BACK BAY observer

The Official Newsletter of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers
P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9877

EPHEMERALS
june 2013

06/06, 7:30 pm
BBAA Monthly Meeting
TCC Campus, VA Beach
Building J, Rm JC-12

06/08
Nightwatch
Chippokes State Park
Surry, VA

06/14
Night Hike
Northwest River Park

06/14, 9:00 pm
Garden Stars
Norfolk Botanical Gardens

06/18, Dusk - 11:00 pm
Boardwalk Astronomy
VA Beach Boardwalk at 24 St.

06/28
Skywatch
Northwest River Park

Looking Up!

Hello all! It has been too long since I've been able to write to you all. Now that school is finished and, I am slightly more free for the summer, I will be able to participate as I wish.

Summer is the prime time for a lot of our outreach, including an event of ours that has been going on for several years now, Boardwalk Astronomy. It is one of my favorite repeat events throughout the year and consists of a bunch of us going down to the VA Beach boardwalk and offering tourists and locals alike a chance to look at the heavens. No, the skies aren't great, and yes, occasionally there are some crazy people,. But there are also little moments, like kids "seeing" the flag on the moon, international travelers teaching us about their cultures' constellations, and people on vacation seeing Saturn for the first time . These are some of the things that make it completely worthwhile.

The very best part about Boardwalk is that you don't need any special knowledge or equipment to participate. A lot of times, people just stand and talk, maybe about astronomy, maybe not. So you don't

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Looking Up, continued from page 1

need to know how far Vega is or what phase the moon is in or which satellite passed over on March 7, 1982. And you don't need a telescope or binoculars or even a map of the night sky. Just you. Just yourself.

So as the summer progresses, I hope to see all of you out there at some point, whether on the boardwalk or elsewhere.

Courtney Flonta

Note: **Boardwalk Astronomy** is held each month from May to September, in cooperation with Beach Events at the oceanfront. BBAA members set up scopes from sunset to 11pm, and show the moon, planets, and anything else that's visible to the public. The VB folks turn out the lights for about a block along the boardwalk near 24th Street, and we let tourists and locals look through our telescopes. It's a good outreach event, coordinated by Chuck Dibbs, Planetarium Director at the Virginia Beach City Public Schools Planetarium, and Dale Carey of the BBAA. It's always on a Tuesday, though we sometimes have Thursday as a rain date.

-George Reynolds

Amazing BBAA Member!

Ben Loyola, saves a boy 's life in Virginia Beach

Many of you may know BBAA member, Ben Loyola, who is our Scholarship Committee Chairman. You may also remember him from two recent meetings where he made presentations on asteroid hunting and setting up a home observatory.

On May 23, 2013, Ben was dropping off his visiting parents at a nearby hotel when he heard a commotion around the hotel pool. After rushing to the deck area to investigate, he found a young boy who had been pulled from the pool and was not breathing. Ben quickly took charge of the situation by shouting for someone to call 911 and administering resuscitation techniques to revive the boy. Fortunately, Ben was successful and the boy survived.

Kent Blackwell spoke for us all when he said, "With newspapers filled with bad and depressing news it does one's heart well to read such articles… Ben You are to be commended and in our minds you are a hero!"

Ben Loyola is an accomplished amateur astronomer who is always willing to help or offer advice. He chairs the club's scholarship committee and is an active BBAA member. Here he is awarding a check to the 2007 BBAA Scholarship Winner.

The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's

Observer

The BBAA Observer is published monthly; the monochrome version is mailed to members who do not have internet access. Members who do have Internet access can acquire the full color version on the Internet at **http://www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml**

Please submit articles and items of interest no later than the date of the monthly meeting in order to be in the next month's edition.

