



Sky Watch

Issue #10-07
October

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society

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Summary of Sept meeting:

The meeting was called to order at 19:10 EDT Gary Scott presiding.

- 1) Chuck Greenwood announced the moving of the BCC Astronomy department (within the building).
- 2) 16 inch club scope's mirror being recoating completed and in process of being re-assembled.
- 3) Dave Guibert discussed plans for Erna Nixon Park (See Outreach news).
- 4) Club members watched the PBS presentation of "Seeing in the Dark".

Meeting was adjourned at 19:40 EDT

Upcoming BAS Meetings:

17 October at the BCC Planetarium.

Chuck Greenwood – summary of his trip to Kitt Peak.

Discuss nominating committee for 2008 BAS Officer elections.

Moon Phases:

New: Oct 11th
Full: Oct 26th

What's in the Sky in October?

Well, September wasn't the best for weather. There were a few good seeing nights but not many, and those (as I remember) were during the work week, and not the weekend. The first part of October has also been dreadful! Let's hope the skies clear as the month progresses.

As the summer triangle heads west in the evening, the object of choice for the amateur astronomer quickly turns to great Andromeda galaxy M31. It can easily be found up and to the left of "βAnd" (second star down from the lower left corner of the great square of Pegasus) Companion galaxies M32 and M110 are also part of the view. All three can be seen with Binoculars, or a low mag eyepiece. There are many other targets near and around Andromeda. The Double Cluster (NGC 884 and NGC 869) between Perseus and Cassiopeia are beautiful also through binoculars. If you want to observe a variable star, check out the eclipsing binary star *Algol* in Perseus Every 2.87 days its brightness drops by more than a magnitude and then rises again. Look for the moon occulting the Pleiades on the 27th.

PLANETS:

Jupiter begins to head toward the horizon SW early in the evening in the constellation Ophiuchus. October is probably the last month to view the giant planet until it rises before dawn early next year. This is a good time of year to observe **Neptune & Uranus**, which transit south by 9:15pm and 11pm respectively by mid October. Neptune is "tiny and dim" at an apparent magnitude of 7.8; whereas Uranus is a much easier target with an app mag of 5.7. **Mars** rises approx 10pm in Gemini by mid October and transits approx 5am. Mars shines brightly at a mag -0.6 and a size of 12 arc sec. In November, it will even get better for observing surface features. **Venus & Saturn** are in the pre-dawn east sky in October in the constellation Leo. They are located adjacent to the star Regulus, and slowly separate from Regulus as the month progresses. Venus is a "blinding" -4.7 magnitude.

Messier List From Oscar:

This month (using the purple URL below) we have 9 Messier items to locate. Seven of them are in the Sagittarius constellation. The other 2 are close by in Serpens and Scutum. You can locate them using the Telrad finder map # 10 and # 11. I sure hope the weather gets better.

Pray for Clear Skies!

Oscar BAS member

<http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/12months/m-oct.html>

BAS Star Parties:

Camp Zyxlor on Saturday **13 Oct.**

I would suspect there is a star party at the north Shilo site on Friday the 12th of October.

BAS Outreach News:

Sept 15 - MAS BAS Star party at FIT (J. Small)

Members of the Melbourne and Brevard Astronomical Societies got together for a star party on the campus of Florida Institute of Technology on September 15, 2007. Members attending for BAS were John Small, Oscar Sifuentes, and Dave Guibert. Unfortunately the sky was completely clouded over making star gazing impossible. We gave it the old college try but the weather overpowered us and we had to give up at about 20:30 EDT. Thanks to those who showed up.

Erna Nixon Park November 17th is the next event. See the BAS website for details.

Club Telescopes:

John Small currently has the 16" dob reassembled with the recoated mirror and plans to bring it to camp Zyxlor on the 13th. Laura Herba has the 8" club dobsonian.



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Notes from the BAS Secretary:

September Star Party at Camp Zyxlor

September was a slow month for BAS. There were numerous cloudy nights and a lot of people were out of town. On September 8th four of us met at Camp Zyxlor for a mini star party. The sky was partly cloudy with several clear periods. Gordon Schafer and his son Philip were on hand with Gordon's 18 inch Obsession Dobsonian and Laura Herba brought the club 8 inch Dobsonian. John Powell was doing some imaging and learning the ins and outs of his Takahashi TSA 102mm refractor. My 10 inch Meade LX90 SCT was set up in close proximity to John so he could continue tutoring me in the fine art of CCD imaging. We all helped Laura set up the 8 inch and gave her instructions on how to locate objects. There was a lot of time spent looking at the beautiful images produced by Gordon's Obsession. Some of the spectacular views were of the Andromeda Galaxy, M13, M15, and the Ring Nebula. The Andromeda filled the eyepiece with a bright glow and the central dense core was quite evident. The globular cluster M13 was also very bright and many stars could be resolved. Looking through this scope is always a treat. My highlight for the night with my scope was viewing NGC 6826 the Blinking Eye Nebula. This planetary nebula is located near the constellation of Cygnus and is 2200 light years distant.

The name refers to the nature of the human eye and not the nebula itself. If you stare at the central star it seems to blink on and off. If you use averted vision the glow of the nebula becomes more apparent. Images of this object show a silver central star with a green gas cloud and red blotches located at the 2 and 8 o'clock positions called "fliers".

September is a good month for viewing our home galaxy the Milky Way, as long as the clouds are not obscuring it! Since there is not a lot to write about here are some facts. The Milky Way contains more than 200 billion stars with most of the more massive ones located near the central bulge. The central bulge is about 10,000 light years thick. The Milky Way is a spiral galaxy and has four arms, the Sagittarius, Perseus, Crux-Centaurus and Orion or local arm which is where our solar system is located. The arms consist of nebula, young stars, interstellar gas and dust. Our solar system is moving around the galactic center of our galaxy at about 557,000 mph and takes 290 million years to make one orbit. Planet earth is located way out on the edge of the Milky Way about 28,000 light years from the center. The next time you are outside on a clear dark night this time of year look straight up and you will see the hazy cloud of stars that is the Milky Way stretching almost all the way across the sky.

Back to the star party at Camp Zyxlor. At about 23:30 EDT the clouds started moving in and we decided to call it a night. Even though this was not a perfect evening, any night spent under the stars with your fellow astronomers is a great time. We have another star party planned for October 13th. Hope to see you all then, bring your scope to Camp Zyxlor you'll be glad you did.

Clear skies, John Small

Thanks John !~!~

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