



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

July 1999
Volume 8 Number 7



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AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS - STRANGE FOLKS

by George Korody

You have to admit that as amateur astronomers we do many things that "normal people" might consider a little bit out of the ordinary. Of course we know these things are perfectly normal given our objectives, but it might be difficult to convince everyone else. Following are some of the things we do that others might find strange. I only take credit for a few of these. I'm sure you can add some of your own.

1. Stare at the same objects night after night, year after year, that haven't changed in thousands of years and probably won't for thousands more.

2. Set the alarm clock for 3 AM, then get up and go outside in the dead of winter clad only in your PJ's, while you look up at the open sky. (Aren't coyotes known for doing this?)

3. Curse (openly) at a beautiful full moon.

4. Stay awake all night and sleep during the daytime, because you want to.

5. Drive hundreds of miles, make that thousands of miles, to do item #4 above.

6. Survive for long periods of time on pop, cookies, and Rolled Gold pretzel sticks.

7. Shovel the snow from the observing pad before you shovel out the driveway.

8. Leave your spouse at home because the right front passenger seat is needed for transporting observing equipment.

9. Locate a one-stop shop that does not sell household furnishings, for disposing of disposable income (and everything is on sale).

10. You fell and broke your Nagler. (Good news: Then the alarm clock just went off.)

11. Have difficulty in finding a white light flashlight around the house.

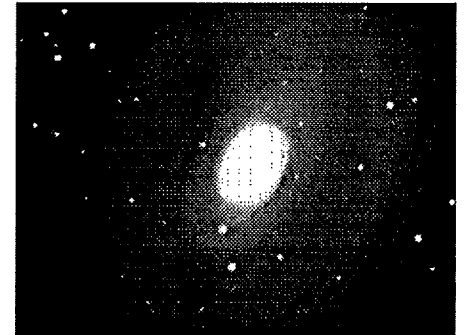
12. Own stock in Rayovac, Duracell, and Eveready, all at the same time.

13. Complain about light pollution from fireflies.

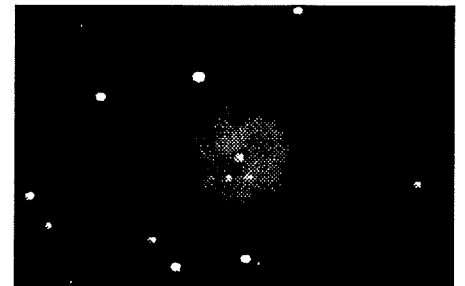
14. Buy mosquito repellent in bulk at Sam's Club.

ASTROPHOTOS

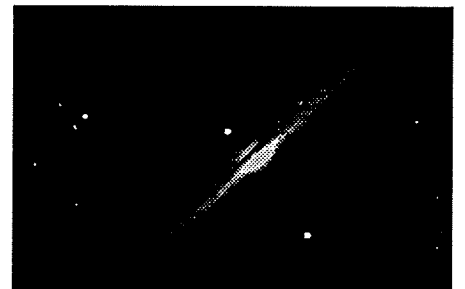
by George Korody



M81



M97



NGC 4565

[Thanks, George, for the great photos! -Ed.] ☆

STAR STUFF

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

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
P.O. Box 7527
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Your submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome. Please write to the address above or contact the editor...

Greg Burnett
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Ford Amateur Astronomy Club**Officers:**

President	Dan Kmiecik
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 --	new: \$ 25	renewal: \$ 20
Lifetime --	\$ 100	

Membership includes 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.

COOL FACT - COMET TAILS

submitted by Dick Harris

comet [n. KOM-it]

Comets are frozen ice-balls, tens of kilometers across, that swing through the inner solar system from the cold depths of space. While they are here they can put on a spectacular show, with huge tails of gas and dust fanning out across the sky.

Although in past centuries comets were thought to be powerful, mysterious harbingers of difficult times, they got their name from their resemblance to something human and ordinary: streaming hair.

The Greek kome means "hair of the head," and the Greeks called comets "aster kometes" (star with long hair). The first recorded use was by Aristotle. Later the phrase contracted to kometes. It passed through Latin as cometa, then through Old French into English.

There is also the coma [KOE-muh], which is the roughly spherical, fuzzy halo that surrounds the head of the comet. That word also comes from the Greek kome, but the other meaning of coma (deep sleep) comes down through a different lineage.

