

SIDEREAL TIMES

The Official Publication of the
Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton

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From the Director

With a few exceptions the weather this year has been very bad for astronomy. The rain damaged our observatory (fixed over the summer through the efforts of John Church). In the month of October, normally the clearest of the year, it has rained almost every weekend. Unfortunately, Jersey Starquest, the AAAP's annual star party, was a casualty of the unusually wet weather we've been having this year. The weekend of October 16th featured back-to-back nor'easters and a snow storm at the Hope Center. The people at the Hope Center were kind enough not to charge us for the cancellation. Hopefully, next year the weather will be better.

I encourage all members to vote on the constitution/bylaw changes that were proposed at the September meeting. The vote on this issue will take place before the general meeting on Nov. 10th. A synopsis of the changes can be found in my article in the October issue of Sidereal Times. An absentee ballot was included with the article for those who will be unable to attend the November meeting. An exact version of the changes is available on our website: <http://www.princetonastronomy.org> (click on the dropdown site map and go to "Constitution & Bylaws (pdf)").

The next board meeting will be on Thursday, November 19th at 7 PM at the observatory conference room at Peyton Hall. All members are welcome to attend.

If you haven't had a chance to see a show at the newly refurbished New Jersey State Planetarium I encourage you to go. The planetarium, which was closed for almost four years, reopened again on September 12th. Older members will remember the Minolta planetarium projector. This has been completely refurbished, cleaned and fixed. The interior lighting and seats have been replaced and a new atrium is in the works with interactive displays.

However the biggest change at the planetarium is the introduction of full dome video, thanks to a grant of the better part of a million dollars from the Prudential Foundation. In addition the planetarium has almost a dozen new up-to-date shows to go with the new system. Our current show is called "Extreme Planets", a look at some of the recent discoveries of planets outside our solar system. (Our Holiday

shows start on the weekend of Nov. 28th.) In the past the AAAP ended our year with a special Tuesday night show at the planetarium in June. It will be nice to have this tradition back next June but go before then to be pleasantly surprised. In the opinion of several knowledgeable planetarians, The New Jersey State Planetarium is now the best planetarium in the eastern US.

Bill Murray, Director

The deadline for the December issue is:

Friday November 27, 2009

THIS IS THE DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING

Send your submissions to:

editors@princetonastronomy.org

Membership Meeting Minutes October 13, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 8:01 PM

AAAP Member John Giles displayed his grandfather's spyglass and told how he used it as his introduction to observational astronomy.

Ken Kremer gave an update on the LCROSS impact.

Director Bill Murray reported that since the October issue of the Sidereal Times contained the report of the proposed bylaws changes and publication of the October issue was delayed due to Ira's illness the vote on the bylaws changes will take place at the November meeting.

Treasurer Mike Mitrano reported that he has collected \$1520 in dues so far this month.

Observatory Chairman Gene Ramsey reported that the repairs to the Simpson Observatory were complete.

Outreach Chairman Jeff Bernardis reported that the next outreach event will be on Wed. Dec. 9th at the Riverside School in Princeton.

During the Old Business segment of the meeting it was decided that, due to the projected extremely bad weather, Jersey Starquest would be canceled this year. Bill Murray agreed to call the Hope Center and notify them of the cancellation. Bill Murray reported that he and Brian Van Liew had replaced the door on the AAAP observatory at Jenny Jump.

The Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM

Bill Murray, Director

Interested in keyholder training?

Contact: kane@princetonastronomy.org or by cell phone (609-273-1456)

Treasurer's Report

Dues for the current fiscal year continue to come in, with \$1,660 (47 members) now having paid. With contributions and outreach included, revenue year-to-date is just over \$2,000

Expenses are just about the same amount – including routine expenses and the observatory repair. Thus, we are at about break-even so far.

The cancellation of Starquest due to weather had little negative impact. All participant payments have been refunded, but because the Hope Conference Center agreed not to charge us for the cancellation and because food had not yet been purchased, our total outlay was only about \$100 for postage.

The Association's cumulative surplus is about \$18,100.

Michael Mitrano, Treasurer

Picture This—NGC 7293

Also known as the Helix Nebula. This is a close example of a planetary nebula with us having the advantage of looking into it. Located in Aquarius the Helix lies some 700 light years away and spans 2.5 light years. Visually this object can best be seen with the aide of an OIII filter with low power on a scope. It can be seen this time of year in the south and doesn't get very high up before dropping back down to the horizon. This picture was taken from a dark site I visit frequently called Coyle Field in south Jersey which is less than an hour and a half from Princeton. Equipment used was a modified Canon 350D with a 0.8x FF/FR through a Meade 8" F6.3 SCT OTA. The final image shown is composed of 21 eight minutes subs using an ISO800 setting.



Brian Van Liew

Other News...

