BACK BAY observer

The Official Newsletter of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers
P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9877

EPHEMERALS may 2015

5/26, 6:00 PM
Boardwalk Astronomy
VA Beach Boardwalk at 24th St.

5/30, 5:00 PM
Girl Scout Encampment
Northwest River Park

5/30, 4:00 PM
Mt. Trashmore Annual Star Party
South Side of Mt. Trashmore

6/04, 7:30 pm
BBAA Monthly Meeting
TCC Campus, VA Beach
Building J, Rm JC-13

Looking Up!

Well it is May already and the pollen is here in abundance! That is ok though, because it will soon be replaced with mosquitoes. Personally, I prefer the pollen. With the warming weather, many members are awakening like hibernating bears to brush the pollen off their scopes and get ready for evenings filled with star gazing. Then again, some of us Polar Bears have been at it all winter long, when given the chance by Mother Nature.

On April 25th a few of us ventured to the Virginia Beach Central Library for our annual National Astronomy Day event. The indoor part went very well, especially with all of the new Night Sky Network resources that we now have; but, as luck would have it, we were clouded out again this year, so there was no outside part of the event. I'd like to thank, Leigh Anne, Zoe, Mark, The Wonder Twins and Chuck for coming out and lending a hand.

On a personal note (and to give a shout out for the ALCOR), I recently set a goal to complete the AL Planetary Nebula Program. I plan to do both the visual and imaging versions. I had already started the visual program, and this week I started the imaging program to match. You would think that the imaging program would be easier since all you need to do is get a picture of the nebula, but boy was I ever wrong! Some of those things are tiny and really hard to see. I think this one will give me a challenge.

Continued on page 3

CONTENTS

Ephemerals	1
Looking Up	1
Avoiding Cord Wrap	2
Club Information	3
Remembering Georgie	4
Observer's Corner	7
Calendar	8

A Solution for the Alt/Az GOTO Mount Cord Wrap Mystery

By Jim Tallman

How many times have you been out observing with a group of people and you hear someone cussing and screaming at their GOTO Altitude/Azimuth (Alt/Az) scope because the cords got all wrapped up in their mount? Well maybe they don't cuss and scream but they still get a bit upset. At a recent Skywatch at Northwest River Park, this occurred two times in a short span of time right next to me. With a little knowledge about why cord wrap occurs and some cord planning during setup, one can at least eliminate this one hair pulling event for good. Here's my solution that really does work to prevent the dreaded cord wrap.

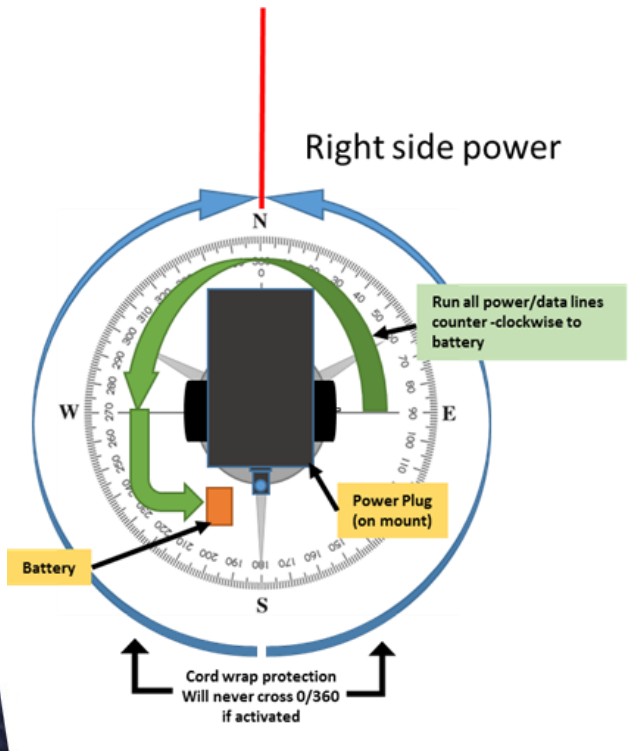
I myself have suffered more than once the pain of getting the cords wrapped up on my Alt/Az GOTOs. It is pretty frustrating (and embarrassing) when you must stop and completely set up your scope again in the dark. Equatorial (EQ) mounts do not suffer from this sort of cord wrap issue but they do have their own quirks, but that is a story for later.

