



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

August 2002
Volume 11 Number 8



Editor: Jim Frisbie

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STAR STUFF is a monthly publication of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club, an affiliate club of the Ford Employee Recreation Association.

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<http://www.boonhill.net/faac>

Submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome Please write to the address above or contact the editor:

Jim Frisbie
via tele #: 734-453-1422
or email: w8tu@peoplepc.com

Dead line is the 15th of each month for the following month of publication.

Officers:

President	Don Nakic
Vice President	Ken Anderson
Secretary	Don Klaser
Treasurer	Mike Bruno

General Meetings:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month (except the combined November/December meeting held the first Thursday of December) at 5:00 PM at the Family Service and Learning Center, 18501 Rotunda, Dearborn, MI 48124.

Observing:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club observes at Spring Mill Pond within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The club maintains a permit for after-hours access. Weather permitting, the club observes on Friday nights, Saturday nights, and nights before holidays.

Club Information:

Observing schedules and additional Club information is available by calling the Observing Hotline at: (313) 390-5456 or via the Ford Intranet: www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html or the public Internet: www.boonhill.net/faac.

Club Membership:


Membership in the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to Ford employees and non-employees. Write or call for an application. Annual - New Member: \$25; Renewal: \$ 20 (before Jan 31 of each year)
Lifetime - \$ 150

Membership includes:

A subscription to the STAR STUFF newsletter and the quarterly newsletter the REFLECTOR published by the Astronomical League.

Discounts on ASTRONOMY and SKY & TELESCOPE magazines, after-hours access to the observing site and discounts at selected area equipment retailers.

Magazine Discounts:

Do not send money to FAAC for SKY & TELESCOPE or ASTRONOMY magazine subscriptions. We have a form that you send in with your subscription directly to the publisher to receive a \$10 discount. Pick up a form at the next meeting, or contact a club officer. 

SWAP & SHOP

For Sale: Celestron CG4, equatorial mount & RA motor. Like-new/excellent condition. Asking \$150. Also, JMI Micro Max Computer w/GOTO and memory, Nisur Alt Az Mount w/Digital Encoders 8192 Tick Accuracy (lists for \$569) asking \$350. Contact: Thomas Blaszk @ Ofc: 313.323.9842 After hours: 313.277.3365

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Don Nakic

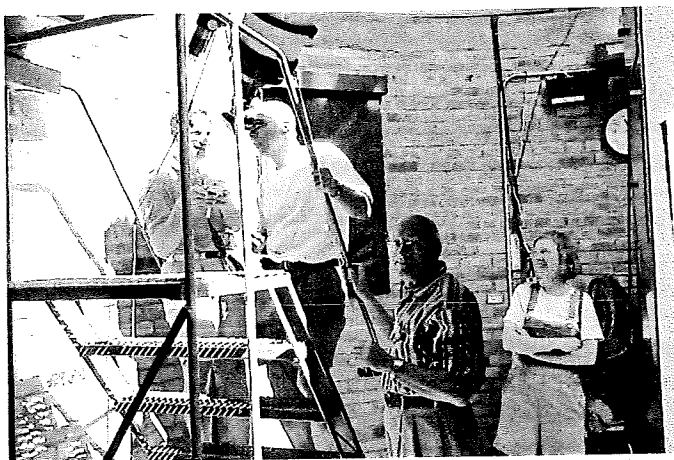
In one day I had a major overdose of astronomy. The day began with a field trip to Eastern Michigan University where I observed our closest star, our Sun, under an H α filter. Later that evening I attended a star party in Manchester, Michigan to observe other stars in our galaxy. It was truly an action packed day of learning and viewing.

