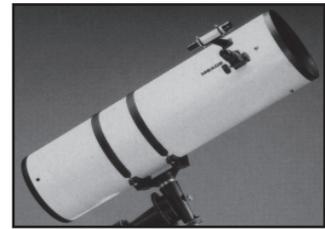


The Observer

The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers
June 2004 Volume 29, Number 6



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TCAA Officers

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Treasurer	Duane Yockey 309-452-3936 duane@lybink.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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Carl J. Wenning

June Picnic, Re-creation of Stonehenge, and Public Observing Session Slated for Saturday, June 19

Each June, the membership of the TCAA holds its annual picnic at Sugar Grove Nature Center. On Saturday, June 19th, we will do the same, but this time with a special twist. Following the picnic and a short business meeting, Carl Wenning will present a public talk dealing with the nature and working of Stonehenge, the great megalithic monument in England that has been likened to an astronomical "computer." Carl will explain briefly how a similar structure could be built in Illinois, and will actually lay out part of a full scale model of Stonehenge (using flags as opposed the multi-ton stone columns!) adjacent to the

TCAA Calendar

Annual June Potluck Picnic and General Meeting
June 19, 2004 - Saturday
6:00 p.m. - Sugar Grove Nature Center

Special Event
Talk and Physical Recreation of
Stonehenge by Carl Wenning
June 19, 2004 - Saturday
7:30 PM - Sugar Grove Nature Center

Public Observing Session
June 19, 2004 - Saturday
9:00-11:00 PM - Sugar Grove NC
Featured Sky Object: "M 13"

picnic shelter at Sugar Grove picnic shelter. Carl will make comments about similar such sites that he has visited in Illinois, Nebraska, Washington, and of course England. Following Carl's talk and re-creation will be a short lecture about M13 and a public observing session orchestrated by President Dan Meyer.

The annual potluck picnic will commence at 6:00 p.m. Members are asked to bring their own entrees, drinks, table setting (dish, cup, and utensils), and a nice dish to share. Members can count on there being one or more grills set out upon which to cook their entrees – meat, fish, vege-burgers, or whatever. Members are also encouraged to bring a grill, if they have one, to share with others.

At 7:15 p.m. there will be a short business meeting consisting of announcements, and perhaps we can receive observing reports from William Carney about recent observations of comet LINEAR and NEAT, as well as from others about the June 8th transit of Venus across the face of the sun. Members are hereby put on notice that there will be a special presentation of an award that night that no one should miss.

Commencing at 7:30 p.m. Carl will give his presentation and, as night approaches, quickly lay out a full-scale model of Stonehenge with the assistance of Duane Yockey, his trusty theodolite and measuring tape. At 9:00 p.m. there will be yet another presentation dealing with Messier 13, the Great Globular in Hercules. This will be followed by a public observing session if the sky is tolerably clear. In the event of rain, the picnic and presentations will still be held. Both the recreation of Stonehenge and telescope viewing will be canceled in the

event of rain.

You'll not want to miss these interesting events. Mark your schedule now.

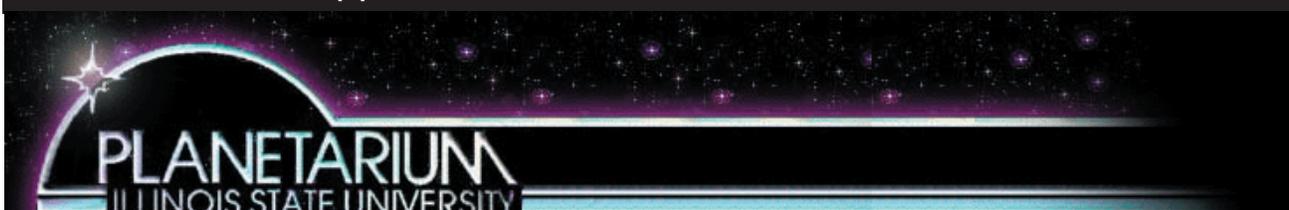
TCAA Cooperates with CLC

On May 13th the Coordinating Committee of the TCAA, Challenger Learning Center, and the ISU Planetarium met to discuss cooperation with the upcoming "summer camps" at the CLC. Janet Moore, lead flight director, has asked the TCAA to present a 3-hour program dealing with electromagnetism and sunspots. Carl Wenning who has taught astronomy for many years will spearhead the effort to provide the presentations that have been slated for Wednesday, June 16, and Wednesday, June 23. The sessions will run from 9:00 a.m. to noon each day. Solar observing will be included if the sky is clear.

