



★ STAR STUFF ★

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

May 2003
Volume 12 Number 5



Editor: Jim Frisbie

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Astronomy Day 2003 went off without a hitch despite the adverse weather conditions. FAAC, Detroit Science Center, and Riders partnered up to provide the public with an introduction to the hobby and science of astronomy. The day started at the Detroit Science Center with fellow amateur astronomers showing images taken by FAAC members, presenting literature on upcoming celestial events, and demonstrating various types of astronomical equipment. The demonstrations, in particular, drew crowds as people lined up to catch a glimpse of the Sun and its spots through binoculars and telescopes equipped with solar filters. Unfortunately, the continuous buildup of clouds lessened the opportunities for inquisitive individuals to see our closest star. In parallel to this, John Kirchhoff had telescopes setup at the Cranbrook Institute of Science to field questions on the hobby as well as to provide views of the Sun. In the evening, John headed out to Island Lake Park to host "beginners night". This event was intended to teach people how to use a telescope and its accessories. From what I heard, about a dozen people outside the club attended the event. In parallel to this, FAAC members went out to Camp Copenconic in Fenton to present Astronomy 101 to kids and parents participating in the Farmington YMCA Indian Guide Program. Due to personal reasons I was unable to participate in the event. Knowing how well our presentations were given in the past I'm confident that it went flawlessly.

I understand that most of you that read this may shrug it off as just another Astronomy Day. But, this was the first time the club supported four distinctly different events in four different counties. However, what made this event extra special are the club members who came out to help, particularly fellow club member Bob Fitzgerald. Some of you may recall that Bob was in the hospital only a few weeks ago. Despite this, Bob was one of the first to arrive at the Detroit Science Center armed with his trapezoidal mount in one hand and binoculars in another. As I helped him setup the mount he mentioned to me that the tripod must be set very low to the ground. He was concerned that the children won't be able to see if it was set to high. Throughout the morning he sat by his setup waiting for those anxious eyes to peer at the Sun. Later that evening, Bob drove out to Fenton to support the program presented at Camp Copenconic. Time and time again Bob is always there to support the club and the science and hobby of astronomy. Bob, along with other club members that aided in the day's events, demonstrated the true spirit of Astronomy Day. Thanks to all those that helped!

Astronomy is a very challenging hobby. As one gets started, they commonly find that there is a lot to learn about our night sky. And then there is the process of learning about which equipment to purchase that meets their viewing needs. This task is becoming ever more difficult as new models are being introduced on yearly basis with more and more computer control features. You never know, Microsoft may partner with Meade or Celestron to develop a telescope. The breadth of information out there can easily overwhelm anyone as they step foot into the hobby. But Astronomy Day, in part, gives us a chance to be ambassadors of the hobby. It provides us with the opportunity to impart on them the knowledge we acquired over the years. Also, it gives us a chance to show how much fun it really can be. I feel we achieved this goal with Astronomy Day 2003. Congratulations to everyone for a job well done!

Don Nakic

MAY 2003 STAR STUFF

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

Officers:

President	Don Nakic
Vice President	Dale Ochalek
Secretary	Don Klaser
Treasurer	Gordon Hansen

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 Ford Motor Credit Building off Mercury Drive near Michigan Ave. in Dearborn.

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. 

FOR SALE: Celestron C102 Refractor (~4-inch). ~1987-88 vintage. Like new condition. Rarely used. Optics are clean. Very Sharp images. Asking \$800 OBO.
Coulter Optical 13.1" Dobsonian reflector. 1984 vintage. Original blue sonutube and particle board rocker box. Very stable and easy to use (with a telrad and spotting scope). Optics are still good. Telescope is very stable for viewing DSOs. One of the first "light buckets". Asking \$400. Contact Greg Miller by email: gmille17@ford.com

FOR SALE: Meade 8" SCT excellent condition
Now you can reach out for detailed observation of the solar system, as well as the deep space. Prepare to be amazed, gathers 73% more light than a 6". You won't have to call it a night after you've observed the Messier Catalog. Comes complete with HD steel tripod, 15mm ep, 6x30 finder & telrad. \$875.00 1-734-722-3959 ask for Michael

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 24, 2003
FAAC GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
By Don Klaser