About a month ago I asked Norb Vance of EMU's Physics Department to host a field trip for FAAC members at the school's (Sherzer) observatory. Norb arranged for a Saturday viewing session of our Sun through a 10inch APO refractor telescope that was equipped with an H α filter. About twelve club members had the opportunity to view sun spots, filaments, and spectacular solar prominences, especially one generated from spots 39, 44, 50. This prominence displayed the most character in both its detail and size. For me it resembled an oil painter's brush stroke that feathered out leaving behind easily discernible hairline strokes. Following the observing session, Norb toured the group through his classroom, lab, and observing deck. Norb showed the group a 4-inch Alvan Clark refractor telescope that was donated to the school in 1878. The telescope was used by Professor James C. Watson to view a total solar eclipse and to search for planet Vulcan. Vulcan was proposed as a planetary body that caused perturbations in Mercury's observed motion; which Einstein later showed that Newton's law of gravitation requires slight modifications for planets close to the Sun.

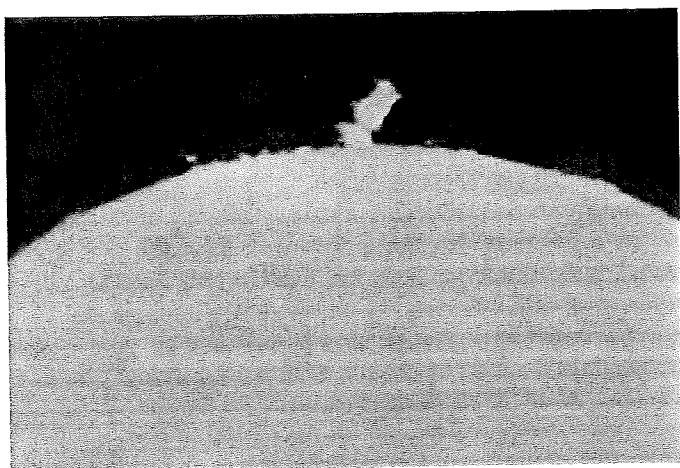
Later that evening I attended Clay Kessler's Star Party in Manchester, Michigan. Despite some known electrical problems with my telescope I was determined to enjoy viewing under a dark sky and camaraderie with fellow amateur astronomers. The evening turned out to be my best for observing and CCD imaging. I received an abundance of

advice from Jack Kennedy and Jeff Thrush on CCD image processing. Jack recommended a book entitled "Astronomical Image Processing", by Richard Berry and James Burnell, as a great resource for understanding various methods to extracting the most information from a CCD image. After purchasing the book I found that it came with a post-processing software package. Within a few days of using it, I would venture to say that it is one of the most powerful image processing tools. I highly recommend it!

For those that had the opportunity to attend the field trip and partake in some dark sky observing would probably have a different story to tell. But I'm sure their stories will have an underline message that speaks of a great time and a memorable experience.



Don Nakic, his brother Joe, George Korody, and Don's wife Ann, all checking out the 10" Astro Physics refractor at EMU.



Solar prominences taken through the 10" AP refractor with a Canon digital camera held to eyepiece.

OBSERVATIONS

by Greg Burnett

[This article was first published in Star Stuff, the newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club, in August 1997.]

I recently spent a couple of hours in the "International UFO Museum & Research Center" in Roswell, New Mexico (www.iufomrc.com). The exhibits at the "Research Center" are well done, given that the place operates exclusively on donations. In fact, the overall presentation proved to be much less strident and dogmatic than I had expected. The majority of the exhibits, naturally enough, document the 1947 "Roswell Incident." Other exhibits address UFO sightings throughout history, "crop circles," and such-like. And surprisingly, several exhibits are directed at acknowledged hoaxes or present skeptical opinions. (Incidentally, this place has the most far-out souvenir shop I have EVER seen: alien caps, alien T-shirts, alien coffee mugs, alien salt-n-pepper shakers, alien ashtrays,... you name it, it's there, with an alien countenance emblazoned on it!)

