

The OBSERVER

The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.

August 2005 Volume 30, Number 8



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AUGUST PICNIC

~ by Michael Rogers ~

I know, I know -- you're looking at the forecast for the weekend and thinking, gee, that sounds like picnic-weather.

Well, good news, picnic lovers: the TCAA August Picnic (for lack of a better name) is in fact this Saturday, the 6th -- arrive at 6:30 p.m. at the Sugar Grove Nature Center, and dining with begin by 7:00. The meteorologist is promising *much* less humidity, nice temperatures, and, once the smoke from the grills dissipates, clear skies!

Just like last picnic, bring an entrée for yourself and something to share. A grill will be provided. Don't forget to bring your own table settings and drinks. I'll try and convince my daughter to bring her 4-H approved, award-winning apple pie (not the same one that she exhibited at the fair, of course: that'll be as hard as a rock by the weekend :-)

Speaking of rocks, if we're really good, maybe we can try and spot the 10th planet. To say nothing of Perseids, which should be starting to pick up, as the peak is on the 12th.

If any scouts want to work on their merit badge (hint, hint) I'll be glad to help, too. See you Saturday!

TELESCOPE RAFFLE DRAWING SEPTEMBER 3

With the ISU Planetarium director's consent, the raffle drawing for a new Argonaut 6-inch Maksutov-Newtonian OTA (optical tube assembly) will be held at the September 3rd MOOS. You might recall that the telescope was purchased from Orion Telescopes and Binoculars (item 09068) by the original owner about five years ago and has never been used. The OTA, to be raffled without a pier (the original purchaser did not buy one), lists at \$1,799. While only 31 of the possible 50 tickets have been sold, with Tom Willmitch's approval the TCAA will move ahead with the drawing.

If you are interested in vying for this valuable, top-quality telescope, you should know that tickets will remain on sale at a price of \$20 each. Tickets will be sold up until the time of the drawing. To purchase your numbered ticket(s), send \$20 per ticket to Carl Wenning prior to the drawing. Make your check payable to Illinois State University Foundation / Planetarium and send it to Carl Wenning at 21 Grandview Drive, Normal, IL 61761-4071, or give it to him at the August 6 event. If you would like to arrange

TCAA Calendar of Events

- Aug 6: Members Only Observing Session with Picnic at SGNC, 6:30 p.m. Picnic, 9:00 p.m. Observing
Coordinators: #1 - Kal Kumar, #2 - William Carney
- Aug. 13: Public Observing Session at SGNC, 8:30 p.m.
"Planetary Nebula M57"
- Sept. 3: Members Only Observing Session at SGNC, 8:30 p.m.
Coordinators: #1 - Michael Rogers, #2 - Kal Kumar

The Observer

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

The Observer is a monthly publication of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization of amateur astronomers interested in studying astronomy and sharing their hobby with the public.

TCAA Officers

President	Lyle Rich 309-862-4417 lylevrich@hotmail.com
Vice President	Kal Kumar 309-661-3542 kal@centralil.net
Secretary	Michael Rogers 309-862-5529 mprogers@mac.com
Treasurer	Duane Yockey 309-452-3936 duane@lybinc.com
5th Director	William Carney 309-829-7748 willcarney@aol.com

Property Manager

William Carney	309-829-7748 willcarney@aol.com
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Observer Editor/ TCAA Education Coordinator

Rebecca Wenning 21 Grandview Dr. Normal, IL 61761 309-454-4164 rwennin@ilstu.edu	Submissions must be received by the 1st of each month.
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Membership Dues

Individual Adult/Family \$40
Full-time Student/Senior \$25

To join the TCAA, send your name, contact info, and dues payment to:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

to see the telescope before purchasing your raffle ticket(s), feel free to contact Carl by phone at (309) 454-4164 or via e-mail at wenning@phy.ilstu.edu.

Remember, because the winner of the telescope will have to provide his or her own mount for the telescope, as well as eyepieces and adapters, this might cause some members to shy away from purchasing raffle tickets. Don't let this be the case. Consider the fact that you might win the telescope and still not want to take possession of it. You could then donate the telescope to the TCAA taking advantage of any tax-deductible charitable contribution available through itemizing deductions on your Federal 1040 tax form. A donor could thereby convert a single winning \$20 ticket into a \$1,799 tax deduction that could have an actual cash value to the donor of 15% to 38% of the full value of the telescope. The TCAA is a Federally recognized 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.

