



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

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November-December 2009

In This Issue

Page One

- Gifts for the Astronomer, 2009!
- A Cosmic Crash

Inside Stuff

- 2 President's Corner
- 7 Meeting Minutes
- 8 Meeting Agenda
- 8 Time to Renew!
- 9 Astro Imaging SIG
- 9 Expo and Swap Meet March 6



... for the Astronomer, 2009!

Bill Sullivan – Camera Mart – M-59 & Telegraph



Bill Sullivan from Camera Mart at M-59 & Telegraph is an authorized Meade dealer and carries a large inventory of Meade telescopes and accessories at his store. He has provided pictures of some astronomy equipment for this season. They could be stocking stuffers, or just enhance the arsenal ...

...continued on page 4



A Cosmic Crash

by Patrick Barry and Dr. Tony Phillips

Two small planets hurtle toward each other at 22,000 miles per hour. They're on a collision course. With unimaginable force, they smash into each other in a flash of light, blasting streams of molten rock far out into space.

...continued on page 4

STAR STUFF

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FORD AMATEUR ASTRONOMY CLUB

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Dearborn MI 48121-7527

PRESIDENT:	Doug Bauer
VICE PRESIDENT:	Gordon Hansen
SECRETARY:	Lori Poremsky/Kevin Medon
TREASURER:	Steve Flessa
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Doug Bauer

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC) meets on the fourth Thursday each month, except for the combined November/December meeting on the first Thursday of December – at Henry Ford Community College, Administrative Services and Conference Center in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions (www.boonhill.net/faac).

The FAAC 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. The FAAC also has use of the dark skies at Richmond Airport, Unadilla, given prior permission. See the FAAC Yahoo Group* for more information.

Observing schedules and additional information are available on our website (www.boonhill.net/faac), or via the FAAC Yahoo Group.* Or call the FAAC Hotline, for info, and leave a message, or ask questions: 248-207-2075. Or send email inquiries to fordastronomy@comcast.net.

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

Annual – New Member:	\$30	(\$15 after July 1)
Annual – Renewal:	\$25	(\$30 after January 31)

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

ASTRONOMY or SKY & TELESCOPE MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS

Obtain the required form from the FAAC club treasurer for a \$10 discount. Send the completed form directly to the respective publisher with your subscription request and payment. Do not send any money directly to the FAAC for this.

Star Stuff Newsletter Submissions

Your submissions to *STAR STUFF* are more than welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at DougBauer@Comcast.Net. Email text or MS Word is fine. *STAR STUFF* will usually go to press the weekend prior to each general meeting. Submissions received prior to that weekend can be included in that issue.

* FAAC Members are welcome to join our **FordAstronomyClub** Yahoo! Group. Messages, photos, files, online discussions, and more! URL: groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub.

Thank You

President's Corner

Doug Bauer, FAAC President

I have decided to use the President's Corner article this month to highlight a few of the people who have done so much this year to make the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club a great club. It is important that everyone in the club recognize the tremendous efforts that go on behind the scene to make this club special.

I apologize that I have not mentioned all of the people who have supported the club throughout the year, it would be a very long list. There are many others who have participated in many ways and I thank you too!

Greg Ozimek, for actively participating in Board Meetings, taking pictures at club events, being the Webmaster for our website on Boonhill, participating in planning for the GLAAC Astronomy at the Beach, ordering the RASC observers handbooks, helping with the FAAC picnic, bringing pizza to the monthly General Meetings and the SIG meetings, and participating in numerous outreach events.

Dale Ochalek, for editing the StarStuff magazine for many years and creating the Astro-Jeopardy for the annual FAAC Banquet.

Timothy Dey, for his dedication and amazing efforts to get the Lincoln Park Observatory restored. He had the fortitude to overcome every obstacle that was thrown at him and make it happen.

Bob MacFarland, for his work on the GLAAC Astronomy at the Beach event, participating in Board meetings, coordinating with the Lake Erie Metropark for the Ice Daze event, assisting in setting up the Hands of God Astronomy Club at Wyandotte Catholic, developing/presenting Astronomy 101 at many outreach events, and negotiating with

the Lake Erie Metropark to allow us to observe there. Also, thanks to his wife, **Holly**, for help at outreach events.

