



BACK BAY observer

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

EPHEMERALS june 2011

6/02
BBAA Monthly Meeting
ECSP Star Party
Hampton Lodge
7:30 PM

6/04
Nightwatch
Chippokes State Park
Surry, VA

6/10
Garden Stars
Norfolk Botanical Gardens
7 pm

6/14
Boardwalk Astronomy
24th Street & The Boardwalk
Virginia Beach
Dusk - 11 pm

6/17
Nighthike
Northwest River Park

6/24
Skywatch
Northwest River Park

Looking Up!

Disaster!

You may have seen Ted's note about the Cub Scouts outing at Holiday Travel Park where he mentioned my "scope disaster". I have been keeping both of my scopes in my (not-so) new Ford E250 van. I had not given much thought to the position of my 10" Dob, nor did anyone happen to notice it to give me a warning. I had it bungee-stapped to the inside of the van standing vertically on the turntable base with the heavy end down (the primary mirror). It seemed to me that it took up a lot less floor space that way. And isn't that sort of how it is sitting when you are using it?

Before we did the Astronomy belt loop presentation for the Scouts, I had moved my van to the area where we were going to set up. After the presentation I opened the back of the van and unstrapped the Dob. The Velcro on the dew heater controller had come loose and it was hanging by its cables. The spotter scope was loose and hanging by its heater cable. I didn't think much of it, so I put both back into position and tightened the set screw for the spotter. I set the optical tube out first and then went to get the base.

Then I noticed a couple of flecks of glass on the base. I set the base out on the ground, went to the scope, and removed the tube's cover plate from the eyepiece end. Then I saw my diagonal secondary laying in the bottom of the tube, right on top of the primary. I laid the tube on its side and lifted the bottom to let the diagonal slide to

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The BBAA Family Picnic is
Saturday, July 9th at the large
shelter in Northwest River Park,
Chesapeake, from 11 am to 3 pm!

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The Milky Way Safari

by Dauna Coulter and Dr. Tony Phillips

Safari, anyone? Citizen scientists are invited to join a hunt through the galaxy. As a volunteer for Zooniverse's Milky Way Project, you'll track down exotic creatures like mysterious gas bubbles, twisted green knots of dust and gas, and the notorious "red fuzzies."

"The project began about four months ago," says astrophysicist Robert Simpson of Oxford University. "Already, more than 18,000 people are scouting the Milky Way for these quarry."

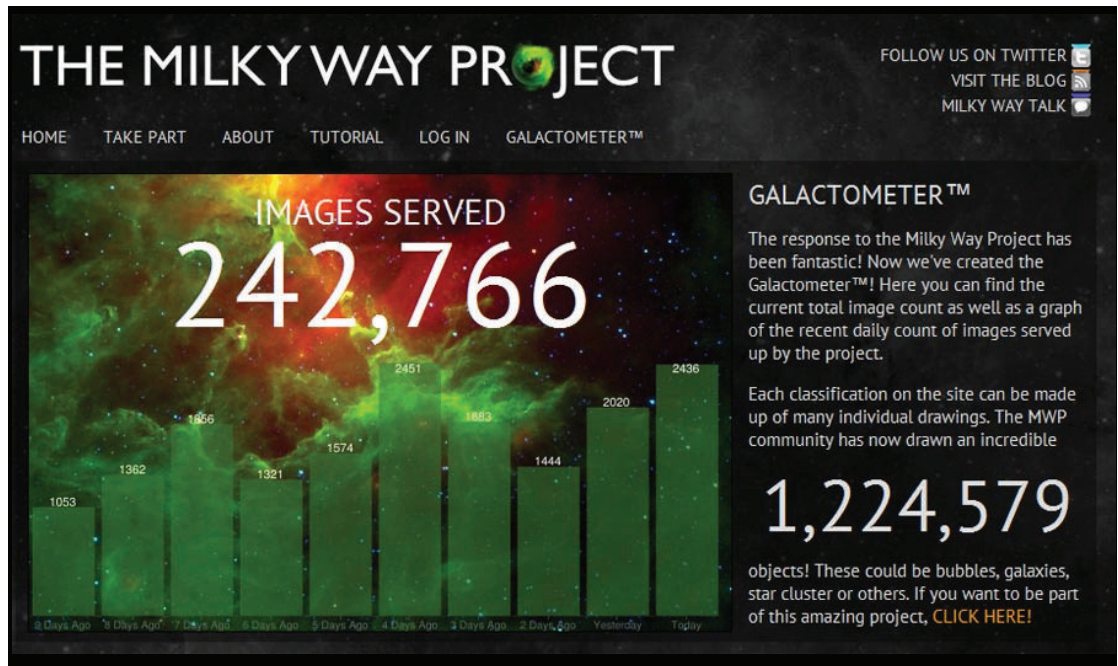
The volunteers have been scrutinizing infrared images of the Milky Way's inner regions gathered by NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope. Spitzer's high resolution in infrared helps it pierce the cloaking haze of interstellar gas and dust, revealing strange and beautiful structures invisible to conventional telescopes. The Milky Way Project is helping astronomers catalogue these intriguing features, map our galaxy, and plan future research.

