

Saguaro Astronomy Club

Metro Phoenix, Arizona

SACNEWS



April 1992 — Issue #183

The Observer's Column

by
by A. J. Crayon

Saturday, February 22, was the SAC star party at Buckeye Hills Recreation Area. The day didn't start out very well. It was cloudy most of the day. However this didn't stop many from at least making the trip. After all, if the skies didn't clear up there would be people around to talk to about the latest in astronomy and observing.

So I gave up waiting on the sky to clear and decided to pack up the scope and head on out to seek who would show up. There wasn't any disappointment. Arriving before sunset there were already several very early arrivers. Pierre Schwaar, Jim Stevens and Dick Jacobson discussed the clouds and hoped (maybe even prayed) they would move out before dark.

Their prayers were answered because by sunset the clouds were gone and there were 9 telescopes already set up. While waiting for darkness we discussed the demise of *Deep Sky*, *Telescope Making* along the upcoming end of *Observers Guide*. Fortunately there will be a new periodical, *Deep Sky Journal*, that will fill the void left by these fine magazines.

At the end of evening twilight the telescope count had reached 15 and observing was already starting at a feverish pitch. It seems that the early observations center around comets. This night was no different even thou the Zodiacal Light competing with Aurora-Phoenicia. Fortunately the Zodiacal Light eventually disappeared. Too bad we couldn't trade by keeping the Zodiacal Light and having the Phoenix sky glow disappear!

The Zodiacal Light didn't stop Steve Coe from finding Comet Mueller. The club newsletter editor had brought along with him some newsletters which were used to locate this solar interloper. A line of observers quickly accumulated at his telescope for viewing Comet Mueller (easier to spell than last month's Zonatta-Brewington). It was generally agreed that there wasn't a tail but the coma had some nice detail. The comet was about 5' in diameter and 10th magnitude with a middle that was very bright and a stellar nucleus. Sounds like the description

Quick Calendar

Deep Sky Group's
Sentinel Star Gaze
Saturday, April 4

Public Star Party
Reach 11
Saturday, April 11

SAC Meeting
7:30, Friday, April 17

Star Party
Buckeye Hills Recreation Area
Saturday, April 25

Note date change of May meeting

of a galaxy with one major difference: after a while the comet was seen to move against the background stars. A fact that confused Charles Messier and caused him to assemble a wonderful list of deep sky objects.

Deep Sky observing for the fun of it was practiced by Pierre using his 16" $f/9$ refractor, Jim Stevens with his 10" $f/4.5$ portable Dobsonian and Dick Jacobson with his 6" $f/5$. Several people have said and written that this 6" telescope is an ideal starter. To that I respond with hearty agreement!

The Herschel 400er's were still at it. The constellations of choice were Monoceros, Puppis, Pyxis, Ursa Major and Virgo. Our able Properties Manager, Rich Walker, was in astronomical heaven with a borrowed 13" $f/4.5$ loaner. He and the author have been observing in the same area of the sky for the last 2 star parties and have enjoyed comparing many observations. The winter constellations need to be mopped up to allow a maximum amount of time to cover galaxies in Ursa Major, Leo and Virgo. Searching in these areas one quickly gets used to galaxy hoping instead of star hoping.

The Messier Catalog also got its fair share of attention by all. Included among them were new SAC member Steve Conner, attending his first star party with his 8" $f/6$. He and family members Bill and Joe enjoyed viewing and showing views of M 78, M 1, M 81/82 and a number

Magazine Subscriptions

Those of you who wish to subscribe to the *Deep Sky Journal* at club rates (\$22.00 for one year, \$43.00 for two years), please notify the Treasurer. We can only obtain these rates if we subscribe as a group of 20 or more simultaneously.

of colorful doubles. Grant Classen, a member from some time back, also spent time on winter entries.

Not to forget, Paul Lind spent some time observing entries from the 110 Best NGC list. His accurate polar alignment and setting circles virtually eliminate the time spent star hopping. No doubt the polar alignment comes from astrophotography.

In between deep sky observing there was a lot of time spent checking out gas giant Jupiter. At one time or another everyone checked the cloud belt system. The southern most prominent belt is still not as conspicuous as it was several years ago.

Several people tried to find the NGC 3242 in Bob's 10" f/5. None were successful. No wonder it's called the Ghost of Jupiter.

The moon rose just before midnight, which is earlier than normal for a star party. Instead of quickly packing up to leave, the serious Jupiter observing was just beginning (there must be something about leaving a star party before midnight.) This time filters were tested to the max. While the light green filter made the cloud belts more contrasty the blue enhanced the overall view.

After a while the died in the wool observers slowly started to pack and leave. Not for home but for a well deserved post midnight snack at a favorite road side diner. No doubt there was more discussion about who could tell the most believable lie?