President Don opened the meeting @ 5:00pm and started out with a discussion on the future of the Scholarship Fund or using the funds to purchase a digital projector. The vote was whether to discontinue the Scholarship Fund & establish an equipment fund or keep the Scholarship Fund and establish an equipment fund. The results were 11 votes for doing both and 6 votes for elimination of the Scholarship fund. Gordon Hansen gave the treasurer's report. Don Klaser gave the secretary's report. Gordon Hansen spoke about the Scholarship fund awards – 3 people will receive awards in the amount of \$250 each. The 3 winners are Mimi Nguyen, Karen Kudelko, and Sarah Pulis. A new combination to the lock on the gate at Island Lake will be in place on June 1st. Contact a Club officer to get the number. The next meeting of the Astro Imaging SIG will be on Tuesday, May 6, from 5 –7pm @ the Family Learning Center on Rotunda. Greg Burnett was presented with the 2002 FERA Contributor Award for his tireless efforts on behalf of FAAC – Way To Go Greg!
Upcoming events were reviewed and discussed – Island Lake Star Party on October 4, Astronomy Day, Saturday May 10th with morning at DSC and evening at Indian Guide Camp, Lunar Eclipse @ Lake Erie Metro Park on the evening on May 15, The GLAAC program @ Kensington Metro Park on Sept. 5 & 6, Summer Solstice event at Doug Bock's house on June 27 –29. Greg Burnett gave the technical talk on telescope eyepiece selection. The main program on telescope types was given by John Kirchhoff. The meeting was adjourned at 7:25pm.

TREASURER'S REPORT – 4/24/2003

By Gordon Hansen

Balance on hand:	Checking	\$ 1,034.94
	Savings	\$ 1,826.49
	Cash	\$ 98.05
Included in above	Scholarship	\$ (836.13)
	GLACC	\$ (319.00)
		=====
Available Funds		\$ 1,804.35



EGGS IN THE AIR

By Patrick L. Barry

The sky will be filled with flying eggs on May 10, 2003, when a thousand students converge on The Plains, Virginia, for the first-ever national high school rocketry competition.

Called the Team America Rocketry Challenge (<http://www.rocketcontest.org>), the competition sets the goal of flying a custom-built, two-stage rocket carrying two raw eggs to a height of exactly 1,500 feet, and then returning the eggs to the ground unbroken. The team that comes closest to 1,500 feet without breaking their eggs will win the national title.

The competition is being organized by the Aerospace Industries Association and the National Association of Rocketry (NAR). NASA administrator Sean O'Keefe will attend the final event.

"The idea is to get kids interested in the world of aerospace," says Trip Barber, director of the competition and vice-president of the NAR. "And they will learn some important lessons about the power of math and science-and cooperation and teamwork-along the way."

To develop their designs, the students first used computer simulator software provided by NAR. Then they had to apply old-fashioned ingenuity and craftsmanship to bring the design to life and flight testing to refine it.

Students constructed rocket bodies using a combination of hobby-store rocket kit parts and custom materials. A typical rocket might consist of cardboard tubes from paper-towel or wrapping-paper rolls, a pre-made nose cone, rocket-kit body segments cut to size, and light-weight, balsa wood fins. But the greatest challenge for many was designing the compartment for the eggs. Some used plastic Easter eggs as casings, padding the inside with

bubble wrap, foam peanuts, or even gelatin. Others decided not to "reinvent the wheel," making a cradle from the egg-crate material used for shipping eggs. Some chose to make larger, more powerful rockets big enough to carry the eggs inside, while others made smaller, more efficient rockets that have a bulging egg compartment mounted on top.

A hundred unique designs will be put to the test in Virginia. Only one will win. But for the students, the real prize has already been won: Learning an approach to problem-solving that works, whether you're launching eggs over a field or sending astronauts to Mars.

In the end, it's all about the future: Future technologies and the kids who will grow up to create them. Many advanced technologies are being developed now by NASA's New Millennium Program (<http://nmp.nasa.gov>). Who will do that work in the future? Perhaps some kids who spent their weekends launching eggs in the air.

Are you a kid? Would you like to build your own rocket? Visit NASA's Space Place and learn how to make a bubble-powered rocket! (<http://spaceplace.jpl.nasa.gov/rocket.htm>) It won't take you to Mars, but it's a good way to get started.

