

# STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club



## Newest Weather Sentry Takes Up Watch

by Patrick L. Barry

Today, we've become accustomed to seeing images of the Earth's swirling atmosphere from space every night on the evening news. Before 1960, no one had ever seen such images.

The first-ever weather satellite was launched that year, kicking off a long line of weather satellites that have kept a continuous watch on our planet's fickle atmosphere—45 years and counting! The high-quality, extended weather forecasts that these satellites make possible have become an indispensable part of our modern society, helping commercial aircraft, recreational boaters, and even military

...continued on page 2

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

#### *Island Lake Gate Combination Change*

Effective August 1, 2005, the lock combination on the FAAC lock box on the gate at the Island Lake State Recreation Area will be changed. The lock box system permits after-hours entry and exit of FAAC members only. For the new combination, please contact any FAAC Board Member or leave your name and phone number on the FAAC Observing Hotline at (313) 390-5456 and Bob will confirm your membership and call you back as soon as possible.

It is very important that the combination never be given to anyone who is not a confirmed member of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club. In doubt, do not give it out. It is also important that the gate key is placed inside the lock box and the combination lock is reinstalled on the box immediately after each use. Never remove the key or combination lock from the gate area. Failure to follow these established procedures can result in Club members being locked inside the park grounds, unauthorized persons entering the park, and termination of FAAC after-hours observing privileges by the Park.

## President's Corner

by Don Klaser, President, FAAC

Observe - 1. To perceive, notice. 2. To watch attentively. 3. To make a systematic or scientific observation of.

Observing - it's the heart and soul of our hobby. It's one of the first things we discuss at every meeting, and it's one of my favorite segments. Listening to each report, I find insights into objects I've seen myself but in a new way. Then, add in the various techniques we use to observe - naked eye, binoculars, telescopes of every design - the variety of experiences is unlimited.

In the early 60's, a friend of mine received a telescope for his birthday. It was a 2" - 2 1/2" refractor with a diagonal prism. We had hours of fun looking at a number of objects (who knew about finder charts) including the moon and planets. I don't think we thought to look at the sun - good thing because he

didn't have a solar filter or even one of those solar eyepieces that were popular back then.

So, back then, who would have thought that the average person (who had \$500.00 in his pocket that he didn't know what to do with) could buy a telescope that would let him see not only sunspots, but flares and prominences as well! The technology available today is truly outstanding - I wonder what Copernicus and Brahe would think about these tools to better view the heavens? It wouldn't surprise me one bit to see a company marketing radio telescopes for amateurs some day.

And yet, nothing beats sitting in a chaise lounge in your backyard and gazing up into space and admiring the panorama before you. Enjoy!

Final thought: Thanks to wireless technology, we can hate our jobs almost anywhere.

-- Don Klaser

## Newest Weather Sentry ...

...continued from page 1

operations avoid unnecessary risk from hazardous weather.

But satellites don't last forever. Parts wear out, radiation takes its toll, and atmospheric drag slowly pulls the satellite out of orbit. Many weather have a design life of only 2 years, though often they can last 5 or 10 years, or more. A steady schedule of new satellite launches is needed to keep the weather report on the news each night.

In May 2005, NASA successfully launched the latest in this long line of weather satellites. Dubbed NOAA-N at launch and renamed NOAA-18 once it reached orbit, this satellite will take over for the older satellite NOAA-16, which was launched in September 2000.



*NOAA-18, the newest in a long line of weather and environmental satellites, launched May 20, 2005.*

"NOAA always keeps at least two satellites in low-Earth orbit, circling the poles 14 times each day," explains Wilfred E. Mazur, Polar Satellite Acquisition Manager, NOAA/NESDIS. "As Earth rotates, these satellites end up covering Earth's entire surface each day. In fact, with two satellites in orbit, NOAA covers each spot on the Earth four times each day, twice during the day and twice at night," Mazur says.

By orbiting close to Earth (NOAA-18 is only 870 km above the ground), these "low-Earth orbit" satellites provide a detailed view of the weather. The other type of weather satellite, "geosynchronous," orbits much farther out at 35,786 km. At that altitude, geosynchronous satellites can keep a constant watch on whole continents, but without the kind of detail that NOAA-18 can provide.

In particular, low-Earth orbiting satellites have the ability to use microwave radiometers to measure temperature and moisture in the atmosphere—two key measurements used for weather prediction that, for technical reasons, cannot be sensed by distant geosynchronous satellites.

With NOAA-18 successfully placed in orbit, the 45-year legacy of high-tech weather forecasts that we're accustomed to will go on.



