

STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

October 1999
Volume 8 Number 10



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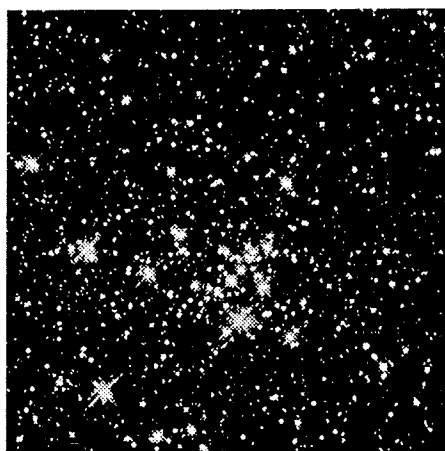
A STAR PARTY TO REMEMBER

by George Korody

Our Seventh Annual Island Lake Star Party was one that will not soon be forgotten. Saturday, September 18 rewarded us with clear skies and pleasant fall temperatures. The registration and sales tent went up in the early afternoon and was soon followed by eager FAAC volunteers and vendors representatives arranging tables and displays in preparation for the expected crowds. Around 5:00 PM the food concession was set-up and registration started.

As Club members arrived telescopes sprang up like mushrooms in the observing field west of the pavilion. The

public started to arrive in cars, vans, trucks, and buses, some bringing their own telescopes and binoculars. The 200-car parking lot at Spring Mill Pond was soon overflowing and vehicles were directed to two other parking lots one and two miles down the park road. Since Park Management had advised that vehicles would not be permitted to park along the roadway or in open fields, we had arranged with Heavner Canoe Rental to provide a shuttle service between the parking lots and Spring Mill Pond. By the end of the evening the two additional parking lots were nearly filled to capacity with 250 additional vehicles. An estimated total of 1,400 people had arrived to partake in the activities and observe the celestial wonders. Telescopes filled much of the field west of the pavilion and many sprang up in the field east of the pavilion. It was estimated that there were more than 100 telescopes.



FAAC had a number of items for sale and the vendors, Rider's Hobby Shops, The Nature Company, and the Discovery Channel Store, were kept busy with sales and answering customers' questions. As odors from freshly cooked hot dogs and other concession items drifted through the pavilion several FAAC presentations took place, including the ever-popular Astronomy 101 slide presentation given by Greg Burnett. Then the drawing prizes donated by FAAC and individual Club members, along with several telescopes and other items donated by the vendors, were distributed to lucky ticket holders.

It was now dark and the crowds filtered onto the fields and among the telescopes to observe the celestial wonders. Children wearing their new colored light bracelets and necklaces purchased from FAAC gave the area a festive look. Many of the young people took part in the popular Sky Tour Certificate Program. Those observing all seven of the designated objects received certificates indicating such, along with a prize donated by the vendors. Oohs and ahs could be heard throughout the area from youngsters and adults alike as they excitedly scurried from telescope to telescope and observed the celestial objects that were displayed.

The crowd slowly dwindled and by the last shuttle run at midnight most of the public except the more serious had left. By 2:00 AM silence had once again

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

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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.

returned to Spring Mill Pond, with only the nocturnal animals and a few die-hard astronomers reportedly remaining to observe the Mighty Hunter Orion as he rose in the eastern sky.

We wish to thank everyone who volunteered and worked so hard to make this such a successful event. We want to thank Rider's Hobby Shops, The Nature Company, and the Discovery Channel Store for co-sponsoring the event, and for their generous donation of drawing prizes. We would also like to thank Barry Craig of the Detroit Astronomical Society for providing the audio systems. ☆

TALES FROM A ROOKIE

by Charlie Francis

Thursday, August 26, 1999. FAAC meeting. Dave Beard accepts his Messier certificate and lapel pin. That gives me an idea: Earn a lapel pin and Messier certificate, and learn the night sky. Motivation times three. But it won't be easy. Dave informs me he used his 188-inch reflector on some of the dimmer objects. I wonder to myself if I can accomplish this task with my 8-inch reflector on a Dob mount. There is no room for doubt. Whatever it takes I'm going to do it! Brave thoughts for a rookie. The hunt is on!

