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OCTOBER E/PO

On Saturday, October 6th, Carl Wenning and Lee Green attended the DAAC Astronomy Jamboree at Friends Creek Regional Park near Maroa. This event constituted the October MOOS for TCAAers. The sponsor of this event, the Macon County Conservation District, did a fine job of promoting the event through radio, fliers and newspaper, and their efforts resulted in an attendance of more than 150 people. A half hour presentation by David Leake, coordinator of the William M. Stearkel Planetarium in Champaign, delighted the enthusiastic crowd. Observing through the eight telescopes that were set up for this purpose followed that. Observing continued until 10:30 P.M. under dark, clear and warm skies.

The evening's event began with a potluck picnic. The event was a great opportunity to meet our counterparts from not one, but two area astronomy clubs. Several members of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society (CUAS) were also in attendance. We talked about possible future joint events with the idea of including several of the clubs around central Illinois. Lee and Carl were very glad that they took the time to participate.

The next evening, Sunday, October 7th, Carl Wenning and Duane Yockey hosted a group of about 15 individuals from the UIUC Business Round Table at SGNC. Carl gave a 20-minute presentation about the Milky Way, and followed up

with a constellation study using a laser pointer. Duane and Carl both followed this with a telescope observing session. Duane manned Carl's 11-inch while Carl used the SGO 12-inch.

Autumn Celebration at SGNC on Saturday, October 20th, was an outstanding success. With better promotion and many more activities than ever before, the event was a huge success. The attendance was probably more than twice that last year. With sales booths lined up all the way from the Nature Center to the observatory, people were channeled directly into the observatory. It was estimated that some 500 people visited the SGO during the day.

Thanks to William Carney's quick thinking, we were able to show not only the sun (completely featureless!) but, more importantly, Venus. The daytime view of Venus was a real winner and surprised lots of observatory visitors. Dave Osenga brought his 6-inch reflector and was able to show both the Sun and Venus. Duane Yockey and Carl Wenning assisted and staffed the display table much of the day talking about the 2008 POS, the January adult education course at HCC, the Mars opposition observations slated for the CLC in Bloomington during late December, and membership in the TCAA. William stayed all day and closed down the operation at 5 P.M.; Duane remained until 4 P.M.; Carl stayed until 2 P.M.; and Dave departed at 1P.M.



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DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER?

~ reflections on life as an amateur astronomer ~

by Carl J. Wenning

At the September public observing session, Dave Osenga gave a sky lecture following my talk about the Milky Way. He spoke with the ease of an experienced planetarium director as he presented to the 40 or so individuals gathered around him to learn about the night sky. He expertly pointed out one constellation after another using his green laser pointer and indicated locations of various celestial objects to be observed with telescopes in the coming minutes. He ended his sky lecture with a sage bit of advice to the effect, "In order to observe the sky, you don't really need a big telescope. In fact, the only thing that a beginner needs is a good set of binoculars and a guidebook to the stars such as H.A. Rey's *The stars: A new way to see them.*" In other words, size really doesn't matter. I strongly agree.

I can remember my earliest observations of the sky. As a budding amateur astronomer I didn't even own a set of binoculars; all I had were my eyes. I took every chance I could to observe the sky. I can remember from my earliest times driving home in our black Studebaker car from some late night visits to my cousins' or grandparents' homes looking out the window to see what I couldn't see from the town where I grew up. As a 5th grader, I frequently visited the Carnegie Public Library in my hometown to pick up observer's guides and general astronomy books so I could learn more about what I was seeing. Eventually, my parent's noted my interest and gave me my first 2.4-inch refracting telescope for Christmas when I was 11 years old. As a high school student, I often camped out under the stars in my backyard with my head sticking out of a pup tent.

Over the years I have had access to quite a few telescopes of varying size. I remember fondly observing with the Perkins 72-inch reflector at Anderson Mesa in Arizona. That was pretty amazing and was probably the one time in my life that size really did count. I remember with great fondness seeing celestial objects – especially the Ring Nebula – in color. The reds, greens, blues, and yellows were vibrant and distinct. No need to use averted vision here to bring out fine detail. Still, the vast majority of my visual observing has been conducted with 6-inch through 32-inch telescopes (the Schottland reflector at Perkins Observatory in Delaware, OH), and during these times size really hasn't made much of a difference. For instance, on the morning of October 21st I saw M42 the best I have seen it in years using only the SGO 12-inch SCT. Sure, a 32-inch gathers much more light than a 12-inch telescope and the details are better as well. Still, compared to what the human eye can show, both telescopes far out perform the eyesight with which humans are naturally endowed.

