



HCAS General Meeting, November 15, 2003

President Wayne French opened the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Treasurer's report: \$2466.71

Old Business:

1. Lunar Eclipse Evening: Several members gathered at the technical high school's parking lot last Saturday evening to view and display the total lunar eclipse for the public. Unfortunately, the skies didn't cooperate and we had to deal with mostly cloudy conditions. However, at totality about 8:00 occasional holes drifted by causing the crowd to holler out when the dull red moon presented her face illuminated by the longer wavelengths sneaking around the earth's atmosphere.



Steve C. had a driven camera set up and took a series of exposures, but at first examination the clouds obscured the view sufficiently to eliminate the hope of constructing an "eclipse movie".

2. Insurance bill due: Carol reported that the liability insurance bill would be due 15 December. This amounts to over \$300.00. Discussion at the meeting centered on what coverage, exactly, we need and if this represented a duplication of coverage already obtained under the Harford Community College. We will check with the HCC to ensure, EXACTLY, what the real situation is while operating as a sanctioned organization on college grounds. Steve C. will seek a document to confirm that position. The aim here is to spend our funds wisely, not to duplicate protection that we already have needlessly. There is of course the consideration of protection for members' liability

when we are operating at the Broad Creek and Steppingstone sites. More information will be provided once we've made the official inquiries.

3. Astronomy Class Support: Dr. George Thomson expresses his gratitude for the support he has enjoyed for his astronomy class. Please refer to the September AstroViews to confirm the remaining scheduled classes and come support this activity if at all possible. Special thanks to Larry and Fran Armstrong and Eric Brossart for their consistent effort to support Dr. Thomson and our club!!

NEW Business:

1. Merit Badge, Boy Scouts: Larry Armstrong reported his contact request our support for scouts seeking the Astronomy Merit Badge. Larry will register with the BSA as an approved councilor for this. He will arrange the sessions that we can support, anticipating this to come about in Feb-Mar next year.

2. HCAS Christmas Gathering: Members elected to hold a "pot luck" dinner prior to the 6 December General Meeting. Please plan to bring a covered dish and your telescopes to the meeting that Saturday evening, starting at 7:30 PM. We'll share some food, fellowship and hope for some good viewing to follow immediately after the General Meeting. We'll run through the phone list to ensure that everyone has been contacted. Please come share the end of the year celebration with your fellow HCAS friends!

3. Christmas Wish List: Several folks shared their "wish list" for an astronomy Christmas...we'll hold a "what I got for XMAS" discussion at the January meeting to see who was "naughty or nice", eh? ☺

Meeting adjourned at 8:20PM

Member Training Class Conducted

Immediately following the General Meeting we conducted the first training class for Observatory Operations. Steve Channel and Bill Geertsen stepped seven members through the processes in place to ensure safe and effective use of the observatory.

Safety was highlighted and the class was instructed on dome mechanics, scope positioning as well as safe start-up and shut down. Most importantly, we emphasized the "rule of two": i.e. HCAS members certified to use the observatory must be accompanied by at least one other HCAS member. This is for reasons of safety and equipment security. Also, please note that the observing privilege is for HCAS MEMBERS ONLY...we aren't opening up the observatory for general public sessions unless by special event approved by the membership. Member certification is a necessary step for gaining access to, and use of, the observatory. Members that successfully complete the orientation training will be added to the approved access list maintained by the Harford Community College Security detail.

Steve Channel completed the mount software upgrade he obtained from AstroPhysics and reports it successfully added the new functions as hoped. Although the scope has not been recalibrated at this time, it is fully functional in the manual mode (i.e. responds to the keypad direction keypad and tracks any object it points at). Bill Geertsen noted that the scope could use some collimation and he/Steve will tackle that in future. However, the views we obtained last evening were quite adequate for the general viewing and learning all the features.

We have written a Standard Operating Procedure for reference. In addition, Steve will provide "cheat sheets" for quick reference to critical functions, e.g. how to rapidly change the mount "slew rate" when you want to move to another section of sky. Congratulations to Doris Thomas, Larry Armstrong, Frances Armstrong, Franz Youngmans, Wayne French, Gerry Kirkendall and Jeremy Kirkendall as the first HCAS "class" > Good Viewing.

ANY MEMBERS THAT WOULD LIKE TO CERTIFY, PLEASE CONTACT THE HCAS SECRETARY (STEVE CHANNEL) FOR SCHEDULING. THE INSTRUCTION TAKES ABOUT 50 MINUTES TO AN HOUR. Contact: srccac2@comcast.net, 410-420-8647

November EVENTS

22nd Star Party <MEMBERS> Stepping Stone/Broad Creek, dusk
29th Public Open House. 7:30PM Technical High School (usual location),

6th December -- Pot Luck Dinner 5:30PM at Observatory followed by General Meeting and observing. <MEMBERS>

Blackwater Falls State Park, WV and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory

Steve and Carol Channel took the trip over the Blackwater State Falls State Park, West Virginia to attend the Kanawah Valley Astronomical Society's "Astro Weekend 2003" on 24-26 October. They confirm that the web site description that, "**Dark skies at Blackwater Falls State Park are a treasured resource**" is far from an exaggeration! This event is free and included lectures, demonstrations and equipment discussions that appealed to the beginner as well as advanced amateur astronomer.