While the lesson plan has already been worked out by Carl and will be taught mainly by him, additional TCAA presenters are invited and encouraged to participate in this presentation and observing activity. As this newsletter goes to press, twenty-nine 6th through 8th grade students are registered for the June 16th class, and eight for the June 23rd class. These numbers are subject to increase. If you are interested in helping with this endeavor, please contact Carl at 454-4164 evenings, or via e-mail at the following address:

wenning@phy.ilstu.edu

Support Your Local Planetarium!



Transit of Venus POS

The special observing session for the transit of Venus, hosted by the TCAA in cooperation with the Challenger Learning Center and ISU Planetarium, was a resounding success. About 50-60 members of the general public showed up for the session – not counting the few who showed up after the transit was over! The session was held at the east side of Image Air at the Central Illinois Regional Airport. Bill Johns, a member of the general public, was present with his camera and took several pictures. The two pictures accompanying this article were provided courtesy of Bill Johns.

In attendance at this event and assisting with the observing were the following TCAA members along with family members in some cases: Jim & Laurie Swindler, Dan, Deanna, & Chris Miller, Kal Kumar, Sharon MacDonald, Duane Yockey, Neale, Anne, Erik, and Laura Lemkuhl, Aaron Vercimak, Cheyenne and Jeannie Adams, Brian Barling, and Wayne



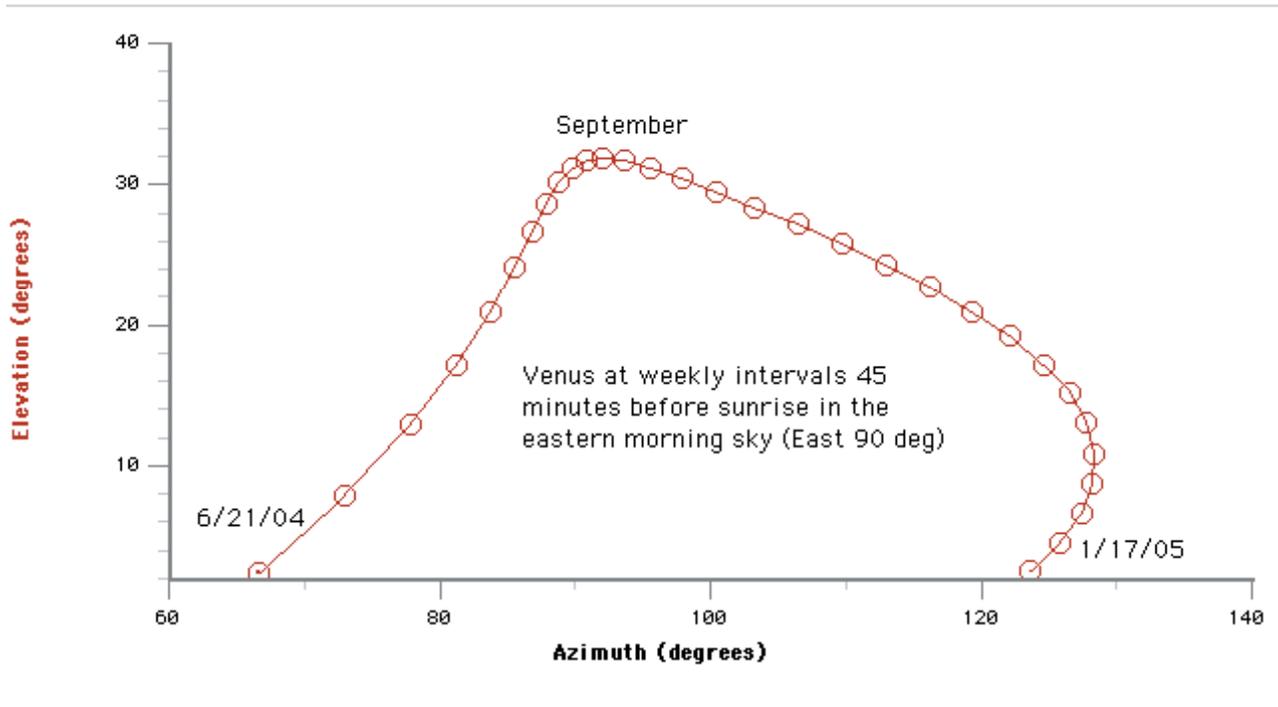
Kreps. In attendance on behalf of the ISU Planetarium was Tom Willmitch, and for the Challenger Learning Center Janet Moore.