Tuesday, August 31, 1999, 10 p.m. to 11 p.m. North Redford Township, Michigan. Back Patio. Sky is dark (looking up). M-13 is first on my list. There it is in my 20mm eyepiece. Next is M-57, the ring Nebula. A little smoke ring in my 9mm eyepiece. September Sky & Telescope magazine explains how to locate M-27, the Dumbbell Nebula, and there it is. Looks more like an hourglass in the 9mm eyepiece. I finish off with M-31, the Andromeda Galaxy, and M-32 its companion galaxy. Two bright smudges or Q-Tip ends.

One hour and five down. Oh yeah, but these were some of the bright easy ones. Still, I hear Han Solo telling Luke Skywalker not to get cocky, it's not over

yet. I watch Jupiter rise and look at its cloud bands and four visible moons. A good start.

Sunday, September 5, 1999, 10:30 p.m. North Redford Township, Michigan. Back Patio. Sky is dark (looking up). Using some magazines and "Nightwatch" star charts I go in search of M-29. 20mm eyepiece. There it is, a backward parenthesis. A unique shape for a star cluster. On to M-39, an open cluster with a triangular shape. M-103 open cluster, which looks better in binoculars than in the 8-ich Meade with a 20mm eyepiece. I stick with the binoculars for the moment and spot M-52 in Cassiopeia and M-71 in Sagitta. Then I notice a naked-eye smudge. It's the Pleiades, M-45. All three were beautiful in binoculars.

Six Messier objects and I only stayed up until 4 a.m.! Only 99 more M-objects to go and the Northern Cross Observatory star party coming up on September 11 at NCO Headquarters. I feel like a 7 year old with Christmas only six days away. The song "Anticipation" pops into my head.

Next: NCO Star Party. ☆

Book Review

by Clayton Kessler

Deep Sky Companions The Messier Objects

Author:	Stephen James O'Meara
Publisher:	Cambridge University Press
Publish Date:	1998
Pages:	304
Cost:	\$34.95 (hardcover)

From the cover you might expect this to be "just another Messier guide". If so you would be doing this book an injustice! Yes, this book will tell you how to find all of the Messier objects and it includes finder charts. The departure from "just another" guide comes in the "readability" of the information presented. Mr. O'Meara presents these

objects as a combination of historical information and his own impressions and experiences at the eyepiece. The author is methodical in his observations. He uses the same telescope for all of them and he operates from an enviable site in Hawaii. All of the objects are examined at length at low power, medium power and high power. A complete description of the authors' impressions is recorded and to top it off, a pencil sketch of each object is included.

This pencil sketch is important. It gives an idea of what to expect to see in the eyepiece (given the fact that you are observing under pristine sky in Hawaii!). I was especially taken with the patterns of stars in open clusters. Mr. O'Meara's sketch shows precisely why M18 is also known as the "Black Swan" cluster, and adds many more like this. I now find myself looking harder at all of these objects, taking not just a glimpse but a long hard look before moving on to the next one.

Every object includes a pencil sketch, a high quality astrophoto of the object, the author's impressions, the discoverers' comments (Messier did not find them all!) and the NGC description. Also included is a finder chart for the object and the relevant size, position and brightness data that you would expect.

The author includes chapters on Charles Messier (written by David Levy), Spectacular non-Messier objects, "Objects Messier Could Not Find", "Messier Marathons" and "A Guide to Navigating the Coma-Virgo Cluster". Add to this a forward by David Levy and this book is truly a treasure.

