



OBSERVATIONS



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★President: Edwin Lurcott
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

AUGUST 1997
(VOLUME 5, NO. 8)

★Vice President: Kathy Buczynski
★Secretary: William O'Hara

CCAS Observing Session

DATE: **Friday August 29, 1997**
RAIN DATE: Saturday August 30, 1997
TIME: 8:15 p.m. EDT
PLACE: **Brandywine Valley Assoc.**
(BVA)
LOCATION: 1760 Unionville-Wawaset Rd.
(PA Route 842)
West Chester, PA (see map)

At the Society's observing sessions, there will be help available to set up and use your telescopes. All members and the public are invited whether they have a telescope or not. Telescope owners are always glad to share the view through their 'scope.



August CCAS Meeting

The August meeting, held on August 1, was a big success despite the tardiness in mailing the August newsletter (bad Jim, wicked Jim). Ed Lurcott and Kathy Buczynski took to the phones and called all the members. About 15-20 people showed up and had a great time in spite of mediocre skies. Gabrielle Rowan gave a talk on the constellation Delphinus. A "First Light" ceremony was held for the Society's new lending telescope.



CCAS now has a Lending Telescope!

Frank Angelini has arranged the donation of a telescope to the CCAS from **Pocono Mountain Optics** in Moscow, PA. The telescope is a 6" f/8 Dobsonian reflector from Orion Telescopes. Ed Lurcott donated three old eyepieces to be used with the telescope. Ed also collimated the `scope and got it ready for use. It is now available for Society members to borrow for use. We are accepting

applications for the position of Lending Telescope Coordinator. The Society extends thanks to Frank, Ed, and especially Pocono Mountain Optics for making this all possible.



Upcoming Events

The September CCAS meeting will be on Tuesday September 9 at West Chester University. The room will be announced at the August 29 Observing Session, and in the September newsletter.

The September CCAS Observing Session will be on Friday September 26, with a cloud date of Saturday September 27, at the Brandywine Valley Association. Remember, if the weather is bad on both days, there will be no observing session that month.

On August 30 through September 1 (Labor Day weekend) MegaMeet VI will be held at Pulpit Rock. This event features rustic camping on the mountain, with great dark-sky observing. The Lehigh Valley Amateur Astronomers have four observatories up there that are open for viewing by participants. Pulpit Rock is not far from the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, but is approached from the other side of the mountain (outside Hamburg, north of Reading). If you're interested, contact Ed Lurcott for details..



Welcome !

We welcome the new members who have joined the Society in recent months: Scott Hain, Gabrielle Rowan, Michael Turco and family, and Jennifer and Kathy Morris.



CCAS Membership Survey

If you have not already done so, please fill out the survey and return it to Ed Lurcott, either by mail or

by bringing it to a meeting. If you lost your copy of the form, please ask for another one at the meeting, or by phone. We haven't received many returns yet, and we'd like to give everyone a chance to express their preferences for Society programs.

Ed Lurcott
1384 Station Place
West Chester, PA 19380
Phone: 436-0387

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BVA Star Party

On Wednesday August 6 Ed Lurcott and Chuck Shorten provided telescopes and expertise for a special star party for a children's educational program at the Brandywine Valley Association. The Society extends thanks to Ed and Chuck for providing this experience for the children, counselors, and parents.

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August's Skies

Moon Phases

New Moon	8/03
First Quarter	8/11
Full Moon	8/18
Last Quarter	8/24

The Planets

Mercury is very low in the evening sky in early August, and then disappears into the Sun's glare.

Venus is low in our evening sky this month and easy to spot due to its brightness, but it will not get high enough above the horizon for good telescopic viewing. It will be the first bright "star" you see in the west after sunset.

Mars is easy to spot in the evening sky, a bright orange or red "star" high in the southwest at dusk.

Jupiter reaches opposition on August 9, and is visible for most of the night all month long. As August begins it is low in the southeast in the evening, climbing higher each night. It is the brightest "star" in the evening sky, easy to find in the faint constellation Capricornus. It is also the most fascinating planet to study with even the smallest telescopes. See below for some special notes on observing Jupiter this month.

Saturn is rising around 11 p.m. in the east as August opens, and around 9 p.m. by month's end. The best time to see it during August is during the early morning hours.

Uranus, in Capricornus this month, is a bit west of much-brighter Jupiter.

Neptune is also in Capricornus, not far from Uranus.

Pluto is on the border between Ophiuchus and Scorpius, and high in the south at nightfall. You need a 8" or 10" telescope, good detailed star charts, and patience to find it. Dark skies help a lot, too.

Jupiter's Moons in August

In the June 1997 issue of *Sky & Telescope*, there is an article about some interesting events occurring this year for the moons of Jupiter. Every six years, the plane of the orbits of the four largest moons turns edge-on to Earth and the Sun. What this means is that from Earth we can see these moons eclipse and occult (pass in front of) each other. What you can see of an occultation, even in small telescopes and binoculars, is two moons getting ever "closer together", and "merging" as the one disappears behind the other. For an eclipse, you can see one moon's apparent brightness dip by a noticeable amount as it passes through the shadow cast by another moon. There are 2 events listed for July, that occur when Jupiter is in the nighttime skies for us in North America. The next one is on August 19-20. From 11:53 p.m. on the 19th to 12:07 a.m. on the 20th (EDT), Callisto will eclipse Ganymede, with Ganymede's brightness dropping by about 56%. This eclipse will be an annular eclipse (the "ring" kind). Then on August 24, from 5:34 to 5:37 a.m. EDT, Ganymede will eclipse Io, with Io's brightness dropping by 57%. This eclipse is a partial eclipse. There are more events like this in September.

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Quiz question of the Month:

What is the distance from the Earth to the Moon in light-years? First person to call Ed with the correct answer wins a FREE ticket to the September CCAS meeting.

Contributing to Observations

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 Jim.Anderson@hbc.com

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

Jim Anderson
 19 Bluff Road
 Thorndale, PA 19372-1104

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Membership Renewals

Check the date printed on the address label of this issue of *Observations*; "exp." appears in front of it, just after your name. 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

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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. Or you can bring it to the next Society meeting and give it to Pete there. Buying a

subscription this way also gets you a 10% discount on other Sky Publishing merchandise.

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CCAS Membership Information

The present membership rates are as follows:

- REGULAR MEMBER**.....\$20/year
- SENIOR MEMBER**.....\$10/year
- STUDENT MEMBER**.....\$ 5/year
- JUNIOR MEMBER**.....\$ 5/year
- FAMILY MEMBER**.....\$ 30/year

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

- President:** Edwin Lurcott (610) 436-0387
- Vice Pres:** Kathy Buczynski (610) 436-0821
- Treasurer:** Pete LaFrance (610) 268-2616
- Secretary:** William O'Hara (610) 696-1422
- Program:** Kathy Buczynski (610) 436-0821
- ALCor and Newsletter:** Jim Anderson (610) 380-4512
- Librarian:** William O'Hara (610) 696-1422

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