



FOCUS

The Newsletter of the United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey

Volume 4, Issue 5

June/July/August/September 1999

Edited by Gordon Bond (AAI), 313 Raphael Ave., Middlesex, NJ 08846-1224

Establishing "Dark Areas"

Among the recommendations of the New Jersey Light Pollution Study Commission was the establishment of protected "dark areas" - places that were used for astronomical observation and/or were habitats for nocturnal animals and plants. The areas would receive special protection against light pollution.

About a year ago, the UACNJ solicited nominations from member-clubs for what sites should be considered for this protection. This data is now being compiled into a comprehensive report by Gordon Bond. This will be issued by the end of the year to various state and local government officials in an effort to encourage them to act.

TPO Discount Subscriptions

Don't forget that members of UACNJ clubs can get The Practical Observer magazine for just \$12 a year (\$2 off the regular rate!).

The current issue contains an interview with Carolyn Shoemaker and an article on understanding the concept of resolving power in optical systems...plus a whole lot more!

Bolides and Aurora at "The Jump"

[Report emailed to Barry Malpas by Bruce Gundlach]

Saturday: Super-Clear, no wind, not cold, amateurs outnumbered the public about 5 to 1! Estimate 35 to 40 people total, maybe more. [According to the] Ranger, the park was about 50% full, quiet as usual this time of year. Lonny Buinis, Wayne Augenstein and myself, were all who I knew were there on duty, but someone from AAI who was there for observatory work helped me and Wayne keep an eye on the 16". Everything was OK, demand to view through the 16" was not over-whelming because of all the other scopes on the field! Big crowd around Craig and Elaina's 16" early in the evening. Did not personally see all of talk, heard it was excellent.

I set up photographic equipment, and began photography at 12 midnight, saw many occasional perseids, and sporadic meteors, and one huge horizon (explosion?) light (lit up grounds a bit!) in the east - no sound. 2 flashes, maybe a transformer blew up?

Photographed and showed everyone comet Lee, 8th mag. Binocs, and 16" used. Comet moved visibly during the evening (in binocs!) Most people left by 3 am, I continued photographing till 5:30 am (dawn!) Craig and Elaina were also still viewing till then. They, and Wayne, did sleep-over, I left at 6:15 am.

Took some shots of early light of spectacular dawn and fog in valley (totally!), also saw Venus (rises about 4:30 am, and super bright!) for first time in morning sky.

Sunday: I returned for another "All Nighter" at 9pm, 2 other amateurs were there, can't remember names, but they are

signed in. At arrival, noticed something strange about the skyglow in the north, began setup, walked back over to chat, and the glow was forming rays! Quick! Get the cameras! I finally recognized this as Aurora, and two of us proceeded to photograph (Shot 1 roll, 24 exp and part of another roll), and view! It appeared as Curtain and Arcs, or Rays, around slight west of due north, in and around the big dipper, but not much higher, and no color.

Viewed 9:30 pm thru about 10pm then tapered off, but I still did some test shots till 11pm. (Tough to tell a general (non-rayed) aurora glow from what might be light pollution in north at low levels) The night was again super, but dew was a problem from 3am thru my stopping point at 4:30 am, sky still super! Others left by 3 am. At 4am, almost on the dot, I was checking my cameras, and noticed the house and grounds light up (even more than yesterdays explosion!) and turned around to see "bright!!!" 5 degree ion trail just left by this meteor (no sound). Did not see any fading embers this time, but trail was high in the south and looked at it for a full minute (timed) before remembering to grab and quick setup a camera on tripod, got a 1 minute exposure before it faded into invisibility! Est. duration, 3 minutes total viewing! Saw trail bend by high level winds!!! This is my 6th or 7th "Photo-Flash" meteor!

Locked up and left by 5am - rush hour booming on route 80! Didn't want to rub it in, but we had a spectacular viewing weekend! This was my first aurora sighting at the Jump, and generally since '91!, I missed the one around Hale-Bopp.

Summer Events Highlights



(back row, L to R) Bill Murray, Chris Van Horn, Ron Mittelstadt, Larry Smith, Saul Moroz, Ralph Marantino, Chris Moser (kneeling, L to R) Vic Belanger, Rex Parker

NJ StarQuest '99

Friday evening was very good observing. Saturday evening was partly cloudy with viewing patchy, although later in the evening around 11:30 the sky cleared up and the viewing was then good for several hours.

About 125 attended. There were attendees from many of the UACNJ clubs as well as other NY, CT and PA clubs. One individual from the Amateur Astronomers Assoc. of Pittsburgh (another AAAP, Brashear country) attended.

- Barry Malpas



Ralph Marantino with his 6" Astrophysics refractor



Elena Danella gets tips on mirror-grinding from John Dobson at Stellafane

Stellafane

The re-vote is in. The town of Springfield has, once again, voted to accept the prison (2345 in favor vs. 1535 against). However, the petition regarding the prison will be kept active! If you have not already signed the petition please check it out and consider doing so. The Springfield Telescope Makers thank all those who have given their support thus far. Keep tabs on the situation right here.

- Barry Malpas



Richard Berry, Carolyn Shoemaker and Barry Malpas

NE Astronomy Forum & Showcase

This year's NEAF was a great event as always. Plenty of interesting speakers and more vendors than you could shake a \$100 bill at! The keynote speaker was Carolyn Shoemaker. I had the pleasure of interviewing her later for *The Practical Observer* (see note on front for subscribing). A very nice person.

Next year's event will be held at Rockland Community College not far from the Holiday Inn in Suffern. The new venue offers more room for the vendors (no tent in the parking lot for the overflow!) and a better auditorium for the speakers.

- Gordon Bond

COMING EVENTS

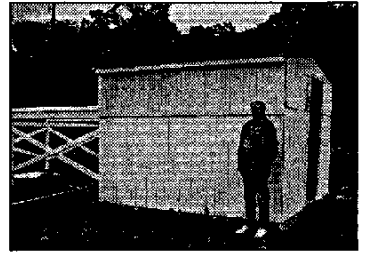
The 3rd Annual South Jersey Star Party, sponsored by SJAG
September 8 - 10, 1999 Belleplain State Forest, Cape May County, NJ

The 2nd Annual Jersey Astro Conference & Showcase
sponsored by AAI

November 6, 1999, Union County College, Cranford, NJ

UACNJ NOTEBOOK

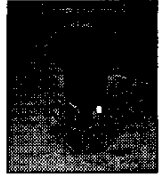
Projects Update AAI Observatory Nearing Completion



AAI's President, Steve Clark awaits clear skies next to the newly completed observatory.



Ray Shapp of AAI puts some finishing touches on the building



The pier onto which will be placed AAI's 14" Celestron.



AAI members gather around the Celestron CM 1400 destined for the Jenny Jump Observatory during the First Light ceremonies.

UACNJ Symposium

Barry Malpas (left) shows his objective prism spectrograph to visitors



Joe Sivo imaged the solar spectra using his fiber optic fed spectrograph on a video screen (lower right).

The UACNJ is on the Web!

Check us out at

<http://www.erols.com/njastro/>

The observers duty roster and the Jenny Jump project work schedule are located in the "UACNJ connection" section on the site.

Check it out, something new is always being added!