"Participants use drawing tools to flag the objects," explains Simpson. "So far they've made over a million drawings and classified over 300,000 images."

Scientists are especially interested in bubble-like objects believed to represent areas of active star formation. "Every bubble signifies hundreds to thousands of young, hot stars. Our volunteers have circled almost 300,000

bubble candidates, and counting," he says.

Humans are better at this than computers. Computer searches turn up only the objects



Volunteers study infrared images of our galaxy from the Spitzer Space Telescope, identifying interesting features using the special tools of the Milky Way Project, part of the Citizen Science Alliance Zooniverse web site.

precisely defined in a program, missing the ones that don't fit a specified mold. A computer would, for example, overlook partial bubbles and those that are skewed into unusual shapes.

"People are more flexible. They tend to pick out patterns computers don't pick up and find things that just look interesting. They're less precise, but very complementary to computer searches, making it less likely we'll miss structures that deserve a closer look. And just the sheer numbers of eyes on the prize mean more comprehensive coverage."

Along the way the project scientists distill the volunteers' data to eliminate repetitive finds (such

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Please submit articles and items of interest no later than the 15th of the month for the next month's edition. Please submit all items to: BBAAErica@yahoo.com or BBAA Observer, P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9877

BBAA Meetings

The BBAA meet the first Thursday of every month except for July. While school is in session, we meet at the VA Beach TCC Campus. **The June Meeting will be held during the East Coast Star Party at the campground at 7:30 PM.** Directions available at www.backbayastro.org.

BBAA Internet Links

BBAA Web Site

<http://www.backbayastro.org>

Yahoo! Group

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/backbayastro>

BBAA Observer Newsletter

www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml

Space Place, continued from page 2

as different people spotting the same bubbles) and other distortions.

The project's main site (<http://www.milkywayproject.org>) includes links to a blog and a site called Milky Way Talk. Here "hunters" can post comments, chat about images they've found, tag the ones they consider especially intriguing, vote for their favorite images (see the winners at <http://talk.milkywayproject.org/collections/CMWS00002u>), and more.

Zooniverse invites public participation in science missions both to garner interest in science and to help scientists achieve their goals. More than

400,000 volunteers are involved in their projects at the moment. If you want to help with the Milky Way Project, visit the site, take the tutorial, and ... happy hunting!

You can get a preview some of the bubbles at Spitzer's own web site, <http://www.spitzer.caltech.edu/>. Kids will enjoy looking for bubbles in space pictures while playing the Spitzer concentration game at <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/spitzer-concentration/>.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Welcome New Members!

Looking Up! Continued from page 1

the open end. It had three fingernail-sized chips broken out of the lower end.

I had not taken vibration into consideration. That big van shakes a little more than my Camry. Along with the spotter and dew controller shaking loose, the single #8 x 1 1/2 " screw that holds the secondary to the spider had vibrated all the way out, at least six turns, and let it fall straight down to the primary, point first.

The primary seems to be intact but has a couple of black spots and a number of scratches next to them. I have called Orion to see if I can get a replacement secondary but haven't heard back from them.

Maybe someone else can learn from my mistake: Don't store your Dob vertically!

I plan on building a horizontal rack about two-thirds the length of the tube that can set on the floor, with bungies to strap down the tube and rubber feet to keep it from sliding. I will probably also work out a way to put a small safety cable or chain on the secondary to keep it from falling very far should it work loose again.

In other news:

The Dark Sky Site Search Committee is rapidly approaching the point of leasing the property in Tyrrell County. There is still time to become a "plank-holder" and have year-round access to one of the last areas on the East Coast that has minimal light pollution. You do not need to be a member of BBAA or any other group. If you are interested in participating, please contact Stu Beaber, Chairman.