Please submit all items to: bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com or BBAA Observer, P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA

President
Courtney Flonta
757-580-0644
president@backbayastro.org

Vice President
Chuck Jagow
757-547-4226
vp@backbayastro.org

Treasurer
Jim Tallman
treasurer@backbayastro.org

Secretary
Kevin Swann
757-424-6242
kjswann@yahoo.com

Webmaster
Nick Anderson
nranderson.deepskyobserver@gmail.com

ALCOR
Bill McLean
alcor@backbayastro.org

Librarian
Bill Newman
billn59@verizon.net

Scholarship Coordinator
Ben Loyola
benito@loyola.com

RRRT Coordinators
Lawrence "Bird" Taylor
Lawrence.W.Taylor@nasa.gov

Newsletter Editor
Paul Tartabini
bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com

BBAA Meetings

The BBAA meet the first Thursday of every month except for July (when we have a picnic instead). The June meeting will be held in the KIVA Room at Plaza Middle School located at 3080 South Lynnhaven Rd in Virginia Beach at 7:30 pm. This meeting is a must-se as Chuck Dibs will be showing off the new planetarium!

BBAA Internet Links

BBAA Website
www.backbayastro.org

Yahoo! Groups
tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro

BBAA Observer Newsletter
www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml

May 2, 2013 BBAA Meeting Minutes

The Meeting was held at TCC.

Those in attendance were:
Courtney Flonta, Bill Holmes, Kevin Swann, Jim Tallman, Mark Gerlach, Thomas Jarvis, Chris Jarvis, Bill Mclean, Andrew Reisenweber, Chuck Jagow, Neill Alferd, Jason Tackett, Matt McLaughlin, Bird Taylor, Robert Beuerlein, Mat Snellings, Jeff Goldstein, Ben Loyola, Robyn Korn, Tom Flatley, Leigh Anne Lagoe, Pete Goulart .

Calendar:

- May 31 Friday, Skywatch @ Northwest River State Park, Equestrian area, 7:30PM
- June 6 Thursday, monthly meeting, Plaza Middle School Planetarium, 7:30PM
- June 8 Saturday, Nightwatch @ Chippokes, 7:30PM
- June 14 Friday, Garden Stars @ Norfolk Botanical Gardens, 9PM
- June 14 Friday, Night Hike @ NWRP, 7PM
- June 18 Tuesday, Boardwalk Astronomy, 7:30PM (rain date June 20 Thursday same time)
- June 28 Friday, Skywatch @ Northwest River State Park, Equestrian area, 8:30PM (TBA 3PM also here)
- June 29 Saturday, Sun watch @ Pungo-Blackwater Library, 1:30-3PM

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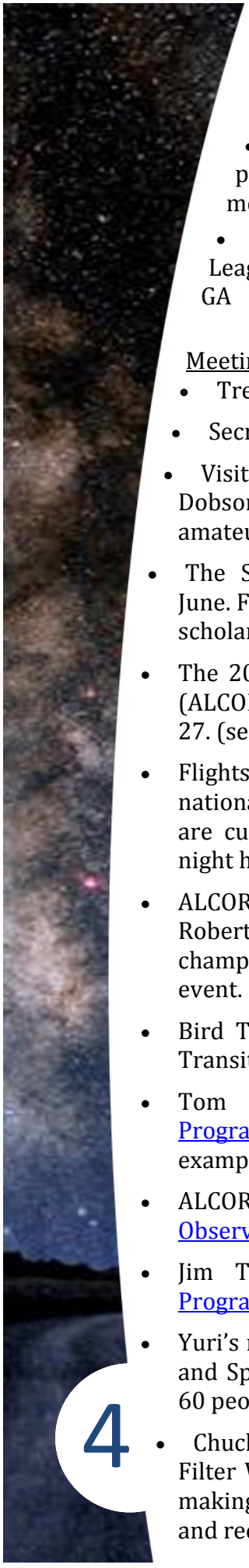


May Meeting Minutes, continued from page 3

- July 10-14 Green Bank Star Quest
- July 21 Sunday, BBAA annual picnic @ NWRP 3PM-7PM (in lieu of monthly meeting)
- July 24-27 ALCON 2013 Astronomical League's national convention, in Atlanta, GA

Meeting Summary:

