

BACK BAY observer

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



EPHEMERALS february 2012

2/2

BBAA Monthly Meeting

TCC VA Beach

Building J, Room JC-12

7:30 pm

2/3

Garden Stars

Norfolk Botanical Gardens

7:00 pm

2/17

Skywatch

Northwest River Park

2/25

Nightwatch

Chippokes State Park

Surry, VA

Looking Up!

Wow, my second Looking Up article... Time really does fly! As we're heading into the spring (and in this bipolar state we like to call Virginia, it truly feels like April), we also head into one of the busiest times of year for outreach. Between school science nights and boy/girl scout programs, and with Skywatch and GardenStars' numbers increasing, there's bound to be something for everyone. So I would highly encourage you all to find a place in your busy schedules to get out and enjoy all this season has to offer. As a former Vice President, I know what it's like to twist arms so that Mr. Forte and I aren't the only ones at an event. :) Seriously though, there should be no pleading when it comes to outreach attendance. We are all a part of this club because we love astronomy; what better demonstration of that love than to share it with others?

As the weather gets warmer, consider checking the calendar of events on the website. See if you can help out with something coming up. The VP likes nothing more than having someone volunteer to go to an event or even coordinate it if he or she can't make it. And, after all, "Bringing astronomy to the people of Hampton Roads" is what we're all about.

Courtney Flonta



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The Nerdiest Video Game Ever

By Dr. Tony Phillips

NASA has a job opening. Wanted: People of all ages to sort, stack, and catalogue terabytes of simulated data from a satellite that launches in 2015. Agile thumbs required.

Sorting terabytes of data? It's more fun than it sounds.

In fact it's a game: Satellite Insight. The Space Place Team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory created the entertaining app for iPhones to get the word out about GOES-R, an advanced Earth science satellite built by NOAA and NASA.

Described by the Los Angeles Times as possibly "the nerdiest game ever," Satellite Insight may be downloaded for free from Apple's app store. Be careful, though, once you start playing it's hard to stop. Some reviewers have likened it to Tetris, one of the most popular video games of all time.

GOES, short for "Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite," is the workhorse spacecraft for weather forecasters. NOAA operates two (at a time) in geosynchronous orbit, one above the west coast of N. America and one above the east coast. They monitor clouds, wind, rain, hurricanes, tornadoes and even solar flares. The GOES program has been in action since 1975.

GOES-R is the next-generation satellite with advanced technologies far beyond those of the older GOES satellites. It has sensors for lightning detection, wildfire mapping, storm tracking, search and rescue, solar imaging, and more. Many of the sensors are trailblazers. For example, the Advanced Baseline Imager has 60 times the capability of the current imager—16

channels instead of 5. It has twice the spatial resolution and five times the temporal refresh rate, including the 30-second imaging of weather systems over a region of 1000 km x 1000 km. Also, the Geostationary Lightning Mapper can count and pinpoint lightning bolts over the Americas 24/7. It's the first such detector to fly on a geosynchronous satellite, and it could lead to transformative advances in severe storm warning capability.

All in all, GOES-R represents a "huge technological leap from the current GOES." We



New iPhone game is first NOAA app and only the second NASA game app. Just as with the real GOES-R, the challenge with Satellite Insight is to keep up with the massive influx of weather and other environmental data.

know this because Satellite Insight tells us so. The app has an informative "Learn More" feature where players can find out about the satellite and the data they have been sorting.

Which brings us back to sorting data. It's

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/newsletters/newsletter.shtml>.

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Please submit articles and items of interest no later than the 15th of the month for the next month's edition. Please submit all items to: BBAAErica@yahoo.com or BBAA Observer, P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9877

BBAA Meetings

The BBAA meet the first Thursday of every month except for July. While school is in session, we meet at the VA Beach TCC Campus. **The September meeting is at the TCC Virginia Beach.** Directions available at www.backbayastro.org.

BBAA Internet Links

BBAA Web Site

<http://www.backbayastro.org>

Yahoo! Group

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

BBAA Observer Newsletter

www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml

Space Place, continued from page 2

a bit like eating Cheerios; just don't tell the kids it's nutritious, and they love it. Helping GOES-R gather and stash data from all those advanced sensors is just as satisfying, too—a dose of Earth science wrapped in thumb-flying fun.

