



OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
Chester County Astronomical Society



★ *President:* Mike Turco
★ *Treasurer:* Pete LaFrance

JUNE 1999
(VOLUME 7, NO. 6)

★ *Vice President:* Steve Limeburner
★ *Secretary:* Frank Angelini

http://members.tripod.com/~ccas_2/ccas.html

CCAS June Meeting & Observing Session

DATE: **Friday June 18, 1999**
RAIN DATE: Saturday June 19, 1998
TIME: 8:15 p.m. EDT
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 try again on Saturday evening.

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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East Goshen Star Night: Postponed to 6/15

East Goshen Township had invited the CCAS to a "return engagement" at the East Goshen Township Park on Paoli Pike for Tuesday June 1, 1999. Since that night was cloudy, and the forecast for the cloud date of Thursday June 3 was just as bad, it was rescheduled for Tuesday June 15. The new cloud date is Thursday June 17. This event is a money-maker for the CCAS because the township charges a registration fee, which they then give to us. We need several telescopes and members to help with this event. Even if you don't have a telescope but can point out constellations you can be a big help at this event. A map is included on a later page. Try to arrive before 8:00 p.m. to set up. If you are bringing a telescope or a display, you have township permission to drive across the grass to the location of the star night festivities (the soccer fields). Contact Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387) if you have any questions about this event.

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Election Report

CCAS officer elections were concluded at the May meeting of the Society. The officers listed below will serve from June 1999 through May 2001.

President	Mike Turco
Vice President	Steve Limeburner
Secretary	Frank Angelini
Treasurer	Pete LaFrance
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Calendar Notes

June 25, 1999: Free public open house at the Flower & Cook Observatory in Malvern
(Friday) 8:00 p.m. EDT

July 7, 1999: CCAS Double Star Observing Club meeting, F. & C. Observatory, Malvern
(Wednesday) 7:30 p.m. EDT

July 16/17, 1999: CCAS Observing Session and Meeting, Brandywine Valley Association
(Friday/Saturday) 8:15 p.m. EDT

July 30, 1999: Free public open house at the Flower & Cook Observatory in Malvern
(Friday) 8:00 p.m. EDT

August 13/14, 1999: CCAS Observing Session and Meeting, Brandywine Valley Association
(Friday/Saturday) 8:15 p.m. EDT

August 27, 1999: Free public open house at the Flower & Cook Observatory in Malvern
(Friday) 8:00 p.m. EDT

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Star Night for Boy Scouts: Malvern, June 12

The CCAS is providing telescopes and expertise for a star night for a Boy Scout troop in the Malvern area on Saturday June 12, 1999. Kathy Buczynski (610-436-0829) is the CCAS coordinator for this event. Give Kathy a call if you'd like to help out with this small group session. We have at least two telescopes promised for this event, but the more the merrier!

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CCAS 20" Telescope News

We would like to extend a big thank you to some CCAS members who have donated money to the Telescope Fund:

Emil Volcheck	\$100.00
Shiv Gupta	\$100.00
Barry Martin	\$100.00

The Telescope Fund was established to pay for the construction of a telescope around the 20-inch diameter telescope mirror given to the Society by the University of Pennsylvania.

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President's Message June, 1999

"A Boomer Meets the MTV Generation"

One Sunday night last year, I was out at Thornbury Park near my home doing some solo observing. I had my refractor set up at one end of the parking lot next to the old SUV, the folding table and the usual other stuff. About ten o'clock, a car drove up and parked some distance away. I heard muted voices for a half hour or so, but didn't pay much attention. Finally a kid maybe 16 or 17 years old came over. We shook hands, introduced ourselves, and struck up a conversation that went something like this.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

"I'm just out doing some observ..."

"Wow, I've never seen a telescope that big before!"

"It's a six-inch"

"I bet you could see into the future with that!"

"Actually, you are really seeing into the pa..."

"Do you think there is life on other planets?"

"I don't think ..."