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



A Boeing Delta II (7326) rocket launched the New Millennium Program Deep Space 1 spacecraft on October 24, 1998.

ASTROGRAPH – HIDING IN A MEADE TELESCOPE!

By Clayton Kessler

Last year Meade announced a new line of computer controlled telescopes and mounts – the LXD55 series. These featured a common German Equatorial Mount and either a 6", 8" or 10" Schmidt Newtonian, an 8" Schmidt Cassegrain or 5" or 6" Achromatic Refractors. As of this writing the OTA's and mounts are not available separately. The telescope setups, especially the Schmidt Newtonian's, are touted as "Photo/Visual" systems. I have to admit to being interested in the Schmidt Newt's but little information was available and, as is common with new products, projected availability slipped several times.

The computer controlled mounts have generated a great deal of interest from people that already had satisfactory OTA's but wanted the convenience of the "Autostar" control. The mounts were not being sold separately. The solution for many of these folks was to purchase a complete system and sell the OTA.

With all of the work and confusion moving out of my old house and building my new place in Manchester I didn't think much about picking up one of these scopes. This changed in December when Tom Trusock, a fellow Michigan Astronomy e-group member, offered his unused LXD55 6" f5 Schmidt Newtonian OTA to the group prior to putting it on Astromart. Tom is using the GOTO mount with his Televue Refractor. Without much hesitation I bought it from Tom thinking to try out the "photo" qualities of the scope as mounted to my G11. I received the scope shortly before Christmas and I was very pleased with it's appearance. I also discovered the "photo" features of the system. The focuser is arranged with several adapters. One is a "Visual" adapter that is in essence an extension tube that threads to the focus tube. This allows for the focus difference between a camera body and an eyepiece. There is a 1 1/4" screw on adapter, a 2" screw on adapter and a "T" thread screw on adapter. By combining these you can bring almost any camera or eyepiece to a proper focus.

First check the plug.....

By the time I had weathered the holidays, and machined some dovetail plate adapters to attach the scope to my G11, I was looking for clear weather in January. Comet NEAT was visible in the west and it seemed a natural target. I had rigged my Short Tube 80 refractor to act as a guide telescope for this system. The first night I was unable to get the ST4 to properly control the G11 and a look through an eyepiece while I mashed buttons on the hand paddle indicated a bad case of "stick-slip" movement. I took a couple of shots but the poor guiding made analysis difficult.

I assumed the mount was telling me it needed to be cleaned and re-lubed with low temperature grease. The outside temps were in the low single digits and so I stripped the mount and cleaned it. Unfortunately the mount seemed pretty clean and the existing lube was in pretty good shape. It was with some apprehension that I re-assembled the mount and tried it out. ARGH! The declination

motor was still jerking around with no smoothness at all – did I have a motor failure? Well – I disassembled the motor as much as possible without removing the rotor from the stator. After I checked the built in gearbox I marked the stator and watched the motor action at the lowest speed. It became



obvious that the action of the motor was not smooth and that one of the windings was not getting power. Of course, all this happened on a Sunday so I could not find any dealers open and order a new motor! In an effort to make a complete diagnosis I removed the motor cable and replaced it with the one for the RA motor. Presto! The motor works fine and my problem just went from a

major failure to a minor "install your spare cable" affair. The lesson here is "Try the simple stuff first" (Always check the plug!).

Now that the mount was working properly I could take some new shots and see the results. Several short exposures of Comet NEAT as it lowered in the west showed good tracking and seemed to have good image quality. As a side note – this was the first time I attempted to guide on the head of a comet and I must say the ST4 and the Short Tube 80 worked very well for this. The "Guide Scope" guiding system that I am using with this setup is working pretty well as long as I make an effort to tighten up all of the screws. While a few early long exposures showed flexure tight adapter and diagonal screws seem to eliminate it.



On to the long exposures!

Once these problems were ironed out I was ready to take some long exposure shots. The setup that I finally settled on was the G11, the 6" SN, ST80

guide scope, ST4 autoguider, Canon F-1 camera with waist level finder and a Lumicon Deep Sky filter in a "T" to "T" adapter. I decided to try out the Lumicon DS filter to extend my exposure time without exceeding the sky fog limit. The filter works well but it does introduce some color shift. Some extra time was needed in processing to deal with this. My first objective was the Pleiades, after all this IS the "Seven Sisters Observatory". I did find out that this object is probably

better without the filter although the jury is still out.

