxies at the edge of the Universe. Walking among the cubicles in NASA's science offices, you are likely to meet people working on climate change, extraterrestrial life, Earth-threatening asteroids, black holes or a hundred other things guaranteed to give a curious-minded person goose bumps. Truly, no other government agency has a bigger job description.

And it's not just scientists doing the work. NASA needs engineers to design its observatories and build its spacecraft, mathematicians to analyze orbits and decipher signals, and financial wizards to manage the accounts and figure out how to pay for everything NASA dreamers want to do. Even writers and artists have a place in the NASA scheme of things. Someone has to explain it all to the general public.

Clearly, some cubicles are more interesting than others. For more information

about the Science Mission Directorate, visit science.nasa.gov. And for another way to reach the Space Place, go to <http://science.nasa.gov/kids>.

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



2011 Great Lakes Star Gaze—Photo courtesy of Jon Blum

Mike Rousseau, Doug Bauer, Ken Anderson, John Schroer, Gordon Hansen, John Lines, Jim Frisbie, Doug Bock, Jon Blum

Treasurer's Report October 7, 2011

By Chuck Jones

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Balance Sheet As of October 7, 2011

	Oct 7, 11
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
CD 200599272	1,053.66
CD 89265268	1,097.86
Checking	1,167.58
FAAC Savings	458.67
Petty Cash Account	184.34
Total Checking/Savings	3,962.11
Total Current Assets	3,962.11
Other Assets	
Equipment	1,569.97
GLAAC	1,898.87
Scholarship	245.80
Total Other Assets	3,714.64
TOTAL ASSETS	7,676.75
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	8,439.30
Retained Earnings	-276.33
Net Income	-486.22
Total Equity	7,676.75
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	7,676.75

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 - September 22

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

Opening/Introduction/Member Observing

Main presentation:

R-Spec Software & Spectroscopy Tom Fields

Tech Talk:

GAS - A Removable Roof Observatory

Club Projects/Committees/Member Support

- October 1st - Beginner's Night
- Open Discussion

Club Business/Secretary/Treasurer/Equipment Reports

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 Blaszk 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 November 10th. The meeting room location – HFCC Admin. Services and Conference Center (same building), Berry Amphitheater Auditorium.

Topics invited. Pizza served.

FAAC Events 2011

November 16th- Ann Arbor Hands On Museum

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.

(continued from page 4)

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



Who's minding the store, while the entire FAAC board is at the Great Lakes Star Gaze?

Chuck Jones, Doug Bauer, Gordon Hansen, Jon Blum



HFCC Astronomy Club members

Hassan Bazzi, Jordan Barr, Jennifer Zdanowski

Above photos courtesy of Jon Blum

FAAC General Meeting Minutes September 22th, 2011

By Doug Bauer, Secretary

Opening:

The meeting was called to order in the Berry Auditorium at 5:30 pm by Frank Ancona, volunteer stand in.

All attendees introduced themselves. There were 22 members including one new member present.

Members contributed their observing experiences.

- Greg Knekleian gave the What's Up in the Night Sky talk. He included:
- How to use Cassiopeia to locate the double cluster and the Andromeda Galaxy.
- The Triangulum Galaxy with supernova.
- Comet 2009/P1 Garradd.
- Mars rises at about 2am. It's path will take it near the full moon, other planets, and M44 throughout the month.
- Jupiter rises at about 10pm. Neptune and Uranus are near Capricorn.

Main Program:

Frank Ancona discussed Preserving the Night Sky, showing examples of what the sky might have looked like before light pollution, the harmful effects of light pollution, the cost of light pollution and using cutoff light fixtures to reduce light pollution.

Business Meeting:

Secretary's Report as published in the August StarStuff was presented by Doug Bauer and approved.

Treasurer's Report published in the August StarStuff was presented by Chuck J. via Balance and Profit & Loss.

Astronomical League Dues are being sent in. If you want to join it is \$7.50, contact Chuck Jones.

Projects and Events:

The Club Telescope is available for use.

Oct 1st – last beginner's night of the year. Mars will be in M44.

Oct 4th – Gordon will present Astronomy 101 at Wayne Library at 6pm. Members are invited to bring telescopes for observing afterwards.

New Business:

Steve Uitti won a Celestron telescope at Astronomy at the Beach. He opened the package for the first time at the meeting and was able to focus on a sprinkler head outside of the meeting room.

