



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

February 1999
Volume 8 Number 2



LAKE HUDSON DARK SKY STARGAZE SATURDAY FEBRUARY 13



IN THIS ISSUE...

On the Web

Erie Ice Daze

Nothing But the FAACs

Heard on the Net

Aurora Alerts

Email Addresses

Missing Persons

Educational Programs

Check Your Label

Software Review

Magazine Discounts

FAAC Club Song

STAR STUFF Contributors

Letters to the Editor

Advertisements

From the Editor

Instructions to Authors

Meeting Minutes

Next General Meeting

ON THE WEB

Thanks to Harry Kindt...

The Star Trails Society is an initiative by the NASA Marshall Space Sciences Lab to involve our science news readers in research. Each month we will announce opportunities for amateur scientists to contribute to research in astronomy, astrobology, and other natural sciences. You don't need to be a professional scientist to participate (although professionals are also welcome) -- students, teachers, novices and serious amateurs can all join.

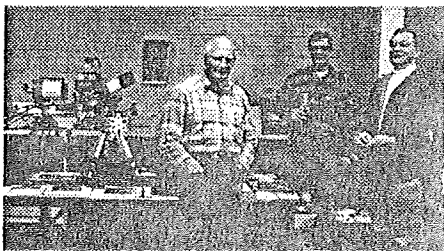
<http://www.StarTrails.com>



ERIE ICE DAZE

Photos by Al Bates

On January 16 our club participated in the annual Ice Daze festival at Erie Metropark. Here are a couple of photos taken by Al Bates.



We filled the classroom again this year, and even did some actual observing! Thanks to everyone who participated in this event.



NOTHING BUT THE FAACs

By George Korody

Welcome to recent new Club members Deborah Wilkelis, Jim Gamboe, and Ken Browne. We hope you have a lot of fun participating in FAAC activities.

It's a fact that the deadline for renewing your FAAC membership for 1999 at the normal \$20 rate has been extended through February 28. Don't miss out on all the upcoming activities and fun. Just send payment with your name to the P.O. box number shown on page two of this newsletter, give it to any Board Member, or pay at the next General Membership Meeting on February 25.

As a Club member you can get a \$10.95 magazine subscription discount from ASTRONOMY and Sky & Telescope magazines for annual renewals or new applications. Simply contact Al Bates or Ray Fowler for the application form to send in with your payment. You can also request the application form by leaving a message on the FAAC Observing Hotline at (313) 390-5456. Specify for which magazine(s) you want the forms.

Comments and suggestions about this column are welcomed. Anyone with items for possible inclusion in future columns is requested to contact the writer at (248) 349-1930, or send E-mail to gkorody@mediaone.net



STAR STUFF

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

STAR STUFF

P.O. Box 7527

Dearborn MI 48121-7527

Your submissions to **STAR STUFF** are welcome. Please write to the address above or contact the editor...

Greg Burnett
gburnett@ford.com
(313) 84-53586

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club**Officers:**

President	Greg Burnett
Vice President	George Korody
Secretary	David Beard
Treasurer	Ray Fowler

General Meetings:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month (except the combined November/December meeting held the first Thursday of December) at 5:00 PM in conference room 1491 in the Ford Credit building in Dearborn, Michigan.

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.

Hotline:

Observing schedules and additional club information is available by calling the Observing Hotline at (313) 390-5456.

Club Membership:

Membership in the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to Ford employees and non-employees. Write or call for an application.

Annual Individual or Family	\$ 20
Lifetime Membership	\$100

Membership include a subscription to the **STAR STUFF** newsletter, discounts on **ASTRONOMY** and **SKY & TELESCOPE** magazines, after-hours access to the observing site, and discounts at selected area equipment retailers.

HEARD ON THE NET

by Bob Lambeck

Gleanings from the sci.astro.amateur newsgroup...

"My Dob Is A Big Money-Sucking Hole" recounted the tale of woe of at least doubling the original investment by fixing all the little things that just needed to be fixed. The replies generally were along the line of "Welcome to the club!"

"Naked Eye Observation of Jupiter's Moons" told of showing the Galilean satellites to an elderly relative who was properly impressed by the close-up view but wondered, "Why are they tilted differently when I look through your telescope?"

