



BACK BAY observer

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

EPHEMERALS august 2012

08/24, 7:00 pm
Night Hike
Northwest River Park

08/24, 8:00 pm
Garden Stars
Norfolk Botanical Gardens

08/28, 7:00 pm
Boardwalk Astronomy
Near 24th St Stage
VA Beach Oceanfront

09/06, 7:30 pm
BBAA Monthly Meeting
TCC Campus

09/07
Skywatch
Northwest River Park

09/15
Nightwatch
Chippokes State Park
Surry, VA



Looking Up!

Hello again! This month I actually have a story to tell, instead of just random ramblings. As most of you know I went to the Astronomical League Conference (ALCon) in Chicago at the beginning of July with my grandmother. It was great. Not quite as good as last year, seeing as I had to pay for it and they didn't give me a check and a plaque this year (last year I won the Horkheimer Youth award, which paid for my trip), but it was still a lot of fun, and very educational. I met a lot of cool people and definitely learned something. The whole trip was a big story, but a few events stand out the most in my memory, and they're all connected to some extent.

It all started on the day we got there. ALCon is an annual four day conference usually in the beginning of July. This year, the day we got there was July fourth. After checking in, taking a nap and dining, we decided to participate in the observing event outside the hotel. It was in a parking lot with lights, and fireworks, but there was a large moon and Saturn was up, so we went for it. We set up before the fireworks started, and there were a lot of people out to watch the fireworks. I went to set up and get aligned with my 6-inch Dob, and found it was REALLY out of collimation. I had shipped it there, with like ten pounds of bubble wrap, so I was a little surprised, but I thought, I'll just see if anyone else has a collimator with them, and it'll be done. Ha. Not even close.

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BBAA Meeting Minutes

August 2, 2012

The Meeting at Plaza Middle School was called to order by president Courtney Flonta at 7:33PM.

Those in attendance were: Courtney Flonta, Robyn Korn, Mark Gerlach, Jeff Goldstein, Linda Goldstein, Robyn Korn, Curtis Lambert, Ben Loyola, Bill McLean, Katelyn Neese, Stacy Neese, Joey Quinn III, George Reynolds, Bernie Strohmeier, Kevin Swann, Paul Tartabini, 'Bird' Taylor and Rachel Wilbur.

Visitors & Guests: Jeff's wife Linda Goldstein, Katelyn & Stacy Neese, & Rachel Wilbur.

Treasurer's report: \$1676.66 General Fund, \$2719.92 Scholarship Fund, \$4396.58 Total.

Top Expenses:

- Tonight the scholarship fund will award \$1500 to this year's recipient
- \$130 picnic reservation
- \$178 food for picnic
- \$390 annual ALCOR dues
- \$411 is due for the web site's 3-year domain name

Secretary's Report: There was no reading of the previous meeting's minutes due to no official meeting last month.

Outreaches:

- 7/31 Boardwalk Astronomy had viewers from Ukraine & Turkey among the locals.
- NOTE: VPAS meets 1st & 3rd Friday of every month on Grundland Dr, Hampton (vpas@yahoo.com)

Scholarship: Ben Loyola, Bill McLean & Matt McLaughlin met & awarded Rachel Wilbur the \$1500 scholarship.

Rachel read her winning essay & Ben read her teacher recommendation.

New Business:

- 8/5 VA Air & Space Museum will have IMAX stream of Mars "Curiosity" landing at 11PM until 3 hrs after touchdown.
- Another web site for information is on youtube: Mars Science Lab (MSL)
- BBAA newsletter is easy to write an article &/or post pictures compared to other

magazines. Email the information to Paul Tartabini (bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com)

- President Courtney motioned to change the publication date of the newsletter from one week before the meeting to one week after the meeting. The motion was seconded.
- Courtney attended 2 of the 50 talks at the Chicago ALCON convention last July. One talk dealt with how to grow your astronomy club. It discussed how to keep members & get old ones back. The presenter was a member of the NASA Night Sky Network (<http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov>) which is a networking site for astronomy clubs. The Network has no dues & member clubs get gifts like science posters & hands-on crafts as well as free web publicity for your club's events. You can search by zip code for other club events as well. Membership only requires that clubs have two observing events per quarter and a building address to mail the free material. Courtney recommended joining. The motion was seconded.
- For better BBAA meeting attendance Courtney & Mark Gerlach suggested:
 - Business meetings only once every 3 months (technically required only once per year to elect officers)
 - Handing out the event calendar at each meeting
 - Possible door prizes
 - Adding some more benefits
 - Lowering the dues
 - Possible member only outings
 - Monthly theme with a speaker like a Meteorology expert or an event like find double star night for the ALCOR pin
- Dark Sky locations:
 - Hampton Lodge, camping \$20/night – can observe in locations away from campers
 - Also parking lots along Colonial Parkway, Yorktown with occasional cars' headlights & rangers spot light safety checks.
- Officers can add events to yahoo calendar but only moderators can edit once posted. George Reynolds will change this for all officers.
- BBAA library is currently held by Bill Newman (billn59@verizon.net) so email him if you need anything.

