

United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey Newsletter



WHERE HAVE THE DARK SKIES GONE?

As more outdoor lighting is installed into New Jersey and other state communities there become fewer locations where people can go to see and learn, first hand, about the wonders of the evening skies and the universe in which we live. In fact the great majority of people in moderate to large towns have never seen how the heavens really appear unless they have visited a planetarium, where, with the flick of a switch, the intrusive city lights can be turned off. Unfortunately, this is only possible on a planetarium sky dome.

Few in New Jersey have experienced the spectacular, and truly awesome Milky Way Galaxy splashed across the summer sky, or other distant galaxies and nebulae that populate the starry landscape. Some are visible to naked eye, while a pair of binoculars will divulge myriads more. All this goes unseen due to what astronomers term "light pollution", the light scattered into the night sky by the inefficient lighting that so many cities, towns, and individuals install. But this condition is not just a problem for those who miss seeing these wondrous evening sights for educational or esthetic reasons. America's great, and costly, observatories on the east coast have been rendered virtually useless for research, and those in the west have also been greatly hindered.

The United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey are sponsoring a public event that will be held on New Jersey Astronomy Awareness Day, Saturday, September 14th, entitled "Where Have the Dark Skies Gone?" Each of the participating clubs will be setting up their telescopes in various community locations, such as parks, ball fields, malls and shopping centers, that evening to allow the public a view of what can still be seen. They also plan to inform the community about better and more efficient ways of outdoor lighting - ways that can save everyone money and energy, and help the environment. Information about the new light pollution study commission bill up before the state assembly will also be distributed.

Following are the participating clubs and contact numbers for further information, locations and varying times.

Amateur Astron. Assoc. of Princeton, Princeton	(908) 359-4322
Amateur Astronomers, Inc., Cranford	(908) 709-7520 eve
Concordia Astronomy Club*, Jamesburg	(609) 395-7182
Hopatcong Area Amateur Astronomers, Hopatcong	(201) 770-1625
Morris Museum Astronomical Society, Morristown	(201) 386-1848 day
New Jersey Astronomical Assoc., High Bridge	(215) 253-7294 eve
North Jersey Astronomical Group, Clifton	(201) 523-0024 day
Sheep Hill Astronomical Association, Boonton	(201) 335-5990
South Jersey Astronomy Club, Millville	(609) 825-2196

* Concordia will be holding their event on the 28th along with the newly reforming Monroe Astronomy Club.

THE NEW JERSEY LIGHT POLLUTION STUDY COMMISSION

The New Jersey Senate Bill S-2608 and Assembly Bill A-4294 will establish a nine member Light Pollution Study Commission charged with studying the problem of light pollution, and advising the Legislature as to its severity and to recommend measures for its amelioration. Light Pollution is a consequence of excessive or inappropriate outdoor lighting. It results in the unnecessary expenditure of funds for energy on inappropriate lighting, as well as adversely affecting safety by shining directly into the eyes of

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motorists, and interfering with the enjoyment of the night sky. Several U.S. cities have adopted measures which have successfully addressed the problem.

The commission would be composed of the Commissioners of Commerce, Community Affairs and Environmental Protection, or their designated representatives; a municipal law enforcement official; and five members of the public. Of these members, one shall represent the lighting industry; one shall be an astronomer with experience in the study of light pollution; one shall represent the business community; and one shall represent environmental organizations. Within nine months of the first meeting of the commission, the commission would be required to submit to the Governor and the Legislature a report setting forth the results of its study and appropriate recommendations.

THE LIGHT POLLUTION BILL: WHAT YOU CAN DO

The New Jersey senate bill S-2608 was passed by a vote of 29-2 by the senate on May 20. The bill has gone automatically to the Assembly where it will probably be merged with Assemblyman Frank A. LoBiondo's version (same wording), Assembly bill A-4294. We have two more major steps to get through:

- 1) the bill must be brought up for committee hearing and passed in the Assembly Energy and Environment Committee; then
- 2) the bill must be posted for a vote of the whole assembly and passed.

If these steps occur successfully, and the governor signs the bill, all by the end of the year, the bill will become law and there will be a state Light Pollution Study Commission. If we don't make it through these steps in time, then the bill would need to be re-introduced in 1992 and the process started again. We want victory this year and we think we have an excellent shot at it.

To insure victory, though, we need to keep working. The first critical thing to do: either write or call Assembly Energy and Environment Committee chairman Robert G. Smith and tell him his bill is important and that you urge him to bring it up for a hearing in the committee. Tell him it is bill S-2608 or A-4294. His address and phone are:

Assemblyman Robert G. Smith
44 Stelton Road, Room 250
Piscataway, NJ 08854
(908) 752-0770

The second critical thing to do: contact your own Assembly representatives and ask them to help get the bill posted for a vote of the whole Assembly (after it has passed committee hearing) -- and then of course to vote for it.