The transit was observed in progress as the sun rose at 5:25 a.m. Within minutes the dull red solar disk was visible. Telescopes turned on the sun without solar filters showed the ball of Venus near the 3 o'clock position on the solar disk. Shortly thereafter Kal Kumar was the first to note that Venus could be seen with the unaided eye. Venus was easily observed

as a prominent "dot" on the face of the sun. In an interesting side note, diehard TCAAers Cheyenne and Jeannie Adams were able to observe the transit just after sunrise and before they had to make their 6:10 a.m. flight to California. We hope that they made it to the terminal on time!

In a late-breaking e-mail from California Jeannine informed me that she and Cheyenne had made it to the terminal with time enough to catch their plane.





Morning Apparition of Venus

When Venus passed through inferior conjunction on June 8 (transiting the face of the sun as seen from earth), it moved from the evening sky into the morning sky. Venus is now a “morning star,” a planet rising in the

east before sunrise. Through January 2005 Venus will be a prominent morning object. During the next few weeks the brilliant planet will rapidly climb higher in the sky with each passing dawn. The accompanying nomogram (see above) shows the position of Venus 45 minutes before sunrise at weekly intervals from June 21, 2004 through January 17, 2005.

Venus will reach greatest brilliancy, shining at magnitude -4.0 , at the end of October. Between now and August 17, the planet will



TCAA

The Astronomical League

The World's Largest Federation of Amateur Astronomers

shift from crescent to “quarter” phase. On August 17 the planet reaches its greatest elongation - 45.8 degrees west of the sun. For the rest of the interval, from greatest elongation until it passes behind the sun in February, the phase will continue to wax until it reaches “full” phase. Venus reaches superior conjunction with the sun on March 30, 2005, at which time it will again enter the evening sky.

During this apparition, Venus will be in the constellation of Taurus through August 2, in Orion through August 11, in Gemini through September 3, in Cancer through September 22, in Leo through October 22, in Libra through November 27, in Scorpius through December 17, in Ophiuchus through December 21, and in Sagittarius through January 5. Moving through these constellations is a product of the planet’s motion around the sun, and our motion on the platform of the moving earth. Venus passes (is in conjunction with) Saturn on August 31, Jupiter on November 5, and Mars on December 6.

Illinois Dark Skies Star Party

The Sangamon Astronomical Society has invited the TCAA to attend the 3rd Annual Illinois Dark Skies Star Party, September 16 through September 19 at the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Park in Cass County, Illinois.

The Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Park is a great facility for a star party. Once again this year, we have secured the use of both group campsites, which can accommodate several hundred people easily. Typically we have about 110 to 150 participants and they have had attendees come from all

over the country. These are great skies for the Midwest.

More details about the star party site and information about The Sangamon Astronomical Society can be obtained by going to our web site:

www.sas-sky.org.

TCAA Observer Editor on Vacation

The editor of the *TCAA Observer*, Rebecca Wenning, is on “vacation” in Acambaro, Mexico, (about 75 miles northwest of Mexico City) where she will spend the months of June and July working at the Julsrud Anthropological Museum. Please send items for inclusion in the newsletter to her father, Carl Wenning, who will serve as temporary editor during these two months.

Reminders from the Secretary

TCAA members are reminded that the renewal date for memberships appears on the mailing label of each *TCAA Observer*. If your dues are in arrears (and this includes two officers - one of whom hasn’t paid his dues since November 2003 - who technically aren’t even members of the TCAA!), then please pay dues promptly to Treasurer Duane Yockey.

