

BACK BAY observer

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



EPHEMERALS october 2009

10/1/2009
BBAA Monthly Meeting
TCC Virginia Beach
Building J, Room JC-16
7:30 PM

10/9/2009
Skywatch
Northwest River Park

10/17/2009
Nightwatch
Chippokes State Park
Surry, VA

10/23/2009
GardenStars
Norfolk Botanical Gardens
1 hour before dusk

10/23-24/2009
East Coast Star Party and
Halloween Costume Contest
Coinjock, NC

10/29/2009
Bayside Library
Virginia Beach
7:00 PM

Looking Up!

Well BBAA'ers, summer is officially over and promises of clear and less humid skies without the benefit of dive bombing mosquitoes reigns once again. Along with the official start of fall, Orion is once again climbing in the late evening eastern sky and the summer triangle is fading to the west. Could all this foretell clear skies for NWRP SkyWatch and the East Coast Star Party this month? And when was the last time we had a really clear night at Chippokes? Let's all hope it does.

It was great to see such a good member turn out for the planetarium show at TCC during last month's club meeting. Lots of regular faces and a few new ones made a very enjoyable evening for all. I hope to see this continue into the New Year. It appears like our membership is again growing. It would be great to see the club back above 90 full time members so spread the word.

BTW, don't forget that the end of the old year represents the time when regular club dues are necessary. Please see Neil, our Treasurer at the next several meetings and make his task easier. Dues remain \$18 per year but please consider an extra \$2 for the Scholarship fund.

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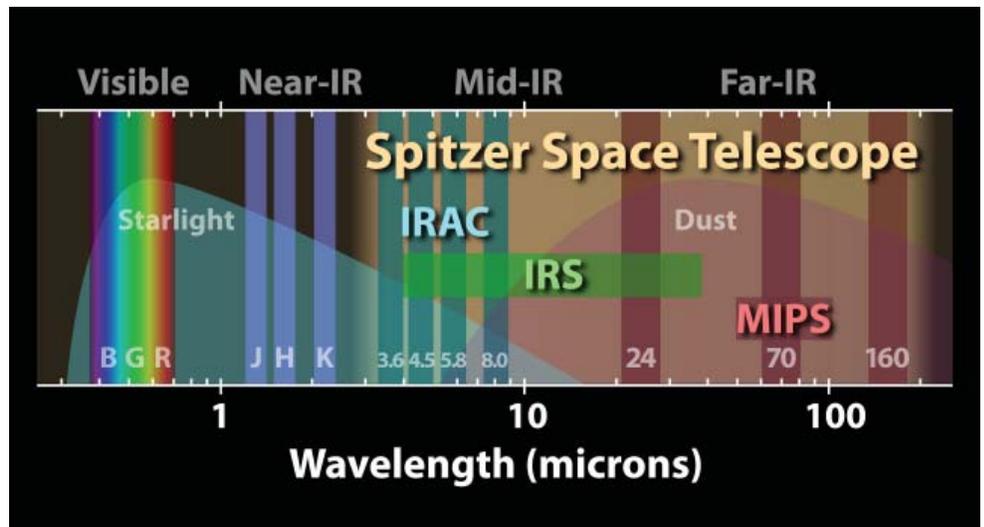
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Spitzer, the Sequel

The Spitzer Space Telescope is getting a second chance at life. The liquid helium “lifeblood” that flows through the telescope has finally run out, bringing Spitzer’s primary mission to an end. But a new phase of this infrared telescope’s exploration of the universe is just beginning. Even without liquid helium, which cooled the telescope to about 2 degrees above absolute zero (-271°C), Spitzer will continue to do important research—some of which couldn’t easily be done during its primary mission. For example, scientists will use Spitzer’s “second life” to explore the rate of expansion of the universe, study variable stars, and search for near-Earth asteroids that could pose a threat to our planet. “We always knew that a ‘warm phase’ of the mission was a possibility, but it became ever more exciting scientifically as we started to plan for it seriously,” says JPL’s Michael Werner, Project Scientist for Spitzer. “Spitzer is just going on and on like the Energizer bunny.” Launched in August 2003 as the last of NASA’s four Great Observatories, Spitzer specializes in observing infrared light, which is invisible to normal, optical telescopes. That gives Spitzer the power to see relatively dark, cool objects such as planet-forming discs or nearby asteroids. These objects are too cold to emit light at visible wavelengths, but they’re still warm enough to emit infrared light. In fact, all warm objects “glow” with infrared light—even telescopes. That’s why Spitzer had to be cooled with liquid helium to such a low temperature. Otherwise, it would be blinded by its own infrared glow. As the helium expires, Spitzer will warm to about 30 degrees above absolute zero (-243°C). At that temperature, the telescope will begin emitting long-wavelength infrared light, but

