

BACK BAY observer

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



EPHEMERALS MAY 2009

Friday 5/1/2009

GardenStars

Norfolk Botanical Gardens

7 p.m.

Saturday 5/2/ 2009

ASTRONOMY DAY

Virginia Beach Central Library

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Thursday 5/7/2009

Monthly Meeting

TCC VA Beach, Building J, Room JC-12

7:30 p.m.

Friday 5/15/2009

Skywatch

Northwest River Park

Dusk

Saturday 5/16/2009

Celebrate Astronomy Festival

Northwest River Park

3 p.m. - Midnight

(Site reserved from 9 a.m.)

Saturday 5/23/2009

Nightwatch

Chippokes State Park, Surry VA

Dusk

Friday 5/29/2009

Night Hike

Northwest River Park

Dusk

Looking Up!

Way to go, BBAA! Was the first Mount Trashmore Star Party a success or not? Try a 1200+ person success. Word has it that the City of VB was very impressed by our club's turnout and how we handled all those people. My congratulations to all involved. Especially Chuck Dibbs, Dale Carey, Ted Forte, Chuck, Greg, Georgie and all for their hard work in preparations for the event. My bet is that we may get more invitations in the future, turning this into an annual happening.

And now for the next attraction – **The NWRP “Celebrate Astronomy Festival” on Saturday, May 16th.** This sounds like an endurance contest in public outreach is going on, but club members continue to be both public-spirited and education-oriented. At our May 7th monthly club meeting at TCC, we will discuss final plans and needs with our organizers. Watch the Yahoo! site for reminders and request from Ted and others. This is an ambitious project and I, for one, am really looking forward to a great day filled with friends and hopefully lots of happy people under clear skies. Also, please put July 11th on your calendars for our annual NWRP club picnic. Once more I promise to make the best burgers you've ever tasted.

Continued on page 3



CONTENTS

Ephemerals	1
Looking Up	1
April's Meeting Minutes	3
NASA Space Place	4
BBAA News	5
East Coast Star Party	6
Observer's Corner	7
Monthly Calendar	8

April Meeting Minutes

The April meeting was called to order at 7:30PM, Thursday, April 2, 2009 by Club President Bruce Bodner.

Members in Attendance:

There were 31 members and guests in attendance at the April meeting of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers held in the Science building (Room JC12) of Tidewater Community College in Virginia Beach. Members attending included:

Neill Alford, Bruce Bodner, Jordan Bramble, Kenny Broun, Gerry Carver, Dale Carey, Nick DePaulo, Chuck Dibbs, Courtney Flonta, Tony Flonta, Ted Forte, Mike Galvas, Jay Garrard, Mark Gerlach, Hunter Hughes, Donald Ives, Chuck Jagow, Georgie June, Ben Loyola, Matt McLaughlin, Bill McLean, Jim Miller, Michael Moore (New Member), Bill Powers, John Pycior, George Reynolds, Rob Schonk, Kevin Swann, Bird Taylor, Melissa Wilson, Robert Wisswell

Treasurer's Report:

\$1,993.54 Club Operations
\$2,161.80 Scholarship
\$4,155.34 Total

Secretary's Report: None.

RRRT Report:

Carlos cancelled the remaining endurance testing due to dome issues and weather alert script issues. Until the dome issues occurred, testing up to that point went extremely well.

Ben Loyola's team is continuing to install the automation system for the observatory mechanicals.

Carlos is still looking for observing proposals. Any member wishing to submit one, feel free.

ALCOR Report: None

Old Business, New Business, Announcements and Observing Reports:

- We added another new member to our midst at the April meeting: Introducing Michael Moore. Welcome to BBAA!!
- **Galileoscopes:** Placing and receiving the scope order has presented challenges for the club. Neill and Chuck are trying to get a confirmation and expected ship date from the Galileo Scope organization. We are still hoping to receive the scopes before the May 16 Celebrate Astronomy Festival, but that is not a certainty. The final cost per Galileoscope is now known. Chuck Jagow reports that the final cost from Galileoscope LLC will be \$13.84 per scope including the shipping fee. The adjusted cost per scope including \$1.16 handling & storage brings the Galileoscope cost to \$15 per scope WHEN they arrive.
- Georgie June "volunteered" to help Ben Loyola take orders for BBAA ballcaps, shirts and jackets. Ben wants to place an initial order soon. If interested in placing an order, Contact Georgie or Ben.
- **Yuri's Night:** Contact Bird Taylor.
- Club received a "Thank You" note for the club's participation at Green Run Elementary's Science Night.
- **100 Hours of Astronomy event at Mount Trashmore.** Scopes will be at Shelter #2. Members with scopes should try to be there before 6PM. Chuck Dibbs supplied vehicle passes to members that had signed up on the Yahoo! group.
- Outreach request from tumbling group "J.W. Tumbler.s" One of the officers will contact them. (July 13th -- Ages 3-7)
- Cub Scout event at Cheatham Annex on the peninsula. (April 18th)

