



## EPHEMERALS - NOVEMBER 2007

DATE	WHEN	WHAT & WHERE
1	7:30p	BBAA Meeting @ TCC in Virginia Beach
2	Dusk	Skywatch @ NWRP Equestrian Area
3	Dusk	Cloverwatch @ Franklin Fairgrounds
7	TBD	Brownie TRY-IT Day
10	Dusk	Nightwatch @ Chippokes Plantation
16	7:30p	Cub/Boy Scouts @ West Rd, Chesapeake
30	Dusk	Skywatch @ NWRP Equestrian Area

## Looking Up!

### Autumn has finally arrived!

No one likes to see it getting dark early, no one that is but us photon crazed star gazers. This is a good time to get those scopes out after work and catch a few peeks into the past. Speaking of getting scopes out, the RRRT is starting to come to life. Keep an eye on the Yahoo group for news and information on this exciting project.

Also, the colder weather is approaching, time to put the bug spray away and break out the sweaters. In addition to the arrival of Autumn, the area is finally get-

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ting some much needed rain, something we are all thankful for. And, speaking of being thankful, Thanksgiving is rapidly approaching. Something else to be thankful for, in just a few weeks, Kent will once again sponsor his East Coast Star Party at Coinjock, NC (November 9 & 10) his 17th annual. If you have never attended Kent's start party, you have no idea what you are missing. The camaraderie, the sky, the box wine, the scopes, the cocaine doughnuts, the good friends, the annual raid on Steve's tent, the food, the box wine, the fun... trust me, it is the best you've ever seen. Kent's East Coast Star Party - The Cure for the common Star Party!

Keep Looking Up!

*Kevin Weiner*

# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer

## CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON!

The Back Bay Amateur Astronomers annual Holiday Luncheon will once again be held at the Lynnhaven Fishhouse in Virginia Beach. And this time we will be in the Starfish Room.

The grand event is planned for Saturday the 8th of December at 12:00 O'clock noon to 3:00 PM. The menu is available online at:

<http://www.lynnhavenfishhouse.net/menus.php?menu=lunch>

We ask that if you plan to attend to please RSVP to:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro/database>

We sure hope to see everyone at the luncheon, it is a very old and dear BBAA tradition!

*Chuck Jagow*

## October's Meeting Minutes

The October meeting of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers was called to order by President Kevin Weiner on Thursday October 4th, 2007 at 7:30 PM at the Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College Campus.

**Members in Attendance:** There were 23 people in attendance at the October meeting. This included 21 regular members, one brand new member ( WELCOME RON NEALE ), and a guest Jim Miller. Members in attendance were: Neill Alford, Dr. Bruce Bodner, Gerry Carver, Dr. Jeff Dunn, Ted Forte, Jay Garrard, Mark Gerlach, Chuck Jagow, Karen Jagow, Georgie June, James Kresky, Ben Loyola, Matt McLaughlin, Bill McLean, Mike Przytula, George Reynolds, Rob Schonk, Kevin Swann, Barbara Weiner, Kevin Weiner and Shelton Williams.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Barbara Weiner reported that we have \$3,931.62 total of which \$1,499.80 exists in the BBAA Scholarship fund, leaving \$2,431.82 for club operations.

**Secretary's Report:** Secretary Chuck Jagow reported that the club membership is at 93 members of which there were about 12 delinquent members needing to pay their dues. The reading of the September minutes were waived, as they generally are, because they are posted

on the Internet.

**Astronomical League Correspondent's Report:** Georgie June indicated that she was awaiting 2 certificates from the Astronomical league.

**Old Business:** There was no old business brought up.

**New Business:** Kevin explained that all of the current BBAA officer positions were up for grabs because each officer had served the maximum stint of two years in their office. And that he and Barb would not accept a nomination for any future office. He then opened the floor for nominations. The following people were nominated and seconded for the listed offices with minimal grumbling on their part:

President:	Dr. Bruce Bodner
Vice President	Chuck Jagow
Secretary:	Matt McLaughlin
Treasurer:	Neill Alford

Bruce Bodner brought up the Christmas Luncheon and suggested that we return to the Lynnhaven Fishhouse if we could get assurances that we would not get "bumped" as we had before. Bruce volunteered to contact the establishment and try to make arrangements for the 15th of December.