How many tails can a comet have?

A comet can have as many as three separate tails. All three can extend millions of kilometers from the comet's head.

The most visible tail of a comet is usually the dust tail. The sun's heat causes frozen material within the head of the comet to evaporate, and the resulting gas molecules carry dust particles with them as they stream off. The dust tail is white and curves gently away from the sun and back along the comet's orbit.

The sun's energy also ionizes some of the gases (strips electrons from the atoms), and a bluish ion tail forms, streaming directly away from the sun. The third

tail is invisible from Earth, because the light it emits is absorbed by the atmosphere. It's made of hydrogen, formed in chemical reactions at the comet's head. Its position is intermediate, between the other two tails.

More about comets:

<http://www.hawastsoc.org/solar/eng/comet.htm>

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NOTHING BUT THE FAACs

by George Korody

Welcome to recent new Club Members:

Mark Drake
John Ford
Bob and Connie Mauro
Lee and Gloria Schauman
Timothy P. Teefey

We all look forward to meeting you and sharing in your experiences while participating in Club activities.

It's a fact: Our club secretary Dave Beard has earned his Astronomical League Messier Club Certificate by observing all 110 Messier objects. This is no small feat because the use of electronically assisted telescopes is not permitted in locating the objects. However, telescope aperture is not limited and Dave's 18" Dobsonian must have made this difficult task a little bit easier.

Because the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is affiliated with the Astronomical League, all FAAC members are eligible to participate in the AL's Messier Club Certificate program as well as other AL certificate programs. Detailed requirements for all of the programs can be found at <http://www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/obsclub.html>

Preparing the Star Stuff Newsletter each month will now be a lot easier for Newsletter Editor Greg Burnett who has

recently purchased a new home computer. I'm sure Greg will soon be connecting the new computer to an internet service provider (hint-hint), then we will all be able to flood his E-mail box with articles for the newsletter. *[In the meantime (which could be a while ;-)* all submission will continue to be gratefully accepted at gburnett@ford.com --Ed.] ☆

HEARD ON THE NET

by Bob Lambeck

From the sci.astro.amateur newsgroup...

As a departure from the continuing Meade vs Celestron debate, Kitty, looking for something fashionable to put on her apartment balcony, asked:

Howdy Ya'll, I'm looking for a nice scope and alt-az mount for casual looking, nothing too technical because I am not technically inclined. Can I get something good in the 2000 dollar range? Maybe a scope I could also use to look out of my 9th floor window with too? I notice a few folks in the building opposite me have scopes on their balconies and I thought when it was cloudy there might be some interesting things to see in the buildings around me. Thanks....Kitty.....

And Scott replied:

Kitty, For Peeping Tom's, Televue is the purveyor of choice. The 4" Genesis or their 85 mm scope are both apochromatic, so you will not be bothered by irritating false color--skin tones will come through clearly. The larger aperture Genesis may be preferred over smaller telescopes, because the larger light grasp will give you a good view into those dimly light apartments across the way. The resolution on both of these high-quality telescopes will reveal rewarding details: even the 85 mm has a theoretical resolution of about 1.2 arc seconds. Under perfect conditions this will reveal details with better than 1/2" resolution at a mile. At 100 yards, counting freckles is easily within the

resolution of these fine instruments. Finally, Televue has a line of nice alt-az mounts. Unlike those bothersome German Equatorial mounts, the televue mounts are easy to use on terrestrial objects and stay aligned with your target.

In the perennial debate over Maks versus apos, the discerning Peeping Tom will choose the apo. Unlike stars, which are always up in the sky (somewhere), the premier viewing opportunities in the apartment across the road may show up unexpectedly. The apo, with it's much faster cool-down times will give you near theoretical performance in a few minutes, while your neighbor's ETX will still be showing tube currents an hour after the viewing opportunity has passed. I think you will agree that quality apos win hands down in this specialized market.

I should add that these telescopes can also be used for astronomy. Even if your interest runs to starlets rather than stars, it is a good idea to pick up one of those ubiquitous Messier posters to hang in the room with your telescope. This provides an opportunity for polite dinner conversation when a guest notices your telescope.

