

Harford County Astronomical Society

Monthly Newsletter



Volume 38 Issue 8 August 2012

Public Star Party

Saturday, August 25, 2012
at 8:00pm
HCAS Observatory

General Meeting

Thursday, August 30, 2012
at 7:00pm
HCAS Classroom

Please check our website for possible schedule updates and changes:
<http://www.harfordastro.org>

and our Facebook page at:
<http://www.facebook.com/HarfordAstro>



<http://astroleague.org/>



<http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/>

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HCAS General Meeting

Minutes of August 2, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by President Gary George. The Minutes of the July meeting were published in the July newsletter and were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Tim reports we have \$4409.22 in the main checking account, he has paid the Astronomical League, the Post Office Box. Yet to pay are the Insurance and Astronomy Magazine renewals. We are up to 66 renewed members, and no further reminders will be made. Anyone not paid up will be dropped from the email list immediately.

Newsletter Issues: Another great issue. Roy is currently out of town but will still need articles and photos by August 13 to be included in the August newsletter.

Website Issues: The photo for the website has been changed. Please submit photos directly to Larry.

Observing Reports: There has been no outings to Broad Creek in the past few weeks due to poor weather. Gary, Grace and Roy used the Observatory to photograph the Werner Lunar X formation, and has put it on the Website homepage. Tim recently took photos of Pluto and M11. Reminder of Member's Observing Night at the Observatory August 11.

Outreach:

Past events - There was a presentation at the Havre de Grace Library on July 31. The Open House on July 28 brought 23 guests and 9 members, although it was completely cloudy. Upcoming Events – Open House on August 25 will bring us a cub scout troop; Paul, Lucy and Karen will make short presentations. September 1 is the Susquehanna State Park fireside event, telescopes and other equipment needed.

Night Sky Network: Please log all events with Colleen. A member may then log their hours once the event has been added to the calendar.

Old Business:

1. Suggestions for dates to clean out dome and repair telescopes – Upcoming Saturday in September, Gary to send out an email.
2. Photos for Stairwell – There are some from Jeremy, Gary and Tim. Please provide an unmounted 8X10, and the frames will be all purchased at the same time to match. Larry is also getting some of Leo Heppner's photos from the College.
3. Updated photo – done.
4. Astrophotography Classes – Larry will provide a date
5. Dome Operating Classes – Tim to run. He will provide a date to interested parties.

Comments, Suggestions, Complaints: Gary would like to offer the chance for people to voice their concerns to him directly if they do not feel comfortable doing so at a meeting. You may reach Gary at home, 410-515-0143, cell 443-827-6355, email gg439209@yahoo.com.

New Business: Grace has unfortunately resigned her position as Vice President of HCAS. This has left many jobs that need to be done by others. A list of jobs that are available will be posted in the Newsletter.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 pm.

*Karen Carey,
Secretary
One People - One Planet - One Sky*

Outreach

**July 28, 2012
Open House**

The night started with threats of severe weather. While there was some distant thunder and occasional lightning in the distance, we did not have rain. Clouds, however, were another matter. Gary opened the dome but was unable to show anything other than the equipment. Karen and Mark set up telescopes out front. Karen was able to give a couple views of the moon. Despite the weather, we had quite a few visitors arrive before 8 PM even though there were no scouts scheduled.

Fortunately, Tom Rusek showed up with one of his great presentations and was able to give the crowd a show. We had 19 visitors show up during the 2 ½ hour event. One person in particular was discussing how the Mason Dixon Line, the Zenith Sector and a telescope are tied together. He is thinking of joining HCAS. I suggested that even if he does not join, would he be interested in giving our club a presentation about this interesting topic. He said he would be interested in giving a presentation and would email us with more information.

Participating in the open house were Gary George, Dave Jayroe, Karen Carey, Tom Rusek, Bob Kesler, Grace Wyatt, Mark Kregel, Paul Sokolowski and Larry Hubble.

- Grace Wyatt

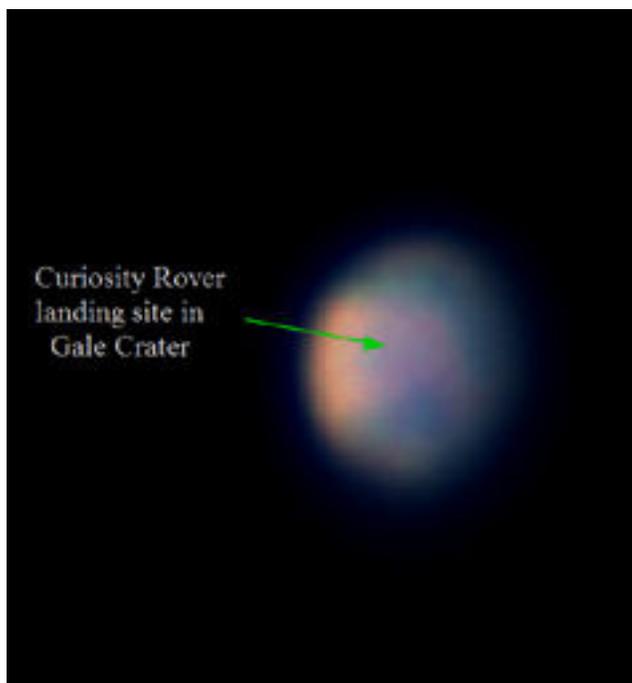
Astrophotography



“The Lunar X”

Photo by Gary George, using the club's 14" Celestron SCT

This is a famous "optical feature" on the Moon, which appears like the letter "X" when the terminator is at a suitable position. The "X" is observable for about 4 hours around the lunar First Quarter. For more information, visit <http://the-moon.wikispaces.com/Lunar+X>



Mars

*Photo taken one day before the Curiosity Rover landed.
Landing location depicted by a green arrow.*

I imaged Mars one day before the Curiosity Rover landed in Gale Crater; note that the landing location of Curiosity near the equator is depicted by a green arrow. The photo further shows Syrtis Major on the right side of the image. Mars was only 5.7 arc seconds in diameter and was at a very low elevation of just 19 degrees since at this late date in the planet's apparition Mars approaches the horizon shortly after sunset.

