



OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
Chester County Astronomical Society



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

AUGUST 1999
(VOLUME 7, NO. 8)

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

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

CCAS August Meeting & Observing Session

DATE: **Friday August 13, 1999**
RAIN DATE: Saturday August 14, 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, the monthly meeting is combined with the Observing Session out at the BVA. There will not be any meetings at West Chester University until September. 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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CCAS September Meeting

The first presentation of the fall will be by our own Jeff Goldader. The topic will be "Building and Using the Hubble Space Telescope." Jeff will discuss the design and construction challenges of the HST and will tell us how astronomers, including Jeff himself, actually get to use it. This should be a great program; don't miss it! Mark your calendars now! The date is Tuesday September 14, 1999 at West Chester University, starting at 7:30 p.m. EDT.

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CCAS 20" Telescope News

The latest news from AstroSystems is that our Telekit has been delayed. They had said they would ship it the last week in July; now they say it will be the last week in August.

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Public Open House: F & C Observatory

There will be a FREE public open house program at the University of Pennsylvania's Flower & Cook Observatory in Malvern, PA on Friday August 27, 1999. The program starts at 8:00 p.m. EDT with a talk about a topic of astronomical interest. If the skies are clear, there will be observing with the Observatory's telescopes. The Observatory is located on Providence Road, just west of the intersection with Warren Avenue. A map is included below.

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First Annual CHESMONT StarFest

The Chesmont Astronomical Society, in conjunction with the Great Valley Nature Center, proudly presents the first annual STARFEST '99, to be held at Warwick County Park on Friday August 6th (or Saturday August 7th depending upon weather). The schedule of events will begin at 7 pm and stargazing will begin right after dusk. The main event will be a raffle to win prizes and a telescope donated by Chesmont Astronomical Society. Proceeds from the raffle will benefit the GVNC. Warwick Park is located just south on County Park Road off Rte. 23 in Knauertown.

Chesmont V.P. Rob Cordivari's e-mail also said: "We're planning on a big turnout. Please encourage your club to attend. Anyone who wants to bring a scope is more than welcome. Just let us know who and what kind of scope if you can."

For more information, call Chesmont Astronomical Society (Rob Cordivari) at (610) 495-0867.

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Calendar Notes

August 13/14, 1999: CCAS Meeting and Observing Session
(Friday) BVA 8:00 p.m. EDT
August 27, 1999: Free Public Open House at Flower &
(Friday) Cook Observatory in Malvern, PA
8:00 p.m. EDT
September 10, 1999: CCAS Observing Session
(Friday) Brandywine Valley Association
September 14, 1999: CCAS Monthly Meeting, West
(Tuesday) Chester University 7:30 p.m. EDT

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Voice-Actuated Telescope Control Has Arrived

Attention all those with Meade LX D650/750, LX200, and ETX-90/125 Autostar; Vixen SkySensor 2000-PC; or Astro-Physics GTO mounts. Voice actuation and control has arrived. Astro-Physics has (finally) shipped its DigitalSky Voice telescope control system software. With a desktop or laptop computer and suitable microphone, you can now establish two-way voice communication with your scope!

It is now possible to ask "What's Up?" and have your computer tell you. It will suggest objects to view that are currently visible in the night sky and within the magnitude limit that you specify. After all, if you only have a scope capable of seeing down to magnitude 10 objects, no use looking for objects that are dimmer.

The system will indicate on your screen what constellations are up, and will list the interesting or fun objects within the constellation that your scope is pointing to. You can ask for objects by their common name like "Find the Ring Nebula" or by designations such as "M fifty three" and "NGC four thousand three hundred sixty three", and your scope will slew to them automatically. If you are looking at an unfamiliar object, you can center it in your eyepiece and say "Identify." DigitalSky will match the object's coordinates and state the best match. A part of the screen called the "Cool Objects" window will display this object as well as the nearby objects within the field, the size of which you specify. You can preplan tours like the Messier Marathon at home before your observing session instead of after you arrive at the observing site. There are predefined constellation tours built in as well.

You can search for objects based on the criterion you select, i.e., narrow your search to a constellation or across the entire sky and set the magnitude limit. For example, you could search for all globular clusters above a certain magnitude or double stars with certain angular separations and magnitude limits. You can go through your tour while at the eyepiece by just saying "next."

Ask your scope "actual position" and it will report and display the coordinates of the position your scope is pointing to. You can even center objects in the eyepiece and control a motorized focuser using voice commands. If you don't want to use the voice commands, you can use keyboard or mouse commands at any time.

