



OBSERVATIONS



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE

CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★President: Edwin Lurcott
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

OCTOBER 1996
(VOLUME 4, NO. 10)

★Vice President: Emil Volcheck
★Secretary: William O'Hara

CCAS October Meeting

DATE: **Tuesday October 8, 1996**
TIME: 7:30 PM EDT
PLACE: Department of Geology and
Astronomy Lecture Room
(Room 113 - Boucher Building)
Schmucker Science Center
West Chester University
LOCATION: South Church St.
West Chester, PA (see maps)

Parking is available behind Sykes Student Center on the south side of Rosedale Avenue, and behind the Bull Center at the corner of Rosedale Avenue and South High Street.

Our program for October will be presented by Bill McDaid, an instructor of astronomy at West Chester University. His talk is entitled "The New Mexico Experience." There will be refreshments and socializing after the meeting.



Next CCAS Observing Session

The next observing session will be held on Friday November 8, with a cloud date of Saturday November 9. The location will be announced at the October Society meeting. At the observing session, there will be help available to set up and use your telescopes. All members are invited whether they have a telescope or not. Telescope owners are always glad to share the view through their 'scope.



Stella-Della-Valley Star Party

The Bucks-Mont Astronomical Association will host the 10th annual Stella-Della-Valley Star Party on October 11 thru 13, 1996. The party features guest speakers, demonstrations, observing sessions, door prizes, and a flea market. The event is held at Camp

Onas in Ottsville, PA. Registration is \$25 for adults, \$40 for couples, and \$10 for children under 16. Contact Ed Melnick, 1443 Devon Road, Warminster, PA 18974, or call 215-443-7929.



Request for Telescopes

A home-school association in the Downingtown area has requested help from the CCAS for a Star Night for their pupils. The event is scheduled for Friday October 18, with a cloud date of Saturday October 19. This is a good opportunity to share the night sky with many people, and to get the word out about our Society. Any members who can come out and help at this event is asked to contact Ed Lurcott.



DelMarVa Star Party

Three members of the Society attended this annual event, held in September. Chuck McLaren, Pete LaFrance and son Chris, and Ed Lurcott, enjoyed the really dark skies.



Winter Star Party

See Ed Lurcott if you're interested in attending the 1997 Winter Star Party on West Summerland Key, 30 miles NE of Key West, Florida. It will be held on February 3 thru 9, 1997.



September CCAS Meeting

One of our newest members, Geoff Burtner, gave an interesting illustrated talk about meteors, meteorites, meteor showers, and asteroids. Pete LaFrance then gave a demonstration of weather data that is available on the Internet. It can be useful in deciding if it will be clear enough to go out observing. For more info (and Internet URLs, etc.) contact Pete at

his address listed below, or e-mail him at lafrance@chesco.com

We also had good news at the September meeting: Kathy Buczynski volunteered to serve as the Program Chair for the Society. Kathy will be arranging the program schedule for our meetings. Any help you can give her would be greatly appreciated. Our thanks to Kathy for taking on this important job for us.

We promised a review of the question of a flag for the Society in the newsletter. All options are on 3' x 5' nylon. These are the options:

<u>Design</u>	<u>Single-sided</u>	<u>Double-sided</u>
plain CCAS logo	\$ 217.50	\$ 390.00
logo w/ stars for border	\$ 258.00	\$ 469.50

The problem is that the prices of all these options exceed the amount approved by the Society members for this purpose (\$150.00). Therefore the question of buying a banner/flag needs to be reconsidered by the membership.



October's Skies

Moon Phases

Last Quarter	10/04
New Moon	10/12
First Quarter	10/19
Full Moon	10/26

The Planets

Mercury will be making its best appearance this year in the morning sky as October begins, and then slowly sinks lower each morning as the month goes on.

Venus dominates the morning sky this month, rising three+ hours before the Sun.

Mars is also in the morning sky in October, moving into the constellation Leo and drawing nearer to Regulus.

Jupiter is easily found right after darkness falls in the evening, appearing as a very bright star in the south-southwest. It's near the top of the "Teapot" in Sagittarius.

Neptune is about four binocular fields east of brighter Jupiter. Neptune shines at about magnitude 7.8 in the constellation Sagittarius.

Uranus is in Capricornus, shining at about magnitude 5.7. It is about one binocular field east of fainter Neptune.

Saturn rises a few hours after sunset, looking like a bright star in the southeastern sky.

Pluto is in Ophiuchus, the Snake Handler, this month. You need to use at least an 8" telescope to find it.

Orionid Meteor Shower: Oct. 19-23

The Orionids are remains of Halley's Comet. They peak on the night of October 21 each year, but are usually active for two nights before and after that. At their peak they can produce 20 meteors per hour. They seem to radiate from the constellation Orion; hence their name. The best viewing of a meteor shower is after midnight. The show should be pretty good this year since the Moon won't be around to drown out the fainter meteors.

Space Exploration Notes

Historical Notes for October

In 1957, the Space Age begins as the Soviets launch Sputnik 1, Earth's first artificial satellite.

In 1959, the Soviet Union's Luna 3 spacecraft transmits the first images of the Moon's far side.

In 1964, the Soviets launch the world's first three-person spacecraft, Voskhod 1, which was also the first spacecraft to feature a "shirtsleeve" environment.