Next month the presentation will be a web broadcast about Spectroscopy from Washington State. This is something we have not done before.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.



2011 Great Lakes Star Gaze - Photo courtesy of Jon Blum

Steve Harvath, Robert Boswell, Dennis Salliotte, Ken Anderson, Jon Blum, Jonathan Kade, John Schroer, Diane Hall, Therese Oldani, Jordan Barr, Jon Root, Jennifer Zdanowski, Hassan Bazzi

Hector J Robinson Update

by Greg Knekleian

Sometimes I write a draft article and realize afterwards it not much more than an equipment design wish list. I usually store these drafts away as they are not practical and have little to do with an HJRO column.

One such wish list topic I wrote but didn't submit last month was for a \$600 dollar open source designed goto mount that actually works well and could replace my little Nexstar mount. I came up with a wish list of features. Within two days of writing the draft, I found out that Meade announced two new mounts that will be coming out in the fall. I was surprised to find out that the smaller and less expensive Meade mount will retail for \$799 and meets most of the specifications I was wanting in my draft wish list. (Maybe I'll buy one of these in the future.)

The other draft wish I didn't submit as an article was a thought about converting a Celestron or Meade SCT into a rich field Newtonian telescope. By adding a removable diagonal on a stem mount and focuser in front of the existing secondary, perhaps a rich field F2 or F3 scope could be created. I don't have a spare SCT to hack at for now, so I'll leave that subject for another issue.

Now for some real world reports.

Monday, October 3rd

We had perhaps 80 show up at HJRO but clouds prevailed. The FAAC cable show videotaped an entire set of clips for a show at the observatory. A scout group and members of the new Lincoln Park High School's "Astronomy Club" were at this event. Many FAAC members showed up and supported the event setting up their telescopes. Sandra Macika did a presentation on how telescopes work to a group of visitors who enjoyed the presentation.

Many astronomers aimed their telescopes at a nearby radio tower as sky was overcast.

I chatted with a few members of the high school club. Leo McMaster also provided pizza to high school club members. Due to clouds, we planned an observing day for the high school club on Friday. Much of the time Monday was spent taping the cable show. Professor David Cinabro arrived to find we had a little task for him, the public presentation of a Meade camera he donated to the observatory. We had him present the camera to the School Superintendent Richard Rockwell, a nice added media touch for the cable show. We also had many of the regular FAAC members who host the show there of course. (I was lucky to be able to escape the video cameras and stay behind the scenes.)

Sandra Macika, Tim Campbell, Brian Kutscher, Rick Arzadon, Steve Uitti, Art Parent and I brought and setup eight telescopes around the observatory. George Korody and Tim Dey were in and around the observatory. Leo McMaster and superintendent, Richard Rockwell were at the event representing the school system.

TUESDAY, October 4 - Wayne Michigan

On Tuesday I was able to drive out under much clearer skies and attend the Wayne library outreach. About eight astronomers from FAAC were present and there was perhaps 40 visitors. Gordon Hansen gave an Astronomy 101 presentation inside. Visitors came out to observe at about 7PM. The moon was the only clear target easy to find while the sky was still bright. We had about six telescopes setup to view the moon (two being binoculars). Everyone seemed to enjoy looking through the telescopes. At about 7:25PM we saw a fireball fall in the southwest, it's long trail was visible to those who had to turn their heads to see it. It broke into two to three pieces before finally burning up. Due to the brightness, some guessed, it was caused by space junk.

Hector J Robinson Update (continued)

WEDNESDAY, October 5

I spent some time Wednesday under clear skies at HJRO playing a bit with astrophotography tests with the Meade camera. I'm testing an inexpensive PC laptop I purchased to run imaging software on. I met Brian Kutscher who showed up to take some photos with his Canon DSLR hooked up to the C14.