The system is supplied with Astro-Physics GTO (go-to) mounts, or it can be purchased separately for other compatible mounts. I will be road-testing the system as soon as I get a suitable microphone (Radio Shack PRO-302 is one of the recommended ones). I'll report on the test next time.

Mike Turco



August Skies

Moon Phases

Last Quarter	8/04
New Moon	8/11
First Quarter	8/18
Full Moon	8/26

The Planets

Mercury is in the morning sky in August. It will be visible for as much as 90 minutes before sunrise in the second week of August, so that will be a good opportunity to see Mercury (Aug. 11-17). After that it sinks rapidly closer to the Sun.

Venus is lost in the Sun's glare for most of August, emerging into the morning sky by month's end.

Mars is in the south-southwest after sunset, looking like a bright reddish-orange "star" in Libra. It's moving away from us now, so it's getting hard to see any details on the planet.

Jupiter rises in late evening in August, but it will be well after midnight before it's high enough in the east for good telescopic viewing.

Saturn is rising about 30 minutes after Jupiter in August.

Uranus and Neptune are in the constellation Capricornus. By the late evening hours when Jupiter and Saturn are rising this month, these two planets are near the meridian.

Pluto is in the constellation Ophiuchus, near Zeta (ζ) Ophiuchus in the evening sky during August. Determined hunters will need dark skies, at least an 8" telescope, and a good finder chart in order to bag Pluto (14th magnitude).



August 11: Solar Eclipse

You've probably heard already that this Total Eclipse can be seen in parts of Asia and Europe, but not here in the U.S. While it's true that you can't see a Total Eclipse here on the morning of Wednesday August 11, if you have a good (meaning low and unobstructed) eastern horizon, you can see the Sun rise partially eclipsed. It will be about 20% eclipsed when the Sun rises here that day; it will look like someone took a bite out of it. Sunrise here that day will be about 6:11 a.m. EDT; 15 or 20 minutes later it will be all over and the Sun will be completely uncovered again. Be sure to take proper eye protection measures before looking directly at the Sun.



August 11-13: Perseid Meteor Shower

With New Moon on the 11th, prospects are very good for seeing the Perseids this year. The best "show" will probably be between midnight and dawn on the mornings of August 12 and 13. Look toward the northeast.



Astroblast '99: August 13-15, 1999

This star party, organized by the Oil Region astronomy clubs in PA, will be held in Venango County's Two-Mile Run Park near Franklin, PA. Gates open at 3:00 p.m. Friday August 13. There will be various talks, a pizza party 6:30 Saturday, a Messier Marathon, and dark sky observing. Registration is \$14.00 before July 30; \$20.00 after that. Camping fees are \$3.00 per night. For more information, call John O'Hara at 814-677-3972 or e-mail at ohara@galacticis.com

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MegaMeet VIII: Sept. 4-5, 1999

Sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Amateur Astronomers Society, this star party is held on the mountaintop near Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, at Pulpit Rock. Gates open at 4:00 p.m. Saturday. "No Fuss, No Frills, No Fee" is their motto. Camping is encouraged. There are no facilities for campers or RVs. For more information, call Tom Smith at 610-944-0752, or via e-mail at TSmith5230@aol.com

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Black Forest Star Party: Sept. 10-12, 1999

This new star party, organized by the Central Pennsylvania Observers, will be held at Cherry Springs State Park at an altitude of 2300 feet. You can camp in the park; there are some electrical hookups. There will be door prizes, speakers, demonstrations, and dark dark skies. The State Park is located on PA State Route 44 in Potter County. State Forest Land surrounds it: the nearest clearing (yes that's clearing, not town) is at least 5 miles away! There is a good field for observing at the Park. Registration is \$25.00, including camping fee. Pre-registration deadline is August 20; after that registration is \$30.00 including camping. Park closes at 10:00 each night; after that you can't go in or out. For more information contact Michael J. Coslo at 814-238-7690 or via e-mail at black_forest@pop.psu.edu

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CCAS Lending Telescope

You can make arrangements to borrow the telescope for a month by contacting Kathy Buczynski (610-436-0821). 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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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.

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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. 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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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 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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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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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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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
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Newsletter:	Jim Anderson	(610) 380-4512
Librarian:	William O'Hara	(610) 696-1422
Observing:	Ed Lurcott	(610) 436-0387

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