"How Do I Tell My Wife I Bought A New Scope" solicited advice on how to break the news. He had hinted last Fall that Spring might be a good time to get a new scope and his wife hadn't objected at the time. Now, the supplier had just told him that the 10-inch LX-200 backordered until March had arrived in mid-January and would be on his doorstep within days. Luckily there is a happy ending to the story. He decided that honesty was the best policy, confessed, and was forgiven. He and his wife both enjoyed reading the responses to his original plea for help. I have selected a few of the more interesting or imaginative ones.

- "Alien mind control."
- "I won it in a contest."
- "It was on sale."
- "Put an observatory dome on the doghouse. You and your new scope will be spending a lot of time in there."
- "Honey, come look through this new eyepiece! Oh, the scope? I've had that a long time."

"New ETX" First reports on Meade's new model ETX and its GOTO controller are favorable. Very favorable. More next month. ☆

AURORA ALERTS

by Chuck Boren

The following is part of a report published by the Space Environment Center that tries to forecast solar activity for the next 27 days (one solar rotation). As time goes on I hope to explain some of the terms used in this report so that you can better understand what it all means. For now this report indicates that solar activity should increase during the period of 10 FEB 99 to 13 FEB 99. This means that geomagnetic storm levels, which could produce an aurora, may be above minor to strong levels. However, this is just an educated guess based on the past performance of two old regions of activity, 8439 and 8440. Keep in mind that the Sun is a dynamic star like any other and active regions that have produced geomagnetic activity during their last transit may or may not be a factor in their next transit. Keep an eye on our INTERNET site for additional information.

FORECAST OF SOLAR AND
GEOMAGNETIC ACTIVITY
27 JANUARY - 22 FEBRUARY 1999

SOLAR ACTIVITY IS EXPECTED TO BE LOW TO MODERATE. M-CLASS FLARE PROBABILITIES MAY INCREASE AFTER 07 FEBRUARY, GIVEN THE EXPECTED RETURN OF (OLD) REGIONS 8439 AND 8440.

NO SIGNIFICANT PROTON ENHANCEMENTS ARE EXPECTED AT GEOSYNCHRONOUS ALTITUDE.

THE GREATER THAN 2 MEV ELECTRON FLUX AT GEOSYNCHRONOUS ALTITUDE IS EXPECTED TO BE AT NORMAL TO MODERATE LEVELS DURING MOST OF THE PERIOD WITH HIGH LEVELS POSSIBLE DURING 11 - 13 FEBRUARY.

THE GEOMAGNETIC FIELD IS EXPECTED TO BE AT QUIET TO UNSETTLED LEVELS DURING MOST OF THE PERIOD. HOWEVER, ACTIVE PERIODS ARE POSSIBLE DURING 10 - 11 FEBRUARY. ☆

EMAIL ADDRESSES

If you have an email address but are not receiving meeting announcements via email, notify the club president (manager of the email distribution list) of your address. Also be sure to advise the club of any changes in your address. ☆

MISSING PERSONS...

The following address had permanent fatal errors -----

<johnghes@aol.com> ☆

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In keeping with one of the major objective of the FAAC, to bring astronomy to the public, we will be presenting our "Astronomy 101" slide show and telescope demonstration program at the following events in February:

Saturday, February 6, at 6:00pm
Cub Scout "Blue & Gold" Banquet
All Saints Resurrection Church School

Tuesday, February 9, at 7:30
Cub Scout "Blue & Gold" Banquet
Angell School in Berkley

Tuesday, February 23, at 7:00
Cub Scout pack meeting
Parsons Elementary School in Gibraltar

These are opportunities to catch the "public" during its impressionable youth, and perhaps start someone down an exciting career path. At the present time we have sufficient volunteers to cover these events, but watch for announcements of future events where your help may be needed! ☆

CHECK YOUR LABEL

If your STAR STUFF mailing label is incorrect, let us know. ☆

SOFTWARE REVIEW

by George Korody

TheSky version #5

One of the items that I recommend as a "must" to new amateur astronomers as well as to more seasoned observers is a computer planetarium software program. With it you can learn what is up in the sky for any particular date or location and you can in-effect observe even on those cloudy Michigan nights. Watching objects rise and set and how they cross the sky is a good way to learn about the objects and the workings of the sky. There are many freeware or shareware programs you can download free from the Internet and others that you can purchase for \$75 or less. There are also excellent high-end programs costing several hundreds of dollars. Such is the new Version 5 of TheSky from Software Bisque of Golden, Colorado (303-278-4478).

