



OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY



★President: Mike Turco
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

JUNE 1998
(VOLUME 6, NO. 6)

★Vice President: Kathy Buczynski
★Secretary: Frank Angelini

CCAS June Meeting

DATE: **Friday June 26, 1998**
RAIN DATE: Saturday June 27, 1998
(regardless of weather)
TIME: 8:15 p.m. EDST
PLACE: **Brandywine Valley Association**
(BVA)
LOCATION: 1760 Unionville-Wawaset Rd.
(PA Route 842)
West Chester, PA (map is included)

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.

To get to the observing site at the BVA, 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.

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Upcoming Events

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

July 24 (25)

August 28 (29)

BVA Summer Solstice Party: Friday June 19

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Request for Astronomical Pictures

Pete LaFrance is working on a Web page for the Society. He would like to include some pictures taken by CCAS members. The pictures (or CCD images, on a diskette) can be of any astronomy subject or object, or related to space exploration. The only requirement is that it is your own photo/image; no copying copyrighted images!! Give your contributions to Pete LaFrance (268-2616).

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Report on East Goshen Park Star Party

Tuesday June 2 was clouded out (actually, we were under a tornado warning that night), so the star party was postponed to Wednesday June 3. That evening did not look promising either before sundown; at the park, the sky was overcast except for a little wedge of blue to the north. The program was started by Ed Lurcott, who had set up his scale model of the Solar System in the park (except for Neptune and Pluto, which were outside the park boundaries). Ed took the small crowd on a walking tour of the Solar System, which they enjoyed. Kathy Buczynski had NASA pictures of the planets to show to the guests at each station. When the tour ended, Ed and Mike Turco gave talks on the state of amateur astronomy today. As the talks were winding down, the Sun set and the clouds started clearing off! It was as though the Almighty Himself was pulling back the curtain and saying "And now it's show time!" Mike Turco said it was because he kept his new AstroPhysics refractor in its case until it cleared. We were able to point out the brighter stars and constellations, and also offer telescopic views of many interesting objects, from the Ring Nebula to the Moon. Thanks to the members who made this possible: Ed, Mike, Kathy, Steve Limeburner, Frank Angelini, Jim Anderson, Scott Hain, and Ed Hammond.

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June's Skies

Moon Phases

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| First Quarter | 06/01 |
| Full Moon | 06/09 |
| Last Quarter | 06/17 |
| New Moon | 06/23 |

The Planets

Mercury is lost in the Sun's glare this month.

Venus is low in the east before sunrise in June.

Mars is lost in the Sun's glare this month.

Jupiter appears in the morning sky in June.

Saturn is low in the morning sky this month.

Uranus and Neptune are in Capricornus, but don't get high in the sky until the early morning hours.

Pluto is in Ophiuchus, just north of the head of Scorpius.

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Queen of the Starry Realm

by Jim Anderson

The constellation of Virgo, the Maiden or Virgin, is of course one of the 12 constellations of the Zodiac, that starry path traversed by the Sun, Moon, and planets. It is therefore one of the oldest of the official constellations. Virgo is the only female figure among the constellations of the Zodiac. Various cultures have seen this figure as a variety of deities.

The Babylonians were some of the first astronomers in recorded history. They called our Virgo Ishtar, the goddess of fertility (sometimes translated as Queen of the Stars). This was probably because Ishtar was rising in the spring skies at planting time, when everyone's mind was on planting. It would have served as the sign to start sowing seed. The Romans, on the other hand, called Virgo Astraea, who was their goddess of justice. Astraea was the daughter of Zeus and Themis. She was the last of the gods and goddesses to abandon the Earth at the end of the Golden Age. An alternative Greco-Roman legend said that Virgo is Persephone, the daughter of Ceres, the goddess of the harvest. This story would be the continuation of the older Babylonian legend, with the tie-in to springtime planting mentioned earlier.

In ancient Egypt, Virgo was seen as Isis, the Divine Wife and Mother. Some archaeologists believe that some structure(s) in Tel el Armarna are related to

Virgo, and the setting of its brightest star, Spica (from the Latin Spicum, ear of wheat). This city was built by the Pharaoh Akhenaton (sometimes called the first monotheist.) They think that Akhenaton may have been paying homage to his own "Divine Wife", the exotically lovely Nefertiti.

In ancient Assyria Virgo was the Wife of Bel (the top god). Virgo was seen as Kanya, the Maiden and Mother of Krishna, in India. Medieval Christians said Virgo was Mary the Mother of Jesus Christ, although some said Virgo was Ruth of the Fields. R.H. Allen notes that the Venerable Bede claimed Virgo was the Saxon goddess Eoestre, another agricultural tie-in. Eoestre is also the origin of the English word for the great springtime Christian feast of Easter, which also pulls in the idea and imagery of new life. At other times by a variety of classical writers, Virgo was seen as the goddess Pax, or Concordia, or Tyche, or Fortuna, or the mother-goddess Cybele, in her lion-powered chariot (after all, Leo is very close by). Even others said she was Diana, or Minerva, or Athena. And finally, some said she was Urania, the Muse of Astronomy.