- May 12th -- Another Cub Scout event. Ted has details.
- *100 Hours of Astronomy* event at Chesapeake library. 10AM thru 5PM, April 4. We will have a display and solar filtered scopes.
- Science Night at Arrowhead Elementary. Monday, April 6th.
- May 16th -- **Astronomy Festival at Northwest River Park.** 3PM till Midnight. Our Solar System Ambassador, George Reynolds will have a display. (Dr Rowe from NSU, Michelle Shinn, Chuck Dibbs, VB planetarium, Radio Telescope, SpaceSuit possibly, NASA representative). The club has the picnic area all day and there was talk about having a potluck type picnic at noon or so. The public event starts at 3PM and lasts till midnight.
- The club is intending to have the normal SkyWatch the night before as well, Friday, May 15th.
- Carlos Salgado from Norfolk State would like to offer a "Spherical Astronomy" workshop. Anyone interested should contact Carlos or Matt McLaughlin for details. The workshop, if it occurs will most likely be during July. He needs 5 signups to be able to offer the workshop.
- The club picnic was discussed. Date to be determined.
- There will be no regular club meeting for June or July (June 4 and July 2). The club picnic and a possible planetarium night at Chesapeake planetarium were discussed as fun substitutes for those two regular meetings.
- April 23-26 is the Tuckahoe Star Party.

The calendar of club events through May 2009 was discussed and a copy was passed out.

Main Presentation/Activity:

Georgie June used the April meeting to test out the "Pluto Game" that will be used as an activity during the "Celebrate Astronomy" Festival May 16th at NWRP.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM, Thursday, April 2, 2009.

Matt McLaughlin
BBA Club Secretary

Looking Up! *Continued from page 1*

On another front, I just returned from the annual Northeast Astronomy Forum (NEAF) in Rockland, NY. There were two feature-packed days of events, seminars, lectures, solar viewing, and the largest amateur astronomy equipment show in North America. Over 120 vendors were present with every major telescope, eyepiece, mount, dome, camera, and accessory available to touch and purchase. Dealers from the east to west coast were present. As usual, the best deals were from favorites like Camera Concepts, Hands On, Astronomics, and OPT. OK; I caved and bought a zoom eyepiece this year (so much for the big spender)! Everyone wanted their picture taken beside the 10" F/9 triplet refractor being displayed by APM of Germany. Geez, the thing looked like a Chevy Suburban on a GEM mount. Only don't tell the spouse you got such a great deal on it at only \$54,000 with no tax.....Ouch.

With spring weather finally here and the skies looking steadier, I am looking forward to the months ahead with all of you.

Clear Skies,

Bruce "Doc" Bodner



The NOAA-19: The Swiss Army Knife of Weather Satellites

Spotting volcanic eruptions, monitoring the health of crops, pinpointing distress signals for search and rescue teams. It's not what you might expect from a weather satellite.

But these are just a few of the abilities of NOAA's newest polar-orbiting weather satellite, launched by NASA on February 6 and turned over to NOAA for full-time operations on February 26.

Formerly called NOAA-N Prime and now renamed NOAA-19, it is the last in its line of weather satellites that stretches back almost 50 years to the dawn of the Space Age. Over the decades, the abilities of these Television Infrared Observation Satellites (TIROS) have gradually improved and expanded, starting from the grainy, black-and-white images of Earth's cloud cover taken by TIROS-1 and culminating in NOAA-19's amazing array of capabilities.

"This TIROS series has become quite the Swiss army knife of weather satellites, and NOAA-19 is the most capable one yet," says Tom Wrublewski, NOAA-19 Satellite Acquisition Manager at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

The evolution of TIROS began in 1998 with NOAA-K. The satellites have carried microwave sensors that can measure temperature variations as small as 1 degree Celsius between Earth's surface and an altitude of 40 kilometers—even through clouds. Other missions have added the ability to track large icebergs for cargo ships, monitor sea surface temperatures to aid climate change research, measure the amount of ozone in Earth's protective ozone layer, and even detect hazardous particles from solar flares that can affect communications and endanger satellites, astronauts in orbit, and city power grids.

NOAA-19 marks the end of the TIROS line, and for the next four years it will bridge the gap to a new series of satellites called the National Polar-



The new NOAA-19 is the last and most capable in the long line of Television Infrared Observation Satellites (TIROS).