The many glassed-in displays documenting the "Roswell Incident" were arranged chronologically and covered almost the entire length of one wall of the building. (The "Roswell Incident," in case YOU have been living on another planet, is the alleged crash landing of an alien spaceship near Roswell, New Mexico in 1947, and the covert removal from the wreckage, by the government, of one or more alien bodies, which by some accounts are still under "government protection" at some secret location.) From all appearances, every newspaper article, every radio interview, every bit of publicity ever associated with the putative event is on display here. Testimony from almost anyone with anything to say about it is transcribed and posted for inspection, whether eye-witness account, hearsay, or idle speculation. Virtually all of the material dated from 1947 to no later than the early 50's. The incident has been in the news recently, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

A key piece of "evidence" from the Roswell Incident is the "I-beam," a replica of which is on display (the whereabouts of the original article is unknown). It is a narrow strip of plastic-like material, having a cross-section like that of a steel girder I-beam. It is perhaps twelve to fourteen inches long, about half an inch wide, and light purple in color. At about half-inch intervals along its length are inscribed a series of cryptic symbols, somewhat resembling runic characters or hieroglyphs. The I-beam supposedly represents a "close encounter of the second kind" (physical evidence). The caption of the display explains that this item was reconstructed based on a description from an alleged witness who claimed to have seen the original when he was eleven years old, but provided the description much later in his life. Thus, the inscribed symbols should be regarded, I suppose, as illustrative only.

Additional exhibits at the "research center" report on other alleged encounters and related phenomena. One exhibit displays a small piece copper- and silver-colored metal that was donated to the museum. The donor claimed to have collected the fragment at a "UFO encounter site." Alongside is a parallel

display of scraps from a Japanese jewelry making process called "mokume gane" (literally "woodgrained metal"). The two samples of material appear identical in all respects. The accompanying text explains that indeed, it was discovered that the donor had at one time been involved in such jewelry making in the United States. Even though this exhibit is not explicitly labeled as a hoax, the connection between the two samples of material is obvious, and the intention of the exhibit seems clear.

There is also one display that gives a nod to several recognized skeptical organizations, including C.S.I.C.O.P., the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, publishers of the magazine "The Skeptical Inquirer." The caption write-up in this display seems at first very fair-minded, but ultimately comes to grief, once again making the well worn mistake of pointing to many observations that "science can't explain..." But the attempt at balance in the overall presentation is admirable.

So, what's this "UFO" stuff really all about, anyway? Sure, there are many observations that "science" can't explain. So what? "Science" cannot explain everything, and never claimed to. To turn the argument around, there have been millions and millions of things throughout history that "science" could not explain (starting with everything). However, NONE of them turned out, when eventually explicated, to be evidence of unnatural, supernatural, or paranormal phenomena, or of meddling by some extraterrestrial intelligence. None. Yet those explanations continue to be the favored hypotheses when something is not immediately understood: Sun comes up every morning, can't explain it, must be Ra in his chariot. Moon and stars shine every night, can't figure it out, must be crystal spheres propelled by angels. See something in the sky, don't recognize it, MUST be intelligent beings from another planet; no other explanation for it. Now, can you "scientists" prove it's not?! So there! That settles it!

The logic of such arguments is so convoluted as to barely be worthy of argument. Folks who "believe" in UFOs won't be swayed by legitimate logic anyway. The best we can hope for, I suppose, is to influence a few who have not yet made up their minds. So, with that in mind, here are some of the major arguments against the classical interpretation of UFOs as evidence of visitation by extraterrestrial intelligence . . .

1. An "unidentified object," flying or otherwise, is exactly that: unidentified. Its mere existence does not imply, certainly does not demand, an extraterrestrial or supernatural explanation.
2. The fact that "science" cannot immediately explain everything reported by everybody, likewise does not demand an extraterrestrial or supernatural explanation. Science is not obligated to explain claims of UFOs. To quote the late Carl Sagan, "Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence." Such evidence must be supplied by the claimant. Neither does science's lack of immediate explanations imply a government cover-up. The government has never been able to keep anything secret very long anyway; certainly

something like a genuine ET would remain secret, oh, about twenty minutes.