OBSERVING UPDATES

Mike Rogers has been serving as TCAA "observing cheerleader" recently, and he has met with some considerable success. Recent members-only and public observing sessions have been well attended thanks to his effort to get members and the general public out for viewing.

On Friday, July 1, there was an informal MOOS that drew quite a large crowd of observers and guests. In attendance were (among others) the Franklin and Rogers families, William Carney, Carl Wenning, Jerod Gross (guest), and Mark Cabaj. Mark dazzled visitors to his temporary observing site with CCD views of things he'd been photographing recently. Mike Rogers dazzled everyone with celestial views of objects using a 20-inch aperture telescope. As Mike later noted on the TCAA listserv, "I don't know how many people went observing last night, but there were a total of 8 of us at the

SGO, and we were rewarded for our efforts with really, really great skies, and a brief spate of meteors."

The official MOOS the next night, Saturday, July 2, was similarly successful. Mike again wrote, "The weather turned out great for last night's MOOS, and at least 11 people (maybe more, it was dark) showed up for the festivities. Before it got pitch dark, a few of us wandered around the fields trying to find a site for a second observatory (to be devoted more to imaging). Once it got dark, everyone scattered to their scopes. Under the expert tutelage of the key holders, I used the 12" for the first time since it came back from Meade, and it worked like a charm. I *really* like that scope."

The Saturday, July 9 public observing session at SGNC was attended by about 25 members and guests. Mike managed to get a brief announcement about the session into the *Pantagraph*. He gave a brief *PowerPoint* presentation dealing with M-8, the Lagoon Nebula, which was followed by celestial views provided with telescopes ranging downward from 20-inches aperture.

TCAA E/PO CONTINUES

On Monday, July 11, Mike Rogers gave a reprise of his NASA Update talk to the Bloomington Optimist's Club. It wasn't a huge group – 8 or 10 people according to Mike – but they all seemed to appreciate it, and we might get a new member out of it.

Mike was scheduled to meet with Terry Greenberg about our club providing a periodic column on observational astronomy for the *Pantagraph*. This will definitely raise our visibility. According to Mike, he doesn't want anything too long – possibly to fit somewhere under an existing feature – but there will be room for an observing chart.

Mike is looking to talk with someone at WGLT-FM radio about doing Star

Talk. He and Carl Wenning are offering to do a series of short programs that will be aired on a regular basis like the programs "Dean of Green" by Don Schmidt and "Tech Talk" by Jim Browne – both of ISU.

The TCAA Board of Directors has agreed to crank out and distribute hundreds of copies of the 2005 Public Observing Schedule brochure.

ARMCHAIR AMATEUR ASTRONOMY

~ by CW ~

When it's much too hot to do any observing, it's nice to stay in doors and become an armchair amateur astronomer for a while. It's nice to surf the Web to see what's out there; amateur astronomers are an amazingly creative group of people, and some dedicate large amounts of time and effort to create web resources for other amateurs.

I recently began a Web search through the TCAA website (<http://twincityamateurastronomers.org/>). I followed the hyperlink to the SGO Clear Sky Clock to see what things were there in light of the fact that this site is sponsored by the TCAA through an annual donation, and the fact that the site continues to grow. Here are some of the nifty things now in place:

Sun & Moon Data: See times of sunrise and sunset, times of moonrise and moon set for Sugar Grove Observatory. See what the moon phase is at a glance.

Star Map: See what the sky looks like right now over SGO. Set your preferred viewing conditions and request an immediate update.

Sat Image: Want to see what SGO looks like from on high? Take advantage of the hyperlink to Google maps to check out the vicinity.

Light Pollution Map: As the name implies, see what the ambient light levels are for the area around SGO.

Earth Maps: Get a topographic

map of the area or a road map. Several choices exist.