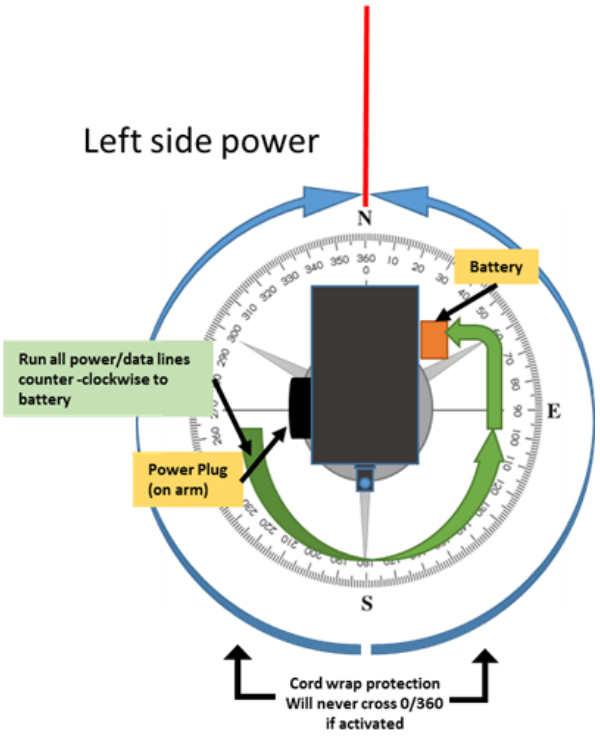
First, we need to understand what cord wrap is. Cord wrap is the direct result of continually slewing a telescope past either the North or South Meridian (depending on hemisphere) in one direction and allowing the various power and data cords to become entangled with the mount. See figure 1 for a wildly exaggerated example. I wrapped 20 feet of cord up so you could see it. In real life it will only take a few feet to accomplish this.

Figure 1. Overly exaggerated cord wrap (would never happen this bad).

All Alt/Az GOTO scopes will suffer from this problem if you are slewing around with the handset on your own. Even the mounts that have the power plug on the stationary part of the mount motor unit can have this issue because if you add dew protection you have now added cords that can be wrapped up. Most scopes have a cord wrap setting that can be turned on to help prevent cord wrap and it should be checked because it is not always on by default. This setting alone is not the solution but once turned on you can set up the scope to prevent wrapping the cords. My solution to this problem is pretty simple and involves the following steps; (a) mount placement, (b) cord management, (c) proper initial alignment steps, (d) proper follow on scope operation. The figures below represent two different power plug locations. They will either be on the Right side (like a CPC-800) or Left (like a NexStar).

Continued on page 7





The Back Bay Amateur Astronomer's
Observer

The BBAA Observer is published monthly; the monochrome version is mailed to members who do not have internet access. Members who do have Internet access can acquire the full color version on the Internet at **http://www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml**

Please submit articles and items of interest no later than the date of the monthly meeting in order to be in the next month's edition.

Please submit all items to: bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com or BBAA Observer, P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA

President
Jim Tallman
president@backbayastro.org

Vice President
George Reynolds
vp@backbayastro.org

Treasurer
Chuck Jagow
treasurer@backbayastro.org

Secretary
Leigh Anne Lagoe
secretary@backbayastro.org

Webmaster
Curt Lambert
webmaster@backbayastro.org

ALCOR
Bill McLean
alcor@backbayastro.org

Librarian
Bill Newman
billn59@verizon.net

Scholarship Coordinator
Ben Loyola
benito@loyola.com

RRRT Coordinator
Lawrence "Bird" Taylor
Lawrence.W.Taylor@nasa.gov

Newsletter Editor
Paul Tartabini
bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com

BBAA Meetings

The BBAA meet the first Thursday of every month except for July. The next meeting will be held on **June 4, 2015** in the Planetarium at Plaza Middle School located at 3080 South Lynnhaven Rd in Virginia Beach at 7:30 PM.

Directions are on our Night Sky Network Page.

BBAA Internet Links

BBAA Website
www.backbayastro.org

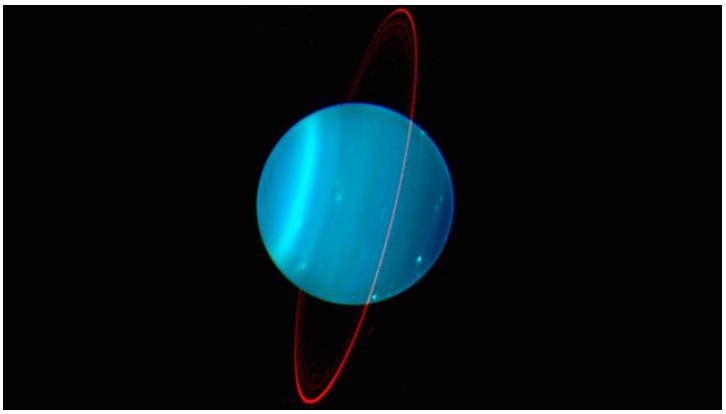
Yahoo! Groups
tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro

BBAA Observer Newsletter
www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml

Looking Up, continued from page 1

On the club front, our May meeting at TCC was a success with Dr. Kunio Sayanagi of the Hampton University Planetary Sciences department as the speaker. Dr. Sayanagi spoke to us about the big disturbances found on Uranus in 2014. It was a superb lecture, as expected, after last year's fabulous talk to our club about Saturn. Hope to see you all at next month's meeting on June 4!