My second objective was M42 and the surrounding area. My reasoning was that I have some shots taken over the last few



years to use as a comparison to access the “astrographic” qualities of this OTA design. Over the course of a couple of very cold evenings I managed to get two 60 minute exposures, one 40 minute shot, one 10 minute shot, one 5 minute shot and two 2 minute shots. The one hour photo prints looked excellent! A quick scan and enlargement showed some vignetting in the corners but no more than expected. I also found some coma in the image corners –

but again not a large amount and no more than can be accounted for by the f5 focal ratio. Overall these looked at LEAST as good as my best previous shots through my 4” f6 refractor.

Once the clouds moved back in priority was given to scanning and processing these negatives with an eye to getting the best image that I could. This led me to new processing techniques that required several attempts to master. On the third attempt I was satisfied that I had gone as far as my existing skill could take me.



Conclusion – I don’t need no stinkin’ Takahashi Epsilon

Well..... OK – maybe I

WOULD like to try a Tak Epsilon. All in all though, I am thrilled with the performance of this OTA as an astrograph. It couples a wide field of view with a relatively fast optical train, a newtonian’s lack of chromatic aberration and a physical size that is easy to mount and guide. As an imaging OTA I find this to be a joy to use. Not that this system is perfect. The secondary needs to be bigger if there is to be no vignetting and the f5 focal ratio leads to a small amount of coma. Still – this is the compromise of the “Photo-Visual” system Meade has produced.

As successful as this OTA is I am wondering just how much vignetting and coma is present in the 8” f4.... or even the 10” f4!! If the amount is not much more than the 6” f5 either of those would make a very nice imaging platform. Hmmmm.... I don’t suppose Tom is going to buy another mount anytime soon.....

ASTRONOMICAL ADVENTURES IN UTAH

by John Kirchhoff

Just returned from my first trip to Utah and my first chance to practice my hobby “Out West”. I am afraid that my writing cannot do justice to the absolute splendor of the night time sky in the low humidity environment of the high desert.

As you probably know I choose to live in the country and face the hour plus commute in to work so that I can have a good look at the sky away from the light pollution of Detroit, Ann Arbor and all the other cities in the SE part of our state. Even living out with the cows there are many nights where the sky is still fairly bright due to all of the moisture in the atmosphere. I live for the nights when a big high pressure system comes out of Canada and dries out our air. The only problem is many of the nights are during the winter and observing or trying to take pictures is kind of nuts when it’s 10 degrees outside!

This past year I have been having a lot of fun (mostly) trying to take pictures of the moon with my digital camera and deep sky targets with my 35mm Minolta. My moon shots have been fairly good but the 35mm stuff has suffered due to lack of practice and just not enough suitable nights. I found that sky glow is a real problem when trying to take much longer than 15minute exposures even in the hinterlands of home. Clay Kessler and Jim Frisbie have been a great help in furthering my pictorial efforts and both urged me very strongly to ship out some camera stuff when they heard of my upcoming trip. As our departure day approached I was still undecided on shipping out my equipment but Clay’s “ You’ll be sorry if you don’t” kept ringing in my ears and I finally packed scope and cameras and sent them West .

My wife’s sister and brother in law live in St. George Utah approximately 1 ½ hours from Las Vegas. I have been to Vegas several times on business but my bride has never been West so we decided to spend 3 days in the City of Lights and then drive up to her sister’s house and visit the rest of the week. I knew Karen would enjoy the excitement of the City and visiting her family . I was really looking forward after so many years to see what the sky would look like Out West. After a fun but uneventful 3 days at the casinos (I still have to work) we headed NE away from the brightest spot on the planet across a corner of Arizona and into Utah. The first two nights Sunday and Monday were taken up with family stuff but I could see that even from suburban St. George with it’s population of 80,000 or so the sky had some real possibilities. I could see all of the stars in the Little Dipper even with the moon and lots of unshielded streetlights in the way. Tuesday was the big day I had been waiting for. A high pressure system was moving into lower Utah and the daytime sky was as blue as I have ever seen it in Michigan. The cameras and scope stuff had arrived intact and I spent Tuesday afternoon unpacking it and assembling the rig I planned on using that night. I planned on trying some ½ hour exposures using two cameras piggybacked off of one of the new Orion German EQ mounts with a 100mm f/6 refractor as the guide scope. I decided to use my old but proven 400mm f/6.3 telephoto along with a 58mm f/1.4 Rokkor that I had just