I have been a user of TheSky in it's various levels and versions for over five years. There is not enough space in this newsletter, or even several newsletters to describe what it can do. Suffice it to say that it can display the sky and it's objects both on-screen and in chart mode just about any way you could possibly imagine it. However, to be able to do this means that just about all of its features are customizable to the nth degree. This capability makes the software somewhat frustrating for the casual or occasional user. But, if you will use the software at least twice a week, or if you do CCD or astrophotography work you will love it. I believe that more serious amateur astronomers use TheSky than any other single planetarium software program.

The software comes in three levels, Level II at \$129, Level III at \$199, and Level IV at \$249. All levels now include the Hubble Guide Star Catalog of 19,000,000 objects, each with detailed information, and the Level IV now supports additional catalogs of 543,000,000 objects! That should keep

you busy for a few nights. It comes in both PC and MAC versions. Below are a few of its neat features. More information is available on the Software Bisque WEB site at www.bisque.com

1. Control automated telescopes like the Meade LX-200, Celestron Ultima 2000, etc. remotely from your home to your backyard or someone else's backyard anywhere in the world!

2. Display your local horizon with its obstructing trees and buildings for any observing site in the world. You can draw and save the line manually, or an automated telescope will draw the line in about one minute!

3. Display tens of thousands of pictures of the objects on your computer screen.

4. Display time skip animations of eclipses, planets, comets, asteroids, satellites, etc. for anywhere in the world for 4,713 years prior and 10,000 years hence.

5. Watch the earth's precessional changes as you change the dates. For example see the sky as the pyramid builders saw it.

6. Watch the sun rise from darkness, cross the sky, and slowly set back into darkness for anywhere in the world for any date.

Well, I won't bore you further, but you get the point. Get an astronomy software program and increase your knowledge as you have fun. ☆

MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS

Do not send money to FAAC for SKY & TELESCOPE or ASTRONOMY magazine subscriptions. We now 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. ☆

FAAC CLUB SONG

by Ann Adamson, Sally Bates, Pat Korody, and Anna Scott

OUR SCOPES ARE PACKED

(to the tune of "Leavin' on a Jet Plane")

Our scopes are packed,
We're ready to go;
The wives are waiting
Outside the door;
The skies are clear and
Stars are shining bright

Orion's belt
With sword held fast;
With archers' skills
He shoots a blast;
Already we can see
The nebulae

[refrain]:
So polar align
And set your scopes;
On Venus, Mars,
Or Orion's show;
Tell us that you plan
To stay real late

Greg the Pres
And George the Vice;
Binocular Bob
Has his own device;
It's astronomy night
And time for lots of fun

[refrain]

Stay until it's early morn.
Stay until it's early morn...
[fade]

☆

STAR STUFF CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to...
Ann Adamson
Al Bates
Sally Bates
Chuck Boren
Harry Kindt
Don Klaser
George Korody
Pat Korody
Bob Lambeck
Anna Scott

☆

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear STAR STUFF:

This years S.M.U.R.F.S. dates are August 12-th thru 15-th. I'll have the new webpages up this weekend with more details. <http://www.aldeberan.com>

Kurt Kemp

Dear STAR STUFF:

I have talked to people I know at Corazon Hill, New Mexico who own an RV park there. They have invited the astronomy community to visit their RV park at Corazon Hill which is located 32 miles east of Las Vegas, NM in a very good site for astronomy. It is absolutely a dark sky site located at 6200 feet above sea level. This is a new campsite last year with pull thru parking as well as modern toilets and showers, etc. They will even turn out the lights in the campground at our request. I doubt if the club can sponsor an event so far away from Michigan but I think we should try to determine how many people would be interested in attending an astronomy event there. The tentative date they have mentioned is the weekend of July 9-11, 1999. Of course I would probably be there the entire week if I traveled that far. Would you please put a note to this effect in the next newsletter to help determine what the feeling of the club members is about this?