Upcoming Events:

By the time this is out, many of us will be at the East Coast Star Party (or will have been at...). This year, the campground owners have decided that they need to charge us to camp. I have only heard a

small amount of chatter about this, so I don't know how most folks feel about it. More to follow.

I will be at Tallwood Elementary School for their Career Day on June 10th, along with some other members. My twin great-nephews attend there, so I am pretty much obligated.

Our next Boardwalk Astronomy event is scheduled for Tuesday, June 14th with a rain date of Thursday, the 16th. It is held on the Virginia Beach Boardwalk around 24th & 25th streets. If you have never done an outreach event this is a large and enjoyable project that usually draws hundreds of eager eyes of local citizens and tourists from all over the US and many from other countries.

If you've got the bucks, there is probably still time to book a trip to watch the June 15/16 total Lunar eclipse in Asia, Africa, and Australia.

The Boötid meteor shower peaks on the night of June 27/28, although sometimes you can see some meteors a few days earlier. The radiant point, near nu Ursa Majoris and beta Boötis, passes nearly overhead. This is usually not a bright shower but has peaked in some years, hitting 50 in 2004 and 100 in 1998.

In the meantime, Keep Looking Up!

/\\ark Gerlach



<http://www.darkskyinitiative.org/links/cartoon.html>

Astronomy Day 2011

Compiled from posts by Chuck Jagow and Ted Forte

Chuck Jagow, Ted Forte, Mark Ost and Bruce Bodner entertained and educated over 400 visitors to the Astronomy Day events at the Virginia Beach Central Library on May 7th. Hali Forte attended to the information table and provided sustenance to the BBAA members in attendance, while Mark Gerlach took over the table. *Astronomy Magazine* and NASA's Space Place provided excellent materials for visitors to take home. Dr. Hitt also provided do-it-yourself planispheres that were extremely popular. The Sun, the star of the day, was beautifully visible thanks to superb weather and conditions.



BBAA Meeting Minutes: May 5, 2011

The May, 2011 meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by President Mark Gerlach. Those in attendance were Bruce Bodner, Dean Brauer, Kenny Broun, Bryan Condrey, Elizabeth Dougherty, Kevin Dougherty, Courtney Flonta, Tony Flonta, Ted Forte, Amy Koenig Gardner, Mark Gerlach, Jeff Goldstein, Erich Hoffer, Bill Holmes, Curt Lambert, Ben Loyola, Matt McLaughlin, Bill McLean, Bill Newman, George Reynolds, Bernie Strohmeier, Kevin Swann, "Bird" Taylor, and Larry Wade.

Treasurer's report: Treasurer Jim Tallman was not at the meeting, but he sent in the Treasurer's report. General Fund, \$3205.25; Scholarship Fund, \$3700.12; total, \$6905.37.

Secretary's report: The April minutes were read and accepted as read.

Vice-President Courtney Flonta reported on June outreach events. On Friday, June 10, BBAA will support two elementary School field day events. Indian Lakes E. S. is providing a schedule of speaking times for their second and third grade field day event Lunch will be provided. Tallwood E. S. is having an "Air and Space" field day theme that day. Mark Gerlach will be there in support of his twin nephews.

Also, a request has come in to support a Cub Scout event on Saturday, 21 May at Trav-L-L Campground off General Booth Blvd. in Virginia Beach. BBAA participants are asked to be there before dusk to teach the belt loop requirements, and show the sky at night through telescopes.

Guests and new members present at the meeting: Dean Brauer, who owns a "homebrew" 8" scope; Bill Holmes, who has "a few scopes", and Erich Hoffer, an astronomy student of Kenny Broun. Dean and Bill were at the mount Trashmore Star Party April 15.

Schedule of events:

- Saturday, 7 May: National Astronomy Day. BBAA will have telescopes and an info table at the Virginia Beach Central Library.
- Friday, 13 May: Garden Stars, 8:30 p.m. at Norfolk Botanical Garden
- Tuesday, 17 May: First Boardwalk Astronomy event (rain date Thursday, 19 May)
- Friday, 20 May: Night Hike at Northwest River Park
- Friday, 27 May: Skywatch at Northwest River Park

TCC will not be available for the June BBAA meeting. That day, Thursday, June 2, will also be the first day of Kent Blackwell's East Coast Star Party at Hampton Lodge in Coinjock North Carolina. After some discussion, it was decided to hold the June meeting at the ECSP at Hampton Lodge Thursday night, June 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Observers' reports:

Mark Gerlach and Ted Forte reported on their trip to the Tuckahoe star party.