two of its short-wavelength sensors will still work perfectly. And with more telescope time available for the remaining sensors, mission managers can more easily schedule new research proposals designed for those sensors. For example, scientists have recently realized how to use infrared observations to improve our measurements of the rate of expansion of the universe. And interest in tracking near-Earth objects has grown in recent years—a task for which Spitzer is well suited. “Science has progressed, and people always have new ideas,” Werner says. In its second life, Spitzer will help turn those ideas into new discoveries. For kids, The Space Place Web site has a fun typing game using Spitzer and infrared astronomy words. Check it out at spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/spitzer/signs.

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



The “warm mission” of the Spitzer Space Telescope will still be able to use two sensors in its Infrared Array Camera (IRAC) to continue its observations of the infrared universe.

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>.

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

President
Bruce Bodner
757-627-7980
bbodner@worldnet.att.net

**Vice President and
Webmaster**
Chuck Jagow
757-547-4226
chuck@jagowds.com

Treasurer
Neill Alford
757-430-9732

Secretary
Matt McLaughlin
757-495-9607

ALCOR
Georgie June
doublestarjune@msn.com

Librarian
Gerry Carver
popcarg@aol.com

RRRT Coordinator
Ted Forte
twforte@cox.net

Scholarship Coordinator
Ben Loyola
benito@loyola.com

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 November meeting will take place at TCC VB in Building J, Room JC-16 at 7:30 PM.** Directions available at www.backbayastro.org.

BBAA Internet Links

BBAA Web Site
www.backbayastro.org

Yahoo! Group
groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro

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

Looking Up! Continued from page 1

BTW, the BBAA scholarship fund will be receiving a contribution of approximately \$1,350 as recognition of our efforts this summer at the VB Boardwalk Astronomy star parties. Thanks to Charles "Chuck" Dibbs, Director of the VB Planetarium and member and past President Dale Cary for making this such a successful and continuing effort at public outreach. I can't wait till next year to start all over again.

Continuing BBAA necessities requires that nominations for a full slate of your four officers be accomplished at October's meeting. Nominations are usually held open until final voting at our November meeting. Your President, V. President, Secretary, and Treasurer have each served two one-year terms. There is a lot of talent in the club together with lots of motivation so I predict a bright future. Volunteer your services.

I hope to see all of you doing your astro thing this month.....Clear Skies,

Doc Bruce

Doc Bruce

2009 EAST COAST STAR PARTY AND HALLOWEEN COSTUME CONTEST

October 23 & 24, 2009
Coinjock, NC

Star Party Admittance

\$15.00 per person

Pay Kent Blackwell upon arrival, no need to register in advance.

Location

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

Portable restroom conveniently located near observing area. Showers and store located in the campground

Prizes

Best Child's Costume \$20

Best Adult Costume \$50
Age 16 and over

Door prizes for youngsters under 12 years old
To be announced

Regular Door Prizes
To be announced

AGENDA

Friday

2:00 PM Registration Begins
(continues all day)

Coffee & snacks served all night

Saturday

10:00 AM Registration Begins
(continues all day)

10:30 AM OPTIONAL Brunch at Mel's
Diner in Grady, NC

5:00 PM Cookout at Observing Site
Kent will supply hamburgers, hot
dogs and soft drinks. Bring a dish
if you wish.