Jim Tallman



At the May meeting, Dr. Kunio Sayanagi presented results from a recent proposal of his that was accepted for the Hubble. Image credits: the Hubble Space Telescope's NICMOS camera).

IN MEMORIAM

BBAA Mourns the Passing of Long Time Member Georgie June

Georgie was the life and spirit of the club for many years. The chief cheerleader, the life of the party, and the sweetest human being I know. She genuinely loved life and added immeasurably to the lives of everyone she touched.

- Ted Forte

The Back Bay Amateur Astronomers suffered a great loss with the passing of Georgie June on March 28 after a long battle against cancer. Georgie was one of those rare individuals who made a positive impact on everyone she came into contact with. She served as the club's Astronomical League Coordinator (ALCOR) for many years, and the enthusiasm and encouragement she displayed in that role have defined the job of ALCOR in our club to this very day. Even her love of astronomy, which was rooted in a pure enjoyment of the beauty of the universe, was a source of inspiration to us all. To say she will be missed is an understatement. Please join us in remembering Georgie through pictures and meaningful words from some of her dear friends.

Kent Blackwell

I would like to say a few words about our dear friend Georgie (Toots, as we called each other) June. Georgie passed away in March of this year from a fight with cancer.

I first met Georgie at the Chesapeake Planetarium, and later at many outreach programs of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers, a club in which she became deeply involved. Georgie loved the club, and always made new members feel welcome. No matter what star party or outreach program she came to, she always turned it into a fun event for everyone.

Georgie attended her first East Coast Star Party about 16 years ago and was enamored with camping and being surrounded by nature, especially gazing at the zillions of stars painted across the Coinjock skies. She always looked forward to the next star party. It just won't be the same without her. But Georgie would want us to continue on with the party and have a good time, so that's what we shall try to do. I plan to have a short tribute to her at the party this spring.

Continued on page 5

Remembering Georgie, continued from page 4

Ted Forte

One of the teachers at the school where Georgie worked commented that kids wanted to be sent to the office just so they could spend time with her. I know exactly how they felt. Georgie was a special friend to almost everyone that knew her.

She genuinely loved her friends, and that was what I admired most about her. But a bit like the tin man in the Wizard of Oz, judging her heart not by how much she loved but by how much she was loved, she surely had a remarkable one.

She was our cheerleader, and she was good at it. She always made you feel like she took genuine pride in your accomplishments. Old timers here will remember how she encouraged so many of us to pursue observing programs. She inspired you, made you want to belong, to participate. I know that much of what BBAA became in the first decade of this century is due to her special brand of motivation, to her nurturing manner, to her magnetic smile, and to her bubbly personality.

I had the happy circumstance to be a frequent observing partner to Georgie. Many of you are familiar with "her" telescope that, apparently, I just carried around for her. She was such fun to observe with. It didn't matter how many times she saw NGC 4565, or the Sombrero, or M22, it was always new and exciting to her. I can still hear her reaction to them, and I'll never look at any of the hundred or so bright objects that were her favorites without hearing her express renewed wonder. I think of her every time something bright and remarkable finds its way to my eyepiece, or, every time I look at something challenging. I can remember vividly one of our first observing interactions where I failed miserably to convince her that the California Nebula was real. And who among her astronomer friends will ever look at the Horse Head without thinking of her? Observing alone in my observatory, I'll sometimes remark aloud at some exceptional or surprising object. It's Georgie I'm speaking to. She is still my observing partner. The night sky for me will always bear her mark, the silly names she made up for objects in the sky will always evoke smiles, sometimes through tears.

Georgie had a way with kids. I was always left in awe of her easy rapport with youngsters. Kids have a way of sensing that someone is genuinely caring. Kids always fell immediately in love with her. I did too.

Chuck Jagow

To all that knew her and enjoyed her company, we have lost a great one and I hope she finally has a bigger telescope than Ted, and a grander view of the wonders of the heaven than the rest of us. She will be missed by us all for certain.

Continued on page 6

Remembering Georgie, continued from page 5

Bill McLean

Georgie cheered me on to do AL programs. She cheered everyone on to look and see more. On top of that she was easy to talk to and made me feel welcome to the club and functions. She was our club's AlCor from the beginning.

I was flabbergasted when she and Ted took me aside and asked if I'd like to take over AlCor. I thought they were going to tell me I did something wrong. She helped me get started as AlCor. My goal then and now has been and is to be, even half as good as she was being the group's AlCor cheerleader.

I will miss her as she has gone to the big observatory in the sky.