"Did you ever see any aliens?"

Hoping that the last comment was a joke, at this point I realized that I wasn't going to be able to carry on a normal conversation, one where both parties actually get to finish a sentence. So I asked him if he wanted to take a look through the 'scope. He wholeheartedly agreed and was at the eyepiece in a flash. I had it on the Orion nebula and I tried to explain what he was looking at. I tried to say it real fast. I figured if I didn't, I wouldn't get it out. I was right.

"Do you see those four sta..."

"Hey, there's four stars in the middle of that cloud!"

"That cloud is actua..."

"What is that?"

"It's an immense cloud of gas in which stars are reforming!"

The conversation went on like this for about five minutes. Then he asked if it would be okay if his friend could come over as well. The thought of holding *two* conversations like this simultaneously made my head swim. "Sure" I said, even

though I had reservations. He then walked back to the car to get his friend who, fortunately, came over by himself.

His buddy looked the same age but went about six-two, 180 lbs. He walked up smiling, we shook hands and introduced ourselves, and, in the words of Yogi Berra, it was *deja vu* all over again.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm just out doing some observ..."

"Wow, I've never seen a telescope that big before!"

"It's a six-inch"

"I bet you could see into the future with that!"

"Actually, you are really seeing into the pa..."

"Do you think there is life on other planets?"

"I don't think ..."

"Did you ev..."

"Ineversawanyaliens!"

Sheesh! This is going to be a tough night! At about this time the first kid came back and asked if it would be okay if his girlfriend could come over and look through the 'scope too. "Sure", I said, and began to sweat.

I was relieved when she came over and introduced herself. About sixteen herself, she was very well mannered and *didn't* ask what I was doing. She was reserved but expressed interest in looking through the 'scope. I told her that unfortunately none of the planets were visible and showed her Orion and a couple of other objects. She enjoyed it. We talked for a bit, with me all the while trying to provide what I thought was the appropriate (read *quick*) answers to any questions.

At one point, one of the guys asked how I knew where to look for objects in the sky. So I said,

"Well, you start with the North Star and..."

"What's the North Star?"

At first I was taken aback. When I realized this was an honest question, it pretty much floored me. These kids were obviously curious, interested, and bright, yet the North Star was a brand new concept. I don't expect a teen to know about telescopes or even rudimentary astronomy, but hasn't everyone by the time they are sixteen heard of the North Star? Even if you are totally unfamiliar with astronomy, I figure it must come up at some point early on, surely by junior prom time.

I gave it my best shot but I don't know how much sank in. After a while they had to go and we bid goodbye.

This chance meeting has stayed with me. I would love to talk with some teachers who regularly deal with kids of this age. Was this an isolated incident or does never having heard of the North Star reveal a condition of the present day?

I may be generalizing but I get the impression that the lack of knowledge about something as basic and useful as the North Star relates in part to overwhelming bombardment today by

useless information, which we receive in so many ways. I used to need to go to a library to do research for school and half the time I didn't find what I was looking for. Now, I can't get away from information I'm not looking for. I mean, after all, you can only absorb so much. And it's delivered nowadays in staccato-like fashion. Consider TV for instance. Kids today get 60 channels to choose from and information in pieces you can measure in bytes. Have you ever tried to watch MTV for more than three minutes? You don't see a performer in one camera shot for any longer than a second. It drives me insane. I have to believe there is a connection between this kind of "information transfer" and short attention spans.

When I was sixteen (seemingly ages ago), music on TV came via American Bandstand and prime time variety shows. (Imagine Perry Como in split-second flashes!) I mean, now we've got satellite TV, split screens, beepers, e-mail, voice-mail, desktops, laptops, fax machines, answering machines, electronic notebooks, cell phones, palm data recorders, and the Internet. No wonder the kid wouldn't let me finish a sentence. Who speaks anymore?

Aw, maybe I'm making too much of this. Maybe I should chalk it up to a generation gap. Then again, we may only have had three TV channels, but I did get to learn what the North Star was.