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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/newslettersnewsletter.shtml>

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: bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com or BBAA Observer, P.O. Box 9877, Virginia Beach, VA

President

Courtney Flonta
757-580-0644
astrogirl12@yahoo.com

Vice President

Mark Gerlach
757-434-4220
mgerlach@verizon.net

Treasurer

Bernie Strohmeyer
757-630-0848
bdsjr@cox.net

Secretary

Kevin Swann
757-424-6242
kjswann@yahoo.com

Webmaster

Nick Anderson
nranderson.deepskyobserver@gmail.com

ALCOR

Bill McLean
preciousmyprecious@yahoo.com

Librarian

Bill Newman
billn59@verizon.net

RRRT Coordinator

Lawrence "Bird" Tavlör
Lawrence.W.Taylor@nasa.gov

Kevin Weiner

kevin.weiner@cox.net

Scholarship Coordinator

Ben Loyola
benito@loyola.com

Newsletter Editor

Paul Tartabini
bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com

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 will be held at TCC in Virginia Beach, Building J, Rm JC-12 at 7:30 pm. Directions available at www.backbayastro.org.

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

Meeting Minutes, continued from page 2

- BBAA sun scope is currently held by George Reynolds. A sign-out sheet has been created and is held by the secretary.
- The club needs VA beach school, VA Pilot & TV station POC's to post our events accurately. Jeff Goldstein has a VA Pilot POC & will give to vice president Mark Gerlach.
- Club anniversary luncheon is projected to be 12/8 or 12/15 at Fire & Vine again.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

**Welcome
New Members!!**

James Coffield
and
Katelyn Neese

Looking Up, continued from page 1

I checked with a couple from Wisconsin that I had met earlier that day, and they said they didn't have a collimator, but we decided to eyeball it. That was when we discovered two of the three collimation screws were missing. We tried to collimate without the missing screws, but that didn't work. So, I had to live with an unaligned scope.

My grandmother, being the nice person she is, decided to go to a hardware store and get a few screws. The first ones she brought back didn't quite fit. So she went back and took the third screw. She brought back the closest match she could. They didn't fit either. So a few days later, before the banquet on Saturday, we decided to go back to the hardware store, and take the telescope with us. We tried to find another screw similar to the one in the telescope but we couldn't. So we brought the telescope inside. When we lifted it up to see the screw on the bottom, we heard this terrible noise. I nearly freaked out. I put the telescope on the ground to scope out the damage (no pun intended). As I expected, the mirror had turned sideways, and wasn't stabilized at all, and we still couldn't find any screws that would fit!

So I did what seemed logical at the time... took the rest of the screws out and took the telescope apart! I removed the mirror, as well as the weight and the springs. I then proceeded to put it all back together. I collimated the mirror while I was at it and simply didn't put the third screw back in. Now, the telescope is all better, although if I need to collimate it again, I'll be screwed (pun intended this time). The funny part of it all was that there was really no more stargazing after the first night. Call that irony, or sad, or whatever you wish, but I call it a great memory, that neither my grandmother nor I will ever forget.

Courtney Flonta



Among the highlights of Courtney's trip was a visit to Yerkes Observatory and a tour of the 40-inch refractor, the largest refracting telescope used for scientific research.

The Caldwell Program: A Personal Testimonial

By Nick Anderson

As the Messier Catalogue is one of the most well-known observing lists, almost every observer will find themselves observing these infamous "M" objects. Observing all 110 Messier objects is often regarded as a "rite of passage" for a beginning observer. But after spending long hours to complete the catalogue, you might wonder: what will I observe next? Well I have a suggestion to offer you.