**Rapid Response Robotic Telescope Project Report:** Ted Forte reported that there had been no real change since the previous month. However the Telescope was supposed to be installed last week but Ted has had no contact with Dr. Salgado so the actual status is unknown at this time. The telescope installers may very well be there this week.

**Presentation:** The evening's presentation was provided by Kevin Weiner on Junk Astronomy. Following the presentation an informal roundtable discussion ensued concerning ways to increase membership and what could be done to improve things with the club. Topics included sidewalk astronomy presentations, special interest groups, contacting ex-members, gift memberships and sending membership invitations to ex-members.

**In Conclusion:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 PM.

*Chuck Jagow*

# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer



## The Red (Hot?) Planet

by Patrick L. Barry

Don't let Mars's cold, quiet demeanor fool you. For much of its history, the Red Planet has been a fiery world.

Dozens of volcanoes that dot the planet's surface stand as monuments to the eruptions that once reddened Mars's skies with plumes of glowing lava. But the planet has settled down in its old age, and these volcanoes have been dormant for hundreds of millions of years.

Or have they? Some evidence indicates that lava may have flowed on Mars much more recently. Images of the Martian surface taken by orbiting probes show regions of solidified lava with surprisingly few impact craters, suggesting that the volcanic rock is perhaps only a million years old.

If so, could molten lava still occasionally flow on the surface of Mars today?

With the help of some artificial intelligence software, a heat-sensing instrument currently orbiting Mars aboard NASA's Mars Odyssey spacecraft could be just the tool for finding active lava flows.

"Discovering such flows would be a phenomenally exciting scientific finding," says Steve Chien, supervisor of the Artificial Intelligence Group at JPL. For example, volcanic activity could provide a source of heat, thus making it more likely that Martian microbes might be living in the frosty soil.

The instrument, called THEMIS (for Thermal Emission Imaging System), can "see" the heat emissions of the Martian surface in high resolution—each pixel in a THEMIS image represents only 100 meters on the ground. But THEMIS produces about five times more data than it can transmit back to Earth.

Scientists usually know ahead of time which THEMIS data they want to keep, but they can't plan ahead for unexpected events like lava flows. So Chien and his colleagues are customizing artificial intelligence software called ScienceCraft to empower THEMIS to identify important data on its own.

This decision-making ability of the ScienceCraft software

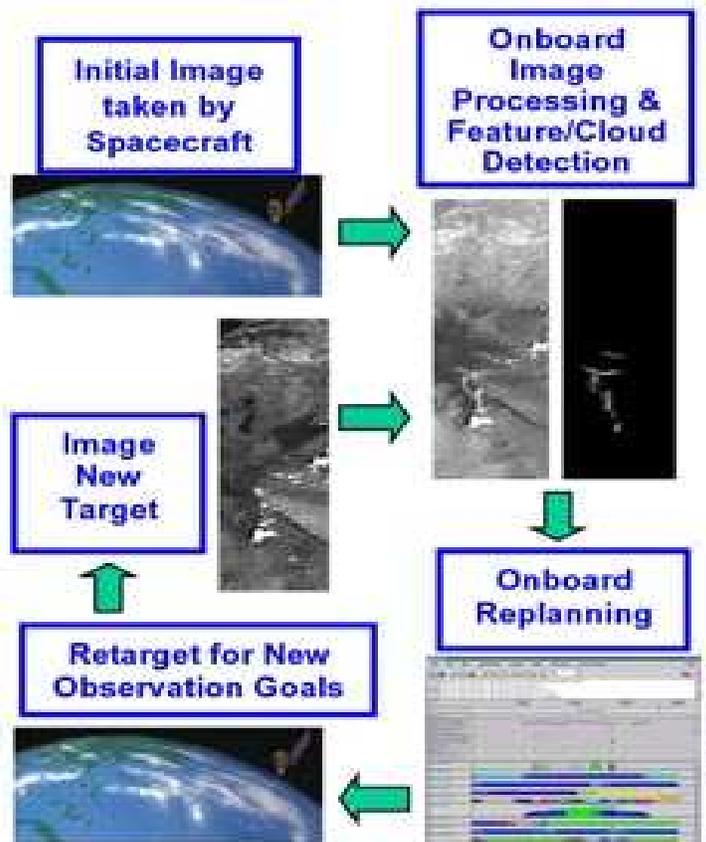
was first tested in Earth orbit aboard a satellite called Earth Observing-1 by NASA's New Millennium Program. Earth Observing-1 had already completed its primary mission, and the ScienceCraft experiment was part of the New Millennium Program's Space Technology 6 mission.

