



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Volume 15, Number 9

September 2006

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Staggering Distance

Dr. Tony Phillips

Tonight, when the sun sets and the twilight fades to black, go outside and look southwest. There's mighty Jupiter, gleaming brightly. It looks so nearby, yet Jupiter is 830 million km away. Light from the sun takes 43 minutes to reach the giant planet, and for Earth's fastest spaceship, New Horizons, it's a trip of 13 months.

That's nothing. Not far to the left of Jupiter is Pluto. Oh, you won't be able to see it. Tiny Pluto is almost 5 billion km away. Sunlight takes more than 4 hours to get there, and New Horizons 9 years. From Pluto, the sun is merely the brightest star in a cold, jet-black sky.

...continued on page 2

Man Bites Dog!

President's Corner

Don Klaser, President, FAAC

After being a faithful companion in our solar system for 76 years, Pluto has been sent to the celestial dog pound by the International Astronomical Union, a.k.a. the IAU. I think the letters stand for insanely autocratic usurpers. Who are these people, anyway? And who elected them?!

"They" say it's because Pluto has not cleared the neighborhood around its orbit - What does that mean? Will the Plutonians have to institute bulk trash pick-up or something (they can contact Kwame Kilpatrick to learn about how to do it)? Then they'll probably ship their junk to Michigan along with Ontario and New York)?

So now our beloved Pluto has become a dwarf planet, a numbered KBO, like an asteroid. I mean, Pluto was tough enough to find when it was a regular planet - how much harder will it be now that it's a dwarf! And what about the Disney Stores - will they have to discount their entire inventory of Pluto items?

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STAR STUFF

SEPTEMBER 2006 - Vol. 15 - No. 9

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:	Ken Anderson
TREASURER:	Gordon Hansen
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Dale Ochalek

CLUB INFORMATION

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 info are available on our website, or via the FAAC Yahoo Group.* Or call the **FAAC Hotline**, for info, or leave a message, or ask questions: **248-207-2075**.

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)
Life Membership:	\$150	

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 dake00k@yahoo.com. 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.

President's Corner *(continued from page 1)*

And how about poor Clyde Tombaugh - he must be rolling over in his grave hearing the news that the high point of his career is now lining the bottom of birdcages. Did the IAU consider any of this -- I think not!

If the IAU is allowed to get away with this, what's to keep them from messing with Neptune, and after that, well, all I can say is that you better watch Uranus!

Let me know what you think.

Staggering Distance... *(continued from page 1)*

That's nothing, either.

A smidgen to the right of Pluto, among the stars of the constellation Ophiuchus, is Voyager 1. Launched from Florida 29 years ago, the spacecraft is a staggering 15 billion km away. It has traveled beyond all the known planets, beyond the warmth of the sun, almost beyond the edge of the solar system itself.

Now that's something.