Clear Sky Alarm Clock with Tonight's Sky: This site will help you plan your observing sessions by helping you to find objects of interest in your sky. Based on your input, a list of objects will be produced that are visible at your location when you plan to observe. Any object below the local horizon will be excluded. On the next page you will see details about each object. You can then research any object of interest with the links provided. It is my intention to provide a sample of what you will see in the eyepiece of a 6" telescope. As a final step, you can select the objects you plan to observe and a page will be provided for you to print and take with you when you go out. Happy hunting.

Satellite Predictions: Too tired to go out observing? Then stay at home and watch earth-orbiting satellites as they zoom through evening or morning twilight. This site tells you all you need to know from your observing location to see many naked-eye satellites.

Clear Sky Clock for Cell Phones: Can't bear to be away from the Clear Sky Clock for too long? Access it through your cell phone and learn about the best times to get that viewing in.

SGO CHECKOUT CONTINUES FOR PROSPECTIVE KEY HOLDERS

~ gleaned Mike Rogers' TCAA
listserv posting ~

Thanks to William Carney's training session last night (July 17), there are now 5 new key holders in the club – Kevin Brown, Chris Franklin, Dan Miller, Duane Yockey, and yours truly. Key holders have access to the Sugar Grove Observatory, and, in exchange for this privilege, have agreed to be willing to open up the observatory for members (and help them operate the telescope).

So, if you are interested in

going observing, just contact any of the key holders listed above. Via e-mail, they are, respectively, kevin.brown104@verizon.net, cfranklin@pekininsurance.com, damiller@mail.millikin.edu, Duane@LYBINC.COM, and mprogers@mac.com. A complete list of key holders appears in *The Observer*. There's no guarantee that a particular key holder will be available on a given night, but there are now sufficient numbers that, statistically speaking, if you have the urge to observe, someone ought to be able to help you.

From my perspective, the 12" seems to be operating perfectly, and the images looked great. Kudos to William for all that he's done to make it so, and we should *all* be grateful that the club has such a great instrument, and that it's so easy to set up – remove cover, turn on power, push buttons :-)

OBSERVING LISTS

~ by Michael Rogers ~

The purpose of this feature is to list who's working on what observing lists, and how far they've gotten. This will hopefully provide incentive for those intrepid observers, and perhaps inspiration to the armchair astronomers.

Messier List

Jean Memken	10
Michael Rogers	10

Herschel List

Other

If you are working on a list and want to gain fame and fortune, please e-mail Rebecca Wenning at rwennin@ilstu.edu. If you want advice on how to choose an observing list to work on, feel free to ask at an observing session or e-mail our Yahoo group.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – July 2005

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2005 - \$ 1,371.47

Income
Lisa Beaty (Dues) - \$ 40.00
Jason Dietrich (Dues) - \$ 40.00
Michael McAvoy (Dues Renewal) - \$ 40.00
James Wall (Sr. Dues Renewal) - \$ 25.00

Expenses
Rebecca Wenning (July Observer) - \$ 24.45

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2005 - \$ 1,492.02

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2005 - \$ 957.54

Income
Keyholder Fee (Franklin) - \$ 10.00
Interest (April, May & June) - \$ 0.67

Expenses
None - \$ 0.00

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2005 - \$ 978.21

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – July 31, 2005 - \$ 2,470.23

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Sugar Grove Observatory

Listing of Official Keyholders (Paid \$10 deposit/\$5 renewal)

Duane Yockey (April 2001, renewed through 2005)
Michael Rogers (August 2001, renewed through 2005)
William Carney (March 2002, renewed through 2005)
Carl Wenning (January 2004, renewed through 2005)
Brian Barling (February 2004), renewed through 2005
Lenore Trainor (December 2004, renewed through 2005)
Lyle Rich, renewed through 2005
Kevin Brown (May 2005)

Sothilingam family (June 2005)
Christopher Franklin (July 2005)

**Announcing New
TCAA Members**



Lisa & Boyd Beaty
Renewal Date: 200607

Jason Dietrich
Renewal Date: 200607

Stephen Newbold
Renewal Date: 200607



Welcome!



The OBSERVER
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Rebecca Wenning, Editor
21 Grandview Drive
Normal, IL 61761-4071

Are Your Dues Due?

The Dues Blues?

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership, please send your dues renewal to our esteemed Treasurer:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761