



BACK BAY observer

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

EPHEMERALS october 2011

11/03
BBAA Monthly Meeting
TCC VB
Building J, Room JC-12
7:30 pm

11/04
Garden Stars
Norfolk Botanical Gardens
7 pm

11/18
Skywatch
Northwest River Park

11/26
Nightwatch
Chippokes State Park
Surry, VA

Looking Up!

Kent Blackwell's Fall 2011 East Coast Star Party was the weekend of October 21-22. Kent put on yet another successful get-together and scheduled great weather for it. We were fortunate enough to have two very clear nights of observing. I don't know the total count, but I expect the attendance exceeded 120 people. I read in someone's email that over ninety people were fed at the spaghetti dinner put out by the Diffrients on Friday night (Thanks Roy & Dee!). Several of us went to Mel's Diner for brunch on Saturday, and there was the usual share table with crackers, cheese and wine on Saturday afternoon. Saturday night saw the big hot dog and hamburger cookout that this event is famous for. Thanks, Ken!

I didn't win nearly as many door prizes this time, only one, in fact. I won a copy of a book that I have been intending on reading for a number of years: A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking.

The Orionids peaked during ECSP this year and we were treated to several good streaks through the sky on Friday night (October 21). A couple of people reported a fireball, but I missed that one.

I finally got to see Comet Garradd (C/2009 P1). At ECSP I was using Sky & Telescope's locator map with little success (It's a rather small map). Jim Tallman came over and moved my 10" Dob about a smidgeon and a half and there it was. Garradd is turning north-

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The Gray Cubicle You Want to Work In

By Dr. Tony Phillips

It's another day at the office.

You're sitting in a gray cubicle, tap-tap-tapping away on your keyboard, when suddenly your neighbor lets out a whoop of delight.

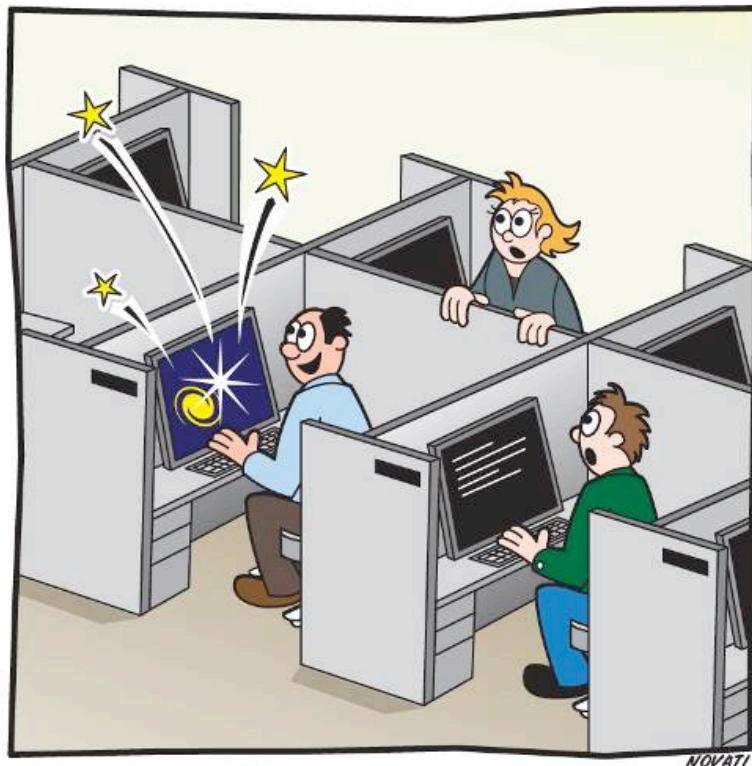
Over the top of the carpeted divider you see a star exploding on the computer screen. An unauthorized video game? No, this explosion is real. A massive star just went supernova in the Whirlpool Galaxy, and the first images from Hubble are popping up on your office-mate's screen.

It's another day at the office ... at NASA.

Just down the hall, another office-mate is analyzing global temperature trends. On the floor below, a team of engineers gathers to decode signals from a spaceship that entered "safe mode" when it was hit by a solar flare. And three floors above, a financial analyst snaps her pencil-tip as she tries to figure out how to afford just one more sensor for a new robotic spacecraft.

