

THE FOCUS

The Official Newsletter of United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey

May 1995

Volume 16 Number 3

ASTRONOMY DAY 1995: SUCCESS!

This year, as luck would have it, the weather cooperated with us and Astronomy Day was celebrated throughout the UACNJ region under crystal clear skies. Activities held at various locations around the state were well attended and very successful.

In Cranford, AAI hosted hundreds of people. Their festivities included lectures by several members, including that of Dr. Terry Matilsky. NJAA and RAC both had booths set up. Solar prominences and Venus were seen by many throughout the day. Many door prizes were had and people were awed by the many telescopes on display outside Sperry Observatory on the big sundial. As darkness fell, the people in attendance were treated to a fantastic showing of Mercury in the west. Views of the six day old moon and Mars dazzled those having their first glimpse through a telescope. As twilight subsided and darkness fell, one of the best nights of the year exposed itself and was enjoyed by all.

Similar activities were held at the UACNJ observatory at Jenny Jump State Park. The activity there was well attended and the very dark skies of Jenny Jump proved their superiority that evening.

On Sunday May 7th, the MMAS held a well attended public observing session at the Morris Museum. Clear skies reigned and a good time was had by all.

STARQUEST COMETH

The Amateur Astronomers Assoc. of Princeton will be hosting the 6th annual Jersey Starquest at the Beemerville 4-H camp in Sussex, New Jersey. This yearly astrofest runs from 5 p.m. Friday, May 26th through Sunday, May 28th.

This years Starquest will feature:

- Dark sky observing
- Telescope making competition
- Saturday lecture program
- Messier contest with prizes
- Swap tables
- Registration includes camping
- Indoor lodging is available
- Fri. Night Astrophoto workshop
- Six catered hot meals
- Door prizes
- And much, much more!

Registration is only \$25 per person, discounts apply for family and early registration. For more information contact Greg Mauro at (609) 585-9465.

It's Here Again, Stella-Della IX

The Bucks-Mont Astronomical Association will be hosting this years annual Stella-Della Valley Conference, on October 20th thru 22nd. The gathering will be held at Camp Onas in Ottsville, PA.

This is one of the very best gatherings of its kind, a fun-filled weekend of camping, discussions of astronomy, observing and friends. Additionally, skies at Camp Onas are rumored to host naked eye stars as faint as 7th magnitude.

As of this writing the featured speakers will be Phil Harrington, Allan French, Al Witzgall and Roger Gordon. For more information contact Ed Melnick at (215) 443-7929.

Adventures of the Southwest

This month the New Jersey Astronomical Association will have NJAA member Cesare Cirillo, deliver a wondrous presentation on his recent trip to New Mexico. His talk will highlight his two week stay at the mother of all astronomical retreats, Star Hill Inn. He will also delight you with his account of a day at the VLA. Besides enjoying Cesares' warm recollection of his vacation you will also be treated to his fantastic array of slides that will accompany his talk.

The talk is to be held at 8:30 p.m. Saturday, May 27th at the Paul Robinson Observatory, located at Voorhees State Park in High Bridge, New Jersey. There is no charge for admission, but donations are welcome. For more info call (908) 638-8500.

UACNJ Board Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Saturday, May 27, 1995. The meeting will be hosted by AAAP and will be held in the Mess Hall at Starquest.



THE JUMP NOTES

Several events will be taking place in the near future at the UACNJ Consortium observatory at Jenny Jump State Park in Hope, NJ.

There will be regular **Saturday Work Sessions** on May 20th, June 3rd and 17th and July 1st and 15th. Work sessions usually begin at 10 a.m. and run all day. Your attendance at these work sessions is sorely needed. During these Saturday work parties, renovations are made to the house and the grounds as well as the work being done to the observatory buildings. If you haven't yet attended a work session, you really should. You'll not only be helping with the site but it's a great way to meet people from other clubs.