More information about Satellite Insight may be found on the web at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/satellite-insight/id463588902?mt=8>. The game also available in web form (flying thumbs

optional) at spaceplace.nasa.gov/satellite-insight.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Welcome New Members!

BBAA Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2012

The January, 2012 meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm in a classroom near the planetarium at Plaza Middle School by president Courtney Flonta. Those in attendance were Nick Anderson, Robert Beuerlein, Tom Flatley, Courtney Flonta, Dino Giangregorio, Mary Giangregorio, Jeff Goldstein, Curt Lambert, Ben Loyola, Bill Mclean, Bill Newman, Bill Powers, Max Rakestraw, George Reynolds, Bernie Strohmeier, Kevin Swann, Jim Tallman, Paul Tartabini, Bird Taylor, Emily Wiggans, Laura Wiggans, Tom Wiggans, and Kevin Weiner.

Treasurer's report: \$2827.03 general fund, \$3710.12 scholarship fund, \$6537.15 total.

Secretary's report: The reading of December's minutes was waived and are posted on the BBAA web site.

Bill Mclean "ALCOR" (Astronomical League CORrespondent) representative discussed that we have 99 awards in the club. He said to use the Astronomical League site for info on observing programs, like the Messier Certificate and the Lunar observing awards. George Reynolds was the first BBAA member to get a lunar certificate back in 2002.

New Member joining tonight is Max Rakestraw. Membership dues were requested to pay tonight.

Visitors are Emily Wiggans (A University of Vermont student who is minoring in astronomy and leader of her dorm's star gazing guild), and Laura & Tom Wiggans from Yorktown.

New Business: Sun filters can be hand-made (Dale Carey did years ago.)

Sky Safari is now on Android with 3 levels. Also is on IPAD & IPHONE.

Kevin Weiner discussed Circulation Curriculum Pro Plus is used for web-inars & we can use the software for outreach newsletters which has over 100 thousand viewers. You can view simultaneous synchronized windows & can use to promote any astronomy & and science event.

The question was asked if there are any viewers of "The Observer" online?

Old Business: Lawrence "Bird" Taylor representing VPAS (Yahoo Group "Virginia Peninsula Astronomy/Stargazers") is also our representative for the RRRT (Rapid Response Robotic Telescope) scope on Fan Mountain (15 miles South of Charlottesville, VA). This 24" telescope is a \$1 million asset that sends you raw file data. But, if you use this data you must credit the Fan Mountain scope in your references. It has a new filter kit & camera & hopes to be running in April. It uses SWIFT satellite (gamma ray bursts & decay) and is capable of optical and infrared imaging and spectroscopy too but it needs alignment. Dr Carlos Salgado wants to know if BBAA will use the scope. Fan Mountain also has one 40" & one 31" reflector and a 10" refractor for imaging purposes.

We received \$750 from city of VA beach for boardwalk astronomy last year.

Question posed - is the Skywatch POC position filled? Better communication is needed.

Newsletter Editor is still needed. It currently uses

an Adobe product so the editor may need some software. In the past Barb used MS Publisher.

NASA monthly "Space Place" takes 1 page. The president writes approximately 1 page. There is an RRRT entry. It was proposed if not many read it, then maybe just email it out. Some state that they use it for the calendar. Paul Tartabini will be the editor for March & April.

George Reynolds consulted the By-Laws for newsletter editor position description.

Schedule:

January 6 Garden Stars 7 pm - if enough people sign up (will post this on yahoo group web site).

January 13 Skywatch (NWRP)

January 21 Chippokes

February 2 next BBAA monthly meeting @ TCC

Scholarship update: Ben Loyola is the Chairman of the scholarship committee. 2011 amount set was \$1,000 and we inform all schools about it by mailing it to school counselors. 1st week of May is the deadline. Committee & treasurer set the projected amount of scholarship. The requirements, GPA and teachers' comments are all entered into a weight factor algorithm.

SURPRISE - Emily Wiggans (present from Vermont) wins it for 2011! It was the best essay they've received in a long time! She then read her essay.

Ben Loyola mentioned old BBAA shirts with our emblem on them that were never picked up are with him here tonight. If you donate or pay for it, it's yours.

Green lasers were discussed. Only get under 5 milliwatts. Dimmer is better for small groups but big groups need higher power. Orion has them for sale. If you remove the IR filter, it is dangerous!