Good luck with your hobby, Scott ☆

CORRECTION

by Greg Burnett

At the last FAAC General Meeting, June 24, the program "Ask the Astronomers" was moderated (with his customary aplomb) by Doug Bock. In response to a question about why the earliest sunrise, the latest sunset, and the summer solstice do not occur on the same day, I gave an explanation of the analemma and how, by imagining it in the sky, one could see that the sun's position on various dates gives rise to the discrepancies. I also stated that the effect depends on latitude, which it does, but I said incorrectly that the effect would be minimal at the equator. In fact it is maximal at the equator, where the analemma lays flat down on its side. This causes the largest differences among the three dates in

question. The analemma stands upright in the sky at the poles, where if there were sunrises and sunsets, the earliest and latest would occur at the solstice. A detailed explanation can be seen at <http://da.saa.ac.za/sky/eqntime.html> I apologize for the error, a result of figuring off the top of my head.

Those of you who missed the last meeting and wonder what this is all about should plan to attend the next meeting and ask the question again! Hope to see you there! ☆

MEETING MINUTES

by Mike Kruskie

These are the F.A.A.C. meeting minutes for June 24, 1999. The Meeting was called to order at about 5:00pm by our President Dan Kmiecik. The first order of business was a reminder from our President for all members to update their personal information i.e. e-mail, address etc. as required. Please send updates to Al Bates at AB4@AOL.COM.

The next order of business and perhaps the most important was to completely and systematically get rid of all evidence that pizza and pop had ever been at the meeting. It went that quick. Anyhow, while the pizza and pop evidence was being destroyed everyone had a chance to tell all about their latest observing sessions and new gadgets they had acquired recently. Meanwhile there were many pass-around flyers, the latest newsletters from other clubs, the planetary society, etc.

The Treasurer's Report from Ray Fowler included the following balances,

➤ Savings Acct. \$3,084.36
➤ Checking Acct. \$457.11

Ray also mentioned that we had received an insurance notice for \$325.00, and that we need to send in our F.A.A.C. membership fees to the Astronomical League. These fees include a \$10.00 society fee for F.A.A.C. and a \$3.00 fee per member, currently we have 94 members.

Bob MacFarland gave an update of the upcoming GLAAC event at Kensington Metropark scheduled for August 21 & 22. PLEASE GET THE WORD OUT FOR THIS EVENT, there is only one more club meeting, prior to this event. The event officially starts at 7:00PM. Volunteers are still needed for the Sky Tour. This is an easy volunteer assignment, you will be given a colored light to help guests identify which type of object you can show them in the night sky. All you have to do is have your scope available to guests and keep it pointed at a particular type of object i.e. galaxy, open cluster, globular cluster, etc. Several vendors will be there, namely Rider's Hobby Shops, The Discovery Channel Store (previously The Nature Company), and Adray. The next GLAAC meeting is scheduled for August 8th at the Nature Center in Kensington Metropark. FAAC members are welcome to attend.

Sky and Telescope magazine has our Island Lake Star Party as being scheduled for September 12th on their website. It is scheduled for September 18th. At the time of typing these minutes, Bob MacFarland, has already sent in a request to Sky & Telescope to correct the date on their website.

George Korody updated us on the status of the lock-box at Island Lake State Park. The box is located on the south gate post. Members who wish to utilize the park can contact a board member for the combination. The combination must not be given out to non-members. When using the park, the gate MUST be locked behind you upon entry or departure and the key MUST be returned IMMEDIATELY to the lock box for other members to have access for entry or egress. George also reminded everyone about the potential meteor shower between 6/26 and 6/29. Hopefully we will have some sightings to talk about at the next meeting. The Jackson Club is holding observing sessions at Lake Hudson State Park on July 10th and August 14th.

There is a request from the Public Library of Westland for our club to put on our Astronomy 101 presentation. The date is still TBD for sometime this fall.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to the new "ASK THE ASTRONOMER" session. The session was mediated by Doug Bock. 3x5 cards were handed out at the beginning of the meeting for everyone to write down any questions they may have. The format was, a question would be read and anyone could raise their hand to answer. The topics were wide ranging from how to polar align properly to what is the answer to "life the universe and everything". Needless to say there was plenty of lively discussion and lots of participation. Most importantly it appeared the session was enjoyed by all and I think, with little doubt, that the "Ask the Astronomer" session will be continued at future meetings. ☆

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club will be held on Thursday, July 22, at 5:00PM in conference room 1491 in the Ford Credit building in Dearborn.

