



FOCUS

The Newsletter of the United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey

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Don't Feed the Bears!

Ken Koons got a rude awakening when he was woken by the sounds of someone going through the garbage cans next to the house up at Jenny Jump where he was spending the night. Expecting it was raccoons, he went out to confront them and found himself face to face with a black bear - and we ain't talking Ursa Major, either! It may have been a small bear, but he was big enough to tear up the garbage cans and attempt pushing in the door near the garage. Ken retreated to his car and honked the horn. Apparently used to humans, the bear didn't seem too bothered but eventually wandered off.

While perhaps a "minor" event as bear encounters go, it serves to underscore the need for a policy regarding the disposal of food garbage. Bears are attracted by the possibility of a meal and have an excellent sense of smell. One measure recently taken was to pour ammonia in and around the garbage cans on the side of the house. Apparently their sensitive noses don't like the strong odor.

In an effort to discourage him and his friends from returning, we are asking that all members to take their food garbage home with them for disposal. The park has provided a stock of large plastic bags for this purpose which are located on the floor of the meeting room near the front kitchen entrance.

A Rainy Astronomy Day

Astronomy Day this year could well have been re-named Meteorology Day. The weather bounced between sun and downpours the whole time and always displayed some rather dramatic looking clouds. Approaching showers could be seen in advance as they swept across the valley and there was even some lightning by nightfall.

Fortunately, this didn't stop around 35 people from gathering at Jenny Jump for the talks, displays, food and sharing in a common interest! Ralph Marantino even had his scope set up, albeit briefly, in the hope of catching some solar observing before the next batch of clouds moved in.

Members of AAAP were able to get in a few hours working on their observatory. AAI should be next with a pre-fab design.



Astronomy Day this year would have been better named "Meteorology Day" considering the weather. Trying to make the best of it, from left to right, are Napoleon, Lonnie Bulnis, Richard Gaines and Ken Maplas.

photo by Gordon Bond

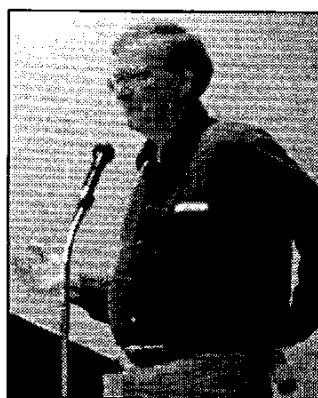
The Rockland Forum

On May 3, well over a thousand amateur astronomers descended on the Holiday Inn & Conference Center in

Suffern, New York for the Northeast Astronomy Forum and Telescope Show. Probably the best event of its kind in the region, it always attracts a large number of commercial vendors, organizations (such as the UACNJ) and first-rate speakers.

The speakers for this year included Karl Hricko (AAI) who explored the topic of colonizing space; *Astronomy* Managing Editor, Dave Eicher gave a slide show tour of the southern sky (once the skylight was finally darkened!); Fred Espenak of NASA Goddard Space Flight Center who spoke on predicting and chasing solar eclipses; Rodger Sinnott Associate Editor of *Sky & Telescope* talked about the making of Sky Publishing's landmark "Millennium Sky

Continued on Back



AAI ex-President Karl Hricko opened things with a talk on space colonization.

photo by Gordon Bond

Rockland Forum

Continued from Front Atlas; author Terrence Dickerson mesmerized the crowds with his wonderful wide-angle astrophotos.

While still an excellent event, it is obvious that they've outgrown their current venue. A tent had to be set up in the parking lot to accommodate all the vendor tables. An afternoon down-pour resulted in water running into the tent and damaging the bottom of the

AAI display set up by AAI President, Tony Patty.

Next year, the Forum will be moved to the vast Eisenhower Hall at the Westpoint Army School in Westpoint, New York, just a little north of Suffern. It will also be held over two days, May 1 and 2.

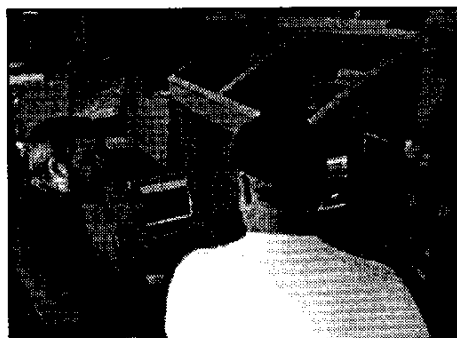
Thanks to Don Urban and Tom Massy for putting on another first-class event!



Here we go again! Members of AAAP scramble to get a tarp over their observatory-in-progress before the next wave of showers hit Jenny Jump during Astronomy Day.
photo by Gordon Bond

Barry Malpas (left) shows off the UACNJ web site to Ralph Marantino and Sol Moroz at Astronomy Day.

photo by Gordon Bond



Wanna Join?

Observership application forms can be downloaded off the UACNJ website at:

<http://www.erols.com/njastro/org/jjmembpg.html>

COMING EVENTS

Jersey Starquest IX

The Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton, Inc. will be sponsoring the 1998 Jersey Starquest from June 19 to June 21 at the Hope Conference and Renewal Center, Hope, NJ.

Camping and catered meals are included.

Registration deadline is June 5, 1998. For further information and registration, contact:

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<http://idt.net/~lewycky/starquest.html>

UACNJ NOTEBOOK

Projects Update

- Running electricity from the house to the 5 observatory buildings.
- Moving the green shed from its present location to the west side of the house.
- 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).
- The bunkbeds bought with a \$500 donation from the Rockland Astronomy Club, have been completed. All that's left is to get the mattresses in.

Dark Site Update

The UACNJ has completed the collection of data for the sites nominated for "Dark Site" status and protection. Environmentalist John Batinsey is making progress getting the State to listen and work with the anti-light pollution movement at large. The UACNJ is now waiting to see what develops so that we can set our efforts within the context of the whole process, thus avoiding associating the issue solely with astronomical interests.

Light Pollution Update

Environmentalist John Batinsey has been working closely with General Public Utility (GPU) to establish an anti-light pollution policy regarding their streetlights. This process could use the support of UACNJ members served by GPU by calling to complain about particularly annoying fixtures. Members served by other utility companies can also complain. If a policy can be created with GPU, such complaints will help encourage other utilities to follow through with their own.

Telephone numbers are as follow:

General Public Utilities (800) 662-3115

PSE&G (800) 724-8517

Atlantic Energy (800) 642-3780

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!