In the final assessment, it's not the size that matters; it's what you do with what you have that really counts. Galileo, using an inferior quality refractor of probably around 1-inch aperture was able to revolutionize our understanding of the solar system. Given the much larger and optically superior amateur instruments we have today, what good have we done? Have we discovered a planet or asteroid? Have we studied binary or variable stars? Have we mapped the moon? Have we discovered a nova or supernova? That's something for each and every one of us to think about.

REGISTER NOW FOR NIGHT SKY WATCH

Now is the time to register for the TCAA's adult education program offered through Heartland Community College. *Night Sky Watch* (SCIENCE 1034, Course Code: 5092), led by former ISU Planetarium Director Carl Wenning (1978-2001), will feature two classroom presentations, one visit to the ISU Planetarium, and an optional field trip to Sugar Grove Observatory.

The sessions will be held each Saturday from January 5 through January 26, 2008, from 7 to 9 P.M. each night. The first two classes will be held in HCC CCB Room 2401. The cost for this course is \$60 per person, and the fee includes materials (but not transportation).

The focus of this short course will be on the denizens of the night sky – moon, planets, comets, asteroids, stars, nebulas, clusters, and galaxies – and how to find and observe them using binoculars and telescopes.

You may register online anytime at www.heartland.edu/communityEd or by phone (with credit or debit card) by calling (309) 268-8160 M-F, 8 AM to 4:30 P.M.. Registration deadline is December 15th. Advance registration is required. No walk-ins are permitted.

HISTORY OF THE TCAA: PART 5

Beginning with the article, "The Origin of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers" in the May 2007 issue of *The OBSERVER*, TCAA Historian Carl Wenning began chronicling the history of the club. He will continue this series, culminating with the 50th anniversary of the club in 2010.

As the years went by, the membership continued to share its interest of the nighttime sky with the general public. Beginning April 17, 1966, and continuing weekly through April 2, 1967, several members prepared a newspaper column for the Sunday *Pantagraph*. The column "Central Illinois Sky" dealt mainly with aspects of observational astronomy. Loyde Strouse was the principal writer of the column, with several members of the club contributing articles from time to time. The other writers were Henry (Hank) Janecek, David Williams, Bill Johnson, and Weldon Schuette. (A complete set of articles is preserved in the TCAA's historical archives due to the foresight of Hank Janecek.) Reverend Strouse taught an adult education class relating to astronomy at this time. In addition, Reverend Strouse built an analog computer to chart the locations of bright stars and planets. He called the device the "horizograph." (After his death, the horizograph was given to Lee Green's brother but it has long since disappeared.) During July 1967 several club members participated in a hobby show held on the sidewalks of downtown Normal. The display consisted of several telescopes set up in front of the North Street Pharmacy.

Club members continued to find themselves involved in observatories or one sort or another. The Fissel farm observatory was used periodically, but its location on the outskirts of town made it less than perfectly suitable as a regular observing site. Club members continued to reach out in other directions for observing opportunities. Ray Wilson and Barry Beaman worked long and hard on an 18-inch reflecting telescope for the IWU Behr Observatory. The 18-inch mirror came from an instrument donated to Illinois Wesleyan in 1895 – one year after the Behr Observatory was constructed with funds donated by a wealthy Chicagoan. Reconstruction and installation of the telescope were completed by the autumn of 1966. The telescope fit snugly into the 22-foot diameter dome of the observatory, but it provided Barry, an IWU undergraduate, ample observing opportunities.

The study of variable stars resulted in David Williams writing several articles for *Review of Popular Astronomy*, and which led to his first job

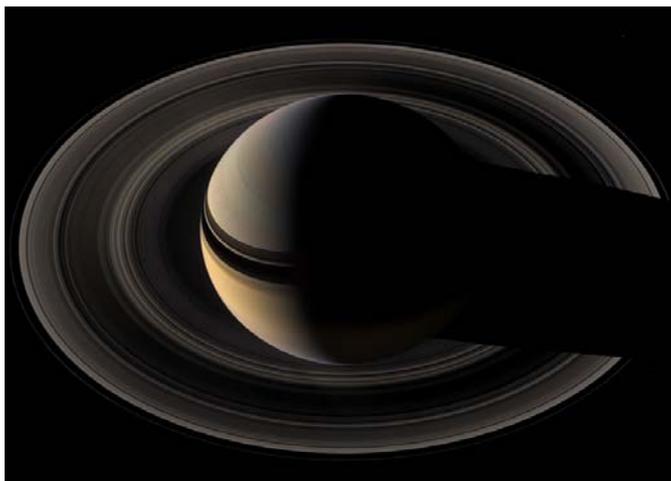
in 1967 when he left Normal to become assistant editor of the *Review* that was then based in Saint Louis, Missouri.

