



OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY



★President: Edwin Lurcott
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

MAY 1998
(VOLUME 6, NO. 5)

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

CCAS May Meeting

DATE: **Tuesday May 12, 1998**
TIME: 7:30 p.m. EDST
PLACE: Department of Geology and
Astronomy Lecture Room
(Room 113 - Boucher Building)
West Chester University
LOCATION: South Church Street
West Chester, PA (see map)

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.

At our May meeting Frank Angelini will talk with us about his recent trip to the wonderful skies of Hawaii. Refreshments and socializing will follow the meeting.

Special Note: During the summer months of June, July, and August, the monthly meeting will be combined with the Observing Session out at the BVA. There will not be any meetings at West Chester University in June, July, and August. That means that if the Friday Observing Session evening is clouded out, we will hold the meeting on Saturday evening, even if that night is also clouded out. Summer meetings start at about 8:00 p.m.

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CCAS May Observing Session

The next Observing Session will be on Friday May 29, 1998, with a cloud date of Saturday May 30. If the weather is bad both days, there will not be an observing session this month. The session will be held at the Brandywine Valley Association (a map is included). From the main parking lot by the office, go up the farm lane to the left, about 800 feet or so to the top of the hill. If you arrive after dark, please turn off your headlights and just use parking lights

as you come up the hill. At the observing sessions, 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. CCAS Observing Sessions are free of charge. Children are always welcome as long as they are accompanied by an adult.

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CCAS Election News

At the April Society meeting the slate of candidates for the elected offices was presented to the Society. The floor was then opened for further nominations, but none were made. We therefore have one candidate running for each of the elected offices. According to our Constitution, when that happens the current Society Secretary will cast one vote for each of the candidates, making the election official. In case you were wondering why you did not receive a ballot in the mail, as described in last month's *Observations*, that is why. The new officers will be installed in their posts at the June meeting. The CCAS officers for the next year are:

President - Mike Turco
Vice President - Kathy Buczynski
Secretary - Frank Angelini
Treasurer - Pete LaFrance

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Star Party Notes

The Star Party at the Ridge Pike Elementary School was clouded out both nights, May 6 and 7, so it was held indoors on Thursday night. Thanks to Ed Lurcott and Pete LaFrance who made the trek on Thursday night.

The Star Party for the Girl Scouts was postponed from Wednesday May 6 to Wednesday May 20.

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June 2: East Goshen Park Star Party

East Goshen Township has asked the CCAS to run a star party in East Goshen Township Park on Tuesday evening, June 2, with a cloud date of Wednesday June 3. Telescopes and members will be needed to help with the anticipated crowd.

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June 19-21: Mason-Dixon Star Party

This fine star party takes place south of York, PA, near the state border. It features speakers on a variety of topics, swap tables of astronomical gear, vendor displays, camaraderie, and great observing all night long if you can stay awake. Practically an unlimited number of camping sites is available. No hookups, though. There are also three motels within "telescope distance" of the park, and many others within a 30-minute drive. Ed Lurcott has a brochure with more details. We would like to get together a group of people to attend this event together; camp together in a group, if camping, etc. The idea is to get the CCAS a bit more recognition outside our own area. Chuck Shorten, Shiv Gupta, Rafael Gonzalez, Pete LaFrance, and Ed Lurcott have all attended this event in the past. You can talk to any of them about their experiences.

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July 21-25: ALCON 98

The National Convention of the Astronomical League will be held this year in French Lick, Indiana. There will be at least 8 professional speakers, competitions in astrophotography and CCD imaging, displays by vendors, a banquet, workshops, tours, door prizes, a midnight bowling tournament, and dark-site observing in the Hoosier National Forest. The French Lick Resort is a recently renovated 1920's style hotel. It features indoor and outdoor pools, a world-famous spa, three restaurants, a pizza parlor, a game room, an ice-cream parlor, a bowling alley, two golf courses, numerous tennis courts, and a brand new convention center. Rooms are \$79 per night for one or two people. Ed Lurcott is planning to attend. Anyone else interested??

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Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars now for these combined CCAS Observing Sessions and Meetings in the coming months:

June 26 (27)

July 24 (25)

August 28 (29)

BVA Summer Solstice Party: Friday June 19

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May's Skies

Moon Phases

First Quarter	05/03
Full Moon	05/11
Last Quarter	05/19
New Moon	05/25

The Planets

Mercury is in the morning sky in May, low and hard to spot.

Venus is the bright "morning star" in May.