Daytime activities are abundant for those who enjoy the out of doors. After attending several lectures, we took a hike through the Blackwater Falls Gorge, enjoying the fall color!



As advertised, Friday evening's sky was indeed spectacular! I'd run out of space to list the naked eye objects, but to state

that M13 was more than just a "fuzzy star" is the truth! There were a large selection of scopes, including a 6inch, F15 bino/telescope...the individual tubes were almost 6 feet long! General public viewers came by, including these two youngsters that spent some considerable time with Carol and I looking at all the wonders.



Accommodations were outstanding. Blackwater Falls Lodge rests sits on the canyon's south rim, providing a sweeping view of the densely forested gorge. Each of the air-conditioned guest rooms has a private bath, phone, and color television. The lodge also features a full service restaurant, game room, and a sitting room with a cozy fireplace. The new 200-seat Harr Conference

Center and indoor pool/fitness center make the Blackwater Falls Lodge a comfortable retreat in a beautiful mountain setting. If



you want more privacy, there are rustic vacation cabins and a 65-unit campground available. For information for next's years event, monitor the KVAS Web Site at: <http://www.kvas.org>

On Sunday, we headed down to the National Radio Astronomy observatory at Green Bank West Virginia. It is home to the largest fully steerable radio telescope, the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank telescope. As described on the web site:

The GBT is described as a 100-meter telescope, but the actual dimensions of the surface are 100 by 110 meters. The overall structure of the GBT is a wheel-and-track design that allows the telescope to view the entire sky above 5 degrees elevation. The track, 64 m (210 ft) in diameter, is level to within a few thousandths of an inch in order to provide precise pointing of the structure while bearing 7300 metric tons (16,000,000 pounds) of moving weight.

Taller than the Liberty, the statue as it is, is not the entire site is an amazing array of telescopes that have contributed fundamental knowledge of the "radio sky". Information is available at the web site :



Statue of GBT, impressive alone! The home to an array of radio telescopes contributed fundamental knowledge of the "radio sky". Information is available at the web site :

<http://www.gb.nrao.edu/>

FOR SALE:

"Telescopic" 10" f/5 Optical Tube Assembly, Model RFT-10 Reflector

Includes: 2" rack/pin focuser w/ moto focus, homebuilt Dobsonian mount, rotating rings on tube, dust covers, aluminum end rings. EXCELLENT OPTICS. \$1000.000 firm. Contact Woody Lower, 410-272-4839

Current HCAS Members: Several folks wanted a list of our current membership. I'm not able to list addresses and phone info. If you'd like to contact another member directly, please use the Yahoo HCAS group of contact me. Thanks. Steve

Lucy	Albert	Heather	Harrison	Tom & Karen	Pickett
Larry & Frances	Armstrong	Leo	Heppner	Doris	Reese
Harold	Berman	K. Aubrey	Hottell	James W.	Roelke
John T.	Bowling	Larry & Linda	Hubble	Salvatore J.	Rodano
Eric	Brossart	Charles	Jones	Tom & Barbara	Rusek
Allen	Burns	George R.	Jones, Jr.	Philip A.	Schmitz
Steve & Carol	Channel	Gerry	Kirkendall	Ralph	Smith
Wayne M.	Claytor	Stephen	Krall	Doris	Thomas
James L.	D'Amario	Mark	Kregel	Cathy	Tingler
Samuel G.	Dunston	Clinton	Lower, Jr.	Kenneth J.	Tomchik
Patrick	Fell	Frank	Majewski	Frank & Martha	Varisco
Wayne	French	Joseph	Manning	Drew	Wilkerson
James	Garrett, Sr.	Millie	McCoy	Fred	Wille
William	Geertsen	J. Gary	McDaniel	Andrew	Williams
Richard	Gilman	Tom	Miller	Doug	Wittich
				Grace	Wyatt
				Franz	Younghans
				Paul	Zappala
				Ron	Zimmerman

AstroViews is the official publication of the Harford County Astronomical Society, P.O. Box 906, Bel Air MD 21014. For the year 2002 any items for publication in any issue are due to the editor **by the 15th of the preceding month**. Please send all contributions (electronic format is STRONGLY encouraged) to Steve Channel at EMAIL: srccac2@comcast.net, regular mail at: 602 Roxburch Terrace, Bel Air, MD 21015. Permission is not necessary for non-profit use of this material, although proper acknowledgment is required. Address changes should be brought to the attention of the editor at the address given above.

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