In 1968 Behr Observatory was deemed too small to contain the observing program and astronomy classes that the Wesleyan faculty wished to offer. A decision was made to remove the aging facility and to replace it with a larger structure to accommodate the growing astronomy program. \$90,000.00 was received to construct the current Mark Evans Observatory on the same site as the old observatory. Behr Observatory would either have to be razed or moved. Once again the town of Normal became involved in efforts to erect a club observatory within the confines of a city park.

Hank Janecek, then President of the TCAA, told the town council that the TCAA had made arrangements to obtain the Behr Observatory structure from IWU. According to a newspaper account, the town council instructed administrator Gordan Jaeger and Recreation Director Dave Anderson to look into the costs involved in moving the structure and getting it set up. The council assured the TCAA that it would provide the land and a concrete foundation to ready the observatory for public use in Fairview Park. It was agreed that club members would supply telescopic instruments, and that Wesleyan University would keep its equipment. Investigation of the costs involved revealed that the project would be more expensive than at first anticipated. The project fell through and the Behr Observatory was reduced to rubble.

Club meetings continued as usual during the first decade and served as a focus of most activity for quite some time. With the turn of the decade many things besides astronomy began to attract the attention of club members, and the twice-monthly meetings were reduced to only one. The last twice-monthly meetings were held in September 1970. Thereafter, and up to the present day, the club members would meet only once monthly.

Eclipses continued to hold a certain fascination for the general public and astronomy club members alike. Weldon Schuette journeyed to Florida in March 1970 and to the Gaspé Peninsula of Canada in July 1972 to see total solar eclipses. Both times he was clouded out. Weldon also continued to contribute articles and diagrams to local newspapers highlighting important astronomical events.



Crescent Saturn from Cassini mission

NOVEMBER SKY GUIDE

03	The Moon passes 0.03° south of Regulus, 8 A.M.	  
	The Moon passes 1.8° south of Saturn, 10 P.M.	 
05	The Moon passes 3° south of Venus, 2 P.M.	 
08	The Moon passes 7° south of Mercury, 5 A.M.	 
	Mercury is at greatest western elongation (19°), 3 P.M.	  
09	Asteroid Ceres is at opposition, 9 A.M.	 
11	The Moon passes 0.4° south of Antares, 3 P.M.	  
12	The Moon passes 5° south of Jupiter, 4 P.M.	 
14	Asteroid Juno is in conjunction with the Sun, 6 A.M.	
17	The Moon passes 1.0° south of Neptune, 5 A.M.	 
	Leonid meteor shower peaks	
19	The Moon passes 2° north of Uranus, 5 A.M.	
27	The Moon passes 1.7° north of Mars, midnight	 
28	Venus passes 4° north of Spica, 4 P.M.	 
30	The Moon passes 0.3° south of Regulus, 2 P.M.	  

OBSERVERS' LOGBOOK FOR OCTOBER

William Carney, Carl Wenning, and Andrew Morrison spent the evening of October 9th observing from SGO. William led the group that observed one comet, two asteroids, and a handful of Messier and NGC objects. Observing at SGNC ran from 7 to 9 P.M. The trio then headed to IWU's Mark Evan's Observatory for another period of viewing. They saw the results of imaging a star cluster using an SBIG 5 CCD camera, and observed the spectrum of Vega. Andrew showed William and Carl the ground-level room that has been returned to the form it had been when, for many years, the TCAA met there for membership meetings. The room was converted about 14 years ago into research labs. About two years ago it was returned to its original condition.

William continued to observe at SGO searching for comets and asteroids which is one of his main observing programs. He observed from SGO on October 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, and quite a few other nights due to a run of clear skies. On the morning of Friday, October 26, William was able to observe Comet 17P/Holmes – the comet that brightened from 17.5 to 2.5 magnitude

over a period of a few hours on October 24. William noted, "It's gorgeous in my 15x70 binoculars as a white-yellow fuzz ball with the core being a little fuller. You got to get out and see this one."