Bruce Bodner gave a brief report on his trip to NEAF (Northeast Astronomy Forum). He attended the imaging conference, where he saw a low-cost spectroscopy device, with which amateur astronomers can do real science.

Ted reported that he had signed up the BBAA for "Discover the Universe" with Astronomy magazine. Our Mount Trashmore Star Party has already been reported to the magazine. They have provided a large quantity of astronomy handouts for public outreach.

Kevin Daugherty reported that he was able to observe "earthshine" of the one-day-old crescent Moon on Wednesday, May 4 from his 13th floor apartment in Virginia Beach Town Center.

Old business:

No update was available on the status of VAAS, since Chuck Jagow was not at the meeting.

New business:

Mark Gerlach stated that since the BBAA is not incorporated, the officers (and members) could be held individually liable in any suit brought against the club. Incorporation would limit the liability of club members and officers. Discussion ensued, concerning incorporation. Ted said that the club would have to reorganize, and establish a board of directors, and keep the IRS informed of our reorganization, since BBAA is a 501(c)(3) Educational and Science organization. Although the subject of incorporation has been brought up in the past, it had not been pursued. Time and effort were cited as reasons. An estimate for lawyer's fees for incorporation would be about \$1,000. Larry Wade said he has been through this type of exercise before, and that eleven separate documents are needed. He suggested getting a corporate attorney who knows how to do it. Bruce recommended that members attach an "umbrella policy" rider to their insurance policy for protection. Ted agreed. Ben Loyola said he has been through incorporation with his business, and it is not that difficult. Rather than "re-invent the wheel", he and Bruce recommended finding another incorporated astronomy club in Virginia and copying their documents. A motion was made and seconded that a committee be established to investigate incorporation and come back to the club with a recommendation. More discussion. Matt McLaughlin was concerned that it is hard enough to come up with four candidates for the elected offices for the club, and that it would be difficult to get someone to be on a board of directors. Larry and Ben said the "board" could consist of just one

or two individuals. Annual filing of a report of organization is required. The motion was carried. A committee will be established.

Bill McLean stated that he needs an electronic membership list to submit to the Astronomical League. Secretary will prepare one.

The subject of the annual July BBAA family picnic was brought up, but no one present knew whether the shelter at Northwest River Park has been scheduled. The Secretary will contact Georgie June, who is the usual coordinator of the picnic.

The August meeting needs a location, since TCC will not be available. Chuck Dibbs' VB Planetarium and Norfolk State University were suggested as possible meeting sites.

The meeting feature was a video of an old black and white "Flash Gordon" television episode from the 1950s. It was a science fiction classic, in which Flash, Dale, and Dr. Zharkov went back in time 1200 years using Dr. Zharkov's time travel device that looked like an illuminated music box. They found a "duranium" bomb with a 1200-year detonation cycle, planted in the past by a time-traveling terrorist. It was hokey, but entertaining.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. by President Mark Gerlach.



Kent Blackwell's East Coast Star Party is this weekend!

June 2, 3, and 4 at the Hampton Lodge Camping Resort in Coinjock, NC.

Contact Kent for more information at:

Kent Blackwell, Organizer

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757-495-4663 e-mail: kent@exis.net



BACK BAY ***observer***

June 2011

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
		01 New Moon
02 BBAA Meeting at TCC VB 7:30		
04 Nightwatch at Chippokes		09 First Quarter
10 Garden Stars at Norf. Bot. Gardens		15 Full Moon
	14 Boardwalk Astronomy @ VB	
	24th Street at Oceanfront Dusk -11p	23 Last Quarter
17 Nighthike at NWRP		
24 Skywatch at NWRP		

Sneak Peek into July

Saturday 07/02/2011 Nightwatch at Chippokes State Park, Surry VA.

Thursday 07/07/2011 NO BBAA Meeting!!

Friday 07/08/2010 Nighthike at Northwest River Park

Friday 07/08/2010 Garden Stars at Norfolk Botanical Gardens at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday 07/09/2011 Annual BBAA Family Picnic at NWRP, 11 am to 3 pm, Large Shelter

Tuesday 07/12/11 BOARDWALK ASTRONOMY @ 24th Street & The Boardwalk in Virginia Beach; Dusk - 11:00

PM Those with solar scopes may come as early, not much before 6:00

Friday 07/22/2011 Skywatch at Northwest River Park

Saturday 07/30/2011 Nightwatch at Chippokes State Park, Surry VA.