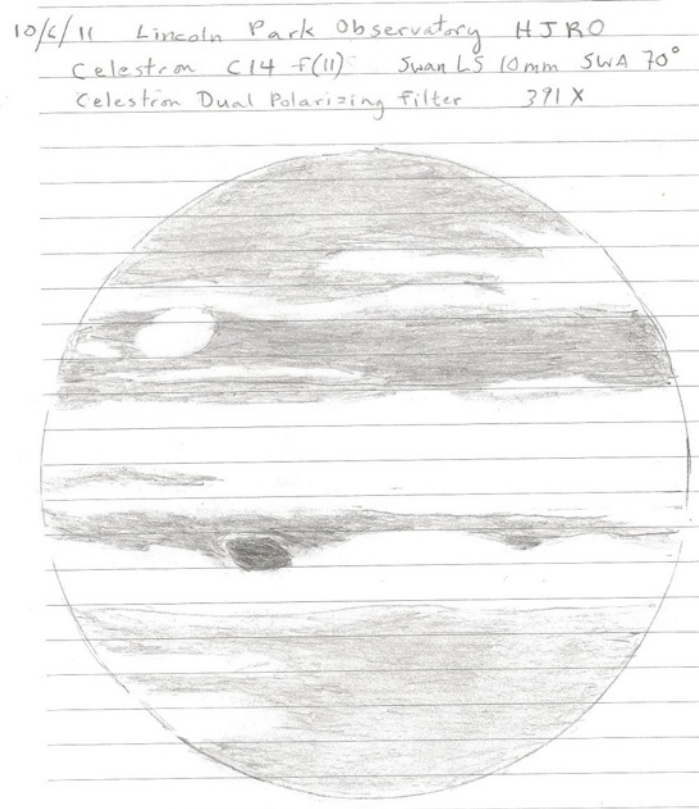
THURSDAY, October 6

Thursday I drove out to Dexter to pick up my 10 inch Newtonian. I returned to HJRO and met Art Parent and Sandra Macika who showed up for Thursday night observing. Thursday was the first time we had someone draw what they saw through our telescope since the HJRO restoration in 2009. Sandra sketched Jupiter while Art and I sat back chatted about many astronomy subjects (including my weekly wish list of new astronomy toys that frequently changes.) *This month I dreamed about a used C-22 RC telescope that would barely fit the dome, maybe we could build another one.*

FRIDAY, October 7

Friday was the first actual observing event with for the new student astronomy club where the skies cooperated. A Yahoo/email announcement resulted in eight FAAC astronomers showing up at the event.

We had fewer visitors than expected, but most visitors stayed there for hours to observe and chat. I was hoping for more visitors, but didn't find until 5PM that it was homecoming night and many students would be involved with that activity. We had maybe 20 to 35 visitors. I actually had three of my neighbors show up and Tim Dey had a couple of neighbors show up as well. One visitor brought a broken telescope with them to get diagnostics and repair suggestions.



(above) Sandra drew this first drawing of any object since the observatory was re-opened.



Pictured above from left to right: Some of the FAAC Astronomers who set up early behind the the Wayne Library. Harold Thomason, Bob Fitzgerald, Rick Arzadon, Art Parent, Dennis Salliotte, and Brian Kutscher.

Hector J Robinson Update (continued)

Leo McMaster the high school teacher who sponsors the club had many visitors show up after reading his Facebook announcement. We had another LP high school teacher (a history teacher), show up and bring her mother and daughter along. Visitors were impressed with FAAC and HJRO. I heard only positive compliments.

At peak attendance, we had maybe two or three people per telescope. The high telescope ratio, insured short observing lines with little waiting to view an object.

After five days of observing, I finally opted out of an invitation to view Saturday night at the Novi Sports park.

OTHER HJRO UPDATES

We have a new Windows 7 box installed at HJRO. We had some issues installing Astronomy software on it. Hopefully this will be fixed soon. Our internet was down, during the first installs which made things more difficult.

A new fiber optic cable has been run to the observatory. By the time the newsletter is published, we should have internet connection through the fiber optics at HJRO. (We will have better infrastructure for more options in the future and possibly a hard wired dedicated phone line at HJRO.)

I took some test pictures at HJRO with the Meade and need to do more testing. We are working on list of options and opportunities to have interesting activities available for the school astronomy club. The student club had nearly 20 members show up for the first meeting. It will be interesting to see what viewing and hobby options we will be able to offer to the new club.

These young whipper-snappers have many more options than I had in the old days, when I used to walk to school in knee deep snow and sub-zero blizzards to do my observing. But that's another story. :)



FAAC Cable Show interviews: Members of the new high school Astronomy club (left above) and also a scout troop from Allen Park Michigan (right above) stand behind Don Klaser

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