In 1995, Sir Patrick Moore devised the Caldwell Catalogue to complement

Messier's famous list. It includes many of the sky's most interesting objects that are not included in the Messier Catalogue. There are 109 objects total on the Caldwell list, but only about 80 are reasonably observable from Virginia because many southern hemisphere objects are included. The Astronomical League offer a partial completion award (70 objects) due to the fact that an observer would have to travel to observe all 109 objects.

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The Caldwell Program, continued from page 5

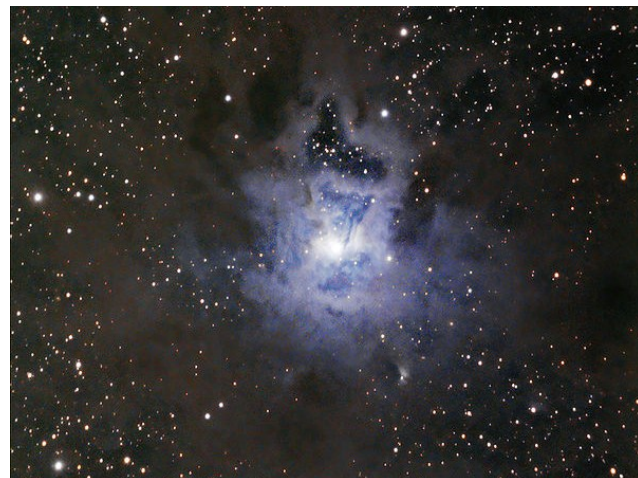
I began working on the Caldwell Program at the very end of 2011 after just finishing the Messier Catalogue earlier in the month. As evidenced in my frequent, enthusiastic observing reports, even with just my 8-inch reflector many of these spectacular objects became new personal favorites. Although considerably more difficult than many of the Messier objects, I immensely enjoyed working on the program, especially with the nebulae. Six months after starting the list I reached 70 objects.

While compiling my logs, I couldn't help but notice that even since December my observing skills have been greatly enhanced by working on the program. No longer am I afraid to test different powers on deep sky objects, and using nebula filters is commonplace. The galaxy M101 (or any other Messier object, for that matter) seems like a cakewalk to me now. I highly doubt that I would've been able to detect some of the most subtle objects on the list if I had started sooner. Because my descriptions get better each month, the early ones I had of some of the Caldwell objects are now laughable to me!

These are some of my favorite objects from the Caldwell list (it would be hard to pick just one): NGC 7023 (Iris Nebula), NGC 6826 (Blinking Planetary), NGC 7000 (North America Nebula), NGC 6992 (East Veil Nebula), NGC 6960 (West Veil Nebula), NGC 4565 (Needle Galaxy), NGC 7293 (Helix Nebula), open cluster NGC 2477, NGC 5128 (Centaurus A), and NGC 5139 (Omega Centauri).

So if you're ever in need of some new objects to observe, I highly recommend taking

a look at the Caldwell list. Many are certainly not easy [NGC 7635 (Bubble Nebula), Sh2-155 (Cave Nebula), IC 405 (Flaming Star Nebula), IC 5146 (Cocoon Nebula) just to name a few], but very rewarding indeed.



The Iris Nebula (NGC 7023), a reflection nebula in Cepheus, is one of Nick's favorite Caldwell objects. (Photo: Hewholooks).

Staring through the eyepiece endlessly to get a glimpse of NGC 7635 (Bubble Nebula)...nearly shedding tears when viewing the Veil Nebula in O-III for the first time...getting to see Omega Centauri six degrees above the horizon with the unaided eye at the ECSP...seeing the Cocoon Nebula and its surrounding dark lane unfiltered...all great memories I will always have!

Of course I won't be satisfied this year until I observe the remaining 11 Caldwell objects that are visible from Virginia, and I won't be truly satisfied until I finish all 109 from the southern hemisphere! Plans are currently in the works for me to go to either New Zealand, Australia, or Chile next summer (or winter that is, for the southern hemisphere)...but that's another story.