Dick Lawrence
5100 Sco Clr Road
Carleton MI 48117
(734) 587 3038

Editor's Reply: It was decided by the FAAC Executive Board that the club should not attempt to sponsor an event so far from home, for a number of reasons, including communication difficulties, legal concerns, and a reluctance to spread our club resources too thin. Anyone interested in attending this event or helping to organize it should contact Dick directly at the address above, or email him at kb8exz@gatecom.com STAR STUFF will publish more info on this event as it becomes available. -G.B.

☆

ADVERTISEMENTS

For Sale: Mint condition enlarging Lenses. Rodenstock Rodagon 50mm f2.8 \$139. Rodenstock Rodagon 80mm f2.8 \$189. David Lee. Work 734-266-9708 Home 734-944-1022

Wanted: Co-expeditioner for Texas Star Party. Leave Friday 7 May arrive back 17 May. Driving in Ford Club Wagon towing 34' travel trailer. Lots of room for stuff. David Lee. Work 734-266-9708 Home 734-944-1022

For Sale: TeleVue 27mm Panoptic eyepiece. Perfect condition, in box. Purchased new at '98 TSP for \$313. Asking \$275. Greg Burnett. (313) 84-53586 gburnett@ford.com ☆

FROM THE EDITOR

by Greg Burnett

Hey, this thing is starting to look like a newsletter! Many thanks to everyone who helped out this month (see STAR STUFF CONTRBUTORS). I'll be brief, cuz I want to get this issue out.

Time was short, so the FAAC Annual Dinner didn't quite make it into this issue. Look for coverage in the March issue.

Hope to see you soon! - G.B.

☆

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

STAR STUFF wants your articles, announcements, letters, etc. MS-Word format is preferred, but the editor will work with anything you submit.

Pretty simple instructions, huh? Submit your contributions today!! The deadline to be included in a particular issue is the Monday following the general meeting, but pay that no mind, just send your stuff along whenever! ☆

MEETING MINUTES**January 28, 1999 General Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by President Greg Burnett at 5:00pm. We then took a break for pop and pizza, and roundtable introductions.

Treasurer Ray Fowler gave the treasurer's report.

Vice President George Korody reported that the 3-rd Annual Kensington GLAAC Star Party will be held on August 20 & 21. And the 7-th Annual Island lake Star Party will be held on Saturday, September 18. George also confirmed the final details for the Annual FAAC Dinner Party scheduled for Saturday, January 30.

The election of officers was supposed to be held at this meeting, but due to a lack of Ford members in attendance, it was decided to postpone the elections until the February meeting. In the meantime, additional potential nominees for the

offices of Treasurer and President can be sought out. The Treasurer must be an active, full time Ford employee. The President must be a Ford employee or retiree.

Scott Cochran, representing the EMU Astronomy Club, said their club is considering holding a SMAAC-type conference on a date TBD, possibly late September or early October.

The program for the meeting was a video entitled "The Beginning of time" narrated by Tom Selleck. The meeting adjourned following the video.

*Respectfully submitted,
Don Klaser*

☆

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club will be held on Thursday, February 28, at 5:00p in

conference room 1491 in the Ford Credit building in Dearborn.

We will be completing our election of officers for the coming year, so be sure to attend. The program for the meeting has not yet been determined, but as always, pizza and pop will be provided.

The Ford Credit building is the low building immediately northeast of (but not attached to) Ford World Headquarters. The building is secured with a card entry system. The easiest way to enter for meetings is to park in the lot east of the building and enter thru the lower east or lower northeast doors. At 5:00p no one seems to have much trouble entering, because many people are leaving about that time. At the lower east door you can dial 911 on the security phone and say you are there to attend a Ford club meeting, and security will admit you. The meeting room is on the lower floor, on the east side of the building, about mid-way along the north-south corridor. Usually, signs will be posted to direct you to the room. ☆

Photos by George Korody...



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