3. After all the reports of sightings, encounters, and abductions over the years there is still not one piece of credible physical evidence, and not even a clear, unmistakable photograph. There have even been reports of people gathering in numbers at predetermined locations to witness recurring appearances of UFOs. Where are the pictures? Did everyone conveniently forget their camera? Even \$5.95 disposable cameras available at gas station quik-marts produce surprisingly crisp, clear pictures of every-day subjects. Where are the UFO snapshots? What we see in the few photos that are proffered for inspection are blurry, indistinct blobs of light that could be anything at all. It reminds me of the report of a tour bus encountering the Loch Ness monster in Scotland. By all accounts some twenty-five people observed the monster, yet not a single photograph was produced. These people were supposedly on holiday, and no one had a camera?!? Personally, I must conclude that this incident, like many others, is a fabrication composed of more or less equal parts of rumor, legend, hearsay, imagination, and wishful thinking.
4. At best, the Universe is sparsely populated, by any conventional standards, and space travel is very difficult and expensive, even assuming technologies advanced beyond our own. Therefore, it seems extremely unlikely that intelligent beings would come all the way to Earth and then, even though they possessed technology superior to our own, continuously conceal themselves from us, successfully in every way, *except for a number of obtrusive, blundering appearances, often in broad daylight!*
5. Humanity always prefers the more fantastic, exciting, and romantic explanations of things not currently understood. It's much more fun! The tabloid newspapers owe their existence to this aspect of human nature.

In the vastness of our Universe, I think it is virtually impossible that we are truly alone. No matter how you believe life originated, it seems very unlikely that it did so only once. However, even with that said, I also think it very unlikely, for the reasons stated above, that we have been visited by extraterrestrials. I would be ecstatic to be proven wrong. Until then, I subscribe to the philosophy espoused by the late Jacques-Yves Cousteau, who said, on the subject of the Loch Ness Monster, "I don't believe in that bullshit."

AMERICA'S LEADING ASTRONOMERS

Astronomer from India, credited for detecting most powerful explosion since big bang and first millisecond pulsar even found.

A humble person from California Inst. of Technology, Pasadena, Prof. Shivdas Kulkarni analyzed the data of a dead star, after 12 billion years of its death and documented the

largest release of energy ever documented by man and first recorded by Bepposax, a new satellite. His site gives some of his accomplishments: <http://www.astro.caltech.edu/~srk>

As a graduate PhD student in University of California, Berkley, he discovered the first millisecond pulsar ever found (pulsar is first spinning remnants of stars with large magnetic field, spins around and sends light in two beams in opposite direction). He found what others have missed and people considered unnecessary during that time. He finally found gamma ray bursts came from other galaxies, not ours. He also found that this burst also generated when stars exploded and collapsed, forming black holes.

He was born in western province in India and dad was a doctor. He joined UCB in 1978 and obtained his PhD in radio astronomy in 1983. He currently teaches as a MacArthur Professor of Astrophysics and Planetary Sciences. He is also a fellow of Royal Society. His life philosophy indicates he likes hard work. He thinks with determination, one can succeed. He often cited his brother in law-who started a small computer concern in harsh Indian environment and made it a global company.

This information was submitted by Abhijit Sengupta.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

Submitted by Pat Korody

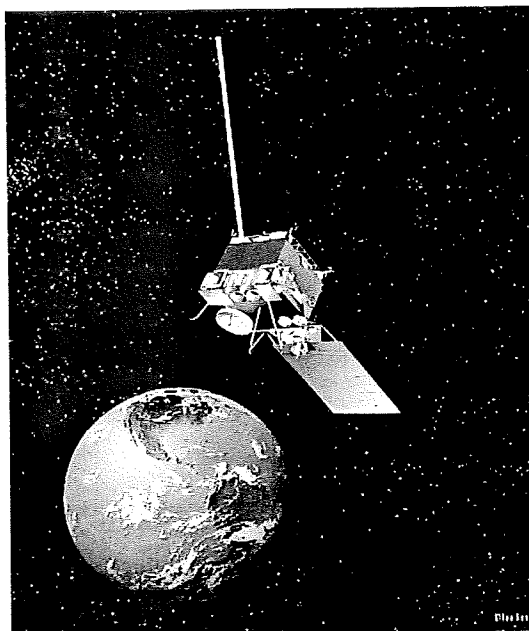
This is the first in a series of mind teasers submitted by Pat from the Arrow Book of Science Riddles by Rose Wyler.