6:30 PM Costume Judging

7:00 PM Door Prize Drawings

Observing Begins

Coffee & snacks served all night



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



Up Close & Personal with STS-127 Crew

Terry Barker

I found out about this event through Twitter—I saw a tweet that announced the STS-127 crew was going to meet with the first 190 people that registered at a link they showed. I did, and I was accepted.

So, Cindy Bowers and I headed to downtown DC this last Thursday to NASA headquarters for the tweetup. It turns out that the previous mission had been the debut of an astronaut tweeting from space. Astro-Mike is actually Mike Massimino, and has helped pioneer NASA's efforts to connect with more of the public through social media like Twitter.

This particular mission was also interesting to me, because we saw the ISS go over in July at the Woodlake Skywatch, when this shuttle crew was aboard. We had about 150 people that night, and the pass put on a really good show. It was also the largest crew that had ever been aboard the ISS—13 people.

The crew described their mission, with accompanying video, while live on the NASA TV channel, and then had a Q/A session. I was also able to get a picture with the MD on the crew, Tom Marshburn.

The audience was definitely full of geeks—most of them were texting and some had PC's going while the show took place. But then again, I was only there because I'm quite a geek myself.

But, several people asked good questions, like the future of the space program, and the apathy of the

public towards space exploration. I also made sure I told the crew I had seen them fly over at a star party.

We got a pretty nice goody bag—a stereoscopic viewer, moon puzzle, X-15 poster, picture of the crew, etc. We got to go up and talk with the crew afterward. And I got a couple of autographs.

This was a very nice program, and I was fascinated, as usual, by being in the presence of real astronauts. One of them, David Wolf, has been up 4 times.

Serious Observing Advice

Mark Ost

At this point I am required by law to inform you that visual observing requires the observer to be actually outside (shudder) and exposed to:

Heat

- Bugs
- The diseases of bugs
- Freezing
- Dew
- Trip hazards
- Wind

This is a courtesy reminder just in case you forgot the details of having NO walls or roof around you. Also incumbent on using a scope with no remote operation or tracking:

No running in to watch "Desperate Housewives."

- You cannot go to bed and expect to be on Jupiter in the early morning.
- If you turn on a light to get a drink of coffee, you will not see anything for 45 minutes.
- If you watch "Desperate Housewives" not only will you not see anything for 45 minutes but you will also not think for two days.

The frost you see form on the telescope will also be forming on you.

BUT you will be in a long tradition of HE MEN that braved the elements to advance knowledge while GIRLY men kept warm by the LCD screen.



Welcome New Associate Member!
Dyanna Jaye

October 2009

observer's corner

Had a decent night last night out in my pasture with my 10".

Started out clear but a passing haze came in around 10:00 and started mucking up DSO work.