purchased on Ebay. Jim had looked at some test shots with this lens and recommended that I stop it down to f/2. I had only two opportunities to test the mount prior to the trip and never with two cameras attached. I had spent Tuesday morning looking for a suitable place to set up and settled for a spot just south of town based on my brother in law's recommendation. I was worried that I was too close to town but Dave is a good guy and he assured me that the site, an old airport, would be OK. We checked it during the day and it appeared to have no lights and the city was blocked from view by some high hills to the north. I estimated that the site was less than 10 miles from downtown.

Dave escorted me out to the spot at dusk and we proceeded to set up the 8" Dob I had sent out and my 7x50 binoculars with tripod. The moon was still quite high and Dave had to head back to the house around 10 so we spent a couple of hours playing with the scope. The air was very steady and we had some very good views of the moon, Saturn and Jupiter. The difference between observing in the driveway and putting the high hills between us and the city was amazing. We turned the reflector towards the Great Nebula in Orion and the scope acted as it were on steroids! Great definition and contrast even with the moon less than 30 degrees away. We also looked at M81/82 with the same results. Dave managed to hang in until 10:30 but finally had to call it a night. He owns a construction company and his day starts by 5am. We said our goodbyes and I began the set up for a night of photos. The moon would not set until 2am so I had plenty of time to polar align the mount. I felt just a little jumpy being by myself and hoped that Dave was right that there were no mountain lions or bears in the immediate area. He also mentioned that rattlers are not too active at night but it would still be wise to stick to the road and not wander into the brush. Believe me, I had NO PROBLEM with this advice! My brother in law did not prepare me for my next surprise. The total lack of sounds I am used to hearing at night. No dogs baying in the distance, road noise, frogs, bugs or any other sounds. I could hear the clock I was using to time my exposures from 40 feet away. The absence of sound was eerie. No wonder I was startled when I noticed a dark shape looming over my shoulder. I was quite relieved to discover it was only my tripod and binoculars.

Astrophotography requires paying attention to detail (not my strong suite), patience, planning, and the ability to problem solve on the fly. My first test occurred immediately after mounting, balancing and aligning the cameras and scope. I had purchased a polar alignment scope for the mount and discovered that I could not rotate the mount far enough to position Polaris in the proper place on the reticule. I gave it my best guess, moved the scope to the east, picked up an alignment star and started watching the drift. Needless to say over an hour later I was still fiddling around with the first stage of the polar alignment. I burned up so much time that I had to pick a second alignment star because the first one had climbed quite high in the sky. By now the moon was dropping towards the NW in earnest and I was beginning to worry that I would not be done by moonset. I must have been off 10 or more fields in azimuth but at last the tracking seemed good enough. I started the second alignment phase and once again had some difficulty before finally getting the mount dialed in. Time to burn some film! I decided to take the first shot in the area around Vega as it was getting high in the NE and the sky was quite dark in the area around it. The moon was still just over the

rock outcropping shielding the site from the city and while the glow of St. George was noticeable I could still easily pick up all of the stars in the Little Dipper with direct vision. I triggered both cameras and started my first exposures. My plan was to observe during my ½ hour shots but I quickly realized that I need to be at the eyepiece guiding if I didn't want all of my pictures to be ruined by tracking errors. At least the guide star's drift was consistent and I could still walk away from the scope for a couple of minutes before correcting it. In retrospect I probably should have spent some more time on the alignment of the mount but I was running out of patience and wanted to get the show on the road. Did I mention that astrophotography also requires equipment redundancy? On my second series of shots the cable release on my wide field camera decided to come apart at the seams. No extras in the photo bag. I jammed it back together for a couple of more pictures before it died altogether. St. George is about 7 degrees south of us in the Detroit area. I knew that this would give me a better look of the southern sky but I was not prepared for the treat in store for me. I witnessed the entire Milky Way rise at once, perfectly parallel to the entire eastern horizon. It literally came out of the ground and the star clouds to the SE in western Scorpius were brilliant. The dark lanes throughout the galaxy were clearly evident as well as many star clusters. M6 and M7 were easily visible to the naked eye and I could follow the full extent of the Milky Way right to the southern horizon! I have heard observers mentioning that it looks like steam coming from the kettle of Sagittarius and I can only say that the pot was at full boil! The combination of the dry air, the 7 degree gain in altitude and the total lack of light pollution to the south made the view one I will remember forever. I could also follow the entire constellation of Scorpius, from the claws, through its blood red heart Antares and then curving down the entire back and tail only to curve back up to Shaula, the sting. As impressive as Orion on a cold dark night! I suppose I could have done a better job of guiding during my picture taking but I found myself looking up at the sky much more often than looking down at the crosshairs in the eyepiece. I watched Mars rise from the instant it appeared over the SE horizon.