Which planet has Canals,

Icecaps,

And an Atmosphere?

(the answer is on page 7)



SATELLITES TO THE RESCUE!

A ship on the ocean is swamped by a giant wave. A small airplane loses power and crash lands on a mountain field. A snowmobiler in Alaska breaks a tread and is lost far from civilization. How do the brave people who rescue folks in peril find out where they are?

Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking, called SARSAT for short, uses two types of satellites to help people (and their pets!). Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites, nicknamed "GOES," fly in place. They never stray from their spots above Earth. Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellites, called "POES," are in constant motion. They orbit Earth several times a day. The main job of these spacecraft is to track environmental conditions around the world. But GOES and POES also hear special distress signals from ships, planes, and individuals. The satellites send the information to a control center in Suitland, Maryland. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Government, operates the center. They learn who's in danger and where the emergency is. Then they send the Coast Guard or the Air Force to save the day!

Ships, airplanes and people use different kinds of equipment to transmit emergency signals. All these devices broadcast distress messages to GOES and POES. Personal Locator Beacons for individuals are available only in Alaska, but soon may be sold in the rest of the United States. Backpackers and others who travel to remote areas could carry these devices in case they get into trouble.

NASA provided the satellites used for SARSAT and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration operates them. SARSAT has helped to locate and rescue more than 12,800 people worldwide and 4,300 people in the United States. The Air Force and Coast Guard also rescued dogs and other

pets that were traveling with their families when disaster struck!

Find out more about SARSAT at [http:// www.sarsat.noaa.gov](http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov). Also check out The Space Place Web site at <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/goes/orbits.htm> to learn how these satellites orbit Earth and how GOES can hang over one spot all the time!

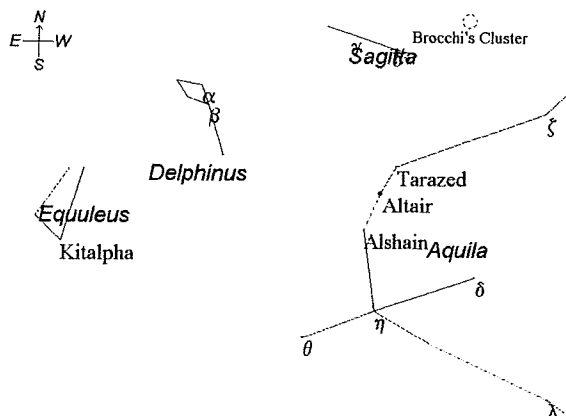
This article was written by Eric Elkins and provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

CONSTELLATIONS FOR THE BEGINNER

By Janice A. Kessler

During the month of August, several small constellations can be seen in the southern sky. Among include Delphinus, Equuleus, Sagitta and Aquila. Aquila, the Eagle, includes the star Altair, a star of the "Summer Triangle." Just northwest of Sagitta is Brocchi's Cluster, an open cluster of magnitude 3.6. The major stars of the month's featured constellations include:

Star #	Star Letter	Name	Constellation	Mag
6	β	beta Delphini	Delphinus	3.63
9	α	Alpha Delphini	Delphinus	3.77
8	α	Kitalpha	Equuleus	3.92
50	γ	Tarazed	Aquila	2.72
53	α	Altair	Aquila	0.77
60	β	Alshain	Aquila	3.71
17	ξ	zeta Aquilae	Aquila	2.99
30	δ	delta Aquilae	Aquila	3.36
55	η	eta Aquilae	Aquila	3.90
65	θ	theta Aquilae	Aquila	3.23
16	λ	lambda Aquilae	Aquila	3.44
12	γ	gamma Sagittae	Sagitta	3.47
7	δ	Delta Sagittae	Sagitta	3.82



All maps and facts are courtesy of Chris Marriott and SkyMap Pro

4.0.

All maps were designed to be viewed from Southeastern Michigan at Midnight around the 15th of the month. If you are at another location or viewing at another time, you may not be able to see this constellation.