On Odyssey, ScienceCraft will look for anomalous hotspots on the cold, night side of Mars and flag that data as important. "Then the satellite can look at it more closely on the next orbit," Chien explains.

Finding lava is considered a long shot, but since THEMIS is on all the time, "it makes sense to look," Chien says. Or better yet, have ScienceCraft look for you—it's the intelligent thing to do.

### Image Caption:

Just as changing cloud patterns on Earth were identified using Earth Observing-1's Advanced Land Imager along with ScienceCraft software, the THEMIS instrument with ScienceCraft on the Mars Odyssey spacecraft can avoid transmitting useless images.



# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer

## BBAA INFO

The BBAA meet the first Thursday of every month. While school is in session we meet at the VA Beach TCC campus in the Pungo building. The November meeting will be on Thursday November 1st at 7:30 PM at the VA Beach TCC campus in the Pungo building in the Astronomy classroom.

## BBAA INTERNET LINKS

### BBAA WEB SITE

<http://groups.hamptonroads.com/bbaa>

### YAHOO GROUP

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro>

### BBAA OBSERVER NEWSLETTER

<http://www.backbayastro.org/newsletters/newsletter.shtml>

## WHERE IS THE MEETING?

### TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS

The TCC Campus is located in Virginia Beach off of Princess Anne road. The following should help you locate the campus.

FROM Interstate I-64:

Proceed to the I64 / I264 junction and take I264 East .  
Take the S. Independence Exit, 17A, right hand lane  
(.000000048134 AU).

Turn LEFT onto Princess Anne road  
(.000000010322 AU).

Turn LEFT onto Community College Place  
(.000000002131 AU).

At the Stop Sign turn right and follow the road around to the left and park in one of the parking lots.

The meeting is held in the Pungo Building which is on the right hand side of the pathway that splits the two major parking lots. The Astronomy classroom is in the far back right hand corner of the building.

### COX COMMUNICATIONS CAMPUS

The COX Communications Campus is located in Chesapeake's Greenbrier section. The following should help you locate the facility.

FROM Interstate I-64:

Take exit 289B (between the Indian River & Battlefield exits).  
South on Greenbrier Parkway (.7382 miles).  
Turn RIGHT onto Eden Way West (.9231 miles).  
Turn RIGHT on Crossways Blvd (.88901 miles).  
Turn Right into the Cox Campus

The meeting is usually held in the Silver room located on the North side of the facility. Enter and tell the guard that you are with the BBAA and they will issue a badge and direct you to the room.

**President**  
Kevin Weiner  
757.548.4936  
Kevin.weiner@cox.net

**Vice President**  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

**Treasurer**  
Barb Weiner  
757.548.4936  
Barb.weiner@cox.net

**Secretary**  
Chuck Jagow  
757.547.4226  
Chuck@jagowds.com

**ALCOR**  
Georgie June  
doublestarjune@msn.com

**Librarian**  
Gerry Carver  
popcarg@aol.com

**Web Master /  
RRRT Coordinator**  
Ted Forte  
twforte@cox.net

**Scholarship Coordinator**  
Ben Loyola  
benito@loyola.com

What do you want to do?