I really enjoyed reading this book. The information presented was interesting and understandable. Mr. O'Meara's writing weaves a spell that made me feel I was there, observing with him. While I have never been a "Messier Maniac" the descriptions, sketches and photographs in this book have me itching to set up a scope and look, really look, at these celestial treasures. I can recommend this one without reservation. ☆

NOTHING BUT THE FAACs

by George Korody

Welcome to recent new Club Members:

Joseph Alessandrini – South Lyon
Glenn Bowman* – Saline
Andrew Clark – Canton
Tom & Patty Cokley – Waterford
Lewis Duffing* – Farmington Hills
Michael Dunn – Troy
Richard Ernst – Waterford
Richard Gilbert – Inkster
John Hansen – Beverly Hills
John Kirchhoff – Livonia
John McCombs – Plymouth
Dave Roberts – Redford

*These new members signed up for lifetime membership. Also, current member Scott Schneider signed up for lifetime membership.

Welcome to all of the above. We look forward to sharing in your experiences as Club members.

Please note that the entry gate to our observing site at the Island Lake State Recreation Area is now being left open at all times. It will remain open until around Memorial Day of next year.

Since the FAAC has an annual after hours permit with the park Club Members can observe at any time. You should always have your Membership Card available for identification. Guests are also welcome to observe with Club Members.

ARTICLE KIT

by Greg Burnett

Lately, the STAR STUFF submissions in-box has gotten a little dusty. In order to encourage you reluctant writers out there, I have prepared a pro forma article, which you can use to prepare your own personal contribution to the next issue of STAR STUFF. All you have to do is fill in the blanks and, Viola! a full-blown journalistic masterpiece ready for publication!...

OBSERVING AT _____

by _____

Last _____ night, _____, _____, and I headed out to _____ for an evening of observing. The temperature was about _____ degrees and _____ had just risen in the east. Just as the last glow of dusk was fading, _____ arrived and set up {his/her} brand new _____ next to us. What luck! We would finally get to see _____ through a _____!

My first observing target was _____. At 100x in my _____ it looked like a _____ with _____ coming out of it. I backed off to about 35x to get the full effect of the _____. Magnificent!

It was perfectly clear and very dark. At about _____ o'clock, _____ fell into the _____. We all had a good laugh at {his/her} expense. No damage, but next time {he/she} will borrow the flashlight I offered.

_____ looked great in my scope with the _____ eyepiece. At 250x I could just barely make out the _____, which I had not seen before tonight. Ah! Another one for the log book. A little after midnight _____ came by and told us _____. We were incredulous! _____ said {he/she} was full of _____. But we had no choice. Mustering great effort and admirable teamwork, we were able to get the _____ back into the _____, and everything turned out OK. Next time we'll remember to _____ before we _____!

It was getting late, but I wanted to look at _____ before we called it a night. I dialed in _____ dec and _____ R.A. on the circles, and there it was, neatly centered in the field. The sky conditions were really extraordinary. I could easily see the _____ going in and out of the _____. Although I have seen this many times before, the sight still amazes me.

Pleased that I had held out for this grand finale, I reluctantly loaded up for the trip back to _____. It had been a great night of observing. Be sure and join us next time! ☆

MEETING MINUTES

by Dave Beard

The September 23rd general meeting of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club was called to order at 5:00pm by president Dan Kmiecik, and the members dug right in to the pizza and pop, thanks to George Korody and Bob Fitzgerald. Dan started with a plea to the members to purchase the entertainment books, these are a tremendous value, and help Both FERA and the club. There are also year 2000 calendars available from Astronomy Products, they also sell books at a 33% discount, and NO shipping!

Dan passed around the nomination forms for the four club officer positions, these will be available until the January meeting, please get these back to Dan as soon as possible.

The roundtable ensued, and members introduced themselves, and discussed their latest observing activity.

The Treasurer's Report: \$ 2258.26 in checking, \$1096.75 in savings, \$683.89 in the scholarship fund.

Bob McFarland discussed the comments from the registration forms from the star party, and handed out a list of some of the comments from the 1042 registrants. Bob asked for typers to type up the addresses from the registrations, in order to send announcements out on the next party, etc.

George Korody reported that approximately 1400 people showed up to the event, calculated using 3 different methods: cars, tickets, and registrations!