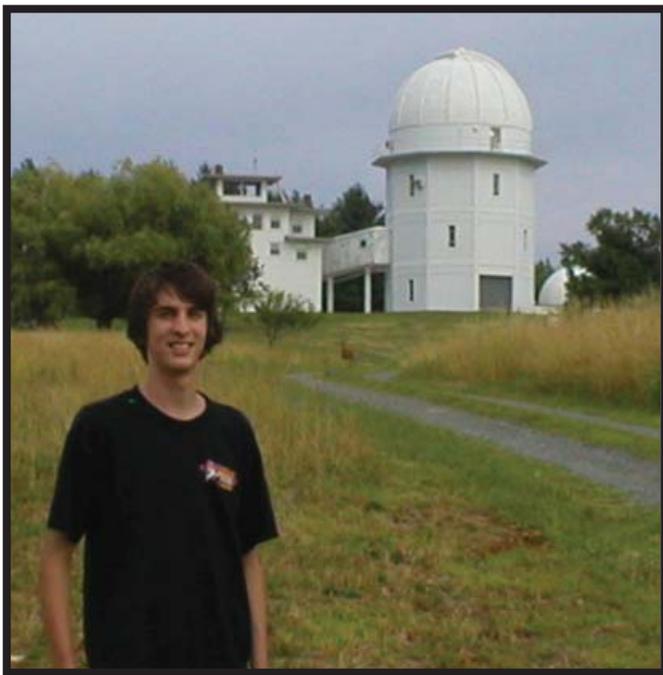
orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System. NPOESS will merge civilian and military weather satellites into a single system. Like NOAA-19, NPOESS satellites will orbit Earth from pole to pole, circling the planet roughly every 100 minutes and observing every location at least twice each day.

NPOESS will have yet more capabilities drawn from its military heritage. Dim-light sensors will improve observations of the Earth at night, and the satellites will better monitor winds over the ocean — important information for ships at sea and for weather and climate models.

"A lot more capability is going to come out of NPOESS, improving upon the 161 various environmental data products we already produce today," Wrublewski says.

Not even a Swiss army knife can do that many things, he points out.

For more on the NPOESS, check out <http://www.npoess.noaa.gov>. Kids can find out about another NOAA satellite capability—tracking endangered migrating species—and play a fun memory game at http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/poes_tracking. This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Jordan Bramble in front of the RRRT Observatory

BBAA Member Receives Award

Congratulations to Jordan Bramble for receiving Second Place in the Astronomical League's National Young Astronomer Award. In addition to the bragging rights and plaque, Jordan will receive a lifetime pass to the University of Texas McDonald Observatory and a trip to the Astronomical League Convention in New York.

Jordan's application was sponsored by his astronomy teacher and BBAA member Don Ives and endorsed by BBAA member Ted Forte (Jordan's research partner on the RRRT) and Dr. Carlos Salgado of Norfolk State University (director of the RRRT observatory).

Jordan was cited for (among several other accomplishments) his RRRT research project searching for NEO's, and his role in creating an astronomy club at his high school. Look for Jordan's name in the next issue of the *Reflector*.

What has happened here?

Please join me in welcoming Erica Smith-Llera as our new Editor of the BBAA Observer Newsletter. Last month I advertised, OK – cried, for help/relief and Erica almost immediately answered the call. This is her first issue and I think you will find her style and end result appealing.

Please give her your support and flood her with material for publication in the upcoming months.

I have enjoyed my run as Editor since the spring of 2006 and now I think we have found somebody excellent to pass the reins on to.

Chuck Jagow

Editor's Note: Wow, I'm thrilled by the introduction. I can't thank Chuck enough for the help in getting my first edition launched. I have some big shoes to fill.

Have you joined the BBAA Yahoo! Group?

A place to read what other amateur astronomers are up to after the sun sets (and sometimes before). You must sign up for a Yahoo! account to join.

tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro/



New&Returning Members

The BBAA welcomes Michael Moore
and welcomes back Chris Ayers!

2009 EAST COAST STAR PARTY

May 22, 23 & 24 - Three nights of observing
Star party registration \$15.00 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 or register in advance. Non-star party-registered guests are welcomed, but must leave before midnight. Registration includes camping, if you wish to do so.

WHERE: Hampton Lodge Camping Resort – Coinjock, NC (252-453-2732)

DIRECTIONS: 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 the foot of bridge. Take Waterlilly exit. Campground is approximately 7 miles down Waterlilly Road.

NOTE: The sky is 6th-magnitude but cedar trees obstruct the horizon 20%.

OBSERVING SITE: The cedar trees and surrounding areas about 100 feet to the left after campground entrance gate. Just follow the signs.

Portable restroom conveniently located near observing area. Showers and campground store located ¼- mile from the observing area. You may camp near your telescope.

No AC is available at the observing field.

If you have an RV needing A/C hookup; additional charges may apply.

Please obey the campground's 10 MPH speed limit.