Carl continued working on his Herschel 400 list during the wee morning hours of Sunday, October 21. He started observing from SGO at 4:29 A.M., and was able to view 59 NCG objects before 6:11 A.M. when the sky became too bright for him to continue observing. He now has a total of 261 of the 400 observations that must be completed to earn the Astronomical League's Herschel observing award. Lee Green and Brian Barling continue to work on their Herschel observing programs similarly.

Duane and Carl traveled to SGNC on Monday the 29th to observe Comet Holmes. There they met up with Mark Cabaj who had a host of his Heartland Community College astronomy students in tow. They visited the observatory, and Duane showed them the comet. On Wednesday William and Carl ran into one another at SGO to do some comet observing as well. As before, Mark was present with his HCC students.

CHASING M27

By Lee Green



I spent the evening of September 11 imaging M27. In my previous columns, I shared my struggles with on-axis computerized guiding. Having 'solved' those issues through the combination of fast guider sampling and small corrections, I wanted to try new objects. Carl suggested M27, and I accepted the challenge.

M27, the Dumbbell Nebula, is a planetary nebula in a rich star field that is much larger than the Ring Nebula, M57. In fact, M27 nearly filled the full frame of my camera at F/10. The nebula's size is about 6 arcminutes. The red hues are primarily from the H-alpha emissions and the light blues are from the Oxygen.

This image is an LRGB exposure of 90, 30, 30, 30 minutes using 5 minute subframes.

Last month's installment listed some observing notes I made, so I apologize if they were somewhat disjointed.

ASTRONOMY EQUIPMENT

by Terry Lee Wright

I don't know about the rest of you, but I can't wait to hit the dark skies with my binoculars or my 8" scope. Each evening I'm waiting for good skies. But when I set up, I don't want to waste time or miss something that could be big. So, good and proper equipment is very important. Now each of us has our own idea of what's best for ourselves. Some like one brand, and another may like a different brand. Price plays a big part in choosing our equipment, too. So, I'm just sharing what I found for myself.

Sometimes, something will hit the market that just makes sense. I'm talking about a filter wheel. For those of you who have a Schmidt-Cassegrain like I do, I found a manual filter wheel that I can use for observations or later for astrophotography. It became obvious to me that time is important, so removing the camera from the telescope and switching filters for each video clip is very time consuming, and it also increases the chances of getting the filters dusty or fingerprints on them. Also for myself in just observations, changing the filters in the eyepiece too many times will wear out your threads in time.

Oh yes, at the prices of filters and eyepieces, I want to do that. I double stacked the filters once, and they almost didn't come apart. So I discovered the "Atik Filter Wheel". It keeps out dust, fingerprints, and switching to another filter is so simple. Now if you have a CCD camera, some already come with a built-in filter wheel, like S-Big or Fingerlakes. But for the simple observer like myself with no camera (yet), I like the idea of a manual wheel. The Atik wheel only weights 11 oz. and has a 1 1/4" inch nosepiece for the telescope side and a T-thread with a locking ring for the camera side. Other fittings are also available. The user must supply his own filters.

I use Meade filters and a moon filter with my scope. I checked into many other brands, but I chose the Atik wheel for myself at this time. The close body design on the Atik wheel protect filters from dew, dust, fingerprints or dropping and switching filter is easy as turning the selection wheel. The slide device with filters didn't appeal to me – the filters are exposed to dew and dust.

So check out the different models there and see if you can improve your nights and save time for more observing – because there's a lot too see out there.

BPL PROGRAM NOVEMBER 14

If you've ever wanted to purchase a telescope and didn't know what to buy and where to buy it, then this program is for you. "How to Buy a Telescope" will be presented by Mike Rogers on Wednesday, November 14th, from 7 to 8:30 P.M. in the Bloomington Public Library's community room. This program is geared toward those who have never owned a telescope before, and want to buy something "reasonable." Mike will help would-be observers to avoid the pitfall of purchasing one of those unusable "toy" telescopes. This doesn't mean that you'll need to throw thousands of dollars into purchasing a telescope. Even a few hundred dollars can be well spent if you know what to look for.

This program is sponsored by the TCAA and will be followed up with a corresponding session "How to Use a Telescope" in early 2008. This will be a great adjunct to Carl Wenning's *Night Sky Watch* adult education course to be held at Heartland Community College during January.