These are just a few of the things going on every day at NASA headquarters in Washington DC and more than a dozen other NASA centers scattered around the country. The variety of NASA research and, moreover, the variety of NASA people required to carry it out often comes as a surprise. Consider the following:

NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) supports research in four main areas: Earth



Some of the employees of NASA's Science Mission Directorate may work in gray cubicles, but their jobs are anything but dull. They get to study Earth, the Sun, the Solar System, and the Universe!

Science, Heliophysics, Astrophysics, and Planetary Science. Read that list one more time. It includes everything in the cosmos from the ground beneath our feet to the Sun in the sky to the most distant galaxies at the edge of the Universe. Walking among the cubicles in NASA's science offices, you are likely to meet people working on climate change, extraterrestrial life, Earth-threatening asteroids, black holes or a hundred other things guaranteed to give a curious-minded person goose bumps. Truly, no other government agency has a bigger job description.

And it's not just scientists doing the work. NASA needs engineers to design its observatories and build its spacecraft, mathematicians to analyze orbits and decipher signals, and financial wizards

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/newsletters/newsletter.shtml>.

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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 September meeting is at the TCC Virginia Beach.** 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>

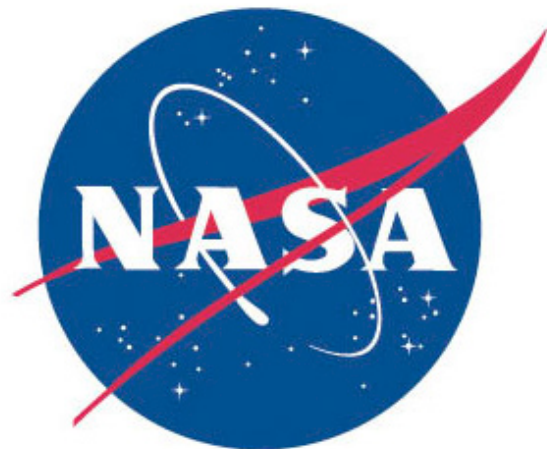
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www.backbayastro.org/observer/newsletter.shtml

Space Place, continued from page 2

to manage the accounts and figure out how to pay for everything NASA dreamers want to do. Even writers and artists have a place in the NASA scheme of things. Someone has to explain it all to the general public.

Clearly, some cubicles are more interesting than others. For more information about the Science Mission Directorate, visit science.nasa.gov. And for another way to reach the Space Place, go to <http://science.nasa.gov/kids>.



Welcome New Members!

November 2011

Looking Up! Continued from page 1

eastward in this month and will be in Hercules into February.

The Northern Taurids meteor shower should peak on November 13. The radiant is actually in eastern Aries, near Delta. This shower is rather light, with an expected frequency of only up to two per hour. The moon will be just past full and will probably wash out any but the brightest streaks.

The Leonid shower will peak on November 18, but the last quarter moon will likely interfere. Sometimes this shower can produce many meteors, but fewer than twelve per hour are expected this year. The material making up this shower is produced by the comet 55P/Temple-Tuttle. The next Skywatch is also

on November 18th, weather permitting. Perhaps we will have some meteors to “ooh” and “aah” over. Hopefully, by the time this is in print (or in your email), we will have a slate of officers nominated for the December elections for 2012.

November also brings Thanksgiving, which I hope will be a pleasant and happy one for all of you and your families.

In the meantime, save your silver, and keep Looking Up!!

Mark Gerlach

BBAA Meeting Minutes October 6, 2011

The October, 2011 meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. in room JC-13 at TCC Virginia Beach Campus by club president Mark Gerlach. Those in attendance were Bob Beuerlein, Kenny Broun, Courtney Flonta, Ted Forte, Amy Koenig Gardner, Mark Gerlach, Allen Goldstein, Erich Hoffer, Curt Lambert, Matt McLaughlin, George Reynolds, Kevin Swann, Matt Swingle, Jim Tallman, and “Bird” Taylor.