Wickedlasers.com has 2 Watt ones for sale - do not get!

You can mount on scope for view finder or can use when teaching a Scout merit badge.

SKY TOOLS 3 is available for \$100 but a discount of approximate \$25 is available if ordering quantities 3 to 10. A few members present recommended this as a must-have item! This offer has been discussed on the Backbayastro yahoo group. TheSkyX Professional Edition & Starry Night Pro were also recommended as beneficial tools. Kevin Weiner will do a future presentation on beneficial software tools.

Chuck Jagow wants to give Webmaster position to someone.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

A Tuesday Night in Lynchburg

by Nick Anderson

Following several frustrating observations earlier this month (clouds, wind gusts, cold weather, observing when the Moon was out), I just had one of those rare nights where there were clear skies, decent transparency (8/10), and decent seeing (9/10). Now if only I could get rid of the skyglow...

I spent 2.5 hours this morning working on the Caldwell list, from 1:45 - 4:15 am. All of the new objects were galaxies except for one planetary nebula: NGC 2775, NGC 3115 (Spindle Galaxy), NGC 3242 (Ghost of Jupiter), NGC 4038 and 4039 (Antennae Galaxies), NGC 4697, and NGC 5248. Of all of these, my favorite was definitely the Ghost of Jupiter. It appeared in my 8-inch to look like a circular blob with an obvious greenish-blue hue. While it didn't really offer any detail, its edges were well-contrasted with the OIII filter.

NGC 5248 is probably the most difficult starhopping object I have observed so far. It is located in Boötes, southwest of Arcturus in an area relatively void of bright stars. It took me probably 15 minutes to successfully locate it.

Additionally earlier in the week, I finally observed surface detail on Mars for the first time. I didn't even need to use the Barlow lens to detect one of the Martian seas and the northern polar cap, as they were visible at 96x.

This morning I learned that I can mostly handle temperatures that drop to the 20's as long as there are no wind gusts. I was forced to cut several observations short earlier in the week just because of the wind gusts.

Caldwell objects seen so far: 22
Herschel 400 objects seen so far: 48

BBAA Amateur Astronomer Scholarship Awarded

The Back Bay Amateur Astronomers is proud to announce that Ms. Emily Wiggans of Seaford Virginia, a 2011 graduate of York High School, is the recipient of the 2011 Back Bay Amateur Astronomers annual scholarship. She received a check in the amount of \$1,000 towards her college education. We commend her on her outstanding scholastic achievements and interest in Astronomy and the Sciences.

Ms. Wiggans was selected from several outstanding candidates by the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers (BBAA) Scholarship Committee. She was presented the award in person at the monthly BBAA meeting January 5, 2012. Emily's friends and family got her to attend the meeting during her Christmas break, to surprise her with the scholarship award. She was totally unaware that she was to be awarded the scholarship.

Emily was chosen for the scholarship early last fall, but was not awarded it then because she had gone off to college at the University of Vermont early. Her family kept the award secret so they and BBAA could surprise Emily when she came home for her winter

break. Everyone knew about it except Emily, which made the presentation entertaining and fun to watch.

Regular BBAA monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month, normally at the Virginia Beach campus of Tidewater Community College Science

building room JC-13 on the second floor. The meetings run from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM and the public is always welcome.

In the picture Ms. Emily Wiggans is being presented the check by Benito Loyola, Chairman of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomer Scholarship Committee, BBAA President Courtney Flonta, and Bill McLean, Committee Member.



The BBAA Scholarship Committee is made up of Committee Chairman Benito Loyola, Committee Secretary Matt McLaughlin, and Committee Member Bill McLean.



February 2012

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
02 BBAA Monthly Meeting, VB		
03 Garden Stars @ Botanical Gardens		
		07 Full Moon
17 Skywatch at NWRP		14 Last Quarter
		21 New Moon
25 Nightwatch at Chippokes		

Sneak Peek into March

Thursday 03/01/2012 Meeting at TCC VA Beach, Building J, Room JC-12 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday 03/16/2012 Skywatch at Northwest River Park

Friday 03/24/2012 Nightwatch at Chippokes State Park, Surry VA.

Saturday 03/30/2012 Garden Stars at Norfolk Botanical Gardens at 7:00 p.m.

