

OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHESTER COUNTY
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

MAY 1994

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▲ acting president, edwin lurcott ▲ acting vice president tim ryan ▲ acting treasurer steven lurcott

May Meeting of CCAS

The may meeting of the CCAS will be on May 10, 1994 from 7:30 to 9:00 PM in the planetarium (room 186) of the Schmucker Science Center at West Chester University. The Center is located at the corner of Church Street and Rosedale Ave. in West Chester, PA. Parking is available behind Sikes Student Union across Rosedale or behind the Learning Research Center at the corner of Rosedale Ave. and South High Street. After the business portion of the meeting, members are invited to visit the observatory on the roof of Schmucker Science Center. If the weather cooperates, the 12" 'scope will be available for observations.

Dr. Anthony Nicastro Speaks at CCAS's April Meeting

"The Vindication of Sloppy Pierre" was the title of Dr. Nicastro's talk at the April meeting. He showed several recorded notes by Pierre C. Lemonnier in which he reported seeing the planet Uranus 12 times before Sir John Herschel, who announced the discovery in 1781. The presentation was well received by the members present. Dr. Nicastro is a professor of physics at West Chester University.

Election of Officers

Nominating Committee members Debbie Athens, Mike Tucker, and Gary Norton reported their recommendations to the Society at the April meeting. Edwin Lurcott has been nominated as President, Steven Lurcott has been nominated as Treasurer, Mike Tucker volunteered to be Vice President (no one would accept the nomination, perhaps we should have called Dan Quayle), and new member Nancy Armstrong accepted the post of Secretary. Formal elections will

be held at the May meeting, officers will be installed at the June meeting.

Mason-Dixon Star Party

June 10-12, 1994 are the dates set for the Mason-Dixon Star Party, arranged by the York County Parks Astronomical Society. It is a combination camp-out and observing session for the whole family. More information and applications will be available at the May meeting of CCAS.

Astronomy Day Display is Well Received at Exton

On Saturday, April 16 (National Astronomy Day), members of CCAS answered questions and provided information about our Society to shoppers at the Exton Square Mall. About 75 people picked up our information pamphlet, about half as many signed up to receive 2 issues of the monthly newsletter. Many expressed interest in joining the Society. Pete LaFrance, Nancy Armstrong and Ed Lurcott manned the display from 10:00 AM until 8:30 PM. Much credit for the success of this effort goes to Pete who brought in his 8" 'scope for display, and to Nancy who encouraged many to sign up for the newsletter. Also thanks to Mike Tucker and Gary Norton for providing posters and photographs for the display, and Tim Ryan for printing the pamphlets. The efforts of Exton Square Mall Management are also recognized for providing the space, table and chairs for free. It remains to be seen how many of the interested people attend meetings and become members, but the initial response was encouraging and the effort worthwhile.

Partial Solar Eclipse on May 10 in Chester County

The moon will cover about 88% of the Sun's diameter at 1:32 PM EDT on May 10, 1994. First contact is at 11:45 AM and last contact is at 3:18 PM. At no time will the Sun be covered completely, therefore proper protection must be used to prevent damage to the eye. No. 14 welders glass or filters designed for solar astronomy may be used. Remember, other materials, even if they reduce visible light to a comfortable level may still allow damaging levels of infrared and ultraviolet rays into the eye. Proper filters should always be placed securely in front of any viewing device, filtering the light before it enters the optical apparatus. Venus may be visible 28° east of the sun if the sky is clear. Mercury will be 12° to the east and presents a bit more of a challenge. Enjoy the eclipse, it is the last central solar eclipse in this area until 2012.

Partial Lunar Eclipse on the Evening of May 24

Only 25% of the moon's diameter will be covered by the central portion of the Earth's shadow in the early evening of May 24. The entire event lasts from 9:18 PM until 1:43 AM on the 25th. The dark portion of the umbra will be visible from about 10:30 PM until about 12:30 AM. Maximum eclipse is at 11:30 PM. You may notice only a slight darkening of the southern portion of the moon while the northern portion remains bright.

Jupiter Dominates the Evening Sky Beginning This Month

Giant Jupiter passed opposition on April 29 and now is above the horizon just about all night. Just about any telescope will reveal the four Galilean moons and the dark bands in the planet's atmosphere. The inner most large moon Io revolves around Jupiter in only 42.5 hours, significant changes in position can easily be observed in just a few hours. As the moons move around Jupiter, their shadows are easily visible on the upper cloud layers of the planet using a modest 'scope. Additionally, astronomers from the Lowell Observatory (Flagstaff AZ),

the University of Arizona, MIT, and the NASA Ames Research Center are planning to conduct 2 observational projects this summer to study the collision of periodic comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 with Jupiter, a phenomenon never before observed. Study success is enhanced by the fact that NASA won't be required to launch anything. Perhaps this is how NASA plans on eventually catching up with the Mars Observer (waiting for it to crash onto a planet).

CCAS Membership Growing

The Society now has over 20 members with strong prospects for continued growth. Future observing sessions open to the public may also bring in new members. The Society was formed to provide a local organization dedicated to promoting an interest in astronomy. Anyone with an interest in astronomy is welcome and encouraged to become a member. Membership rates are as follows:

- Regular Member: \$20/year
- Student Member: \$5/year
- Junior Member: \$5/year
- Senior Member: \$10/year

Regular meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the planetarium (room 186) of the Schmucker Science Center at West Chester University. Further information regarding membership may be obtained by contacting Ed Lurcott at (610) 436-0387, or Steve Lurcott at (610) 268-6943.