For Sale. Orion ST120 F5 Refractor. This scope has a 120mm aperture (4.7") and a focal length of 600mm. This is a rich-field achromatic scope that is best used at low powers for wide field visual observing of star fields and large DSOs. I have also used this as my guide scope as it has a large lens to gather a decent amount of light.

Soon to be available will be my Canon 350D DSLR camera which is modified for imaging into H-alpha. Just about all my images I have posted in the last two years of the Sidereal Times have been taken with this camera. The reason for selling is that I have the chance at getting another camera. There is plenty of life left into this camera so here is your chance at getting into astrophotography.

If you are interested in either of these items please email me at brian@princetonastronomy.org to discuss these further.

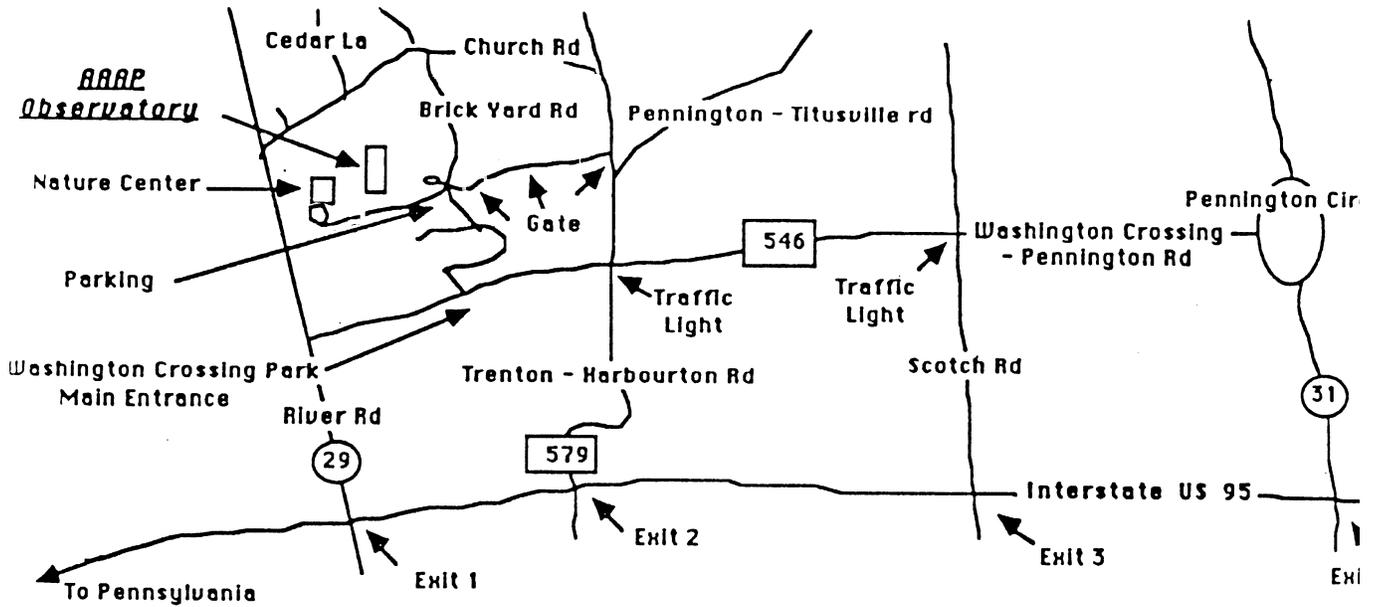


NASA's LRO & LCROSS: Post Impact Update At the October 13 AAAP Monthly meeting members night I presented a brief status report on NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) and the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS). LCROSS successfully smashed into the lunar south pole on 9 October 2009 in search of frozen water ice inside the permanently shadowed Cabeus A crater target. Science results will be announced by mid December 2009. Attendees at the UACNJ Astronomy Symposium and Stella Della Valley Star Party also heard my reports on LRO & LCROSS, Mars and the Hubble repair mission.

Check out the Universe Today website to see my LCROSS & LRO photos from inside the "Clean Room" featured online on October 8, 2009, the day before the October 9 impact:

"LCROSS (and the Moon) Up Close" <http://www.universetoday.com/2009/10/08/lcross-and-the-moon-up-close/>

Submitted by Ken Kremer



The best way to get to the observatory is to take Interstate 95 South towards Pennsylvania. Then take Scotch road at Exit 3 and proceed north (this amounts to right). Then, at the third traffic light take a left onto the Washington Crossing-Pennington road (County Route 546). Take this road to the first traffic light and take a right onto Trenton-Harbourton road (County Route 579). Take this road to the first driveway on the left, this is the Phillips Farm/Soccer Field entrance to the park. There is a series of three gates with club combination locks. If the gates are not open, you will need the lock combination to open the gate or be accompanied by a Keyholder member. The Simpson (AAAP) Observatory's phone number is (609) 737-2575.

See us on the Web: www.princetonastronomy.org

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