## STAR STUFF

JULY 2005 - VOL. 14 - No. 7

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

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

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| PRESIDENT:         | Don Klaser    |
| VICE PRESIDENT:    | Ed Halash     |
| SECRETARY:         | Dale Ochalek  |
| TREASURER:         | Gordon Hansen |
| NEWSLETTER EDITOR: | Greg Burnett  |

### CLUB INFORMATION

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month, except for the combined November/December meeting held on the first Thursday of December. Meetings are held in the Administrative Services and Conference Center building at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions.

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club 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.

Observing schedules and additional information are available by calling the FAAC Observing Hotline at 313-390-5456, on the Ford Intranet at [www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html](http://www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html), and on the public internet at [www.boonhill.net/faac](http://www.boonhill.net/faac)

Membership in the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (F.E.R.A.).

Membership fees are as follows:

|                      |       |                         |
|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Annual – New Member: | \$30  | (\$15 after July 1)     |
| Annual – Renewal:    | \$25  | (\$30 after January 31) |
| Life Membership:     | \$150 |                         |

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

### MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS

Do not send money to the FAAC for *ASTRONOMY* or *SKY & TELESCOPE* magazine subscriptions. Obtain a discount form from the club secretary and send the form directly to the publisher with your subscription to receive a \$10 discount.

### STAR STUFF NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Your submissions to *STAR STUFF* are more than welcome! Send all items to the editor at [skyfog@comcast.net](mailto:skyfog@comcast.net) preferably in MS-Word format, but in-line email text is fine too. *STAR STUFF* will usually go to press the weekend prior to the week of each general meeting. Submissions received prior to that weekend will be included in that issue.

Find out more about NOAA-18 and the history of polar-orbiting weather satellites at <http://goespoes.gsfc.nasa.gov/poes>. For kids and anyone else curious about the concept, the difference between polar and geosynchronous orbits is explained at [http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/goes/goes\\_poes\\_orbits.shtml](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/goes/goes_poes_orbits.shtml)

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

## Minutes of the FAAC General Meeting

by Dale Ochalek

### May 26, 2005

The May meeting came to order at around 5:45 pm, beginning as usual with member self-introductions and the typical go-round of observation experiences. Some comments: Tony Licata remarked upon the 7<sup>th</sup> magnitude skies he witnessed recently in Germany; Ken Anderson chased M101 with a broadband filter and 20mm eyepiece on a big dob; Harry Juday presented another version of a reprocessed photo of M104.

George Korody mentioned the July 3 and 4 "deep impact" event involving the impact with Comet 9T Temple; George viewed the comet at 40 degree elevation; Harold Thomason mentioned he often stations himself on Michigan Ave. in front of the Dearborn Police Dept. on clear summer days, with his Coronado aided refractor, for anyone wishing a look.

Jon Blum presented his tech talk, which included some very interesting photos and experiences from Maui (Jon's winter residence) and the Big Island of Hawaii, and the observatories there (if we could just join you for a week or two in the winter, Jon).

Don Klaser lead a session of "Ask the Astronomer" for the main presentation.

The meeting continued with a review Club Business, and the members approved the minutes. The treasurer, Gordon Hansen, was not in attendance to provide the treasurer's report.

We then turned to projects and events portion of the agenda. Dave Brown reported on his successful effort to get FAAC access to the Lake Erie Metro Park for night observing. The park will allow the FAAC access from April to October. Guidelines for use include calling the park to alert them before coming out, and arrive before 10 pm (800-477-3189 or 734-379-5020 ). Members are advised to carry an FAAC membership card. Park entrance fees apply (daily or annual permits available). Several good vantage points are available, but get there in time to explore and pick a good observing spot.

Don Klaser report that this year's Island Lake Star Party will coincide with the August 13 Beginner's Night. The club will provide burgers and dogs, and everyone will bring a dish to pass potluck style. Don will send a sign-up sheet around at the next meeting, and will also get with Greg to have a notice included in the newsletter.

Gary Stahl handed out a listing of available books for our Club Library. Contact Gary Stahl before the next meeting to take out a book.

Ed Halash reported on a possible alternative observing site, at the Richmond airport. Ed invited members to come out and check out the site. The dark sky is not quite that of Lake Hudson, but close. Ed said he would be willing to organize another occasion wherein members could check it out.

Bob MacFarland announced that the GLAAC event this year is in the works, with two potential speakers from U-M. Dates are September 9/10.

The Astrophotography SIG meets the second Thursday of each month.

Don Klaser discussed World Youth Day, for Friday, August 19. It will be held on a farm near North Branch in Lapeer County, and is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit. The FAAC will be involved, and will set up scopes at a pre-arranged site to provide viewing for the attendees, mostly high school students. Viewing will be at 10-11 p.m., or so. Brother Guy Consolmagno, author of "Turn Left at Orion" and "Brother Astronomer" will be the guest speaker on from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., and FAAC participants are welcome to come earlier for his presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

### June 23, 2005

The June meeting came to order at 5:30 pm. Beginning as usual with member self-introductions, and the typical go-round of observation experiences, some comments included: Ken Anderson talked about searching for sights within the Virgo cluster, and other sights, at Island Lake. Jon Blum asked about observing Mercury and Venus, since on Monday June 27 the two will be a tenth of degree apart an hour after sunset. An agreement was settled to meet at the South Lyon Municipal Park (site of the Venus transit gathering), for those interested, any day over that June 25 to 27 weekend.