## OBSERVER INFO

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/newsletters/newsletter.shtml>

Please submit articles and items of interest no later than the 15th of November for the December issue. Please submit all items to:

[ObserverBBAA@cox.net](mailto:ObserverBBAA@cox.net) / [chuck@jagowds.com](mailto:chuck@jagowds.com)

OR

BBAA Observer  
P.O. Box 9877  
Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9877

# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer

## Delmarva No-Frills XII 2007

I arrived mid-day to the XII annual Delmarva No-Frills Stargaze, and received a gracious greeting by about a dozen of my friends from the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers in the Tidewater, Virginia area. Also welcoming me were Roy & Dee Diffrient from Monkton, MD and C.J. Wood from Ridgeley, MD. This entourage would be our little star party group amongst others for the remainder of the week and weekend. Wednesday's forecast was not good, indeed, nor was Thursday's. As I so often say, never, ever put so much faith in weather forecast.



Kent waiting out the clouds.

One well-meaning man even visited my trailer armed with several printouts of a half-dozen weather forecasts. Take your pick; they all predicted different forecasts, but none predicted clear skies. As darkness fell it was supposed to be raining, according to the above-mentioned predictions. They were all wrong, because for three hours the sky was beautifully clear!

I was combing the sky with my 25" wondering what to view first when Delmarva Stargazers member Don Surles wandered by and suggested we take a gander at the lenticular galaxy NGC 7457 in Pegasus. This bright galaxy showed some inner detail but wasn't overly impressive. Then Don said, "Ok, try NGC 7814", a very bright galaxy with a nearly stellar core and faint extensions, with mottling visible on the eastern extension.



CJ Woods our first Associate Member!

I glanced over, as C.J. Wood was desperately scanning the skies looking for illusive planetary nebulae, including IC 2165 and the large Eridanus face-on galaxy NGC 1232. C.J. continued his quest to track

down Abell planetary nebulae, a major undertaking for sure! His 15-year old friend Hunter Alton was combing the skies with his relatively new 10" Dobsonian telescope. Hunter found NGC 1528, a large open cluster containing 30-50 bright stars that curve in a nice, circular pattern. His next target, NGC 1545 was not so im-

pressive, but we all chuckled at the disappointment of a cluster containing only three stars!



Roy and Ted pondering the weather.

By midnight clouds rolled in so everyone in the observing field packed his or her gear away. Within an hour or so the rain the weathermen had predicted began, raining quite hard, but only briefly. With little hope of seeing clearing skies I retired for the evening.



Bob up to something!

Thursday was quite cloudy most of the day but the skies did clear every now and then. I accompanied Dee Diffrient and my friend Robert Hitt for a shopping spree in nearby Queenstown, MD. By nightfall it was evident the sky was not going to clear but that suited me just fine since clear skies were to prevail for the following two evening. For dinner, Dee Diffrient prepared her usual elaborate, gourmet meal. Thanks to the Delmarva Stargazers for allowing us to dine in the large tent you purchased for this year's event. After dinner the rain began and continued quite heavy for the duration of the evening.

Friday everyone awakened to crystal clear blue skies. Since the Sun was absent of sunspot activity I pointed my 100mm f/8 scope to Venus, now appearing about first-quarter phase. Next up was Mars, and even in broad daylight it was ruddy red in color and amazingly bright. Consulting my planisphere it was decided a good target might be the star Castor in Gemini. Not only was this double star visible as a tiny blue-white dot set amongst the deep blue sky but also so was its close companion.

Although the wind was quite strong in the day, by evening it had subsided. On one hand it's good that the wind stopped but on the other hand because of a lack of a breeze



Cliff showing off his baby.

(Continued on page 7)

# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer

## THE OBSERVER'S CORNER

8-12-07 — Ted Forte It was one of the better nights from Chippokes. The skyglow is even worse to the ENE but otherwise the conditions were almost ideal minus great seeing. Few bugs, manageable dew, and cool temperatures. We had a nice crowd of observers and several excited campers that spent the first few hours after dark with us. The meteor count was fairly low but constant. Of course it was after 1:30 am before I saw my first one! But I had the pleasure of making mental notes of the rate from the audible oohs and ahhs. Since we had guests I spent a lot of time on showpieces and revisited the same ones with each wave of spectators. But I managed to view several planetaries that I don't get to see often like 6309, 6572, 6369, 6445, 6629, 6891 and 6818 in addition to several of the usual suspects. I also added one Arp to my total- an interacting galaxy pair in Pegasus. Ok check your notes ... is 6572 green or blue? When I observe with Kent, I normally come down on the blue side of planetaries he sees as green. But 6572 is one of the objects I see as very definitely over the line - more green than blue. I was out-voted by the observers present last night, but I know I have support out there. Which is it? Green or Blue? Saying blue-green is a cop out, take a stand and cast your vote. In any case, all agree the color (whatever it is) is intense. A really great planetary. I think the favorite among our little group was 6369 which is a miniature version of M57 in Ophiuchus. Its morphology is actually quite different, but in the eyepiece it's the spitting image of the ring only smaller. The final hours (I got home at 5am) were devoted to watching meteors and expecting a visit from the mansion ghost, which was probably too busy watching meteors itself to bother with us. Not counting the two dogs that hung around for the whole night, there were no uninvited guests. It was about the best night I've ever experienced at Chippokes, at least I enjoyed myself more than I usually do there.

10-22-07 — Mark Ost Sunday night was a mixed bag with clouds and clear spots. What was fun was chasing the comet in Bootes. Kent and I dashed across the street to a neighbor's yard just in time to dodge the street light in front and capture the comet just after sundown in the 25x100 binoculars. Leonos looked bright and was easy to see if hard to find low in the sky. We only had a moment before the clouds swallowed the comet. The rest of evening was uneventful observation. Monday morning though started with a bright Orionid meteor on the way out to the back yard. In variable seeing, Mars was superb in steady moments with the polar cloud shining like a beacon and very good detail in the disk with light and dark markings. A light blue filter really enhanced the polar clouds. The Televue Mars type one filter provides fine actual color renditions. With the sun rising I got a peek at Saturn noting the rings have closed considerably from last time I saw it. The ring show will be much inhibited for the next season.

## EAST COAST STAR PARTY

NOVEMBER 9 & 10

### Star Party Admittance \$12.00 per person

Please register and pay Kent Blackwell at the telescopes site, not at the campground store. Pay at the door, no need to pay/register in advance. Non-registered guests are welcomed, but must leave before midnight. Admittance includes camping, if you wish to do so

**Hampton Lodge Camping Resort – Coinjock, NC (252-453-2732)**  
Approximately 45 miles south of Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA area  
Driving north on US 158, take Waterlilly exit before crossing the Joseph Palmer Knapp Bridge at Coinjock. Follow signs  
Driving south on US 158, cross the Joseph Palmer Knapp Bridge at Coinjock. Turn left at foot of bridge. Waterlilly exit Campground is approximately 7 miles down Waterlilly Road

**NOTE: THE SKY IS 6<sup>TH</sup> MAGNITUDE BUT CEDAR TREES OBSTRUCT THE HORIZON ABOUT 20%.  
OBSERVING SITE: THE CEDAR TREES AND SURROUNDING AREAS@100' TO THE LEFT AFTER CAMPGROUND ENTRANCE GATE JUST FOLLOW THE SIGNS  
PLEASE OBEY CAMPGROUND 10 MPH SPEED LIMIT**

Portable restroom is located near observing area. Showers and campground store located ¼ mile from observing area

You may camp near your telescope.

**No AC is available in the observing field**

### ITINERARY

**FRIDAY:** 2:00 PM REGISTRATION BEGINS  
7:00 PM CASUAL STARGAZING BEGINS

**Coffee & snacks served all night**

**SATURDAY:** 10:00 AM REGISTRATION BEGINS  
11:00 AM BRUNCH AT MEL'S DINER IN GRANDY, NC (OPTIONAL)  
4:30 PM COOKOUT AT OBSERVING SITE  
KENT WILL SUPPLY HAMBURGERS, HOT DOGS, SOFT DRINKS - YOU MAY BRING A DISH IF YOU WISH!  
6:00 PM DOOR PRIZE DRAWINGS

**OBSERVING BEGINS AFTER DOORPRIZE DRAWING**

**Coffee & snacks served all night**

**Jeff Norwood and Grete of Camera Concepts will be available to ply their wares to all.**

**Kent Blackwell, Organizer  
1169 Old Kempsville Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23464  
757-495-4663 e-mail: kent@exis.net**

# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer

(Delmarva No Frills, Continued from page 5)

the dew proved quite menacing. If your optics weren't fitted with some kind of dew prevention heaters you were going to be out of luck for the rest of the night.