It may seem strange at first that so many different peoples consistently identified this constellation as a female, and linked that to agricultural matters. But recall that it is a springtime constellation, when new life is emerging all around us, and seed is being sown everywhere. In most cultures the female figure is associated with fertility; so when you think about it, it is no surprise that this constellation is so consistently imaged as a mother/goddess: a female giving life to the world again after the dead time of winter. Keep that in mind as you prowl among the stars of Urania, looking for galaxies afar, and may the Queen of the Starry Realm send new astronomical life (zeal) coursing through your veins.

References:

Star Names: Their Lore and Their Meaning, Richard Hinckley Allen, 1963

Burnham's Celestial Handbook, vol.3, Robert Burnham, Jr., 1978

Skywatching, David H. Levy, 1994

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June 11, 1998

To all members of the Chester County Astronomical Society,

It has been very gratifying to see the Society grow from its very meager beginnings in 1993 into the energetic and dynamic Society it is today. This growth is the result of the efforts of a lot of people. Professor Hugh Harber was instrumental in getting West Chester University to sponsor the Society as a university-community organization. Hugh gave the Society much needed advice and guidance in those formative years.

In the beginning the officers struggled to put out a one-page newsletter to inform others of the monthly meetings. Eventually our Secretary Nancy Armstrong took over publishing the newsletter for a few years. Then Jim Anderson came along and offered to be the Newsletter Editor. Jim has also taken on the chores of being the CCAS's representative to the Astronomical League, handling all of that correspondence for the Society. He has done an outstanding job, with occasional writing help from his wife Donna. Jim's efforts deserve the gratitude of the entire Society.

As Treasurer, Steve Lurcott handled the finances in the early years until Pete LaFrance assumed that office. Because of his able handling of those duties, as well as his enthusiasm for astronomy and dedication to the Society, Pete also deserves part of the credit for the success of the Society.

Our current Vice President, Kathy Buczynski, has served in many capacities beyond the normal duties of Vice President. As a result of her efforts, the Society has expanded into many new areas. The "Constellation of the Month" program was her suggestion, and I believe this program should be continued to include all constellations visible from this latitude. What a great reference that would make when completed!

Other individuals have contributed to the success of the Society in a variety of ways. Frank Angelini was instrumental in obtaining the Society's lending telescope, a 6" f/8 Dobsonian. Frank also secured the sponsorship of the Exton Square Mall for our annual Astronomy Day display. I'm certain that his skill in dealing with other people made all this possible. Many thanks are due to him on behalf of the Society. The CCAS Library is the responsibility of Bill O'Hara. The number of books available to CCAS members is continuing to grow, and Bill's acceptance of this position and the fine job he is doing is very much appreciated by all CCAS members. Connie Shapiro obtained the use of the Brandywine Valley Association's property for our observing site. Our relationship with the BVA remains excellent to this day. Many thanks are due to Connie and the BVA for letting our Society use their property in this way.

As you can see a lot of members have contributed to making the Society what it is today. All members have helped with their attendance at events, and with their willingness to serve on various committees, such as the annual Election Committee.

With the torch being passed to the new officers, I can see only a bright and healthy future for the Society. I congratulate Mike Turco, as he becomes our new President, as well as the other elected officers: Kathy Buczynski, Vice President; Frank Angelini, Secretary; and Pete LaFrance, Treasurer. Many interesting possibilities have presented themselves to us in just the past few months. It certainly will be very exciting to see how this all pans out.

As for myself, I will continue to devote time and energy to whatever the Society undertakes. If it pleases the membership, I would like to serve as Observing Chair, and to help in any other capacity I can. The past five years have been very rewarding, and under the new leadership I anticipate that the next five years will be just as rewarding for all of us.

Sincerely,
Edwin Lurcott
CCAS President, 1993-1998

For Sale:

An Edmund Scientific Astroscan 2001, with aluminum tripod. In mint condition, only used three times. Current price at Edmund is \$389.00 with the tripod. Best offer over \$289.00 takes it all. Call Tom Comitta at 610-692-6521.

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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.

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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 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)

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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

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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, free of charge.

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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 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.

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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: Mike Turco (610) 399-3423

Vice Pres: Kathy Buczynski (610) 436-0821

Treasurer: Pete LaFrance (610) 268-2616

Secretary: Frank Angelini (610) 873-7929

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Newsletter: Jim Anderson (610) 380-4512

Librarian: William O'Hara (610) 696-1422

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