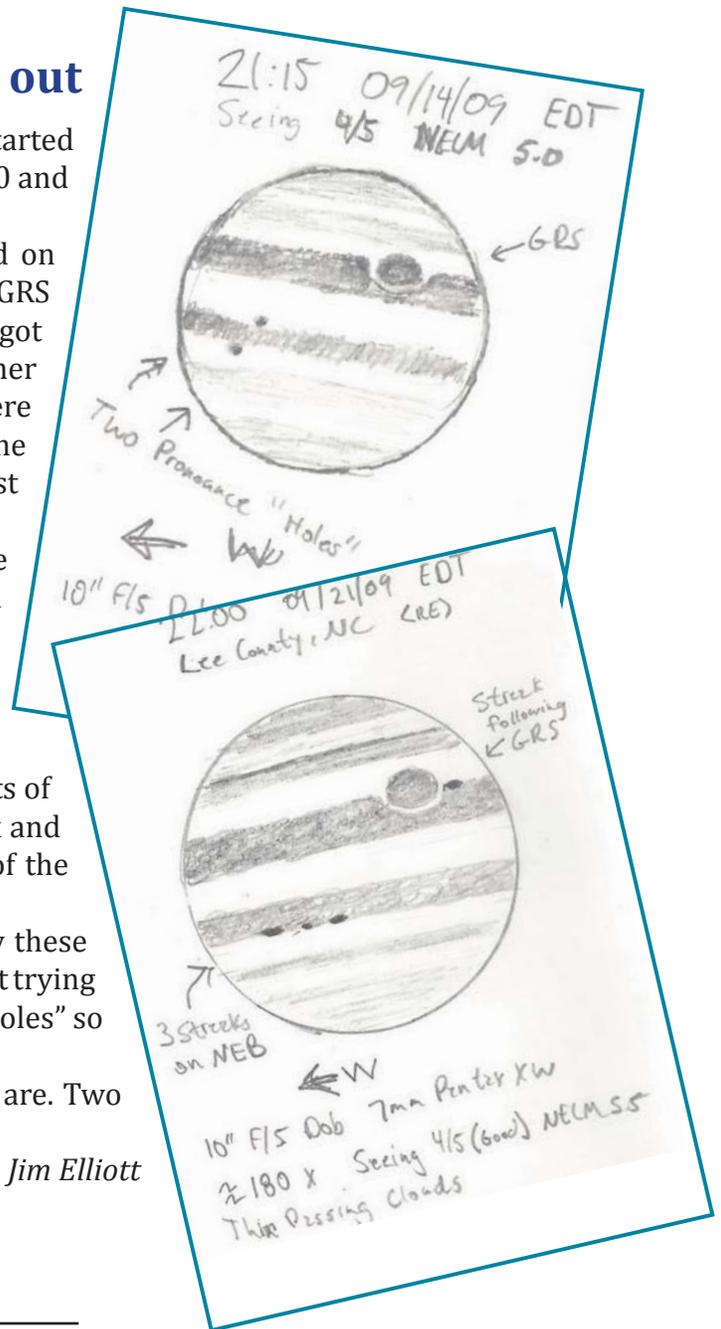
Seeing was pretty good so I just concentrated on Jupiter. No moon transits or occultations, but the GRS was scheduled to transit at 9:45, so it was all good. I got out too late to see the bigger "hole" we saw the other night in the NEB, but the smaller one was right where we saw it the other night, about an hour ahead of the GRS. But to my surprise, there was another hole just ahead of the hole and on the other side of the NEB. Also, once the GRS came into full view there was the typical light shaded hollow area between the GRS and the SEB, but in addition to that, there was a solid dark hole right behind it.

Looks like there is a LOT of activity going on with Jupiter right now! I'm sure they aren't comet strikes because they are right in the location where lots of atmospheric activity occurs, but the holes are so dark and symmetrical, they sure look like the photos we saw of the comet strike last month.

Anyway, I pulled out the sketch pad and threw these together. Nothing like Sol Robbins' sketches, but I wasn't trying to be artistic, just trying to show the locations of the "holes" so be kind to my feeble sketching abilities =-)

I scanned them in this morning and here they are. Two sketches, about an hour apart.

Jim Elliott



Sunday, September 13 proved to be one of those magical Fall observing nights.

I set up my 10" Dobsonian at dusk at Mark Ost's Observatory, just in time to get a great view of mighty Jupiter. As darkness fell, we could tell it was going to be a great night, both in transparency and seeing.

Shortly after dark we were joined by a new BBBA member, Kevin Rasso (hope I spelled

the last name correctly, Kevin). Kevin brought over his 80mm William Optics apochromat telescope, a scope perfect for exploring the depths of the Milky Way in Sagittarius, which is where his scope remained trained much of the night.

A very interesting objects was the double star Struve 2733 in Delphinus. We split it with some difficulty at 200x in Mark's 5" refractor, but fairly easily at 400x. Incidentally, it lies in the same field as the faint galaxy NGC 6956. Look at it at high

power and notice its dusty appearance. Also note an involved 11.8 magnitude star.

Kevin showed us a nice view of M 8 (the Lagoon Nebula) and M 20 (the Trifid Nebula). Wow, it's nothing like the wide, low power field and sharp contrast of a good refractor.