Jupiter also appears in the morning sky in May, and is very bright.

Saturn is low in the morning sky this month. On the mornings of May 28 and 29 (Thursday and Friday) it will be very close to Venus. On May 29 the two planets will be only about 0.5° apart!!

Uranus and Neptune are in Capricornus, low in the southeast before dawn.

Pluto rises late at night this month, in Ophiuchus, just north of the head of Scorpius, reaching opposition on May 28. It requires at least an 8" - 10" telescope and lots of patience to bag Pluto.

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King of the Starry Beasts

by Jim Anderson

The constellation of Leo, the Lion, is familiar to all of us as one of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac. The identification of this group of stars as a lion reaches way back into antiquity. The Persians, the Turks, the Syrians, the Jews, and the Babylonians all saw this star pattern as a lion. The ancient Egyptians also saw it as a lion; indeed, it is very easy to picture this constellation as a reclining lion, posed much like the Great Sphinx. Pliny claims that the Egyptians revered the stars of Leo because

the annual Nile floods, the beginning of their growing season, always coincided with the entrance of the Sun into the stars of Leo. Some have said that the constellation became associated with a lion because the lions of the desert left their usual haunts to go down by the Nile in midsummer. There they could obtain relief from the searing heat of the desert summers. This event also occurred when the Nile rose each year, and the Sun was in the constellation Leo. The similarity between the usual reclining image of Leo and the Great Sphinx may not be all that coincidental: one story says that the Sphinx was modeled as the body of Leo and the head of the nearby virgin, Virgo. In Greek mythology, Leo was the great lion slain by the hero Hercules as the first of his Twelve Labors. Ever since, Hercules has carried the thick and very tough skin of this lion as his shield. So when you look at pictures of Hercules drawn for the constellation of the same name, that is what he is holding up in front of himself: the skin of Leo.

The Egyptian king Necepsos taught that at the Creation the Sun first rose in Leo. Consequently Leo was seen as a symbol of fire and heat. Astrologically speaking, Leo was the House of the Sun, which governed the human heart. It was considered to be a fortunate sign, and was associated with the colors of green and red. Some ancient physicians, however, taught that when the Sun was in this constellation all medicines became poison. Indeed, these sages said that even taking a bath at that time of year was taking chances with one's life! Don't tell your kids that. Other ancient diviners said that the thunder frequently heard in the summer (again, when the Sun is in Leo) forecast sedition and the deaths of great men.

In more modern times, Leo has reigned over Bohemia, France, and Italy. He is also the symbol of the cities of Bath, Bristol, and Taunton in England. Of course, it is also the symbol of the English royal family, and therefore symbolic of England itself. Allen claims, without explanation, that Leo is also a symbol of our own Philadelphia. And you thought it was the Eagles!

So when you go out among our stars of Spring in May, don't be surprised if you hear a mighty lion's roar, announcing the approach of the summer heat! Clear Skies!

(Please, Dear God, some clear skies for a change!!!!)



CCAS Lending Library

Our Librarian, Bill O'Hara, has the books in our library all ready for members to borrow. You can drop by Bill's place (call first, of course) to borrow a book. Or you can call Bill before a meeting and ask him to bring a book to the meeting for you. The complete list of books is too big to include in the newsletter; there will be copies available at CCAS meetings. Bill's phone number is 696-1422.



AL Observing Programs

One of the benefits of joining the CCAS is that you also become a member of the Astronomical League, a national federation of astronomy clubs. The AL has a series of Observing Awards, and 4 observing clubs based on these awards have been started in the CCAS. These are the Messier Club, the Binocular Messier Club, the Lunar Club, and the Double Star Club. These "clubs" will arrange times for the members working on those awards to get together to share experiences and advice in finding interesting sights in the night sky, and possibly also to observe together. Working on these awards also gives you a plan of observing, so to speak. "What will I look at tonight?" becomes "Which Messier objects are visible tonight that I haven't seen yet?" Each club has a volunteer coordinator:

Messier Clubs (both): Bob Hartje (610-325-7285)

Lunar Club: Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387)

Double Star Club: Jim Anderson (610-380-4512)



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 **SNY114@aol.com**

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

Jim Anderson
19 Bluff Road
Thorndale, PA 19372-1104



CCAS Lending Telescope

You can make arrangements to borrow the telescope for a month by contacting Steve Leiden (296-3793). The 6" f/8 reflector can be borrowed by club members for a month at a time.



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



Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at a reduced price, which is 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.



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