I recorded this RGB image at 9:06 PM on Aug 4 (0106UT on Aug 5) using 2,492 individual frames for each of the 3 color channels. The focal length for this image was 8,456 mm and the focal ratio was F/30. I used a C11 SCT and a 3x barlow lens together with a monochrome CCD webcam and color filter wheel.

Peter Nerburn

Observing Notes

Members Observing Night HCC Observatory July 14, 2012 Approximately 8PM to 10PM

Those Present Were: Gary George, Grace Wyatt, Bill and Arlene Meininger, Doris Thomas, Cheryl Kilduff and Paul Sokolowski.

This was the first scheduled Members Observing Night, a new event designed attract the members who do not regularly participate in other club events. There had been very little advance "registration" and the weather prediction for the evening was poor.

The weather lived up to the prediction. It was a sweltering evening, with generally consistent complete overcast.

Nevertheless, those in attendance proceeded to the dome and prepared for the possibility of some viewing. The scope was fired up and pointed in the general direction of Saturn, which would have been the highlight target of the night.

And we waited.

Around 9:00, I caught a brief glimmer of something trying to peek through the clouds in the south. By the time I got to the scope and tried to view it, clouds overtook again. At that point, Gary, Bill, and Arlene, being the wise observers that they are, decided the best observation point would be inside the classroom air conditioning. As it turns out, they were correct. The pictures on the wall that they saw far exceeded any observations from the dome.

At approximately 9:15, Cheryl decided to go down to the "lawn" to see if there was any potential break in the cloud cover. I joined her. We did notice Vega struggling to make its presence known through a hazy hole in the cover, but within minutes, it lost the battle. So we went back.

Finally, at around 9:30, I declared the evening DOA and we prepared to leave. This provided the only excitement of the evening. I forgot that when closing the dome, it is necessary to push both buttons simultaneously for the upper wind screen to close, even though both my "class" notes and the club's notes clearly say to do so. Fortunately, our wise observers were still in the air conditioning and quickly came to my rescue.

We closed up the observatory and called Security at approximately 10PM.

- *Paul Sokolowski*

**Future
Member Observing Nights
for the rest of the calendar year (all are Saturday) are:**

August 11, September 15, October 13, November 10 and December 8.

**Broad Creek
August 12, 2012
9:00pm to 11:40pm**

I met with Cathy Tingler and Bill Gelston at Broad Creek. At first, the sky became darkened with clouds and we felt the humidity increase. However, within an hour after sunset, the sky cleared, and despite some haze, we began a good night of observing. Bill used his new 9.25" Celestron and Cathy had her 6" Orion. (Both scopes are on GoTo systems.) This time, I didn't bring my own scope, but spent the session testing a camera I had found: a 30-year-old Canon SLR film camera, which I plan to use for photographing the aurora borealis next month.

For the next few hours, we pleasantly toured some of the Summer objects, including globular clusters M13, M92, M22, M28, M9, M10, and M12.

By 11:00pm, part of the autumn sky could be seen: Andromeda, Pegasus and Cassiopeia. We were able to view M31 galaxy, as well as M15 globular cluster, the Double Cluster and NGC 457, the "E.T. Cluster".

The Milky Way was faintly visible overhead, in Cygnus, Aquila and part of Cassiopeia.

The two planets Uranus and Neptune were visible in the southern sky.

We began packing up around 11:40pm. It had been a clear but hazy night, with a little dew. The temperature had remained in the 70s.

- Roy Troxel

The best times to observe at Broad Creek are between the last quarter and first quarter of the lunar cycle. The current period is:

August 14th thru 22nd, 2012

Try to keep some of these nights open on your schedule!

Because of the unpredictable weather conditions, we cannot set a specific date and time to observe. Sometimes the decision to go to BC is made within a few hours before sunset. In any case, all club members will be notified by email.

Miscellaneous Notes
Member Observing Nights

When ?

- August 11
- September 15
- October 13
- November 10
- December 8

All are on Saturday

All are at the HCC
Observatory

Why ?

- To Encourage All Members to Participate in a Once-a-Month Evening Dedicated to Members Only.
- No "Outside" Interference - Only Your Fellow Members Will Be There. Come to Meet Everyone.
- Your Personal Guests are Welcome but be Reasonable.
- The Dome Will be Available for Observing. (Suggest Some Targets)
- Bring Your Own Scope for Observing and/or Help.
- Just Getting Started ? - Bring Your Questions and Take Advantage of the Group's Experience.
- Just Want to Socialize ? - That's OK Too.

What's Going On ?

It's HCAS Members Observation Night !!!

Please RSVP to harfordastro@yahoo.com

Upcoming Star Parties for 2012

Please consult the star party web sites for the latest details.

Black Forest Star Party

Cherry Springs State Park, PA

Sept 14 - Sept 16, 2012

<http://www.bfsp.org/>

Mid-Atlantic Star Party

Robbins, NC

Latitude: 35° 26' 11"N / Longitude: 79° 33' 01"W

Oct. 12 - Oct. 22, 2012

<http://masp.us/>

This newsletter is the official publication of
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P.O. Box 906,
Bel Air, MD 21014.

Items for the newsletter are due to the editor by the 13th of the month of publication.

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Webmaster: Larry Hubble

...and our Facebook page at:

<http://www.facebook.com/HarfordAstro>