Jim Tallman

Georgie always made the ECSP fun. On the first ECSP after Ted Forte moved to Arizona, it was a bit cloudy and we were all sitting around remembering him when someone got the idea to call and order a pizza for delivery from Ted's house. Georgie laughed so hard during all of that I thought she was going to pass out!

Never one to be outdone, Georgie always looked forward to her friendly competition with Roy Different on who could make the best "fill in the blank" drink. Some of them were awful but I didn't have the heart to tell her because she was having a great time.

Roy Diffrient

I never lost hope for Georgie, even when there wasn't much. I'm still hoping she's up there somewhere, maybe getting a better view than ever before. Of course we have all been missing her smile for awhile now – the last time I saw her was at ECSP in May 2013. I remember at that party, Georgie had put together some Christmas ornaments on the cedars. She did love those star parties, and she made them fun for everyone else.

I'm so glad I knew her, and I treasure my memories of her. She was unique, and always the most fun at a star party. I'll greatly miss her.

Jim Elliott

She was such a dear and sweet person to everyone, she never met a stranger. The world is less of a place without her but heaven is certainly richer. Sharing the views of "omega say what" with her are memories I'll cherish forever.

George Reynolds

She was truly loved, and we have missed her, but will indeed miss her more now.

Cord Wrap, continued from page 2

Mount placement is very critical and you must ensure that you have positioned your mount and scope to point as close to north as you can get. It need not be super accurate, but the positioning needs to be close. Using north as your reference point will also help remind you to not cross that meridian when manually slewing the mount while using the handset.

Next you must determine where your power needs to be routed to on your mount. In the figures at the bottom of page 2, the green arrowed lines represent the longest distance the plug end would travel if we always assume that initially we move the mount counter-clockwise from 359^0 to 0^0. We never plan to cross 0^0. This also dictates where you want to place your power source. For right hand mounts you want to place your battery to the back left. For left hand scopes you want to place your battery more to the front right. This ensures that you have routed all power cables based on the longest possible travel distance and that enough cable length has been accounted for. Once set up, be sure to secure your cords up and out of the way so that you do not get caught in them later in the dark.

Once you have your mount set and the cords placed you can start your alignments. Most scopes have at least two different alignment methods available, if not more. Regardless of what method you choose, you will want to perform your alignment in a counter-clockwise direction. This means that, unless you have the Celestron SkyAlign feature, you will need to pick at least two bright stars by name and move to each star as directed, always moving in a counter-clockwise direction. If you have the SkyAlign feature though, all you need to do is move to the first bright star, center it, align, and then move on to the next two objects while moving only in the counter-clockwise direction. Note, some mounts have an auto align function (ETX Series, etc.) that will pick a star and move to it for you, so if you have cord wrap protection turned on you should be ok, just try to select the stars in the counter-clockwise direction if you can.

Finally, once you have the alignment done, you must remember that you can move the scope in any direction that you want to from this point on, as long as you do not ever cross 0^0. Yes, I know that this seems a bit drastic but it does prevent a lot of problems for you later when it is dark. The GOTO computer will of course always honor the fact that it must never cross north in its travels, even if that means that the mount must rotate completely around to get from say 359^0 to something at 2^0. It is a small price to pay and once you have set up like this a few times, it becomes second nature.

I do realize that all of this seems like one of those over-blown Alton Brown Good Eats cooking shows where he used 40 steps to boil water, but if you follow the above advice, and it works well for you next time you are out, you too can stand in the dark and listen to the bugs chirp and astronomers threaten their equipment, with a smile.

Observer's Corner: April 11, 2015 Skywatch

The club had a great turnout for the April 11, 2015 Skywatch event at Northwest River Park. The young lady on the left is Tia Marvin. It was her first time at Skywatch setting up a telescope!

Photos by Melvin Spruill Jr, Copyright 2015.

may 2015

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
5/07 BBAA Monthly Meeting		5/03 Full Moon
5/09 Skywatch @ Northwest River Park		5/11 Last Quarter Moon
	5/30 Girl Scout Encampment	5/18 New Moon
		5/22 Saturn Opposition
5/26 Boardwalk Astronomy @ VA Beach Oceanfront	5/30 Mt. Trashmore Star Party	5/25 First Quarter Moon

Sneak Peek into June

Tue 6/02/2015 Boardwalk Astronomy, VA Beach Boardwalk @ 24th St, 6:00 PM
Thu 6/04/2015 Monthly Meeting, TCC, 7:30 pm
Sat 6/06/2015 Skywatch at Northwest River Park, 8:30 pm
Sat 6/13/2015 Nightwatch at Chippokes Plantation, 7:30 pm
Tue 6/23/2015 Boardwalk Astronomy, VA Beach Boardwalk @ 24th St, 6:00 PM