

OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

DECEMBER 1993

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♠ acting president, edwin luccott ♠ acting vice president tim ryan ♠ acting treasurer steven luccott

Meeting Notes

The next meeting of the Chester County Astronomical Society will be on December 14, 1993 from 7:30 to 9:00 PM at the planetarium room of the Schmucker Science Center at West Chester University. Schmucker Science Center is located at the corner of Church Street and Rosedale Avenue in West Chester, PA. A map is available and will be mailed to any that request it. The following meeting will be held on January 11, 1993.

Old Business

The November meeting of the Society was held at the planetarium room of the Schmucker Science Center at West Chester University.

A draft of the proposed constitution and by-laws for the Society was distributed at the November meeting. Any requests/changes/additions etc should be voiced at the December meeting. It would be nice to start the new year with a formal constitution in place.

The Society welcomes 6 new members who joined while attending the November meeting. Holly Silverthorne, Garry Norton, Debbie Athens, Sandy Maxwell, Rolf Zimmer and John Stulack represent the single largest increase in membership in our brief history. To all members, bring a friend to a meeting. They might catch the bug!

During the November meeting Dr. John Stolar gave an inspiring talk on astrophotography. His lecture covered simple photography using a tripod mounted camera to more complicated techniques such as eyepiece projection through a tracking telescope. Many members expressed an interest, particularly with the upcoming lunar eclipse

New Business

Our December meeting will feature Professor Hugh Harber. Professor Harber will give a historical presentation on the Stargazer's Stone and Mason & Dixon in America. Hugh has performed a considerable amount of research on this subject. It should be very interesting since a lot of the relevant events took place in the Chester County area.

The clouds cleared away nicely by Sunday/Moday Nov. 28/29 for the total eclipse of the moon. Ed, Steve and Steve's wife Lori observed the eclipse from Ed's backyard observatory until about 2:00 AM. The southern portion of the moon remained quite bright even after it had passed into the umbra. The northern quadrant was very dark with little coloring while the central section showed some the reddish-brown coloring typical of a lunar eclipse. Rumor has it some photographs were taken. Maybe they will show up at the December meeting. Anyone else who caught the event on film is urged to bring evidence to the meeting.

HUBBLE UPDATE

On December 4 astronauts on board the shuttle Endeavor successfully captured the Hubble telescope for some much needed repairs. I'm sure many of us are aware of the \$1 billion orbiting telescopes sad history. NASA is optimistic about restoring the instrument to a greater degree of functionality. In view of the Mars Observer debacle, NASA needs a win. Although it will never achieve the optic specifications cited during design, it should be an improvement on the current capabilities.

Worth Seeing

If you find yourself looking up in the next few weeks, here are some objects of interest:

GEMINID METEOR SHOWER - The meteor shower will peak during the evening hours of December 12 and continue into the morning hours of the 13th. The moon will be new, so this represents a good opportunity for viewing even faint meteors. We'll discuss observations during the meeting the following night.

M-42 (THE ORION NEBULA) - M-42 rises in the southeast and is visible for most of the evening hours. This most prominent nebula and the accompanying 4 star group known as the Trapezium (for obvious reasons) is approximately 16,000 light years away, much further than the bright stars that make up the familiar constellation of Orion. In our skies most likely you will see only the brighter portion that contains the Trapezium. The entire nebula is much larger than that, with an actual diameter of about 30 light years. Some astronomers believe that the Trapezium is a very young group of stars, perhaps only 100,000 years old, mere infants when compared to our 4,000,000,000 year old sun.

CERES - The minor planet Ceres is a bit more challenging. It will brighten to the eighth magnitude in the constellation of Cetus. On December 18 at 7:00 PM it will be at R.A. 1 h 36', declination +0° 03'. There will be other eighth magnitude stars in the area. Note the pattern one night and see if a change can be observed on the following evening. It will be moving roughly northward for the next couple of weeks. Ceres orbits the sun in 4.6 years and is about 620 miles in diameter.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Chester County Astronomical Society was formed to provide a local organization dedicated to promote an interest in Astronomy through meetings, discussions, speaker programs. Observations with a variety of telescopes. All individuals with an interest are encouraged to join. There are a variety of membership plans available. Please note that these initial membership rates do not include a subscription in Sky and Telescope. As membership grows, we hope to incorporate a subscription to this publication with each membership. If anyone is interested in membership, contact Edwin Lurcott at (215) 436-0387. and active

- Regular \$20/year
- Student \$15/year
- Junior \$10/year (18 years or younger)
- Family \$30/year

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO OBSERVATIONS

Members are welcome and encouraged to contribute articles to OBSERVATIONS. The deadline for the January edition is December 28, 1993. Contributions should be sent to:

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Every effort will be made for the timely inclusion of submitted articles.