George Korody and his trusty sidekick, **Pat** – for their efforts with the GLAAC Astronomy at the Beach event, including managing the FAAC table and prize drawing, participating in Board Meetings, working to set up the Lincoln Park Observatory and coordinating future events there, being the gatekeeper for Island Lake, gathering and organizing the door prizes for the Annual FAAC Banquet, and participating in outreach events.

Bob FitzGerald, who despite several bouts of serious illness this year, helping with many outreach events, answering the FAAC Hotline, participating in the planning for Astronomy at the Beach, managing the club equipment for part of the year, providing parliamentary support for the club, serving on the nominating committee, helping set up the Hands of God Astronomy Club and participating in the FAAC Board Meetings.

Lori Poremsky and Kevin Medon, for their leadership as club Secretaries creating a smooth process to handle new members, starting the Astronomy for Everyone community access television program using the Wyandotte Studios, participating in Board Meetings, doing the minutes for the General Meetings, and helping with set up and cooking at the FAAC Multiclub Picnic.

Steve Flessa, for his efforts as the FAAC Treasurer, keeping track of the money for all of the dues, sales and events, keeping track of the GLAAC funds for the Astronomy at the Beach and the Lincoln Park observatory, and participating in outreach events, ordering & selling Astronomy calendars, and participating in the FAAC Board Meetings.

Chuck Jones, FAAC Vice-President, for participating in the Board Meetings and leading FAAC meetings when I was away, and serving on the committee planning the 2010 Astronomy Expo. Also, thanks to his friend **Barb**, for her help at outreach events and for

donating the center pieces at the Annual Banquet.

John Schroer, for participating in many Board Meetings, working on the GLAAC Astronomy at the Beach, participating in outreach events, providing leadership in setting up the Hands of God Astronomy Club, and coordinating of the 2010 Astronomy Expo.

Sandra Macika, participating in many outreach events, helping to set up the Hands of God Astronomy Club, working on the Astronomy for Everyone programs, and bringing pop to the General Meetings.

Gordon Hansen, for participating in the FAAC Board Meetings, leading the Imaging SIG, administration of the Club Yahoo site, planning the annual FAAC Banquet, and developing/presenting Astronomy 101 at several outreach events including the Astronomy at the Beach.

Ben Cline, for participating in the FAAC Board Meetings, taking on the Club Librarian job, investigating use of MeetUp.com for use by the Club, and suggesting and helping to develop the Club Mentor Program.

Ken Anderson, for participating in FAAC Board Meetings, making copies of the agenda for the General Meeting, participating in outreach events, participation in the Astronomy for Everyone shows, and creating the mini-Messier marathon for the FAAC Multiclub Picnic.

Don Klaser, for participating in many FAAC Board Meetings, and many outreach events, and hosting on the Astronomy for Everyone series.

Jim Frisbie, for participating in the FAAC Board Meetings, finding presenters for the Club meetings, and serving on the Nominating Committee.

Dennis Salliotte, for participating in the FAAC Board Meetings, coordinating with the

Lake Erie Metropark for an observing site, doing shows at the HFCC Planetarium, and participating in numerous outreach events.

Tom Blaszak, for planning the Astronomy Expo's for several years and providing guidance as he transitions the responsibility to a new team this year.

Frank Ancona, for participating in FAAC Board Meetings, leading the Dark Sky education for the club, participating in several outreach events, being on the nominating committee, working on the meeting presentation coordination, and giving several presentations on Light Pollution.

John Kirchhoff, for his coordination of the Island Lake Beginner's Night and participation in outreach events.

Steve Uitti, for his participation in the Astronomy for Everyone series and outreach events.

Ed Halash, for coordinating the reservations for our meeting room at HFCC and coordinating with the SEMSA Soaring Club which allows us to use their airfield for observing.

Harold Thomason, for his role as Equipment Manager in the first part of the year and participation in outreach events.

DeeAnn Bauer, for her patience and understanding in participating in outreach programs and putting up with me.

I would like to thank the following people for doing presentations at Club meetings:

G.M. Ross, Ken Anderson, Sandra Macika, Steve Uitti, Dave Bailey, Mark Deprest, Jon Blum, John Schroer, Tim Dey, Milton French, Ken Bertin, Frank Ancona, Gordon Hansen, Don Klaser, John Kirchhoff, and Bob Naeye.