FAAC August 22, 2002 General Membership Meeting 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm Agenda

- Introductions Don Nakic 20 min
- Reports: Treasurer's Mike Bruno 5 min
Secretary's Don Klaser
- Old/New Business Don Nakic 15 min
- Upcoming Events Don Nakic 5 min
- Star Magnitudes Greg Burnett 15 min
- TBD 30 min

ASTRONOMICAL CALENDAR 2002

August

All times are Eastern Standard Time or Eastern Daylight Saving Time, whichever applies.

- August 22 Full Moon 6:29 pm (Sturgeon Moon)
- August 25 During last week of August, watch Venus close in on Spica low in WSW at dusk.
- August 30 Last Quarter 10:31 pm
- August 31 Moon near Aldebaran, with Saturn far to their lower left (2 am to dawn)
Venus and Spica 0.8° apart (dusk)

September

- September 1 Moon near Saturn (2 am to dawn)
Venus appears low in WSW at dusk all month and as a crescent in a telescope.
- September 3 Moon near Gemini Twins (dawn)
- September 4 Moon near Jupiter (dawn)
- September 6 New Moon 11:10 pm
- September 8 Moon 20° right of Venus (dusk)
- September 9 Moon near Venus.

with Spica 6° below Moon (dusk)

September 12 Moon near red Antares (dusk)

September 13 First Quarter 2:08 pm

September 14 For rest of month at dawn, Saturn appears midway between Aldebaran and Gemini Twins; Jupiter appears midway between Gemini Twins and Regulus -- which has returned to the morning sky.

September 21 Full Moon 9:59 am (*Harvest Moon*)

September 23 Equinox 12:55 am

September 26 Venus at greatest brilliancy (dusk)

September 27 Moon near Aldebaran (12 am to dawn)

September 29 Last Quarter 1:03 pm
Moon near Saturn (12 am to dawn)

September 30 Moon right of Gemini Twins (dawn)

This information was obtained from the
Henry J. Buhl, Jr. Planetarium in Pittsburg, PA.

FAAC CALENDAR

Activity	Date	Time	Contact
- General Meeting	Aug 22	5 pm	
- FAAC Board Mtg	Sep 12	5 pm	
- Island Lake Star Party	Sep 14	-	-
- GLACC Star Party	-	-	-
- General Meeting	Sep 26	5 pm	
- FAAC Board Mtg	Oct 10	5 pm	
- General Meeting	Oct 24	5 pm	
- FAAC Board Mtg	Nov 14	5 pm	
- General Meeting	Dec 5	5 pm	
- Lake Erie Ice Days	-	-	-

Island Lake Star Party Sign-up

Coordinator: Ken Anderson
 Tent coordinator: Bob MacFarland
 Slide presentation topic and presenter:
 Constellations (TBD), Comet Making (TBD), Astronomy
 101 (Greg Burnett), Beginner Scopes (John Kirchhoff)
 Slide projector/screen: Greg Burnett
 Transportation shuttle: George Korody
 Packet Material: Don Klaser, John Kirchhoff
 Raffle prizes/donations: Pat Korody, Mike Bruno, John Kirchhoff
 T-shirts: Mike Bruno
 Sponsors: Rider's Hobby Shop
 Hot dog stand coordinator: George Korody
 Activities and coordinator: Making Planisphere (Ken Anderson),
 Star Bingo (Ken Anderson)

confirm with park
make Sky Tour forms
but drawing tickets

Press Release: Janice Kessler

Registration Table:

6:00-7:00: Bob MacFarland, Pat Korody, Ray Fowler

7:00-8:00: Sue Fowler

8:00-9:00: Tony Licata

9:00-10:00: TBD

Sales Table

6:00-7:00: Dennis Salliotte, Howard Berlin

7:00-8:00: Sue Fowler

7:00-8:00: Gordon Hansen

8:00-9:00: TBD

9:00-10:00: TBD

Parking

6:00-7:00: TBD

7:00-8:00: TBD

8:00-9:00: TBD

9:00-10:00: TBD

Telescope viewing

Charles Francis, Tony Licata, Gordon Hansen

Howard Berlin, Mike Bonner, Bob Fitzgerald (Binos)

Milt Antonic

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH ...Answer

Did you say Mars? You're wrong! Mars has an atmosphere and icecaps, but no one has ever proved that it has canals. The straight lines sometimes seen on Mars through a telescope have been called "canals". *The Mars Surveyor satellites have disproved Lowell's theory of canals on Mars.*
 The right answer is the Earth.