NOTES ON THE JUNE UACNJ MEETING

The Summer UACNJ meeting was held at the New Jersey Star Quest in Beemerville hosted by the Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton. Items discussed were both the recent passing of the senate bill S-2608 as well as the September 14th, New Jersey Astronomy Awareness Day, the aim of which is to make the public more aware of astronomy, and to educate them concerning light pollution problems and possible control. (Both subjects are discussed in greater detail above.)

Duane Degutis of the Hopatcong Area Amateur Astronomers handed out copies of a "Messier Catalog Workbook" he had compiled to all delegates present hoping other clubs might find the concept applicable to their activities.

Larry Smith of Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton suggested we hold a social event in the Fall. Al Witzgall, representing the New Jersey Astronomical Association offered to host the event which will be held on November 9, 1991 at Voorhees State Park.

THE UPCOMING UACNJ NOVEMBER MEETING AND BAR-B-Q

The next meeting of the UACNJ will be held at the observatory at Voorhees State Park in High Bridge, hosted by the New Jersey Astronomical Association. The meeting will begin promptly at 4:00 p.m. All interested members of New Jersey area astronomy clubs are encouraged to attend. Some of the agenda items to be discussed are as follows:

1) Election of 1992 officers; 2) setting of 1992 UACNJ meeting and special event dates; 3) discussion of up-coming special events and review of past events for critique; 4) inspiring other clubs to join the UACNJ; 5) state observatory; etc.

After the meeting (5:00 - 5:30) there will be a pot-luck Bar-B-Q. NJAA will provide the cooking items, all you need do is bring some food such as: a pack of franks; a salad; dip and chips; or any other picnic munchies. Don't forget to bring other members of your club, family, friends, etc. And don't forget your telescopes. There will be a star party in the evening (the area has fairly dark skies for NJ). It should be a fun evening where you can get to meet amateur astronomers from around the state.

BELATED CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations are in order for both AAAP with their New Jersey Starquest which was definitely the New Jersey amateur astronomy function of the year. This event can only get better each year as it becomes better known. There were members from most of the New Jersey clubs, several New York and Pennsylvania groups, as well as a few Maryland, and Florida.

Congratulations also to AAI for hosting the International Astronomy Day symposium. There was a strong turn out from the North Jersey Astronomical Group as well as many other New Jersey clubs as well as many out-of-staters. This year the flea market was hosted by the Sheep Hill Astronomical Association which, I think, helped their club coffers a little. There was also a very good variety of lecture topics the entire day.

AAAP The Amateur Astronomers of Princeton, Inc. Meet on the second Tuesday for their monthly meetings at Peyton Hall on the Princeton campus and have their observatory open every Friday evening, weather permitting. Call (609) 737-2575 for information and observatory directions.

AAI Monthly Meetings are held at the Campus Center Auditorium, and Public Star Parties at Sperry Observatory. Both are on the campus of Union County College, Cranford, NJ. The Observatory is open every Friday to the public. Call evenings (908) 709-7520.

CAC The Concordia Astronomy Club meets on the third Thursday of each month at the Concordia club house, in Jamesburg. CAC invites members from other clubs to attend their presentations. However, special security arrangements must be made. Please call for information first (609) 655-1422.

HAAA The Hopatcong Area Amateur Astronomers meet on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 P.M., at Hudson Guild Farm, on Sparta-Stanhope Road, in Hopatcong. Public nights are on selected Fridays and Saturdays throughout the year. For further information call (201) 398-1198 or (201) 770-1625.

MMAS The Morris Museum Astronomical Society holds their monthly meetings at the museum in Morristown on the second Tuesday evening of the month. For further information about their events call (201) 368-1848.

MTC The Montclair Telescope Club is an observing group that meets periodically at a dark-sky location at Kemah Lake in Sussex County. For club information and next meeting date call (201) 447-2581.

NJAA The New Jersey Astronomical Association of High Bridge holds its monthly meetings at their Observatory at Voorhees State Park on the fourth Saturday of the month. Call (908) 638-8500 for information.

NJAG Public nights are held at the Observatory at Rifle Camp Park, Rifle Camp Road, West Patterson, NJ. For information or directions, call the Nature Center at (201) 523-0024. Business meetings and program are held on the second Wednesday of each month.

SHAA The Sheep Hill Astronomical Assoc. meets the 1st Sunday of the month at the Boonton Town Hall Community Room. Observatory Open House is on the 3rd Friday of the month. Call (201) 335-5990 for information.

STAR The S*T*A*R Astronomical Society, Inc. hold their monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at Holmdel Park Activity Center in Holmdel and hold bi-monthly observing weekends. For further information call (908) 536-4663 or (908) 264-1723.

WAS The Willingboro Astronomical Society is a group devoted primarily to observation and astrophotography. They hold their meetings at the Willingboro Municipal Building on the first and second Friday of each month. Call (609) 627-3043 or (609) 829-4345 for information.

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