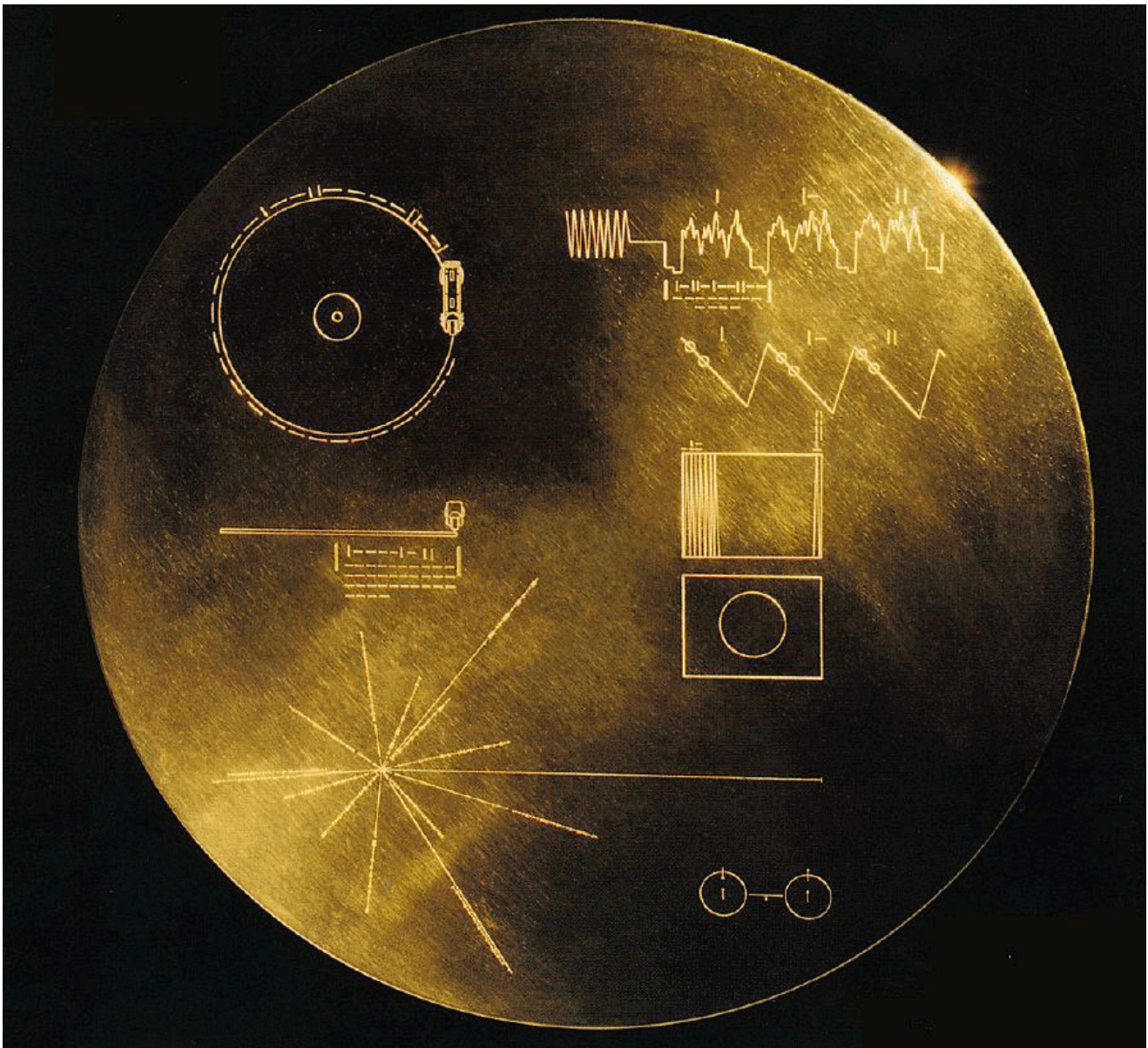
"On August 15, 2006, Voyager 1 reached the 100 AU mark—in other words, it is 100 times farther from the Sun than Earth," says Ed Stone, Voyager project scientist and the former director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "This is an important milestone in our exploration of the Solar System. No other spacecraft has gone so far."

At 100 AU (astronomical units), Voyager 1 is in a strange realm called "the heliosheath."

As Stone explains, our entire solar system—planets and all—sits inside a giant bubble of gas called the heliosphere. The sun is responsible; it blows the bubble by means of the solar wind. Voyager 1 has traveled all the way from the bubble's heart to its outer edge, a gassy membrane dividing the solar system from interstellar space. This "membrane" is the heliosheath.

Before Voyager 1 reached its present location, researchers had calculated what the heliosheath might be like.

... continued on page 3

Staggering Distance... *(continued from page 2)*

In case it is ever found by intelligent beings elsewhere in the galaxy, Voyager carries a recording of images and sounds of Earth and its inhabitants. The diagrams on the cover of the recording symbolize Earth's location in the galaxy and how to play the record.

"Many of our predictions were wrong," says Stone. In situ, Voyager 1 has encountered unexpected magnetic anomalies and a surprising increase in low-energy cosmic rays, among other things. It's all very strange—"and we're not even out of the Solar System yet."

To report new developments, Voyager radios Earth almost every day. At the speed of light, the messages take 14 hours to arrive. Says Stone, "it's worth the wait."

Keep up with the Voyager mission at voyager.jpl.nasa.gov. To learn the language of Voyager's messages, kids (of all ages) can check out spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/vgr_fact1.shtml.

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

August Meeting Minutes

Ken Anderson

Meeting minutes were not available at the initial time of publication for the September Star Stuff.

Nonetheless, you may visit our Yahoo! Group - FordAstronomyClub (registered FAAC members only) to view the minutes, when available.

Look under "Files" at the URL: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub>

Meanwhile, don't forget about the GLAAC "Astronomy at the Beach," September 29 – 30.

Meeting Agenda - Sept. 28

5:30 pm

Opening/Introductions/Member Observing

New Members & Guests – Diane Worth

Presentation: "NexStarry Night: How I Bought an Orange Telescope" -

Club Business / Secretary/ Treasurer Report

Club Projects / Committees / Member support

- Club Apparel Program - Diane Worth
- FAAC Hotline - Don Klaser
- Astro-Imaging SIG – Jim Frisbie
- GLAAC Update – Bob MacFarland
- Sally Ride Science Festival - Don Klaser
- Great Lakes Star Gaze - Recap - All
- Mercury Transit Event - Don Klaser
- Open - All
- Walk-ins

FAAC Calendar of Events 2006

Bob MacFarland

September 29-30 - Astronomy on the Beach – GLAAC, Kensington Park

October 28 - Beginner's Night - Island Lake

November 8 - Mercury Transit Viewing. Tentative – TBD

Treasurer's Report

Gordon Hansen

Bank Accounts

Checking	\$	1,525.27
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Savings	\$	3,025.65
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TOTAL Bank Accounts	\$	4,550.92
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Cash Accounts