First up for me was the remarkable Draco edge-on galaxy NGC 5710, a galaxy nearly the equal of spring's NGC 4565 in Canes Ve-



Steve without a computerized scope? ?

natici. After searching for a few lesser known planetary nebulae I took a break and walked the field to see what others were viewing. In exchange for a peek through their scopes I offered them donuts. Not a bad deal, indeed! Ted Forte's showed me one of his favorite objects; the planetary nebula NGC 7008 in Cygnus that Ted nicknamed "The Fetus Nebula". Chuck Jagow was tinkering with his new Meade MySky handheld device as well as imaging M 42



Chuck DEFINITELY sees some new stars!

through his telescope. Steve Hamilton was sighting globular clusters and planetary nebulae with his new Meade 16" Lightbridge Dobsonian while Roy Diffrient chased down illusive planetary nebulae at the threshold of his 18" telescope, as well as the Cassiopeia diffuse nebula Sharpless 2-157 that lies in the same field of view as the pretty open cluster NGC 7510. Cliff Hedgepeth managed to fit M 31, M 32 and NGC 205 in the field of view of his new 42mm eyepiece using his 12" Orion IntelliScope. Cliff also

continued his quest for open clusters in the Dolidze catalog. There are about forty-seven, and Cliff completed his quest of finding them all. Finally, Ray Moody from Richmond, VA glanced at The Saturn Nebula as well as the planetary nebula NGC 1514 in Taurus.

The last two objects I observed with my scope before retiring for the evening were NGC 2393 (The Eskimo Nebula) in Gemini and the ever-popular M 42, The Great Orion Nebula. The brighter portions were emerald green, and the faint extension exhibited a pinkish color. It was the best I've ever seen it!

Saturday proved to be equally as beautiful as Friday. Although everyone was quite tired from being up so late the night before we still looked forward to another full evening of stargazing. As the sun set a one-day-old crescent moon hugged the western horizon with



OUR FUTURE PRESIDENT RELAXING?

mighty Jupiter following not too far behind. Sighting Jupiter I determined that the atmospheric seeing was not going to be exceptional, but at least transparency was excellent. I stayed up late enough that evening to get a glimpse of Orion rising above the silo that sits in the observing field. By then it was time to go to bed.

Thank you, Dee Diffrient for, once again, feeding us so well and a gracious thanks to the Delmarva Stargazers for organizing another terrific star party. Even when clouds hamper the viewing it's still fun to see everyone again, and to simply sit around and talk shop. It's a bit of a drive from Virginia Beach, VA but I wouldn't miss it for anything.

**Kent Blackwell**

## NIGHT SKY GUIDES

The night sky guides we ordered this spring are in and are available for all, and we are asking for a \$4.00 donation to cover the cost of acquisition and distribution. Retail price for the guides is \$5.95. To see a representation of the Night Sky Guides, zip on over to the files section of the BBAA YAHOO group and look for the C5 NIGHT SKY GUIDE folder. See Chuck Jagow for your copy at the next meeting.

# The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's Observer



## NOVEMBER 2007

BBAA EVENTS	SPECIAL OUTREACH	ASTRONOMICAL EVENTS
01 = BBAA Monthly Meeting @ TCC VB Campus Pungo Building, 7:30 PM		01 = LAST QUARTER
02 = SKYWATCH @ NWRP, Dusk		
03= CLOVERWATCH @ Franklin Fairgrounds, Dusk		
	07 = Brownies TRY-IT Event @ , TBD, POC: TBD. Time: TBD	
10 = NIGHTWATCH @ Chippokes State Park, Dusk		09= NEW MOON
	16 = Cub/Boy Scouts @ West Road, Chesapeake, POC TBD. Time: TBD	17 = FIRST QUARTER
		24 = FULL MOON
30 = SKYWATCH @ NWRP, Dusk		