- Treasurer's Report was read.
- Secretary's report reading was waived.
- Visitors: Leigh Anne Lagoe who has an 8" Dobsonian & Pete Goulart who is an amateur cosmologist.
- The Scholarship committee will meet in June. Five applications were collected for the scholarship.
- The 2013 Astronomical League Convention (ALCON) will be held in Atlanta, GA July 24-27. (see: alcon2013.astroleague.org).
- Flights for the Astronomical League's national convention this July in Atlanta, GA are currently $227 round trip with $113/ night hotel reservations.
- ALCOR representative Bill Mclean awarded Robert Beuerlein the Messier marathon champion of the evening at the last VPAS event. He viewed 28 through patchy clouds.
- Bird Taylor recently earned the AL Venus Transit award.
- Tom Flatley finished the AL's Galileo Program & recommends using online examples for how to organize everything.
- ALCOR has recently added the Asterism Observing Program.
- Jim Tallman received the Double Star Program award.
- Yuri's night (held in April at the Virginia Air and Space Museum in Hampton) had about 60 people attending.
- Chuck Jagow & Jim Tallman held a Solar Filter Workshop. Participants received help making their own custom-made solar filter and received a pizza box to store it in.
- The evening's raffle winner was Robert Beuerlein who won a smooth space camera in addition to donated launch code cards (time on SLEW scope).
- An additional winner was Neil Alford who won an Illustrated guide to Astronomy Wonders.

Observing Reports:

- Last Saturday's cub scout viewing event was manned by Chuck Jagow, Jim Tallman, Mark Gerlach and one more. 50+ scouts (1st thru 4th grade) and 20 parents viewed. Club members spoke & provided hand-outs. The Dobsonian telescope had the best views.
- Neill Alford saw the March 22 mid-Atlantic bolide break apart. (check out The Latest Worldwide Meteor/Fireball Reports blog and the MBIQ Meteor Bot Internet Query for more information.
- Bird Taylor barely saw the NASA Antares rocket launch from Buckroe Beach in Hampton. Mat Snellings drove up to Wallops Island to see the launch & got a great view. The main road was blocked but security directed him to an alternate road that had about 300 people. Mat cautioned to beware of ticks if you go to Wallops for a launch.

Meeting Presentation:

- The meeting presentation was by member Jason Tackett. His presentation was entitled: The CALIPSO Mission – Understanding Aerosol & Cloud Influence on Climate with Lasers in Space. Jason described the CALIPSO mission, which utilizes a series of satellites that use green and near infrared lasers to measure natural & human-generated aerosols. The lasers are naked eye safe, but not through a telescope. Highlights of Jason's talk were seeing Sahara desert dust over the Atlantic Ocean & the Caribbean; Siberian summer fire smoke that even reached Virginia on 5/14/2012. Volcanic eruptions were also visible.

Minutes taken by Kevin Swann

NASA's Space Place

Exploring the Water World

By Diane K. Fisher

In some ways, we know more about Mars, Venus and the Moon than we know about Earth. That's because 70% of our solar system's watery blue planet is hidden under its ocean. The ocean contains about 98% of all the water on Earth. In total volume, it makes up more than 99% of the space inhabited by living creatures on the planet.

As dominant a feature as it is, the ocean—at least below a few tens of meters deep—is an alien world most of us seldom contemplate. But perhaps we should.

The ocean stores heat like a "fly wheel" for climate. Its huge capacity as a heat and water reservoir moderates the climate of Earth. Within this Earth system, both the physical and biological processes of the ocean play a key role in the water cycle, the carbon cycle, and climate variability.

This great reservoir continuously exchanges heat, moisture, and carbon with the atmosphere, driving our weather patterns and influencing the slow, subtle changes in our climate.

The study of Earth and its ocean is a big part of NASA's mission. Before satellites, the information we had about the ocean was pretty much "hit or miss," with the only data collectors being ships, buoys, and instruments set adrift on the waves.