First light in the high desert happened all too quickly at precisely 6am. I had glanced to the east and noted the Great Square of Pegasus rising and moments later began to notice a dome of light at the horizon and slightly to the north. For just an instant I wondered where it was coming from (you get a little punchy pulling an all nighter) and realized that my first night among the stars in Utah was coming to an end. I watched Venus masquerading as a brilliant morning star rise low in the SE as dawn overtook my best night ever out under the stars.

Just in case you are wondering I am very pleased with the results of my photographic efforts out west. I missed the photo of Scorpius due to the balky cable release and I still need to work on my guiding. I did end up with the two best deep sky shots (one with each camera) that I have ever taken as souvenirs of a most memorable trip. Next year we will skip Vegas and head straight for St. George and the clear skies of the desert!

ISLAND LAKE BEGINNER'S NIGHT

By John Kirchoff

The first Beginner's Night at Island Lake was held Saturday evening May 10th. After a mostly cloudy Astronomy Day the weather decided to give us a bit of a break and the skies over Island Lake started to clear up around 7pm. By 8pm there were several club members and some very nice telescopes present. Mike Russo brought the Dall-Kirkham cassegrain he has been working on, George Korody was there with his tandem dob reflector, and Don Klaser had his new Meade LXD 55 8" SN ready to roll. Gordon Hansen provided some nice views of the moon with his Orion XT 10" dob to everyone present. We also had a Takahashi Mewlon cassegrain on the field as well as a nice Intes Mak-Newt. Several non club members came out to join us and a good time was had by all. Our club photographer, Al Bates, was there to record the event and answer questions. The sky started to close in again around 10pm and we locked the gate at 11:30. Thanks to everyone that helped in making our first Beginner's Night for 2003 a success (especially on such short notice) and remember that our next gaze is scheduled for Saturday June 7th at 7:30pm. Hope to see you there!

INDIANA STAR PARTY NIAG/GREAT CON

By John Kirchoff

Rider's Hobby Shop took our Astronomy department on the road to Indiana the weekend of April 25/26th to attend the annual Northern Indiana Astronomical Group's Star party and convention. The event was held at Camp Crosley YMCA camp in Warsaw, Indiana. After rain on Friday during the day the sky cleared out for Friday night's observing and Saturday was just a picture perfect day followed by an absolutely stellar night of observing!

Attendance this year was equal to an all time high with over 250 registered from all over the Midwest. The con kicked off Saturday morning, with the launch (via balloon) of a low cost communications micro-satellite no bigger than a shoebox developed by Taylor University. The afternoon program included lectures on Dwarf Nova Outbursts and Nebulae. In addition to an Astro-quiz contest, there were awards for astro photos and telescope making and a raffle with a Meade ETX 90 as the grand prize.

Lots of great telescopes to look through Saturday night.....Dobs of all sizes, APO refractors and SCT's.

Had the best view of M104 (Sombrero) I have ever had with a Celestron 14 at over 200x. Filled up the eyepiece with both sides and dust lane clearly evident using direct vision! I managed to view M97 and M108 in my 7x50 bino's (confirmed in a 12" dob) and add them to my Messier binocular list.

Mark your calendars for the last weekend in April 2004, and plan on attending one of the Midwest's best Star Parties.