Sure you can buy that \$10,000 telescope, right after you buy me that new diamond ring.

NCRAL PLANNING MEETING

Dave Osenga hosted the first planning meeting for the NCRAL 2010 conference that the TCAA will host. Dave, William Carney, Carl Wenning, and Duane Yockey all met at Dave's home in Normal to discuss the upcoming event. A variety of possible statements of intent were reviewed, as well as vision statements for the conference. There seemed to be a strong preference among the planning committee for a "Generations" theme spanning the 400 years since Galileo and looking forward to the future with the Spitzer Space Telescope. Ideas were also tossed about for speakers and subject matter.

It was decided that the best date for the meeting would be on April 16/17, 2010. The conference will be budgeted for 100, with the expectation of making a small profit should more than 100 amateur astronomers attend the event. Venues were discussed with no decisions being made. It was thought that the TCAA might want to undertake some forms of fundraising to keep the registration costs low. A basic budget was discussed.

The following tasks were generally agreed to: Dave will manage door prizes, Duane will work on mailing lists and promotion, Carl will start building the agenda and working on a web page. There are a number of other jobs that need to be filled, and the membership will be asked to participate in the effort to hold the conference.

Carl will update the outline and distribute it to the TCAA Board of Directors for discussion at the next Board meeting on November 12th. He will also identify various leadership positions that need to be filled based on the exemplary work of the 2006 NCRAL meeting planners in Appleton, WI.

PROFILES IN AMATEUR ASTRONOMY: CARL J. WENNING

Carl Wenning's earliest recollection of astronomy goes back to an early summer evening in 1956 when as a 4-year-old he stood on a wire fence to the west of his grandfather's farmstead in Sharpsburg, Ohio. His grandfather pointed out Venus in the western sky. Even though Carl was just under 5 years of age, he was amazed that anyone could know the name of celestial objects. Carl has a faint recollection of his grandfather spending an evening with him camping out under the stars on the south side of the house later that summer – or perhaps the next summer – with his grandfather pointing out constellations as the night moved on. Carl and his grandfather were “favorites” of one another. His grandfather passed away from leukemia on October 23, 1957, and both his life and his death affected Carl greatly. Carl's lifelong interests in astronomy and beekeeping (!) came from his grandfather. In fact, it was due to his grandfather's influence that Carl earned a B.S. in Astronomy from Ohio State University in 1976 and served as ISU's Planetarium director from August 1978 through June 2001.

Carl received his first telescope on Christmas Eve in 1963 when he was 11 years old. It was a black 80X Gilbert reflector – a toy telescope – given to him by his mother. Carl notes, “I can still remember looking past our Christmas tree through our large picture window at the waxing gibbous moon and Jupiter as they hung side-by-side low in the western sky late that night.” Carl's mother learned of his interest in astronomy when he kept going to the old Andrew Carnegie Library in Celina, Ohio, and repeatedly borrowed and perused *Pictorial Astronomy* by Dinsmore Alter. She also noted his constant examination of a huge Sears & Roebuck catalog asking her to buy him a view-screen planetarium. Again Carl notes, “I had no idea that my dream for my own planetarium would be fulfilled 14 years later.”

A few years after that, she purchased another telescope for Carl – a white 100-power 2.4-inch refractor which kept him viewing the heavens for a few more years – until the day when he accidentally tipped the telescope over, it hit the sidewalk objective first destroying the objective! In high school Carl was able to purchase a slightly larger toy telescope – a 4¼-inch reflector – using money from his part-time job.

Over the years – as an undergraduate astronomy major and with his subsequent professional association with the field of astronomy – Carl has always had access to telescopes – from the 32-inch reflector at Ohio Wesleyan's Perkins Observatory near Delaware, Ohio, and Ohio State's 16-inch classical Cassegrain telescope atop Smith Lab in Columbus to the 8-inch Celestron and 10-inch Odyssey telescopes at the ISU Planetarium. It wasn't until later in life, in the summer of 2006, that Carl finally purchased a significant telescope of his own, an 11-inch Celestron CPC “goto” Schmidt-Cassegrain.

The first astronomy club that Carl ever joined was the Ohio State University Astronomy Club. He served in nearly every



capacity in that club and started the *Eros* newsletter where he discovered his love for writing. For a brief while Carl spent time with the Columbus Astronomical Society, but paid dues for but one year. He moved to Normal from Michigan State University in 1978 to start his job as planetarium director at ISU on August 21, 1978. Carl reflects, “My first trip to town was for a job interview on August 7th. I arrived in town late that evening, and a beautiful and memorable gathering of Mars, Venus, and the crescent moon foreshadowed the lucky outcome of my job interview the next day.”