Although I couldn't help but revisit some familiar objects such as NGC 7662 (the Blue Snowball), M 27 (the Dumbbell) and M 31 my objective was to find all the NGC galaxies in Delphinus. They are only seventeen. I found thirteen but since the remaining ones are fainter than 15th magnitude I'll have to save those for the 25" scope.

We wrapped up the night with another view of Jupiter. It was the best I've ever seen it, with the equatorial cloud belts standing out like a fine drawing. We had hoped to see Ganymede emerge from behind the planet but it occurred too late. Since each of us had to work Monday morning we had to drag ourselves away from a nearly perfect night of stargazing.

It was nice meeting Kevin, who seems to be a very skilled observer. In addition to his 80mm refractor Kevin also has a 10" SCT so we'll look forward to seeing him at future BBAA events.

Kent Blackwell

The conditions here tonight were delightful

-- Pleasant temps, almost no bugs, and fairly dry. Transparency could have been a bit better, but after all the clouds and rain we've had lately, I'm not complaining. I usually observe from my driveway, which is not the greatest location. The SQM read 20.8, but if you believe that I have a bridge for you -- The trees surrounding my house are encroaching enough to fool the meter. The sky, what I can see of it, is really only about mag 5.0.

I wanted to see the "new" (actually just rediscovered after being overlooked for years) Wolf Rayet nebula around the star WR-134 or WR-135 (at about 20 09.4 +36 08), in Cygnus, and the "new" (reclassified really) planetary PM1-333 (21 40 59.3 +58 58 39.6) in Cepheus.

I first tried WR-134 at low power, 68X, with an OIII filter on my 18" f/4.5 Dob. At the coordinates, at first I saw nothing but the crowded Cygnus Milky

Way. But after moving the scope a bit, sweeping across the field a few times, I became convinced that I was crossing a broad, faint nebulous area. The easiest part seemed to be a broader area to the north -- easier seen averted. Once found, I could reliably come back to it. The broad arc then became apparent, as described in Steve Gottlieb's observation. This bubble is really large, several degrees across, or it would be if it were visible. The visible nebula is only a small part of a circle -- that is, the arc is just a slight curve. Finding this object reminded me of the first time I found the California nebula -- The edges seem to be where it's most apparent that you're seeing a nebula. I also tried the UHC filter. It provided less contrast, although the nebula was still a little visible. Not seen at all unfiltered. It was plenty big so I didn't try higher powers.

I didn't have a very good idea what to expect with planetary Preite-Martinez 1-333. The Amastro observation (previously posted) said a size of about 0.8' x 0.5', so I began with low power and an OIII filter, but did not see it. After switching to 184X (13 Ethos with Paracorr), I noticed a very faint smudge of light, sort of a rounded rectangle. At first with averted, I found that I could then hold it steady with direct. It is elongated slightly approx. N to S, with no central star apparent in the OIII. With the UHC at 184X, it was still visible, but with reduced contrast, and still no central star. Unfiltered I couldn't see it. I also tried the OIII at 299X, but that seemed too much power, causing less contrast and visibility, and 120X was also no improvement. There is a noticeable sawtooth asterism of about six mag 13 or so stars running E-W just a few minutes to the north and east of the object, so they can be in the field at 184X and lower -- Once found, they help with locating the object.

Sure was good to get out under the stars again tonight. I really needed some old photons. I didn't really expect to have any luck with these two objects here, so I was pleasantly surprised. So did anyone else get out and observe these two?

Roy Diffrient



BACK BAY ***observer***

October 2009

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
01 BBAA Monthly Meeting (TCC VB)		04 Full Moon
09 Sywatch (NWRP)		
17 Nightwatch (Chippokes)		11 Last Quarter
23 Garden Stars (Norfolk)		18 New Moon
23 - 24 East Coast Star Party (Coinjock)		
	29 Bayside Library (VB)	26 First Quarter

Sneak Peak into November:

- 11/04/2009 Bayside Library***
- 11/5/2009 BBAA Monthly Meeting at TCC***
- 11/6/2009 Skywatch at NWRP***
- 11/14/2009 Nightwatch at Chippokes***
- 11/27/2009 Garden Stars at Norfolk Botanical Gardens***