Remember Como's TV theme song? "Dream along with me, I'm on my way to the stars..."

Sing it, Perry. Slow and sweet.

Mike Turco
5/99



June Skies

Moon Phases

- Last Quarter 6/07
- New Moon 6/13
- First Quarter 6/20
- Full Moon 6/28

The Planets

Mercury shows up in the evening sky around mid-month, low in the northwest after sunset. By the end of June it will be visible for as much as 90 minutes after sunset, so that will be a good opportunity to see Mercury.

Venus will be the first and brightest "star" you can see in the evening sky in June.

Mars is in the south after sunset, looking like a bright reddish-orange "star" near a bright blue-white star (Spica). We are still close enough to Mars for good telescopic viewing in June.

Jupiter rises between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. EDT in June.

Saturn is rising by 4:00 a.m. EDT in June.

Uranus and Neptune are in the constellation Capricornus, visible before sunrise in June.

Pluto reached opposition on May 30, in the constellation Ophiuchus, near Zeta (ζ) Ophiuchus. That means that Pluto is rising in the east as the Sun sets in the west, and is setting in the west at sunrise. Determined hunters will need dark skies, at least an 8" telescope, and a good finder chart in order to bag Pluto (14th magnitude).



News from Neighboring Societies

From *The Delaware Valley AMATEUR ASTRONOMER*, the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Astronomical Association; upcoming Meeting Topics and speakers:

June 11	"Is There Astronomical Evidence for the Existence of God?"	Dr. Deborah Haarsma
July 9	"The Big Bang Never Happened"	Eric Lerner, author

DVAA meetings are held at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, Hagys Mill Road, Philadelphia. Meetings start at about 7:30 p.m., with the main talk held at about 8:00 p.m. DVAA meetings are open to the general public, free of charge. Contact Mike Turco (610-399-3423) for more information or directions, or for a ride to the meeting. Or check the DVAA Website at <http://www.libertynet.org/~dvaa/>

From *Focus*, the newsletter of the Delaware Astronomical Society; upcoming Meeting Topics and speakers:

June 15	still TBA as <i>Observations</i> goes to press...	
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DAS meetings are held at the Mount Cuba Observatory in Greenville, Delaware. For more info contact President Warren Jacobs (610-566-0510). Or check their Website at: <http://www.physics.udel.edu/>



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. Copies of the catalog are available at CCAS meetings. Bill's phone number is 610-696-1422.



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. Working on these awards also gives you a plan of observing: "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): Frank Angelini (610-873-7929)

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

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

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CCAS Website

Pete LaFrance has set up a Web page for the Society on the World Wide Web (Internet). He has included some pictures taken by CCAS members. Check it out at:

http://members.tripod.com/~ccas_2/ccas.html

Pete welcomes any additions to the site by Society members. The contributions can be of any astronomy subject or object, or can be related to space exploration. The only requirement is that it is your own work; no copying copyrighted material! Give your contributions to Pete LaFrance (610-268-2616).

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Join the Fight for Dark Skies!

You can help fight light pollution, conserve energy, and save the night sky for everyone to use and enjoy. Join the nonprofit International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) today. Individual memberships start at \$30.00 for one year. Send to:

International Dark-Sky Association

3545 N. Stewart

Tucson, AZ 85716

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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). Club members can borrow the 6" f/8 reflector for a month at a time; longer if no one else is waiting to borrow it.

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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 19311-9785

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Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at a reduced price of \$27.00, which is much less than the newsstand price of \$48.00, and also cheaper than individual subscriptions (\$37.95)! 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

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CCAS Officers

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

President: Mike Turco (610) 399-3423

Vice Pres: Steve Limeburner (610) 353-3986

Treasurer: Pete LaFrance (610) 268-2616

Secretary: Frank Angelini (610) 873-7929

ALCor and

Newsletter: Jim Anderson (610) 380-4512

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

Observing: Ed Lurcott (610) 436-0387

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