AGENDA

FRIDAY

REGISTRATION

Begins at noon and continues all weekend.

8:30 pm CASUAL STARGAZING BEGINS
Coffee & snacks served all night

SATURDAY

10:00 am Optional breakfast at Mel's Diner in Grandy, NC

6:00 pm Cookout at observing site.
Kent will supply hamburgers, hot dogs and soft drinks. You may bring a dish if you wish.

8:00 pm Door Prize Drawings
Observing begins after.
Coffee & snacks served all night

DOOR PRIZES TO BE ANNOUNCED

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

Observer's Corner

Wouldn't one think three all-night observing sessions would suffice for quite some time? Not so. Mark Ost and I enjoyed a great observing evening last night; a night with a transparency and seeing rating a 9/10. Most outstanding of all were the views of Saturn in Mark's 4" f/8 refractor and my 10" f.4.7 Dobsonian. His best views were with his new Brandon 8mm eyepiece and Barlow and my best views were using my 30-year-old Gailand Orthoscopic eyepiece and a 5x Barlow. The beauty and detail were beyond description.

It was also a fitting night to find illusive galaxies in UMa and Hercules. Early on, I found the supernova SN 2009dd in the bright galaxy NGC 4088 but I'm here to tell you the supernova is really tough with only a 10" scope. It was actually "bright" through my 25" this weekend at Tuckahoe Star Park at the Delmarva Stargaze XV.

Kent Blackwell

Tonight was one of those nights where everything goes right! I went out to Mark's again and observed by myself. I started out the night with the Supernova in NGC 4088. At 150x, the galaxy starts to show nice detail, and the SN is obvious even with direct vision. Can't wait to get a look at this through Ted's 18.

After the SN, I revisited M51, and I am now sure that I saw a star and not HII regions; the better seeing allowed me to be sure.

I checked out Saturn and Algieba, a pretty binary I forgot about. The two stars are almost the exact same golden hue.

Then it was time for the Virgo cluster. This time I was armed with a better chart, which made the Messiers fairly easy to identify, but I wish I could better identify all the NGC's in between. I started with M59 and 60 and worked my way up.

I saw the end in sight for the Messier catalog and moved on to M68. This is a pretty globular. The only thing left for me at this moment was M83, and it was too low, so I moved the scope WAYYYYYY way back to behind Mark's shed on the edge of the trees, and even then M83 was just barely above the trees on the other side of the yard. Quite a pretty galaxy, it has a really bright core but extremely low surface brightness that gives the galactic disk

a misty appearance. I guess you could say M83 was more of a physical challenge than anything else, since I had to lug the scope around.

Then I revisited M101 and M97 since the last time I saw them was late summer at NWRP while they were in the light pollution of the prison. M101 is another large, low SB galaxy.

Now I've logged all 109 Messiers (102 doesn't exist), and my first supernova. Now tomorrow at NWRP I can focus on showing things to the public and maybe some Caldwell objects.

Jordan Bramble

great night ...

After two days of hunting I was able to find M81 and M82, the first galaxies that I've ever found from my Norfolk backyard. I had been searching using Dubhe as a launching off point, and hopping from there.

With the aid of the pocket atlas, binocs, telrad and 8x finder, I got M81. I've been reading that M82 should be visible in the same field of view so I started scanning using M81 as a guide and then M82 appeared. Wow! What a feeling to find something on your own. Now it's one of those easy finds for me. Can't see it with binocs (10x) but with 41x both are in view. I was trying for M51 but gave up by midnight because the early Monday work week comes too soon.

A good entry in my diary. I thought I'd never be able to bag a galaxy from here.

Tio Sanchez

By a small miracle I was able to see the Venus/Moon conjunction today during the early phase. Was actually able to show a couple of folks the telescopic view and they saw Venus naked eye during the daylight for the first time. Kent saw the ultimate part where Venus was on the cusp of the moon but it was nice anytime. Two great crescents, one big and one small and bright. We were partly cloudy and I thought we would blow it, but clear skies prevailed in NC.

Mark Ost

BACK BAY observer



May 2009

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
01 Gardenstars @ Norfolk Botanical Gardens (7:00 PM)		01 First Quarter
	02 Astronomy Day @ Central Library, Virginia Beach	
07 BBAA Monthly Meeting @ TCC Virginia Beach Campus (7:30 PM)		09 Full Moon
15 Skywatch @ NWRP (Dusk)	Mid-May Cub Scout Pack 374 @ North Landing Beach Campground	
	16 Celebrate Astronomy Festival @ NWRP	17 Last Quarter
	22 - 25 Kent Blackwell's East Coast Star Party @ Coinjock, NC	
		24 New Moon
29 Night Hike @ NWRP (7:00 PM)		