



FOCUS

The Newsletter of the United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey

Volume 4, Issue 1

February / March 1998

Gaining Ground in the Fight Against Light Pollution

It has been said, even among some UACNJ members, that the fight against light pollution is a "lost cause". Faced with the increasing encroachment of housing developments and shopping malls, it can indeed seem that way. But the truth is, we *have* made progress. Consider the following:

- New Jersey is the only state that formed a commission to study the problem.
- The State Department of Transportation has established a policy to:
 - Maximize the use of shielded light fixtures.
 - Comply with lighting recommendations made by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) and American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO).
 - Utilize reflective surfaced signs that do not require their own lights.
- The Garden State Parkway and NJ Turnpike now only install cutoff (shielded) lighting.
- General Public Utilities (GPU) is considering using shielded cobra head fixtures as their standard street light and adjusting any of their leased-type floodlights that project glare visible from passing vehicles.

Perhaps most significantly, environmentalist John Batinsey, who headed the state-appointed study commission, had a meeting with State Government officials on March 3, 1998 to discuss light pollution. At this meeting was the Director of Legislative Services, Mary Marcianite, Environmental Council to the Governor, John Valeri, Mitch Malec of Codes and Standards (who also

served on the Commission) and Ed Zamengo of General Public Utilities (who also served on the Commission). This meeting resulted from a letter written to the Governor's office by Batinsey which was forwarded to Jane M. Kenny, Commissioner of the NJ Department of Community Affairs - so writing letters to the Governor can get results!

One of the main problems we face is trying to place our particular perspective within the context of the total issue - roadway glare, compromised security against crime, waste of natural resources, lowering of the quality of life in general. Because "light pollution" was discovered by the astronomy community, most of the press first learns of this issue at astronomy events. As a result, most media coverage has been primarily from the

astronomy - that is, *minority* interest - perspective. This trivializes the whole thing and misses the point entirely!

If you still think light pollution is just an "astronomy thing", consider Henrico County, Virginia. In 1994, the Henrico County Division of Police received funding from the Department of Criminal Justice Services to start a program called Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This program was pioneered by Florida State University criminologist C. Ray Jeffery in 1971 after studies interviewed inmates as to why they chose certain sites to commit crimes. The Virginia program looked at how the layout and physical design of a community contributed to the reduction of crime. Lighting

Con't. on Back

Dr. Matthew Golombek Among Speakers at Rutgers Geology Day

Rutgers University held its annual Geology Day on January 31 at the New Brunswick, NJ campus. The event included a first-rate line up of speakers, a gem and mineral show and sale, and an open house at the Geology Museum. Among the many who flocked to it was a sizeable number of UACNJ members. Much of the attraction was due to the geology of Mars being featured by the first two speakers.

Martian meteorite expert, Dr. Allan Treiman, opened things up with an in-depth talk about the now famous (or infamous, depending upon your perspective!) Martian meteorite some believe holds microfossils of



Chief Pathfinder Scientist, Dr. Matthew Golombek

ancient Martian life. While he keeps an open mind, Dr. Treiman seems to conclude that the evidence ultimately points to it being doubtful that this is evidence for Martian life.

The keynote speaker was the Mars Pathfinder Chief Scientist, Dr. Matthew Golombek. His enthusiasm for his job was infectious as he spoke about the mission and its results - including a 3-D slide

show. He was swamped afterwards by press and what might be described as "science groupies" seeking autographs and photos! One woman even brought one of the die-cast toy models of the Pathfinder still

Con't. on Back

Rutgers Geology Day

Con't. from Front

in its package for him to sign!

After a lunch break, Dr. Richard Olsson, of the Rutgers Department of Geosciences gave a presentation on his work with the K-T boundary - the boundary layer between the geologic strata of the Cretaceous and Tertiary periods where the dinosaurs became extinct. By drilling core samples at the correct depth in New Jersey and other sites, Dr. Olsson and his colleagues have discovered evidence that supports the idea of a mass extinction brought about by an impact of earth by an asteroid.



Front row, left to right: Bonnie and Al Witzgall, Jenny and Barry Maipas, Robert and Joel Strausberg

Back row, left to right: Ralph Marantino, Gordon Bond, Wayne Augenstein, Don and Linda Greenwood, Karl Hricko, Wayne Petko

Not Pictured: Herb Johnson, George Lewycky, Penny Fischer, Sol Moroz, and possibly others!

Dr. Richard Lutz of the Institute for Marine & Coastal Studies then spoke about his work using the Alvin submarine to study the geothermal vents of the world's oceans. These are along the ridges where molten rock is being forced up between the tectonic plates and spreading. Much to many biologist's surprise, a wealth of life was found to thrive in spite the caustic environment. Dr. Lutz's and his colleagues found these creatures (tube worms, crabs, etc.) to

have one of the fastest known growth rates. Precious metals such as gold have been found to also be forming at a prestigious rate, fueling ideas of mining a "renewable" natural resource.

Bill Seldon of the Rutgers Geology Museum said that the speakers commented to him that they were impressed by the level of sophistication shown by the audience.

Light Pollution

Con't. from Front

was among the many aspects studied. It is worth noting that while they had no previous knowledge of "light pollution", they independently

arrived at many of the same conclusions as the astronomy and environmental communities studying the issue.

To encourage action, write, call or e-mail the Governor's Office:

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman
Governor of New Jersey
State House CN 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
(609) 292-6000

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.htm>

For a free copy of the Light Pollution Study Commission's report or a list of local legislators, call the NJ Office of Legislative Services at
800-792-8630.

For a list of legislators, visit the Legislature's Home Page at:
<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>

COMING EVENTS

Astronomy Day

Amateur Astronomers Inc. at 12:30 pm in Cranford, NJ
UACNJ at Jenny Jump 3:00 pm on May 2, 1998
talks and other events for the general public

Northeast Astronomy Fourn

May 3, 1998, 8:45am to 6:00pm
Holiday Inn & Conference Center
Suffern, New York

February 14th Meeting Results

- The new Constitution and Bylaws were passed.
- The 28" observatory building project was discussed.
- Announcement that the Rittenhouse Astronomy Club of Philadelphia, PA had joined the UACNJ.

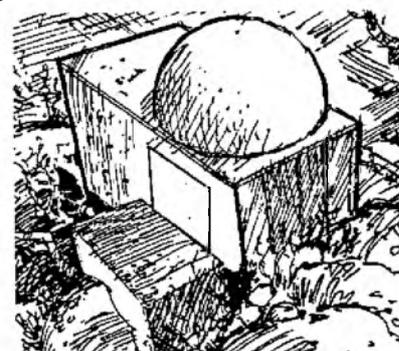
Upcoming Projects

- Running electricity from the house to the 5 observatory buildings.
- Completing the bunkbeds (bought with the \$500 Rockland Astronomy Club donation).
- Installation of digital setting circles on the 16" Greenwood telescope. These are presently being custom designed by JMI and were purchased from the \$2,000 Exxon grant (other items include eyepieces and spectroscope).
- Moving the green shed next to the west side of the house.

Team Leader Meeting & Telescope Qualification

There will be a Team Leader meeting on March 21 at 1pm at Jenny Jump.

Qualification on the 16" Greenwood telescope will be held on March 21 at 2 pm. When the digital setting circles are installed later this year, everyone will need to qualify again.



Sketch of the observatory for the 28".
Drawing by Ken Maipas

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!