IMPORTANT NOTICE -- GATE COMBINATION CHANGE

By George Korody

Please be advised that the combination number on the gate lock at our Island Lake State Recreation observing site will be changed effective June 1, 2003. The Park will be locking the gate at 10:00 PM. Under no circumstances is the combination number to not to be given to anyone who is not a confirmed member of the FAAC. This is for the benefit and protection of all Club Members, as well as the protection of park property. As in the past, it is important that immediately after use the key be returned to the lock box for use by other Club Members. The new number can be obtained from a Board Member or by leaving a message on the FAAC hotline at (313) 390-5456. Your membership will be confirmed and you will be notified of the new number by return phone call or E-mail.

ASTRONOMICAL IMAGING S.I.G.

By George Korody

The next meeting of the Astronomical Imaging S.I.G. will be held at the Ford Family Service and Learning Center on Tuesday, June 10 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. This is the same location as all previous meetings. The main topic at this meeting will be color combining. Vic Singh will lead the presentation and discussion. Directions to the meeting place can be found at

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

The group meets once each month. Group members volunteer to prepare astronomical imaging related presentations and lead informal discussions at the meetings. Thanks to all the volunteers who have helped make the S.I.G. so successful. Volunteers are already lined up for the remainder of the summer and into the fall. A field imaging trip is currently being arranged. All Club Members are welcome to join the S.I.G.. If you are not a member and would like to join, just come to the meeting.

May 22, 2003
General Membership Meeting
5:00 pm to 6:50 pm
Agenda

- Introductions	Don Nakic	20 min
- Reports: Treasurer's Secretary's	Gordon Hansen Don Klaser	5 min
- Old/New Business	Don Nakic	10 min
- Upcoming Events	Don Nakic	20 min
- Technical Discussion	Greg Burnett	15 min
- TBD	Don Nakic	5 min
- Homemade Scopes	John Schroer	35 min

ASTRONOMICAL CALENDAR

May 2003

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

May 15	Full Moon 11:36 pm	Planting Moon
May 15-16	Lunar Eclipse	Maximum at 11:40 pm
May 17	Mercury at Aphelion	
May 22	Last Quarter Moon 8:31pm	
May 22	Moon near Mars - morning	
May 28	Mercury near Venus, Moon – morning	
May 29	Moon near Venus – dawn	
May 31	New Moon 12:20 am	

June 2003

June 1	Moon near Saturn – evening
June 4	Jupiter near Moon – evening
June 7	First Quarter Moon 4:28 pm
June 14	Full moon 7:16 pm (Flower Moon)
June 19	Moon near Mars – morning
June 21	Mercury near Venus – morning
June 21	Last Quarter moon 10:45 am
June 21	Solstice 3:10pm
June 28	Venus near crescent Moon – dawn
June 29	New Moon 2:39 pm

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

FAAC CALENDAR

Activity	Date	Time
- Lunar Eclipse – Lk Erie	May 15	
- General Meeting	May 22	5 pm
- FAAC Board Mtg	Jun 12	5 pm
- General Meeting	Jun 26	5 pm
- Summer Solstice	Jun 27-29	
- GLACC	Sept 5,6	
- Island Lake Star Party	Oct 4	

**Crestwood School District - Ensign Planetarium
Public Shows**

**1501 Beech-Daly
Dearborn Heights, MI 48217
(313) 274-3711**

All shows begin at 7:00 pm

June 11: *Our Guest Star – Kristina!*

Kristina Nyland shines as or special guest star as she returns from U of M for a presentation on the latest in astronomy

A DAY IN YOUR LIFE

Submitted by Pat Korody

If you are an adult weighing about 175 pounds, in 24 hours:

- Your heart beats 103,689 times.
- Your blood travels 168,000,000 miles.
- You breathe 23,040 times.
- You inhale 438 cubic feet of air.
- You eat 3¼ pounds of food.
- You drink 2.9 pounds of liquids.
- You lose in weight 7.8 pounds of waste.
- You perspire 1.43 pints.
- You give off 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit.
- You turn in your sleep 25 to 35 times.
- You speak 4,800 words.
- You move 750 major muscles.
- Your nails grow .000046 of an inch.

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



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Get ready for Mars!

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Club Member price \$249.99 with this ad!
- New! Celestron Baader Contrast-Booster Filter \$49.99
Club Member price \$39.99 with this ad!
- Celestron Observer's Kit (includes case, eyepieces and filters) with purchase of Celestron telescope \$99.99 (over \$300 retail value)