SAC Officers

President	Paul Lind	863-3077
Vice President	Steve Coe	878-1873
Secretary	Susan Morse	934-7496
Treasurer	Bob Dahl	582-5526
Properties	Rich Walker	997-0711
SACNEWS Editor	Paul Dickson	841-7044

Comet Comments

by Don Machholz

No comets have been discovered or recovered recently, but two comets may be visible in our morning sky. Comet Shoemaker-Levy (1991d), about 2.5 astronomical units from both the earth and sun, remains within telescopic view. Comet Mueller, if it survives a March 21 perihelion of 0.20 AU, will appear in our morning sky, dimming rapidly.

Don Machholz (916) 346-8963

Comet	Shoemaker-Levy		(1991d)		
Date	RA-2000-Dec		Elong	Sky	Mag
03-24	20h31.6m	+42°06'	64°	M	11.0
03-29	20h39.3m	+42°17'	65°	M	11.1
04-03	20h46.3m	+42°29'	65°	M	11.1
04-08	20h52.6m	+42°41'	66°	M	11.2
04-13	20h58.2m	+42°57'	67°	M	11.2
04-18	21h03.1m	+43°07'	68°	M	11.3
04-23	21h07.4m	+43°20'	70°	M	11.3
04-28	21h11.9m	+43°33'	72°	M	11.4
05-03	21h13.7m	+43°45'	74°	M	11.4
05-08	21h15.7m	+43°56'	76°	M	11.4

Comet	Mueller		(1991h ₁)		
Date	RA-2000-Dec		Elong	Sky	Mag
03-24	23h36.3m	-05°23'	12°	M	3.7
03-29	23h18.5m	+04°54'	18°	M	5.6
04-03	23h12.8m	+15°04'	26°	M	7.0
04-08	23h12.3m	+24°27'	33°	M	8.1
04-13	23h14.8m	+33°02'	39°	M	9.0
04-18	23h19.0m	+40°49'	44°	M	9.7
04-23	23h24.6m	+47°51'	48°	M	10.4
04-28	23h31.4m	+54°12'	52°	M	11.0
05-03	23h39.3m	+59°55'	55°	M	11.5
05-08	23h48.5m	+65°03'	58°	M	11.9

Directions to SAC Events

SAC General Meetings 7:30 PM at Grand Canyon University, Fleming Building, Room 105 — 1 mile west of Interstate 17 on Camelback Rd., north on 33rd Ave., second building on the right.

SAC Star Parties at Buckeye Hills Recreation Area — Interstate 10 west to Exit 112 (30 miles west of Interstate 17), then south for 10.5 miles, right at entrance to recreation area, one-half mile, on the right. No water and only pit toilets. Please arrive before sunset; allow one hour from central Phoenix.

Bits and Pieces

Coming Events

Several star parties are planned for April. The Sentinel Star Party on April 4 and the public star party at Reach 11 on April 11.

May has several more events. A Public Star Party at Thunderbird Park on May 9, the Riverside Telescope Makers Conference (RTMC) on the weekend of May 23, and TAAA's Grand Canyon Star Party from May 30 to June 7.

April's Speaker

April's speaker is Darrell Nye, a long-time eclipse chaser.

Due to illness, Brian Skiff was unable to attend last Month's meeting.

May Meeting Date Changed

The SAC meeting schedules for May 15 has been rescheduled one week earlier, May 8.

1992 SAC Meetings

April 17
May 8 **Changed**
June 12
July 17
August 14
September 11
October 9
November 6
December 12 Party

1992 SAC Star Parties

April 25
May 23
June 27
July 25
August 22
September 19
October 24
November 21
December 19

May Newsletter Deadline

Be sure to mail items to be included in the newsletter by April 22. Items sent later will not be included, but will be included in the next newsletter.

SAC Surveys

Those of you who still have not returned your surveys from last month's newsletter, please make an effort to fill them out and mail them to the newsletter editor.

A significant number of you answered the survey, but with only 40% returned, we haven't heard from the majority of you. This is your chance to share your opinions on improving SAC.

Such-A-Deal

SUCH-A-DEAL is a place to advertise equipment, supplies, and services related to amateur astronomy. This is a free service for SAC members and friends. SAC is not responsible for the quality of advertised items or services.

Telescope—Upgraded Meade DS10, 10" *f*/4.5 Newtonian with refigured primary by Galaxy Optics to 1/16 wave peak-to-valley, Galaxy Optics 1/10 wave secondary, Novak heavy duty spider & research grade 9-point flotation primary mirror cell, 2-inch helical focuser with 1 1/4-inch adapter with 1-inch, 2-inch, and 3-inch extensions. Novak 2.6-inch secondary holder. Meade equatorial mount and clock drive plus Pierre Schwaar cradle & Meade drive corrector. Meade 4mm research grade Orthoscopic eyepiece, 25mm Meade Kellner eyepiece, & a 2X Meade barlow. All in fine condition. Primary & Secondary mirrors have enhanced coatings by Galaxy Optics. Asking \$1200 or best offer. Alan Tolman, 954-9452 (evenings), 231-2470 (days)