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 there is a manned security desk. Identify yourself, and say you are attending a Ford club meeting, and the guard 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. ☆

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! ☆

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. ☆

CHECK YOUR LABEL

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

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. ☆

FROM THE EDITOR

by Greg Burnett

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of STAR STUFF, especially George.

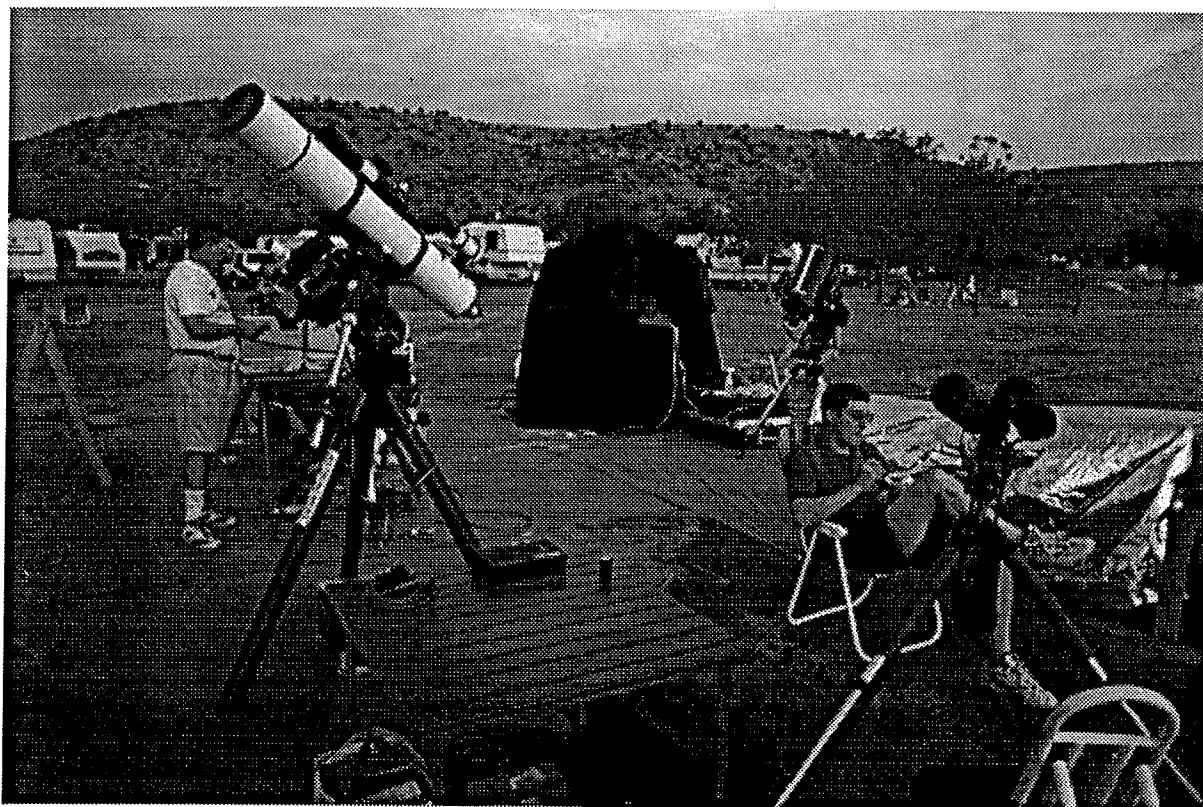
Hope to see you soon! - G.B. ☆

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jul 10	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Jul 22	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Aug 12-15	SMURFS Star Party
Aug 14	Lake Hudson Second Annual Public Stargaze
Aug 20-21	Kensington GLAAC Star Party
Aug 26	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Sep 11	NCO Planning Meeting @ 4:00 PM Followed by Autumnal Equinox Star Party
Sep 11	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Sep 18	Seventh Annual Island Lake Star Party
Sep 23	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Oct 6-10	NCO Wilderness Fall Star Party – Boon, MI (West of Cadillac)
Oct 9	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Oct 28	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Nov 6	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Dec 2	FAAC Joint November/December General Membership Meeting
Dec 11	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze

Check for updates on the FAAC hotline: 313-390-5456

Also check out these WEB sites: Ford Intranet: <http://www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html>
External Internet: <http://kode.net/~dougbock/faac/>

A PIC LEFT OVER FROM THE TEXAS STAR PARTY...

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