Minutes from the previous meeting were distributed and read, and approved with some slight corrections/additions, including one involving our Club Library; borrowing period extends from one meeting to the next. Also, the filter referred to in those minutes, that of Harold Thomason, was not a Coronado but a Daystar. The treasurer's report was presented by Gordon Hansen.

The agenda was altered to allow time for the presenters to show, so club business was discussed.

Lake Hudson Kiosk Dedication June 4 was discussed, and encouragement given to those who want to support any dark sky / anti-light pollution effort. A web site with a more complete write-up is [aaoj.homestead.com/files/kiosk/kiosk-2.htm](http://aaoj.homestead.com/files/kiosk/kiosk-2.htm). Ken Anderson noted also, that someone, perhaps from the Jackson Club, left behind a bocchi ball set. Bob MacFarland had sent an email to the Jackson club to try to find out who the owner might be.

Don Klaser updated the information on the annual FAAC Island Lake Star Party, which will coincide with the August 13 Beginner's night. It was noted that - all are invited to picnic at the park during the day as well, but now it is to be strictly "bring your own" food, refreshments, etc.



Don Klaser remarked on the need for a "welcome" Chairperson, to oversee creation and distribution of welcome packets. Pat Korody has volunteered to be a new member greeter, and Diane Worth volunteered to chair this effort.

Ed Halash mentioned his arrangement for members to have a visit at Richmond Airport on July 8 and/or 9, to review a possible new dark sky site. FAAC members are welcome to attend the picnic and fireworks on July 9; this is 2 or 3 days after new moon. Ed reported that a glider flight might be possible for those interested.

Bob MacFarland discussed progress with the GLAAC "Astronomy on the Beach" plans. There will be two JPL representative speakers – Shannon Murphy, and John Schroer. On Saturday, Fred Adams from the University of Michigan will present a talk regarding the "Five Ages of the Universe." There will be a comet-making at the pavilion. Gordon Hansen will present Astronomy 101, and Kevin Denny will reprise his fascinating "How cold is space" laboratory. For something new this year, the key presentations will be presented additionally at 2pm Saturday, for those who worry about leaving their equipment to watch, during the evening. Also, there is a water park under construction nearby, but assurances have been given that the star party will not be affected. There will be sign up sheets for volunteers to support the GLAAC event at next two FAAC meetings.

Regarding the SIG, Jim Frisbie reported on a participation of 15 to 18 at each meeting, and that the last meeting featured an "ask the astrophotographer" session, which proved valuable and interesting. The next meeting is July 14, with topics TBD.

Don Klaser updated the World Youth Day information, taking names for intended volunteers. Contact Don to volunteer now, because attendance is limited. Credentials will be required for attendance. Again, this will be held on a farm near North Branch in Lapeer County, and is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit. The FAAC will be involved, and will set up scopes at a pre-arranged site to provide viewing for the attendees, mostly high school students. Viewing will be at 10-11 p.m., or so. Brother Guy Consolmagno, author of "Turn Left at Orion" and "Brother Astronomer" will be the guest speaker on from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., and FAAC participants are welcome to come earlier for his presentation. Attendees are to contact Don Klaser for directions.

Some walk-in topics were brought forth. Dennis Saliote asked for help with bringing the pop until December, and Bob Fitzgerald volunteered. Gordon Hansen mentioned that non-Ford people are encouraged to take advantage of a new offer for X-plan auto purchase through a Ford employee sponsoring member. You can send email to Gordon for further details.

Also, sadly, Greg Burnett will be retiring as newsletter editor as of September, so please, contact any club official to offer the possibility of offering your services as the next Star Stuff editor.

Don followed the club business portion of the meeting with "Ask the astronomer."

Meeting adjourned at around 7:10 pm.

## FOR SALE...

**Meade 12" LX200 GPS SCT with UHTC** Only used six times! Includes: Kendrick Dew Removal System, two 12 volt battery power sources, dew shield, Baader film sun filter. Over \$4000 of equipment! Best offer over \$3000

Contact Don Sommers at 248-553-7042

## FOR SALE...

**Meade 10" LXD55 Schmidt Newtonian** telescope Autostar guided, German Equatorial mount, "T"- adapter, Super Plossl 26-mm eyepiece, 1.25" and 2" eyepiece holders, battery pack for 8 "D" cell batteries, 25ft. 110v. power cord. Bought in 2002 for \$1200, will sell for \$1000, or possibly trade for another scope.