Carl started participating in TCAA events during September of that year. His first meeting with the membership occurred at IWU's Mark Evans Observatory; Pat McGee, the departing planetarium director, introduced Carl to everyone. After being elected Vice President at the annual meeting of 1979, Carl thought that it was reasonable that he should finally join the club!

When asked about his observing awards, Carl quipped, “While I have received a number of astronomy-related awards – the Messier standard certificate (August 1985) and honorary certificate (July 1986), the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers (1988), the Lifelong Honorary Membership in the TCAA (1988), and the NCRAL Service Award (2007) – the greatest honor I have had to date as an amateur astronomer has been to know the membership of the TCAA. I have had the pleasure of working with the brightest stars of our club including the likes of John and Bertha Kieviet – the founders of our club, Weldon Schuette – a truly outstanding amateur astronomer, Aubrey Johnson – our one and only “Comet Halley Two Timer,” Robert Finnegan, a highly dedicated observer, Sandy McNamara – the “heart and soul of the club” and...the list goes on and on. It is a distinct honor working with the current membership of the TCAA as well.”

(Continued on page 7)

PROFILES IN AMATEUR ASTRONOMY: CARL J. WENNING (CONT.)

(Continued from page 6)

When asked about his favorite memories Carl stated, "First and foremost, three family events come to mind: (1) holding up my one-year-old daughter Rebecca to the sky so she could see Halley's Comet as it departed in the spring of 1986, (2) taking her out at five years of age to watch "dancing air" (auroras) during the winter of 1990, and (3) witnessing her complete the standard Messier certificate on September 16, 1997, one day short of her 12th birthday (making her one of the youngest people ever to earn the Astronomical League's provisional Messier Award according to then president Barry Beaman). Other fond memories, in no particular order, are observations made with the 72-inch Perkins reflector at Anderson Mesa south-southeast of Flagstaff, Arizona, doing astrophotography with the 24"-36" Schmidt camera at Kitt Peak National Observatory, the observations of total solar eclipses [1994 in Potosí, Bolivia, and 2006 in the Mediterranean Sea just north of Crete], comets [Kobayashi-Berger-Milon (1975); West (1976); IRAS-Araki-Alcock (1983); Halley (1986); Hale-Bopp (1995); Hyakutake (1996); the titanic impacts of Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter (1994)], the transit of Venus across the face of the sun in 2004, and auroras, etc. I also remember fondly having an unexpected lunch with W.W. Morgan at Yerkes Observatory and a surprise breakfast with Halton C. Arp at Kitt Peak National Observatory, and going through Percival Lowell's personal papers (including his many drawings of the "canals" of Mars) in the plate vault at Lowell Observatory. I also remember fondly my History of Astronomy course with Philip C. Keenan during my undergraduate days at Ohio State University. Lastly, I cannot forget those times I observed with Weldon Schuette, the TCAA outstanding amateur astronomer."

ASTRONOMY SOFTWARE

By William Carney

Because we might get a few new members from the SGNC Autumn Celebration, I'll provide some information in the next few newsletters dealing with several web sites where one can get free astronomy software or information.

<http://www.stargazing.net/astropec/> for Cartes du Ciel (free PC program)

and these for info just to name a few:

<http://www.spaceweather.com/>

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

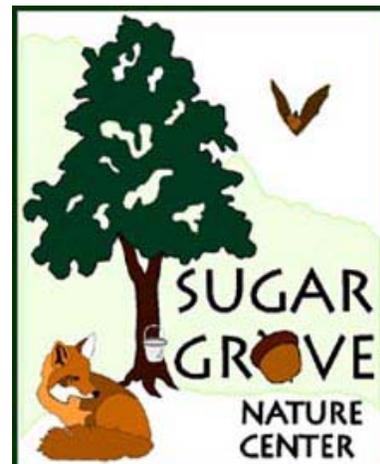
<http://www.space.com/>

<http://www.spacedaily.com/>

TCAA-RELATED WEB PAGES

Carl Wenning has developed a "TCAA Observing Page" making use of RSS programming. The web page gives up-to-the minute weather reports, forecasts, moon phase, hyperlinks to important web sites that can provide detailed local data, and a day-by-day calendar of astronomical events provided by the authors of the *Abrams Planetarium Sky Calendar* that is published at Michigan State University. You can access the observing page at http://www.phy.ilstu.edu/~wenning/observing_page.htm. Be certain to bookmark this site. Sugar Grove Nature Center now has an official web site that can be reached at <http://www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org>.