The G.L.A.A.C. report: There have been no meetings since last month.

New business: The Northern Cross Observatory will be hosting a Fall star party October 6th through the 10th up at Boon Michigan. Details can be accessed at the NCO website: <http://bsd1.kode.net/~dougbock/ncomain.html>

Greg Burnett then began his slideshow titled "S.M.U.R.F.S., and beyond.....". A collection of slides, both of stars and star gazers. ☆

HEARD ON THE NET

by Bob Lambeck

From the sci.astro.amateur newsgroup...

Jeff Wulf recently proposed a solution to the cloud problem using "Reverse Skycology" (terminology suggested by Phil Grindle):

"OK. I've figured it out. SINCE WE ALL know the universe is secretly working against us, we will NO LONGER call ourselves "amateur astronomers" ... We will instead, from now on, be known as "amateur acloudomers". We will as such study and ENJOY the study of clouds. We will never again admit we ENJOY looking at comets or "deep space fuzzies". We will now enjoy the study and formation and progress of CLOUDS. Our messages will consist of posts like "OOooo ... really cloudy, I LOVE IT!" and "NOT JUST CLOUDS, _R A I N_! How great is this?!" IF we are not "treated" with our lovely puffies, we will instead be forced to break out our telescopes, BUT WE WILL COMPLAIN. (The universe, seeing this, will bless us with CLEAR SKIES for the rest of our lives.) WHO'S WITH ME?! I AM AN AMATEUR ACLOUDOMER!"

Among the various supportive responses was this from Steve South:

"Pah! Amateur indeed. Those of us (in the UK) well versed in the science refer to ourselves as nebulonomers. Ah! those subtle nuances of overcast! The 13 kinds of drizzle! I have to say that I'm a stratus observer myself, though I occasionally have a peek at the cumulus types and I have no time for the endless mare's tail vs. mackerel sky flame wars.

"Sadly, there seems to be an increasing number of people calling themselves nebulologers, who claim that people's

futures are determined by cloud shapes. Not to mention the cloud.loonies with new 'scientific' theories about the origin and physics of clouds. Oh, alright, I will mention a couple. There's Pythagorus Nebulium with his 'Soft landing on clouds' ideas (among others), and Alexander Avian who claims that clouds are the nesting places of strange birds.

"Incidentally, we are looking forward to August 11th, when we hope to be able to observe the famous cloud darkening caused, it is believed, by an eclipse of the sun. Let's hope we have some grand overcast for the occasion and don't wind up being cleared out ...

"So, greetings from the natural home of nebulonomy, and commiserations to you southwestern US readers who must have a really hard time pursuing the hobby.

"By the way, there's a new mailing list just started for amateur rain-gauge makers. Apparently you can make a rain-gauge quite cheaply from a discarded telescope. I'd like to make a 24" bore instrument, so if you know of any discarded 24" telescopes, send 'em over to me."

Steve later described the August cloud darkening:

"Yes I was clouded out. I did get a glimpse of the partial phases through some breaks in the cloud, and the cloud darkening was spectacular. The speed with which darkness fell made it quite an experience. All contributions towards a trip to Mozambique in 2001 to view southern hemisphere clouds gratefully received!" ☆

FROM THE EDITOR

by Greg Burnett

The Seventh Annual Island Lake Star Party was a smashing success! Perhaps it was your first ILSP, or your first star party of any variety. We'd like to hear about your experience. Maybe you're a veteran of many such affairs. We'd like to know how you think the ILSP stacked up against the others. You don't have to

be a professional writer. You don't even have to know-a duh English too a-good. Just jot down your thoughts for the benefit of our STAR STUFF readers, and send them to me by email, snail mail, or smoke signals (see the masthead for addresses).

Hope to see you soon! -- G.B. ☆

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club will be held on Thursday, October 28, 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. ☆

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. ☆

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! ☆

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. ☆

1999 Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Calendar

FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

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/>

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