Constellation Cygnus by Jim Frisbie



The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Presents:

THE TENTH ANNUAL



Our Sponsors:

RIDER'S
HOBBY SHOPS



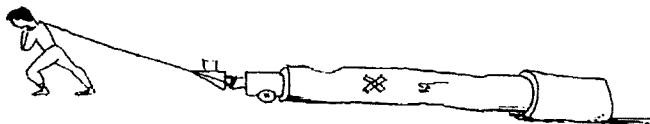
Saturday September 14th 2002
6 PM – ??

This event will be held rain or shine – cloudy or clear!!

Event Listing:

- ♦ **Telescopes of all kinds** – these are available to look at and look through . Have questions? Just ask!
- ♦ **Presentations and Demonstrations by local Technical Experts.** These are designed to answer your questions about equipment and observing techniques and help you to get the most from your telescope.
- ♦ **Astronomical Equipment** – educational material, books and star charts will be on display and made available by our sponsors.
- ♦ **PRIZES!!!** - There will be door prize drawings for telescopes and other items.
- ♦ **Observing Tour for Children** – Kids who register will be given an observing list. Marked telescopes will be on the field for the challenge. A certificate of achievement, and a gift from the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club, will be awarded to all who complete the observing list!

Your Telescope is Welcome!!



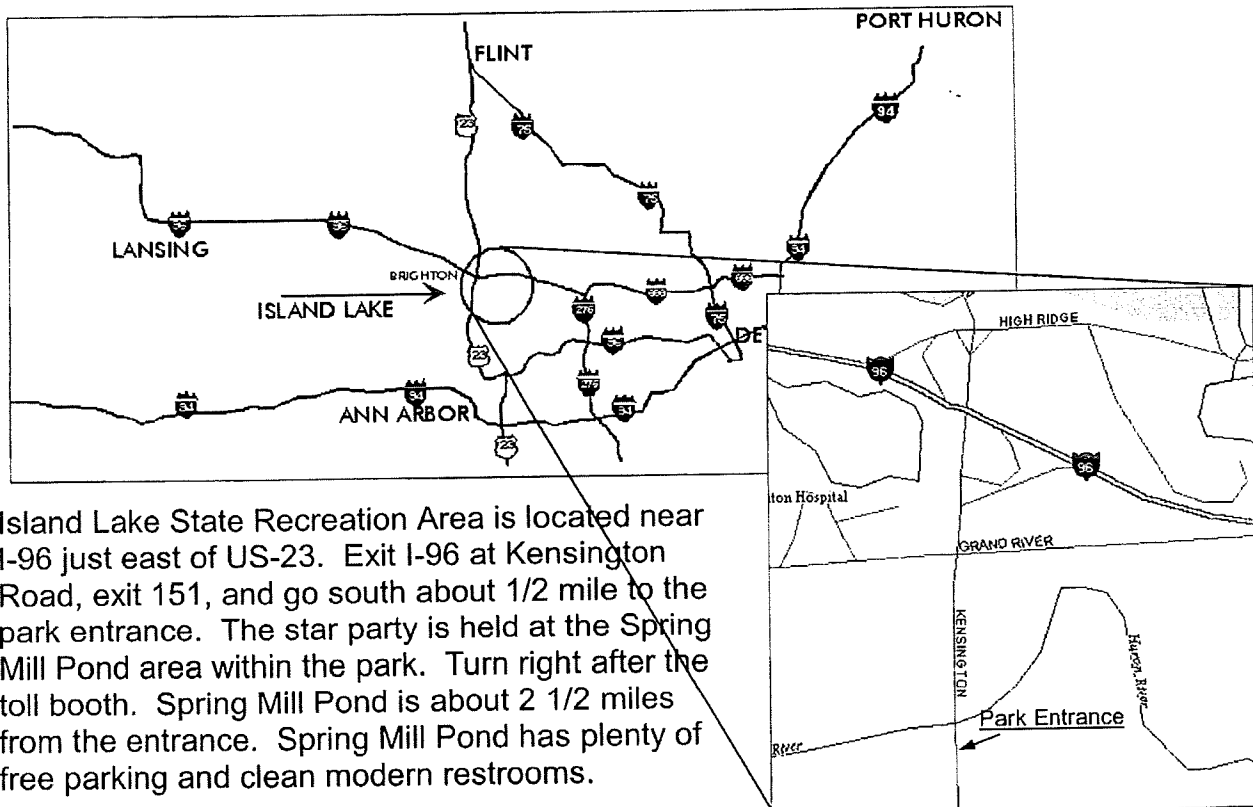
If you have questions about your equipment this is the perfect opportunity to get the helpful advice you need. Limited AC power and plenty of space is available. Please arrive before dark to allow for set-up time.