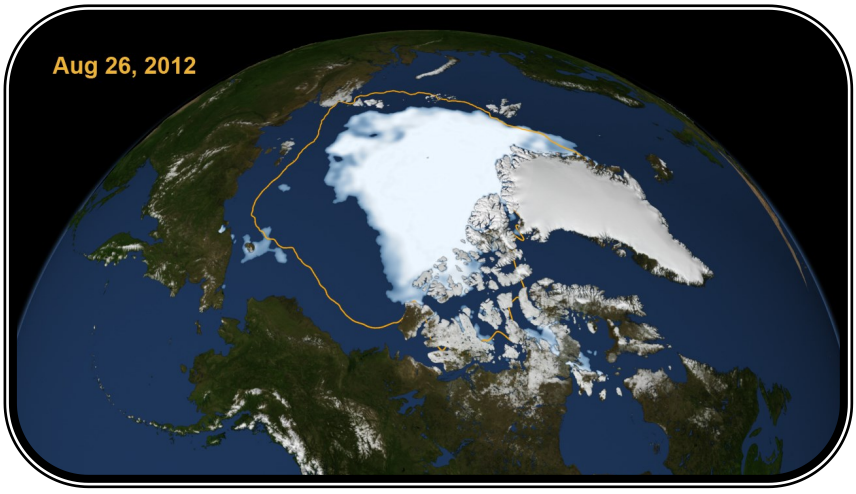
Now ocean-observing satellites measure surface topography, currents, waves, and winds. They monitor the health of phytoplankton, which live in the surface layer of the ocean and supply half the oxygen in the atmosphere. Satellites monitor the extent of Arctic sea ice so we can compare this important parameter with that of past years. Satellites also measure rainfall, the amount of sunlight reaching the sea, the temperature of the ocean's surface, and even its salinity!

Using remote sensing data and computer models, scientists can now investigate how the oceans affect the evolution of weather, hurricanes, and climate. In just a few months, one satellite can collect more information about the ocean than all the ships and buoys in the world have collected over the past 100 years!

NASA's Earth Science Division has launched many missions to planet Earth. These satellites and other studies all help us understand how the atmosphere, the ocean, the land and life—including humans—all interact together.

Find out more about NASA's ocean studies at science.nasa.gov/earth-science/oceanography.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with NASA.



This image from September 2012, shows that the Arctic sea is the smallest recorded since record keeping began in 1979. This image is from NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio at the Goddard Space Flight Center.

The Spring 2013 East Coast Star Party

By Kent Blackwell

After nearly a week of clouds and rain, everyone was looking forward to the May 9-12, 2013 East Coast Star Party (ECSP). Unfortunately, the weather forecast wasn't much improved from the week before.

Despite rather gloomy predictions, Thursday was a beautiful day, and the sky at night was about as dark as I have ever seen it in Coinjock, NC. Only a dozen or so eager observers showed up Thursday, but we made the best of the small crowd. Roy and Dee Diffrient once again came from Monkton, MD. Dee did her magic, feeding us pulled pork, cole slaw and a wonderful apple cake for desert. Top that off with soft drinks and Chardonnay wine and that hardly qualifies as "roughing" it in the wild.

The first object I sighted was the comet ***C2012 S1 (ISON)*** lying at Castor's foot in Gemini. ISON has been predicted to be a comet of the century this coming November 2013. Even though the sky wasn't completely dark the comet was easily visible in my 25" f/5 telescope.

Roy Diffrient showed me the small but bright planetary nebula ***IC 3568***, nicknamed the Baby Eskimo. One glace at this object will verify the moniker; it really does look like a small version of NGC 2392, The Eskimo Nebula in Gemini.

One of the most splendid views of the evening was seeing the huge southern globular cluster ***Omega Centauri*** through Bob Beuerlein's 8" Celestron CPC-800HD at a magnification of 100x. It was truly the best I have ever seen it, verified by Bob, Roy Diffrient, Ray Moody and Paul Tartabini. The peculiar lenticular galaxy ***NGC 5128 (Centaurus A)*** lies about 5-degrees to the north and was really something special seeing the inky black superimposed dust lane that makes this galaxy so famous.

The sky was very dark after midnight. Roy, Ray and I all got readings of 21.45 on the sky quality meter. That's darker than I've seen the Coinjock skies in ten years. The sky was so dark I decided to shoot a few skyscape pictures of the Milky Way (see large image above), which was just emerging over the treetops. The area in the Cygnus region was beautiful.

As pretty as the Cygnus region was, the Scorpius and Sagittarius areas were even more beautiful. By 2:00 am a few high clouds rolled in, indicating to me that it was time to quit and go to bed.