Of course, don't forget to take a periodic look at the TCAA's website at <http://twincityamateurastronomers.org>.



COMET HOLMES MAKES “QUITE A SPLASH”

On October 25th, Comet 17P/Holmes burst onto the night-time scene — brightening by a factor of a million in just two days. Members of the TCAA have observed the naked-eye comet repeatedly. It might put on quite a show for the next few months. The nearly unprecedented outburst raised the brightness of the comet from 17th-magnitude into plain view without optical aid. The comet currently shines at 2nd magnitude and has yet to show any signs of dimming. It is an easy object to find, and is readily discernible even under the bright lights of town.

The comet currently is located about 30° up in the sky — one-third of the way from the horizon to overhead — at 8 P.M. local standard time. It then appears about twice as high as the bright star Capella. For observers at mid-northern latitudes, the comet climbs directly overhead between 1 and 2 A.M. With

the moon at third quarter phase at the start of November, there is plenty of time to observe this object before moonrise.

Unlike most bright comets, Comet Holmes doesn't possess a tail. This is so because the comet is now roughly opposite the Sun in the sky as seen from earth, and the tail points directly away from the observer. To the naked eye, the comet looks like a modestly bright star. With a set of binoculars or a telescope, it looks like a large, fuzzy star. A telescope will show the nucleus and coma with its complex detail.

Comet Holmes currently is 150 million miles (245 million km) from Earth and 230 million miles (370 million km) from the Sun. It is moving slowly among the stars of Perseus, and it will recede slowly from the Earth due to the fact that its orbit is elliptical with perihelion just outside of Mars' orbit and aphelion just inside Jupiter's orbit.



Comet Holmes is seen in this photo taken through a telescope from Palm Beach Gardens, Florida November 4, 2007. The comet experienced an outburst and brightened a million times and can now be seen with the naked eye, according to NASA. REUTERS/Doug Murray (UNITED STATES)

Comet Holmes is seen in this photo taken through a telescope from Palm Beach Gardens, Florida November 4, 2007. The comet experienced an outburst and brightened a million times and can now be seen with the naked eye, according to NASA. REUTERS/Doug Murray (UNITED STATES)



The International Space Station and the Space Shuttle Discovery (both represented by the line) fly below Comet Holmes in the constellation Perseus, just minutes after they undocked, as seen from Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, November 5, 2007. REUTERS/Doug Murray (UNITED STATES)



TCAA Treasurer's Report – October 2007

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – September 30, 2007 - \$ 2,293.19

Income

Ed Duran (elect. dues renewal) - \$ 25.00
Orlyn Edge (senior dues renewal) - \$ 25.00
Wudtke family (dues renewal) - \$ 40.00
Roy Ostberg (senior dues renewal) - \$ 25.00

Expenses

LYB Inc. (August Observer) - \$ 14.76

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – October 31, 2007 - \$ 2,393.43

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – September 30, 2007 - \$ 1,149.63

Income

Donation (Oct. 7 observing session) - \$ 20.00

Expenses

None - \$ 0.00

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – October 31, 2007 - \$ 1,169.63

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – October 31, 2007 - \$ 3,563.06

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Sugar Grove Observatory

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

Duane Yockey (renewed through 2007)
Michael Rogers (renewed through 2006)
William Carney (renewed through 2007)
Carl Wenning (renewed through 2007)
Brian Barling (renewed through 2007)
Christopher Franklin (renewed through 2007)
David Osenga (renewed through 2007)
Gerry Schroeder (renewed through 2007)
Josh Lindsey (renewed through 2007)
Andrew Morrison (February 2007)
Dan Miller (renewed through 2007)
Lee Green (April 2007, renewed through 2008)



UPCOMING EVENTS

November 12— TCAA Board Meeting

November 14—"How to Buy a Telescope," BPL

The OBSERVER

Newletter of the TCAA, Inc.

Erin Estabrook, Editor
314 Covey Court
Normal, IL 61761

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**

Visit the Twin City Amateur Astronomers
on the web at
www.twincityamateurastronomers.org/