No telescope? No Problem! There will be lots to look through – just bring your curiosity!

Admission is Free* and Children are Welcome!

* You need a State Park Vehicle Permit if you don't have one – a daily permit is \$4.00



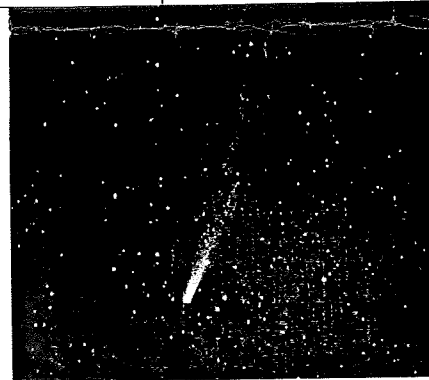


Island Lake State Recreation Area is located near I-96 just east of US-23. Exit I-96 at Kensington Road, exit 151, and go south about 1/2 mile to the park entrance. The star party is held at the Spring Mill Pond area within the park. Turn right after the toll booth. Spring Mill Pond is about 2 1/2 miles from the entrance. Spring Mill Pond has plenty of free parking and clean modern restrooms.



Please Remember – Clear Autumn nights can get very cool. Bring warm clothes. And don't forget the State "Bird" - bring mosquito repellent.

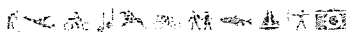
It is polite to cover your flashlight with a red filter so as to avoid spoiling anyone's night vision.



Comet Ikeya-Zhang - By Clayton Kessler



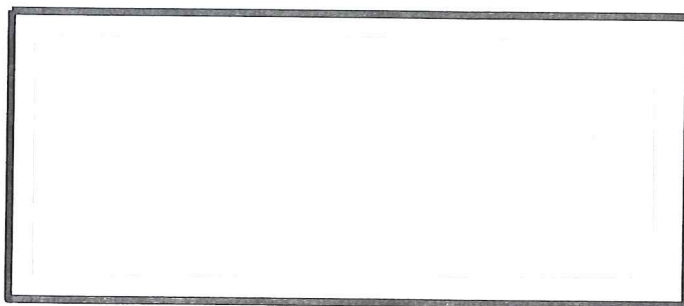
**Ford Employees
Recreation Association**



The Island Lake Star Party is an ideal outing for Scout Troops and Class Trips. We strive to provide an atmosphere where presentations are educational and FUN. Don't forget – Spring Mill Pond is our regular observing site. Members are there most clear Friday and Saturday evenings. Call our Observing Hotline at (313) 390-5456 to confirm an observing weekend and join us! Check out our Web site at <http://www.boonhill.net/faac/>. E-mail faac1992@hotmail.com

CCD Image of Saturn by George Korody, CCD Image of Jupiter by Doug Bock, Northern Cross Observatory

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Star Stuff Newsletter
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48167+3555



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- Receive a **\$500 factory rebate** when you purchase a
Nexstar 8 GPS between July 15 and October 31st.

MAP price \$2499.00 your final price after rebate **\$1999.00**