E-mail inquiries to: [eddyelectro@talkamerica.net](mailto:eddyelectro@talkamerica.net)

## FOR SALE...

**Right-Angle Viewfinder** (8x25) for Meade ETX-90 telescope (Meade part # 825). Brand new. Sells at Scopetronix for \$50. My price \$25.

Jon Blum [Derml@aol.com](mailto:Derml@aol.com) 248-553-4944

## FOR SALE...

**Meade ETX Spotting Scope**, 5 inch, Paragon Plus tripod, 26mm Super Plössl, 9.5mm Orion Epic, 13mm Orion Superwide Lanthanum. Nearly new, must sell. Could sell individually.

Contact Jack Fournier at 248-219-6222

## Astro – Poetry

### Young Moon

Young moon...purple-twilight sky,  
Thin silver crescent... limited light,  
Joining the glow of a million stars,  
And the rosy glow of distant Mars,

The birds have gone to rest, and we,  
Allow the skies to set us FREE.....  
Delighting.....in this quiet serenity,  
Our hearts.....echo.....PEACE...Peace....peace

-- Anna Scott, FAAC

## Job Opening: STAR STUFF Editor by Greg Burnett

I will be going back to school this fall to continue training for my second career. Since I will still have my day job, there just won't be enough time to do all the things I'd like to do, including serving as editor of STAR STUFF.

If you would be interested in taking over that position, say about August, please contact me at [skyfog@comcast.net](mailto:skyfog@comcast.net).

## Astrophotography



Taken by John Kirchhoff on the morning of July 20th. Celestron 91/4SCT w/TeleVue 5X Powermate Stack of over 1900 frames.

Mars is 10.5" in diameter and will reach maximum size of 20" at the end of October.

## Beginner's Night at Island Lake

**Saturday August 13 from 7:30pm to Midnight**

Do you have a new telescope that you would like to learn to use? Do you want to see samples of what the night sky has to offer? You should consider coming out to Island Lake Recreation Area on Beginner's Night. These nights are dedicated to providing equipment and observing assistance to new astronomers.

(The event will take place on the date indicated regardless of sky conditions, cloudy or clear. If it is raining, the event will be cancelled.)

The exact location of the observing site is the "Spring Mill Pond" parking lot and picnic area, at the Island Lake State Recreation Area, on Kensington Road, south of I-96 between South Lyon and Brighton.

For more info or details on this event, send an E-mail message to [riderslivonia@aol.com](mailto:riderslivonia@aol.com) or check the club website at [www.boonhill.net/faac](http://www.boonhill.net/faac)

You may also contact John or Dan at Rider's Hobby Shop 734-425-9720

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club observes at the Island Lake site on Friday and Saturday evenings year round, provided skies are clear. You are welcome to visit the observing site on any weekend, but you must be with a club member if you plan to observe after 10PM. Call 1-313-390-5456 to find out if anyone is going out on any particular night.

## Treasurer's Report - June 23, 2005

by Gordon Hansen

| Bank Accounts               |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Checking                    | \$ 353.11          |
| Savings                     | \$ 2,508.35        |
|                             | -----              |
| <b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>  | <b>\$ 2,861.46</b> |
|                             |                    |
| Cash Accounts               |                    |
| Cash Account                | \$ 25.50           |
|                             | -----              |
| <b>TOTAL Cash Accounts</b>  | <b>\$ 25.50</b>    |
|                             |                    |
| Asset Accounts              |                    |
| FERA Ticket Sales           | \$ -               |
| GLAAC                       | \$ 795.00          |
| Projector                   | \$ 413.97          |
| Scholarship                 | \$ 256.60          |
| Swap Meet                   | \$ -               |
|                             | -----              |
| <b>TOTAL Asset Accounts</b> | <b>\$ 1,465.57</b> |
|                             |                    |
|                             | -----              |
| <b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>        | <b>\$ 4,352.53</b> |

This Space Available

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club  
Star Stuff Newsletter  
P.O. Box 7527  
Dearborn MI 48121-7527



# RIDER'S<sup>®</sup>

## HOBBY SHOPS

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Store Hours:</b><br>M-F 10am-9pm<br>SAT 10am-6pm<br>SUN Noon-5pm | <b>Gen. Manager:</b> John Kirchhoff<br><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.riders.com">http://www.riders.com</a><br><b>Email:</b> riderslivonia@aol.com | 30991 Five Mile Road<br>Livonia MI 48154<br>Tele: (734) 425-9720<br>FAX: (734) 425-2029 |
|---|---|---|

### NEW ARRIVALS FROM ORION !

O3 Narrow band filters...perfect for the Veil Nebula

1-1/4" \$89.99    2" \$139.99

New Short Tube 80 \$399.99

New 130mm Mak OTA \$649.99