Cash Account	\$	88.78
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TOTAL Cash Accounts	\$	88.78
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Asset Accounts

GLAAC	\$	2,126.45
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Projector	\$	621.38
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Scholarship	\$	188.05
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TOTAL Asset Accounts	\$	2,935.88
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OVERALL TOTAL	\$	7,575.58
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Astro Imaging SIG

Tony Licata

The next meeting of the Astro Imaging SIG is Thursday, October 12, 5:30 pm, Roseneau Rooms A-B, at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, in the Administrative Services & Conference Bldg. (same as the FAAC General Meeting). Tony Licata will lend some expertise on using a Digital SLR for astronomical imaging.

All Club members and their guests are invited. If you drive up to the Faculty parking lot gate, it should open, allowing you to park close to the building. (**Editor's Note:** Tony Licata now replaces Jim Frisbie as SIG lead. Congrats and welcome to Tony; best wishes and thanks to Jim for all the hard work!)

Items for Sale

Coulter 10" Dobsonian telescope. \$400.
Contact Bob Stonik, 313-361-4954.

8" LX200 "Classic" F/10, low hours, great shape. 2nd owner, new in 2001. Includes all std. plus optional - Scopestuff long Dec. cord, Scopestuff collimation knobs installed, Meade 1812 power adapter, Meade heavy duty Cordura soft case, Kendrick Dew Strap, Homemade counter weight and rail, dew shield, and scope transporter, Telrad base. On display at Rider's Livonia. \$1400.00 OBO

Call Jim: 313-386-6944 day, 313-928-9042 eve.

Celestron Orange Tube 8" (mid-1970s) Very good condition, no scratches, w/camera mount, tripod. RA bearings, slo-mo Dec fine. Corrector plate needs cleaning; needs a visual back and diagonal.

Contact Dr. Nicolle Zellner, Albion College
nzellner@albion.edu

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, 248-219-6222 Contact Dr.

Wanted: Meade Autostar II –
Need replacement hand paddle controller for Meade LX200 GPS.

Contact Dale Ochalek, dake00k@yahoo.com, 734-717-8810

New Hotline Number!

The FAAC has a new hotline number! (Thanks, Mr. FitzGerald!) Call the hotline to see or tell who's doing some observing at the club sites (Island Lake Park, Richmond), or seek general club information, info on new memberships, whatever!

FAAC Hotline: **248-207-2075**

Sky Calendar

Jim Frisbie

September

- 22 Fr New moon 7:45 AM
- 23 Sa Autumnal Equinox 12:03 AM
- 26 Tu Moon passes 5 degrees south of Jupiter-PM
- 30 Sa First Quarter moon 7:04 AM

October

- 6 Fr Full moon 11:13 PM Hunters Moon
- 9 Mo Moon occults the Pleiades starting at 10:30 PM
- 13 Fr Last Quarter moon 8:26 PM
- 16 Sa Moon passes 2 degrees north of Saturn-AM
- 16 Su Mercury at Greatest Elongation east (25 degrees)
- 22 Su New moon 1:14 AM
- 24 Tu Moon passes 5 degrees south of Jupiter-PM

All times in Eastern Daylight Time.

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

Toasting - Jan and Don Klaser!

Best wishes and congratulations to the newlyweds - none other than our own first couple, Jan and Don Klaser. The two tied the knot September 16.



Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Beginner's Nights - at Island Lake

Remaining 2006 Date:

October 28
from 7:00pm to Midnight

(Arriving at 7pm will allow you to get help, or set up, during daylight)

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 (weather permitting)? 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 events will take place on the date indicated regardless of sky conditions, cloudy or clear. If it is raining, that 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 details on this event, contact John Kirchhoff, c/o Rider's Hobby Shop of Livonia, 734-425-9720, or email riderslivonia@aol.com

*The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club observes at the Island Lake site on Friday and Saturday evenings year round, provided skies are clear. Check the FAAC Hotline for information, or to leave a message: **248-207-2075**. 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.*



Kensington Metropark Tenth Annual Astronomy at the Beach Sept 29th & 30th

*Great Lakes Association of Astronomy Clubs
(Time: 5:00 pm to Midnight rain or shine)*

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~dgs/kensington/>



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- Tour the Constellations
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- Bring a Chair or Blanket

- How Cold Is Space?
- See Digital Imaging
- Take a Sky Tour Treasure Hunt
- Food and Beverages
(available for purchase)



Kensington Metropark I-96 at Kent Lake Road Exit
Exit 153 North, then go North to Martindale Beach.
Phone 1-800-477-3178

This Event is FREE!

\$4.00 Park Vehicle Pass Required

Revised 7/12/2006

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Star Stuff Newsletter
P.O. Box 7527
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