Treasurer’s report: General Fund, \$1528.13; Scholarship Fund, \$3710.12; total, \$5238.25. The expenses for the VAAS Conference were \$1284.59 and receipts were \$200.00, for a net cost of \$1084.59. Other expenses included paying the A.L. dues, renewing IDA membership, and sending the proceeds from the sale of the Cecil Nichols equipment to the members of the family.

Secretary’s report: The minutes of the September meeting are posted on the BBAA Web site..

President Mark Gerlach gave a brief account of the VAAS conference that took place over the past weekend, on Saturday, 1 October. From the feedback that he and others received, it was very successful. A vote of thanks was offered to Chuck Jagow, who coordinated the event. (Chuck was not at the meeting, however.)

Calendar items:

“Moonwatch” events scheduled for Saturday, October 8 at Princess Anne Area Library in Virginia Beach and at the Virginia Air & Space Center in Hampton. Bird announced observing at the GAP Friday, Oct. 7. The Fall East Coast Star Party, hosted by Kent Blackwell, will be held 21-23 October. The last Boardwalk Astronomy night of this year is scheduled for Tuesday, 11 October, though the forecast is calling for rain. Thursday, 13 Oct. is the rain date.

There will be a Venus transit in June of 2012, in the afternoon. East coast will be able to see part of it. The whole transit may be seen from the far west.

Alaska and Hawaii will be able to see the whole thing, which will be several hours long. Bird Taylor recommends #14 welders' glass as a solar filter. He suggests supplies be ordered now, to avoid a late rush.

Observing Reports: Several members said they have seen Comet Garradd, which is getting brighter. Ted reported on the "No Frills" Star Party at Tuckahoe, MD.

George Reynolds mentioned the free Stellarium planetarium program for the computer. It is handy for outreach, to show people the constellations, and can be used at the telescope. It can even be used to control a computerized scope. Bob Beuerlein suggested Microsoft's WorldWide Telescope application.

Old business: None.

New Business: Ted Forte said that this school year is the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Chesapeake Public Schools Planetarium. Dr. Bob

Hitt has been there 30 years or more. The planetarium was built with money allocated to the school districts after the Russians launched Sputnik and other space probes in the late 1950s and early '60s. There will be a special event commemorating the 50th anniversary sometime this year, at a date to be determined. The Virginia Beach City Public Schools Planetarium is several years newer than Chesapeake's.

Bird Taylor showed a brief DVD showing the Mars Science Laboratory under construction in the clean room at Cape Canaveral. After that, the meeting was moved to the TCC planetarium, where Ken Broun presented a new show he recently received.

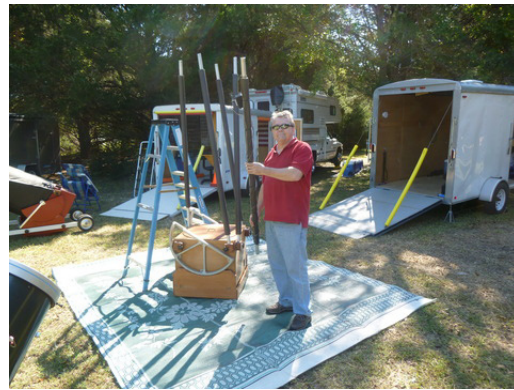
The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.



Solar System Twins

Pluto has a twin in sister dwarf planet Eris. While Eris is still believed to be more massive, they are nearly identical in diameter.

2011 October East Coast Star Party





Ted Forte at the
No Frills Star
Party...

Although some
have suggested it
is the "No Refills"
Star Party!



BACK BAY ***observer***

November 2011

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
03 BBAA Monthly Meeting, VB		02 First Quarter
04 Garden Stars at Norfolk Bot. Grdns.		
		10 Full Moon
18 Skywatch at NWRP		18 Last Quarter
26 Nightwatch Chippokes State Park		25 New Moon

Sneak Peek into December

Thursday 12/02/2011 Meeting at TCC VA Beach, Building J, Room JC-12 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday 12/03/2011 SHIVER FEST @ Mt. Trashmore VA Beach, Dusk - 11:00 PM.

Friday 12/16/2011 Skywatch at Northwest River Park

Saturday 12/24/2011 Nightwatch at Chippokes State Park, Surry VA.