To all of these people, without whom, we would not be the club that we are, I say,

"THANK YOU, from the bottom of my heart!"

As you see these folks, please take the time to thank them for all that they have done for us.

There are many roles for FAAC Members. If you are looking for some way to support the club, contact any Board member and they will help you find a way to help.

It has been a great year, Thanks!

Doug Bauer
DougBauer@Comcast.Net

A Cosmic Crash

Continued from page 1

This cataclysmic scene has happened countless times in countless solar systems. In fact, scientists think that such collisions could have created Earth's moon, tilted Uranus on its side, set Venus spinning backward, and sheared the crust off Mercury.

But witnessing such a short-lived collision while pointing your telescope in just the right direction would be a tremendous stroke of luck. Well, astronomers using NASA's Spitzer space telescope recently got lucky.

"It's unusual to catch such a collision in the act, that's for sure," said Geoffrey Bryden, a cosmic Crashspitzer - an astronomer specializing in extrasolar planet formation at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and a member of the science team that made the discovery.

When Bryden and his colleagues pointed Spitzer at a star 100 light-years away called HD 172555, they noticed something strange. Patterns in the spectrum of light coming from nearby the star showed distinctive signs of silicon monoxide gas — huge amounts of it — as well as a kind of volcanic rock called tektite.

It was like discovering the wreckage from a cosmic car crash. The silicon monoxide was produced as the high-speed collision literally vaporized huge volumes of rock, which is made largely of silicon and oxygen. The impact also blasted molten lava far out into space, where it later cooled to form chunks of tektite.

Based on the amount of silicon monoxide and tektites, Bryden's team calculated that the colliding planetary bodies must have had a combined mass more than twice that of Earth's moon. The collision probably happened between 1,000 and 100,000 years ago — a blink of an eye in cosmic terms.

The scientists used the Spitzer space telescope because, unlike normal telescopes, Spitzer detects light at invisible, infrared wavelengths.

"Spitzer wavelengths are the best wavelengths to identify types of rock," Bryden says. "You can pin down which type of rock, dust, or gas you're looking at."

Bryden says the discovery provides further evidence that planet-altering collisions are more common in other star systems than people once thought. The "crash-bang" processes at work in our own solar system may indeed be universal. If so, Spitzer has a front row seat on a truly smashing show.

See Spitzer Space Telescope's brand new Web site at <http://spitzer.caltech.edu/>. Kids can learn about infrared light and see beautiful Spitzer images by playing the new Spitzer Concentration game at <http://spaceplace.jpl.nasa.gov/en/kids/spitzer/concentration>.

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



Caption:
Artist's rendering of cosmic collision involving two objects whose combined mass was at least twice that of our Moon. Discovered using the Spitzer Space Telescope in the planetary system of a star called HD 172555 100 light-years away.

This image may be downloaded from http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/news_images/smashup.jpg.



for the Astronomer...
(continued from page 1)



Minutes - October Meeting

Lori Poremsky

General Membership Meeting Minutes:
10/22/09

The meeting was opened and facilitated by Vice President Chuck Jones who was filling in for Doug Bauer who was out-of-town. 31 members and visitors were in attendance including one new visitor Ellen Duncan who had learned about the club while visiting the Astronomy at the Beach event in September.

Several members shared their observing experiences. These included: Chuck Jones (new imaging camera), Ken Anderson (morning planet conjunction), Gordon Hansen, Milton French (morning planet conjunction), John Connop (Crescent Nebula), Tony Licata (new imaging telescope), Bob MacFarland (Cadillac West Star Party) and Frank Ancona (a Grand Rapids observing site).

John Blum presented the main topic entitled Astro Gadgets, Part 2. John who's motto is "I've never seen an astro gadget that I didn't need" covered a full array of dozens of field accessories including tables, specialized eyepieces, filters, digital voice recorder, batteries, power cables, bug repellents, clothing, and storage for equipment while at home. John engaged the audience who shared some of their own experiences with the items he discussed. He also included suggestions for reference materials and even had a recommendation for a fun astronomy related television comedy program (The Big Bang Theory – CBS 9: 30pm on Mondays). John passed out a reference sheet which identified sources for where to find these astro gadgets.