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East Coast Star Party, continued from page 6

***Scenes from Coinjock**: Left:* The line forms quickly for Dee Diffrient's mouth watering spaghetti dinner. Somehow there always seems to be enough for everyone. *Center:* No one puts on a star party like Kent Blackwell, so who can blame him for occasionally "flipping out" during the weekend. *Right:* Nothing cheers up a rainy day like Georgie June's bright smile. *Images courtesy of Kent Blackwell, Roy Diffrient, and Michelle Shinn.*

Most of the day Friday everyone enjoyed relaxing and chatting about the hobby of astronomy. By late afternoon about 30 more people showed up. Dinner that evening was awesome, and once again provided by Dee Diffrient. Glenda Moody also contributed to the immense job of feeding nearly 35 of us. Dee's spaghetti is always out of this world (perfect for us astronomers) but this time it was even more out of this world. Although she provided buckets full of spaghetti, by the end of the meal there was hardly any left. Several cakes were provided for dessert. We all thank Roy & Dee Diffrient and Ray & Glenda Moody for feeding us.

Clouds were predicted for the entire night, but the sky occasionally cleared, giving us and many visitors from the campground the chance to see a some "show objects."

M3 & **M13** were gorgeous in my 25" and the planet **Saturn** was beautiful in a 6" f/8 telescope belonging to the twin 13-year old boys, Tom and Chris. The rings were razor sharp. The boys also split the double star **Alcor & Mizar**, as well as **Polaris**.

By midnight the sky clouded completely. Most people packed their scopes away for the night, just in time for the sky to clear once again! Isn't that always the way it works?

We were expecting rain Saturday morning but the sky was mostly clear and the temperature rather cool. About twenty of us made the usual trek to Mel's Diner in Grandy, NC, which is about 15 miles south of our observing site at Hampton Lodge in Coinjock, NC.

Around 2:30 pm we got together for what is becoming an ECSP tradition, a wine and cheese hors d'oeuvres frenzy. Each of us had an eye on the weather as thunderstorms threatened to move in. Regardless of the weather everyone had a great afternoon enjoying the social hour. Although we all hoped for clear skies in the evening, that was almost a moot point since socializing is nearly as fun as stargazing.

The annual cookout was at 5:30 pm. Several friends called me from Virginia Beach and said it was raining. Perhaps that's why the crowd was somewhat smaller than previous years. We lucked out without any rain though.

The door prize drawing was next. First was the under-15 drawing. Georgie June and I made certain we had enough prizes so that all the kids walked away with something. Despite the smaller crowd, more kids attended than usual. Good, we need young blood to keep our hobby afloat! Jim Tallman won the grand prize of the adult drawing — an Explore Scientific 8.8 mm, 82-degree waterproof eyepiece. Congratulations to Jim.

After the last door prize was handed out Jim Tallman and Georgie June awarded special thank you cards and contributions to yours truly and Roy and Dee Diffrient. We were all enamored by your generosity. Thank you!

Unfortunately, it was mostly cloudy Saturday night so we weren't able to do much observing. Overall, though, it was a wonderful ECSP event. The skies were spectacularly clear on Thursday evening and mostly clear Friday.

I would like to thank all those who helped me put this event on, in particular Roy and Dee Diffrient as well as Ray and Glenda Moody. I know the forecast was not good for the weekend and I owe a special thanks to those who ignored the gloomy forecast and came out to support the East Coast Star Party anyway. The Fall party is tentatively planned for Halloween weekend, 2013. Don't forget to come dressed in your scariest attire.

June 2013

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
6/6 BBAA Monthly Meeting		6/8 New Moon
6/8 Nightwatch @ Chippokes State Park		6/16 First Quarter
6/14 Garden Stars @ NBG	6/14 Night Hike at Northwest River Park	6/21 Solstice & Moon occults Kappa Librae
6/18 Boardwalk Astronomy		6/22 Full Moon
6/28 SkyWatch @ Northwest River Park	6/29 Sunwatch at Pungo-Blackwater Library	6/30 Last Quarter

Sneak Peek into July

No Meeting in July
Sat 7/06/2013 Nightwatch at Chippokes State Park, Surry VA.
Fri 7/19/2013 Garden Stars at Norfolk Botanical Gardens, 9:00 pm
Sun 7/21/2013 BBAA Summer Picnic, 3:00 pm
Tue 7/23/2013 Boardwalk Astronomy at 24th St VA Beach Boardwalk, Dusk – 11:00 pm
Fri 7/26/2013 Skywatch at Northwest River Park