In 1967, the Soviet Union's Venera 4 is the first spacecraft to examine another planet's atmosphere (Venus).

In 1968, NASA launches Apollo 7, the first Apollo mission in space.

In 1969, the Soviets have three manned spacecraft in orbit at one time, Soyuz 6, 7, & 8.

In 1971, England launches its first satellite.

In 1987, the Soviet Union launches Cosmos 1894, its 2,000th satellite.



Comet Hale-Bopp

The weekly bulletin from *Sky & Telescope* (for Sept. 27) indicates that Comet Hale-Bopp appears to be

having a slight outburst. Magnitude estimates reported are in the range of 5.5-6.0.

October Coords for Comet Hale-Bopp

<u>Date</u>	<u>R.A.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>	<u>Constell.</u>
10/1	17h 29.6m	-04° 59'	Ophiuchus
10/10	17h 30.8m	-04° 34'	Ophiuchus
10/15	17h 32.0m	-04° 17'	Ophiuchus
10/20	17h 33.9m	-04° 03'	Ophiuchus
10/30	17h 38.7m	-03° 27'	Ophiuchus
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October Star Story

Appearing higher in the eastern sky each night as the weeks of October pass are a number of the "constellations of autumn." Six of these are tied together in myth, forming the largest group of "related" constellations. They are: Andromeda, The Chained Princess; Cassiopeia, The Queen; Cepheus, The King; Cetus, The Sea Monster; Perseus, The Hero; and Pegasus, The Winged Horse. This is their story.

King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeia ruled the ancient country of Ethiopia. They had a beautiful daughter whom they named Andromeda. Now it seems that Queen Cassiopeia was a bit vain. She boasted that she was more beautiful than the daughters of the sea god Nereus. Of course we all know that since they were the daughters of a god that this was impossible. Sill, Nereus was suitably outraged, and, being a god, sent the great sea monster Cetus to ravage the kingdom. An oracle told the distraught King and Queen that they could only save their kingdom by sacrificing their daughter to Cetus. That, and that alone, would appease Nereus. Well, what's a daughter when a whole kingdom is at stake. So the King and Queen chained Andromeda to a rock by the sea, where Cetus would be sure to find her.

While all this was going on, Perseus The Hero had been busy in another sector of the mythological heavens. Perseus was the son of Zeus and the mortal Danae. Perseus had just achieved fame by killing the Gorgon Medusa, one of three sisters who were so ugly (how ugly were they?!) that one glance from

them and you turn to stone. Using the goddess Athene's shield as a mirror to turn back Medusa's glance, Perseus managed to cut her head off. As her blood spilled forth, from it sprung the winged horse Pegasus. Perseus hopped on, and now they came cruising over the coastline of Ethiopia in the nick of time.

Swooping low over the sea astride Pegasus, Perseus revealed the head of Medusa to Cetus as the great sea monster closed in for the kill. Cetus instantly turned to stone and sank to the bottom of the sea. Perseus freed Andromeda from her chains, and they rode off on Pegasus into the heavens and immortality.

So as autumn advances, watch these constellations climb ever higher in the sky. Recall the myths that bind them together, and beware of gazing too long at Algol (the Demon Star) in Perseus, for it is the eye of Medusa! Also, gaze upon α Ceti, and try to recall the more modern myth related to it.

Above all, have fun. Clear Skies!



Also Available

A free brief overview called *Getting Started In Astronomy* is available from the CCAS. It can be picked up at a CCAS function, or you can call the newsletter editor to get a copy mailed to you. Suggestions for improving this introduction to our hobby are always welcome. Articles for the *First Light* column, intended for beginners, are also needed.



Contributing to the Newsletter

Contributions of articles relating to astronomy and space exploration are always welcome. If you have a computer, and an Internet connection, you can attach the file to an email message and send it to the editor at skywalkr@voicenet.com. Or mail to:

Jim Anderson
 1086 King Road IVY-312
 Malvern, PA 19355



Membership Renewals

Check the date printed on the address label of this issue of *Observations*. If you are due to renew, you may send your renewal check made out to our Treasurer, Pete LaFrance. Mail to:

Pete LaFrance
413 Church Rd.
Avondale, PA 19311

Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates!

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at \$27 per year, about half the newsstand price, and also cheaper than individual subscriptions! Make out a check to the Chester County Astronomical Society, note that it's for *Sky & Telescope*, and mail to Pete LaFrance.

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CCAS Membership Information

The present membership rates are as follows:

REGULAR MEMBER

(18 years or older)\$20/year

SENIOR MEMBER

(65 years or older)\$10/year

STUDENT MEMBER

(full-time college student) \$ 5/year

JUNIOR MEMBER

(under 18 years old)\$ 5/year

FAMILY MEMBER

(husband, wife & children)\$ 30/year

For further information on membership or society activities you may call:

President:	Edwin Lurcott	(610) 436-0387
Vice Pres:	Emil Volcheck	(610) 388-1581
Treasurer:	Pete LaFrance	(610) 268-2616
Secretary:	William O'Hara	(610) 696-1422
Program:	Kathy Buczynski	(610) 436-0821
Public Rel:	Kathy Cseke	(610) 644-9543
Obs Chm:	Mike Tucker	(610) 584-8236
Newsletter:	Jim Anderson	(610) 993-0261

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