We still need several items for the meeting center in the house. We are looking for:

Bunk bed frames

Standard size refrigerator

Metal storage case (about 6'x4'x2')

and the following publications:

Cluster

IAPPP Journal

ALPO Journal

SARA Journal

AAVSO Journal

If you have any of these items please contact Barry Malpas at (908) 755-6932.

Notice: For those of you who have not submitted their 1995 observers fees, you should do so now. The combinations for the locks were changed on May 6.

One light pollution problem arose about a year after the Jenny Jump project was begun. The AT&T microwave tower that is about 1/4 mile from the site underwent a conversion from evening red lights to 24-hour white xenon strobes in order to meet FAA regulations. Contacts were made with AT&T in September of '94 and were told that their new lighting was adversely affecting our observing site. They promised to put it in their work schedule. On April 15th it was noticed by several observers that, although the xenon light remains during

the day, after sunset it switches over to blinking red lights. A big thank you to AT&T.

The first public program was held on April 29th with Al Witzgall giving an excellent lecture on meteorites and providing a multitude of hands-on samples. Additionally, that night AAI held a star party under intermittently clear skies.

On June 10th and 11th, Al Tencza of NJAG will be conducting a VHF QSO Party - Ham Radio contest at Jenny Jump. If you are interested contact Al at (201) 772-1279.

Get Your Astronomy Here!

by *Gordon Bond*

An important part of running an amateur astronomy club is getting publicity. It let's people know you're there, helping to get new members and announce events. But getting much more than a line or two in an event calendar is not always easy. Since I used to work for Forbes Newspapers, I have been able to use my old contacts to help New Jersey's amateur astronomy community get some publicity. Some of you may have already read my articles on Jenny Jump and profiles of some of the people and places in New Jersey's astronomical community. These articles appeared in Forbes' "Weekend Plus" supplement which is included with weekly newspapers in the Hills-Bedminster, Somerset County, Franklin, Bound Brook, Middlesex, Dunellen, Metuchen, Edison, Piscataway, North and South Plainfield, Greenbrook, Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Cranford areas.

If your club has interesting people, places or events that might make for an interesting article, let me know and I will see about getting it published in this supplement. Write to:

Gordon Bond

313 Raphael Ave.

Middlesex, NJ 08846-1224

**Send submissions and
articles for *The Focus* to:**

The Focus

c/o Wayne Zuhl

717 Brookside Place

Cranford, NJ 07016

RAC Hosts 4th Annual Summer Star Party

This year the Rockland Astronomy Club is holding their 4th annual pre-Stellafane Summer Party and Family Camping Vacation. This years gathering takes place from Saturday July 22nd through Sunday July 30th at Shady Pines Campground in Savoy, Massachusetts.

The campground has some of the darkest skies found on the East Coast. The site is on a mountain top plateau, at an elevation of 2,200'. On the best nights, the sky has a limiting magnitude between 6.5 and 7.0.

The Shady Pines campground is clean and picturesque, with the center of attraction being a 35' x 70' spring fed swimming pool. Other facilities include a children's playground, teen game room, volley ball court, adult lounge, live entertainment on weekends and miles of trails for hiking. All campsites have water and electricity; some have sewers for recreational vehicles. For your pleasure there are two spotless restrooms with hot showers. The camp store has basic food stuffs as well as washers and dryers, there is also a supermarket about 10 minutes away.

A day trip to Stellafane is planned for Saturday, July 29th. It is only 90 miles from Shady Pines.

Come and enjoy eight fun filled nights with members of the Rockland Astronomy Club this year at Shady Pines.

For more information call (201) 768-6575. Space is limited and campsites around the observing field are the first to go.

Stellafane Reminder

This years annual Stellafane Convention in Springfield, Vermont will take place July 28th through July 30th. This is the "granddaddy" of all astronomy conventions. Additionally this year, conventioners will get to look through the newly completed 13" Schuppman Telescope, the largest of it's type in the world!