Requirements for The Astronomical League's Caldwell Program

- Observe and record your observations with a description and/or a drawing (only one is required) with sufficient detail to convince your society's awards coordinator that you did in fact expend the time and effort to find and appreciate each object.
- A photo or CCD image may be added but cannot replace the visual observation. Any telescope or binoculars are acceptable. Computer assisted and GoTo capabilities not permitted.
- For a list of all 109 Caldwell Objects, see: <http://tinyurl.com/ALcaldwell>

Beach Street USA

and

BBAA Boardwalk Astronomy



The Boardwalk Astronomy outreach program on July 3, 2012 at the 24th street stage area of the Virginia Beach oceanfront was a resounding success. During the late afternoon the public was treated to a beautiful view of solar prominences through Dale Carey's Coronado Hydrogen Alpha telescope. At 8:30 pm I spotted Saturn high in the sky and quickly trained my 10" Dobsonian on the ringed planet. Tourist and residents alike lined up to view Saturn's rings and its largest moon, Titan. George Reynolds showed everyone a lovely view of the full moon hugging the horizon through his low power portable refractor.

The sky remained clear all night and the atmospheric seeing was simply impeccable. The line to look through our telescopes never ceased from the hour mentioned above until 11:00 pm. In fact, I never had an opportunity to look at anything else. The "Saturn line" simply never ended. Thanks go out to Georgie June for assisting me at the

helm of my telescope. Without her I wouldn't have had a one minute break.

Although most of us were exhausted by the end of the session we all agreed it was well worth it. Those who peered into our telescopes were simply amazed at the beautiful sights. Everyone thanked us for all our efforts. We club members would like to thank Beach Street Events, organizers Chuck Dibbs of the Virginia Beach Planetarium and Dale Carey for all their efforts.

Was anything lacking this year at Boardwalk Astronomy? You bet it was. We all missed Ted Forte. In case you have been away from planet earth a few months, Ted and Hali Forte moved to Arizona. Last night it seems that Ted's usual long line shifted to my telescope. I only wish the public could have been treated to a view of Saturn in Ted's 18" Dobsonian but they seemed very well pleased with what they did see.

Kent Blackwell



A youngster is treated to a ring-side view of Saturn, courtesy of his Dad's arms and Kent Blackwell's 10-inch Dobsonian.



The "Saturn Line" grows as crowds gather near 24th St. for BBAA's Boardwalk Astronomy event on July 3, 2012.

Newsletter Notes

- At the August BBAA meeting, Club President Courtney Flonta suggested that the newsletter change its monthly target publication date to be a week **after** each month's club meeting, rather than a week before, as it has been for the last couple of years. Her suggestion was well received by the club members in attendance, and so, *The Observer* will now be sent to all members within a week after the monthly meeting.
- Please note this is a *target* publication date, and the actual publication date depends upon when all of the content material is received. To ensure publication occurs in a timely manner, it is requested that all articles, columns and features be submitted by the date of the monthly meeting.
- Club members are encouraged to have items published in the newsletter. We welcome your reports on observing, outreach events, observing trips, star parties, equipment reviews, news of member achievements & honors as well as astro images and pictures of club activities. As editor I will work with you to make publishing an item in the newsletter a breeze. Content by club members is what makes the newsletter different from a commercial astronomy magazine. Sharing, teaching and interacting with our club friends through the newsletter is an important benefit of BBAA club membership.
- All submissions & inquiries regarding *The Observer* should be sent to **bbaa.newsletter@gmail.com**
- If you've missed the NASA Space Place article in the July and August issues of *The Observer*, don't worry. The problem is on the NASA side and the feature will resume next month.
- Finally, you'll notice that this issue has been released past the publication target date. Please bear with us as we transition to the new publication schedule. You should receive next month's issue on time (by 9/11/2012).

Paul Tartabini, Editor

Scenes from the BBAA Picnic, July 15, 2012



You did know that chef duty at the picnic is one of the Club President's official duties, right?



Georgie gets to do what many BBAA club members have only dreamed of...



At least someone wasn't goofing off!



Well, I guess they were wet already



August 2012

BBAA Events	Special Outreach	Astronomical Events
24 Garden Stars at Norfolk Botanical Gardens	24 Night Hike at NWRP	24 First Quarter
	25 "Science Saturday" at Blackwater Regional Library	
	27 Moonwatch at Princess Anne Library	
28 Boardwalk Astronomy		3 Full Moon



Sneak Peek into September

Thu 09/06/2012 BBAA Monthly Meeting, TCC Campus, 7:30 pm

Fri 09/07/2012 Skywatch at Northwest River Park

Sat 09/15/2012 Nightwatch at Chippokes State Park, Surry VA.

Fri 09/22/2012 Garden Stars at Norfolk Botanical Gardens, 8:00 pm

Tue 09/25/2012 Boardwalk Astronomy, Virginia Beach Boardwalk near 24th street stage