

THE FOCUS

The Official Newsletter of United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey

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COMET HYAKUTAKE A REAL SHOWSTOPPER

By now you all must be comet-ed out! That certainly is nice for a change. Since it's been years since we've had a respectable comet, it was even nicer to have a fantastic comet. All this on the heels of the early hubbub about comet Hale-Bopp.

Almost every club, if not every club, put on very well attended public nights for comet observing. AAI reported almost 1000 attendees on March 30th, while NJAA had more than 600 in attendance for their comet party.

Reports throughout the state were phenomenal. Observations of a tail stretching more than 60 degrees were not uncommon. Even in the light polluted areas (most of the state) the tail could be seen stretching across more than 20 degrees of sky!

Hopefully Hale-Bopp will put on just as good a show!

If you would like to submit your observations of the comet for publication, please send them to me at:

The Focus
c/o Wayne Zuhl
717 Brookside Place
Cranford, NJ 07016

or via email at:
zuhlw@soho.ios.com

March Board Meeting

*Summary of the UACNJ Board of
Directors Meeting, Mar 30 1996
UACNJ Observatory at
Jenny Jump State Park*

The meeting opened at 10:54AM to very light delegate attendance. An agenda was distributed. Brief reports from the delegates were requested, which will be a regular agenda item. Upcoming events were noted: the Rockland event (now past), the Morris Museum Astronomy Day event on April 13th, Jersey Starquest on June 14th through 16th at Beemerville. UACNJ Treasurer Tom Massey's written report showed a net balance of \$5871.80 less recent bills.

In Old Business, Barry reported the soda machine was installed and operating. Sodas are 75 cents each. He reported no new observatory site deposits were received, so the last site foundation will be developed and run by UACNJ, possibly to be purchased later by a UACNJ club. The current depositors for sites are AAAP, HLO, SSG and AAI. There was discussion by Ralph and Barry about site use as a solar observatory with help from AAI.

In New Business, Barry reported that Observatory site development plans and schedules were discussed in a February meeting of the Observatory Committee with site representatives from the clubs. Details were distributed to clubs and UACNJ members. He noted a special need for planning on May 4th for a "long day" of activities on May 18th to grade and bulldoze the observatory and parking sites. For Publicity,

Barry said he would look for a person to provide help with publicity.

Larry Smith was reported to be working on an Exxon grant proposal with Don Kruse and Mike Luciuk. Saul reported 38 people have individual Observatory memberships, and he is working on obtaining renewals. Ron provided a list of paid (10) and non-paid member clubs, and he will send the non-paying clubs their previous form in his request for renewal. He reported the Constitutional Committee is meeting. They plan to talk to people to solicit information and for suggestions. The Security Committee has purchased security locks and the combination lock on the gate has been changed - Barry or Saul should be contacted for details.

In other New Business, we discussed the comet activities at Jenny Jump and other sites, and the amount of public interest. Barry will develop a list of public attendance rules.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 AM.

(Complete minutes can be obtained from the Secretary, Herb Johnson. Call him at 609-771-1417.)

*Submitted by Herbert R. Johnson,
Recording Secretary*

UACNJ Board Meeting

*The next meeting will be held on
Sat., June 15, 1996 at
10 a.m.*

*The meeting will be held at Jersey
Starquest
All are welcome to attend the
meeting.*

*For directions call Barry
Malpas at: 908-755-6932*



THE JUMP NOTES

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

There will be regular Saturday Work Sessions on June 8th and July 13th. Work sessions usually begin at 10 a.m. and run all day. During these Saturday work parties, renovations are made to the house and the grounds and anything else that needs work. 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.

In mid October we received the official word from the State that the site plan has been approved. This means that new observatories have begun construction. We will begin setting up work crews to help dig and pour the foundations. On Saturday June 8th we will begin framing the foundations and on the July 13th the foundations will be poured. If you have any spare plywood or 2x4's they are greatly needed! Get out there and give a hand!

On Saturday, July 27th there will be a picnic from 2-7pm. All observers and people who helped at the observatory are invited to attend. This will be one of the few Saturdays that you won't have to break a sweat working around the observatory. Instead you'll break a sweat playing volleyball or Frisbee! During the day, scopes will be doing solar and planetary observing, the evening is the usual Saturday Star Party. This is great opportunity for you to come out and meet the people who make Jenny Jump a success.

We need your support to make the Observatory a success. If you're already a supporting member of the Consortium then you know that yearly dues are due. Regular membership is \$20, Sustaining memberships cost \$50. Your dues help pay the bills that are incurred at the Observatory to keep it operating. This may sound like a beg-a-thon but that money is needed to help

keep this fine dark sky site available to amateur astronomers. If you are not a Consortium member and would like to become one, contact Barry Malpas at 908-755-6932 for more info.



AAJ Running Two Trips To 1998 Eclipse

AAI is sponsoring two different trips to observe the February 26, 1998 total solar eclipse. There are both land and sea trips available.

The land trip consists of seven nights in Aruba. Airfare, hotel and transportation to the eclipse site are all included in the \$1550 cost.

If you're more inclined to observing the eclipse from the ocean, AAI is also running an Eclipse Cruise. The Cruise ship departs from Miami and will sail about the Caribbean for nine nights. The cost of the sea trip is \$1700.

If you interested in going on either one of these trips you'll want to put in your deposit right away, as space is extremely limited. For more info on the land trip contact Joe Arcaro at 908-889-6607 (evenings). For cruise information call 908-248-2378 or 908-855-6941.

Starquest Seven

The Amateur Astronomers Assoc. of Princeton will be hosting the 7th annual Jersey Starquest at the Beemerville 4-H camp in Sussex, New Jersey. This yearly astrofest runs from 5 p.m. Friday, June 14th through Sunday, June 16th.

This years Starquest will feature:

- Dark sky observing
- Telescope making competition
- Saturday lecture program
- Caldwell 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 \$28 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 X

The Bucks-Mont Astronomical Association will be hosting this years annual Stella-Della Valley Conference, on October 11th thru 13th. 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.

For more information contact Ed Melnick at (215) 443-7929.

NJAA Hosts Science Kids

NJAA will be hosting a Science Adventure Camp at their observatory at Voorhees State Park in Highbridge, NJ.

The weeklong event takes place from July 22nd through July 26th.

From 9am till noon the events are geared toward children ages 5 through 8. From 1pm till 4pm events are for children ages 8 through 11.

Activities will include:

- Nature Hikes*
- Hands on Science Experiments*
- Science Projects*
- Crafts*
- Games*

For more information call 908-873-1001.