Sugar Grove Nature Center Observatory keyholders are hereby reminded that each keyholder is required to be a dues-paying member as well as to pay an annual \$5 fee for the privilege of having direct access to the SGO. Again, if either your dues and annual access fee (or both) are in arrears, please pay promptly.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – May 2004

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – April 30, 2004 -	\$ 1,460.77
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Income

Wayne Kreps (dues renewal) -	\$	40.00
Kal Kumar (dues renewal) -	\$	40.00
Troy Berg (dues) -	\$	40.00
Kelly Mesch (dues) -	\$	40.00
Jim & Deb Presley (dues renewal) -	\$	40.00

Expenses

Rebecca Wenning (Newsletter Expenses) -	\$	140.60
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OPERATING FUND BALANCE – May 31, 2004 -	\$ 1,520.17
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OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – April 30, 2004 -	\$ 900.97
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Income

None -	\$	0.00
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Expenses

None -	\$	0.00
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OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – May 31, 2004 -	\$ 900.97
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TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – May 31, 2004 -	\$ 2,421.14
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Respectfully submitted,

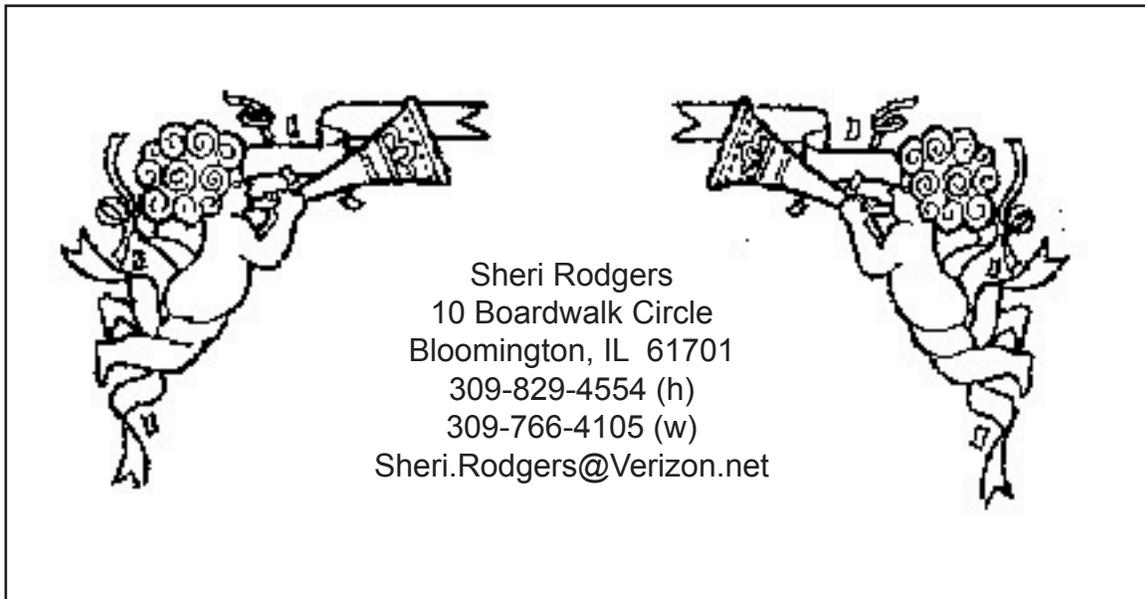
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Prairie Sky Star Party September 9 -12, 2004

The Amateur Astronomy Events and Conventions Association (AAECA) invites you to attend the 2004 Prairie Skies Star Party. The AAECA will host Prairie Skies at Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See 4-H camp, near Kankakee, Illinois. One of the AAECA's goals is to continue holding an annual star party at Camp Shaw-WawNas-See. In addition, the Prairie Skies staff has many years of star party experience

at Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See. We look forward to preserving the familiar atmosphere and experience that attendees have come to expect at Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See. Prairie Skies Star Party and the AAECA are not associated with the Chicago Astronomical Society and/or Astrofest. Prairie Skies Star Party will feature all night observing, vendors, a swap market, catered meals, door prizes and more. There will be a special emphasis on amateur telescope making, recognized through our telescope and accessory contest.

The Welcome Mat



The TCAA Observer
Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.

Rebecca Wenning, Editor
21 Grandview Dr.
Normal, IL 61761

Dues Due?

The Dues Blues

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership -- and with the new observatory, why quit now? -- Please send \$40 to our esteemed treasurer:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

Thank you for your support!