Mark Deprest from the University Lowbrows Astronomers followed John with a review of his week long visit to the 2009 Okie-Tex Star Party which is held in northwestern Oklahoma each September. Some 300+ serious



astronomers attend along with some major equipment suppliers. This event is organized by the Oklahoma City Astronomy Club and the Cimarron Heritage Society. Mark's oratory and Power Point presentation detailed what the observing conditions were like and what beautiful rock formations and petroglyphs which can be found in the area.

Temperatures range from 80 or 90 degrees in the daytime to 40 degrees at night. Limiting magnitude skies there are rated at 7.0 limiting magnitude and a #1 on the Bortle scale. During his 2009 visit, Mark reported 3 of the 8 nights to be very clear. However, while visiting in 2007 he experienced 8 nights of excellent viewing.

The event is held near Kenton, OK which is very near to the border with New Mexico. Driving distance from the Detroit area is about 1300+ miles. The cost for the event is \$75 for registration only or \$120 for registration and meals. Observers can camp on-site or find accommodations in the area. See www.okie-tex.com for more information.

The Astro-Imaging special interest group will be meeting at 5:30 on 11/12 in the Berry Auditorium in the Administrative Services building at Henry Ford Community College. The topic is TBD.

Dennis Salliotte announced the reestablishment of the agreement made with the Lake Erie Metropark which allows FAAC members to use a new site for observing from April 1 to November 30th each year. See the FAAC Yahoo Group files directory titled Lake Erie Metropark FAAC Site for information on how to sign up, the usage criteria and where the new site is located. Club dues are due by January 31, 2009. Nominations for the Sirius Award should be sent to one of the club officers by November 15, 2009.

The meeting ended at 7:30.

Meeting Agenda - December 3

HFCC –Berry Auditorium - Admin. Services & Conference Center

For map see:

http://www.hfcc.edu/contact/campus_maps.pdf

5:30 PM

Opening/Introduction/Member Observing

Main presentation:

Astronomy for Everyone – Don Klaser - FAAC

Tech Talk:

Astronomy Holiday Gifts – John Kirchhoff
FAAC

Club Business

Secretary/Treasurer/Equipment Reports

Club Projects/Committees/Member Support Nominating Committee

Astronomy Session at Camera Mart – Dec 4 &
Dec 5

Astro-Imaging SIG

Dark Sky Committee

International Year of Astronomy 2009

Time to Renew, Members!

Steve Flessa

It's time to renew your membership in FAAC! Send your check in today to FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, Michigan 48121-7527. Please include any updates to your contact information.

Membership includes access to the observing sites at Island Lake Recreation Area, Lake Erie Metro Park, and Richmond Airport.

Discounted subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines. and most importantly, the interaction with people who share your love for astronomy.

Renewal fees for 2009 are only \$25, and after January 31, \$30!

Astro Imaging SIG

Gordon Hansen

Gallery Submissions Requested!

If you have any interesting photos, astronomy related or not, please send them to tglicata@aol.com as JPG attachments.

The SIG gallery of images will be viewed during each SIG meeting. A reminder is posted on our Yahoo site periodically for submissions.

All are invited to join us, share and discuss their images. We always have a good time, with lively discussion.

Next meeting is January 14, HFCC Berry Auditorium. Topics invited.

Expo and Swap Meet March 6

John Schroer

Mark your calendars, and plan ahead! The sixth annual FAAC Astronomy Expo and Swap Meet is scheduled for Saturday, March 6, 2010, 9am-4pm, at the familiar Holy Cross Church Gymnasium, 30650 Six Mile, Livonia. Details are not final for the programs, but a full day is planned, according to event chair John Schroer (email: ka8grh@yahoo.com).

Event seeks early table sales and possible sponsors. See the latest flyer on the FAAC site: <http://www.boonhill.net/faac/>

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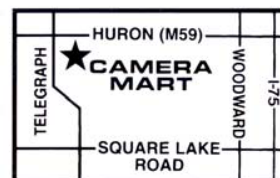


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December 4 and 5!**



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