

The Night Sky

Astronomy Club of Akron
Akron, OH USA

[HTTP://WWW.ACAOH.ORG](http://www.acaoh.org)

President's Column

By Gregg Crenshaw

“Rain keeps falling on my head” and falling and falling. As I write this, the Sun is shining. That’s right the Sun is still there. I was beginning to wonder. Hopefully the soggy spring weather pattern is behind us and we will have more sunny days and clear nights so we can see the stars.

For those of you that did not attend the May meeting the ACA had an election. For the first time in my 14 years as a member of the ACA the membership had a choice of who would be president.

The ACA thanks Jay Svitko for stepping up and taking the President’s post during a difficult period and for taking on the Vice President’s post for the coming year. To Jeff Hudson, thanks for his time as Vice President and for taking on editing THE NIGHT SKY for the coming year. To Ray Hyer, thanks for his time as editor of THE NIGHT SKY. To Gary Smith, thanks for becoming the new Treasurer for the coming year, and to Ethel Lillie, thanks for her years of service as Trustee. I look forward to working with the all ACA board members in the coming year.

On Friday, June 6 the ACA was
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Upcoming Events

Saturday June 28

OTAA Convention Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society

Indian Hill Observatory near Huntsburg, OH. For info <http://chagrinvalleyastronomy.org>

Saturday July 5, 9:00 pm

The Jewels of Summer

Ring Nebula, Dumbell Nebula, Hercules Cluster, Andromeda Galaxy and many others.

Saturday July 26, 9:00 pm

The Autumn Constellations

Tour of Taurus, Aries, Pisces, Aquarius and Sagittarius and many others.

Saturday July 26

OTAA Convention Cuyahoga Astronomical Society

Letha House Park Barn in Chatham Township For info <http://geocities.com/cuyastro/>

ANNOUNCEMENT

If you have not renewed your membership to the Astronomy Club of Akron, this will be your last newsletter.

Video Astronomy

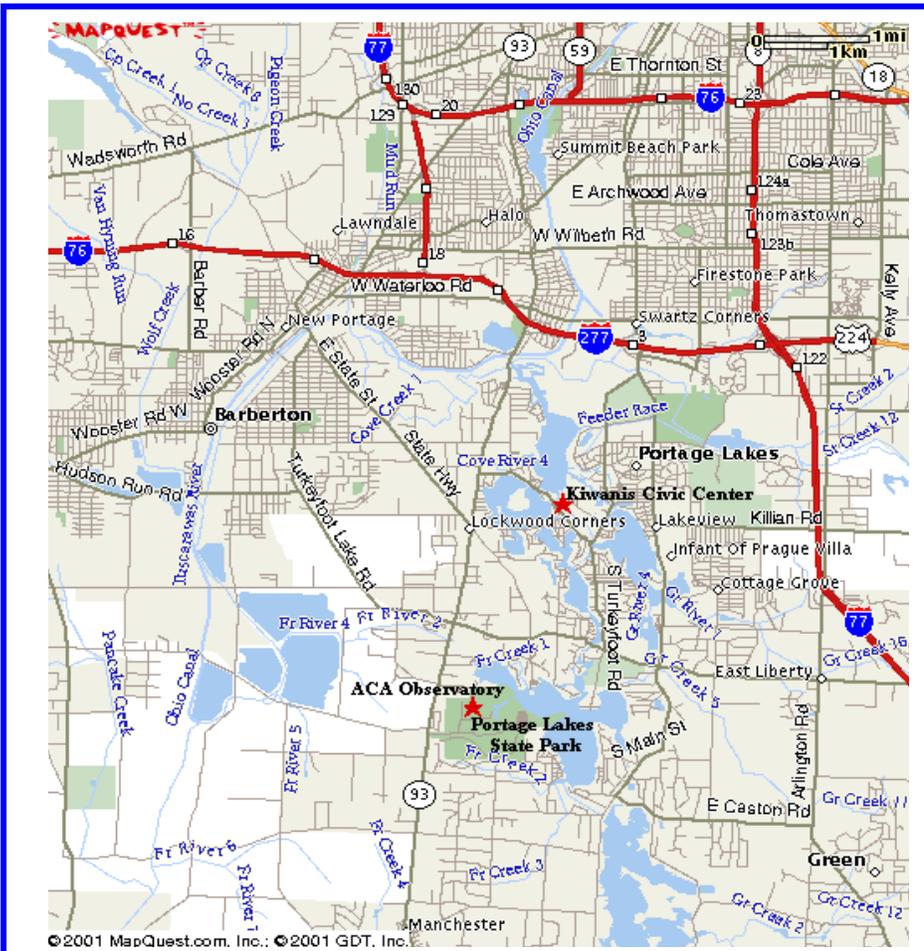
By Glenn R. Cameron

I bought an Adirondack Video Astronomy (AVA) StellaCam EX. It’s a video camera with an adapter that fits in my telescope in place of the eyepiece. It’s also very sensitive. Its “first light” was a few Saturday’s ago at the ACA observatory. Wow! I’m very pleased. My telescope is a Meade LX90 with a focal ratio of F10. I didn’t have a focal reducer for deep sky stuff and had to borrow a Barlow lens for the planets.

I started with Saturn, first without, then with the borrowed Barlow. Very nice. The sky was clear of clouds but the seeing was still pretty jittery. The Cassini division would come and go, as would a large band on the planet. The wind was blowing my LX90 a bit too, which wasn’t helping things. All in all though, a very exciting first view.

After a while I moved on to Jupiter. Wow again! Jupiter seemed to fill my 5-inch monitor. Okay, of course it wasn’t nearly a full screen apparition but still, it was amazing. I could see the largest bands and could detect other belts swimming into and out of view. What really blew me away was the Great Red

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The Night Sky	
Editor / Layout	Jeff Hudson
Contributors	Gregg Crenshaw Glenn Cameron Rich Ruggles John Crilly Jeff Hudson

The Night Sky is published monthly and contains information on upcoming meetings, observing sessions, and articles by members.

**Submission Deadline
July 15, 2003**

Since 1949, the primary objective of the Astronomy Club of Akron is to promote the interest, education and advancement of its members in astronomy. The ACA maintains its own observing site and club telescope at Portage Lakes State Park. Many club members donate their time and services to local schools, church groups, and other organizations as well as to the general public.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in astronomy. No equipment is necessary and no knowledge is needed. There is no age limit!

The ACA is a 501c3 non-profit organization.

Astronomy Club of Akron	
President	Gregg Crenshaw
Vice-President	Jay Svitko
Treasurer	Gary Smith
Secretary	Lynn Laux
Observatory Director	Ray Pau
Statutory Agent	Rich Ruggles
Trustee	Glenn Cameron
Trustee	Dave Jessie
OTAA Representative	Lou Poda

Welcome New Members:

- Pam Regula
- Sharon Davis
- Nick Mihiylov
- Peter Ossai

Next Club Meeting

The ACA does not hold regular monthly meetings during the summer, the next scheduled meeting is on Friday, September 21, 2003. Contact Jay Svitko or Jeff Hudson with leads on a speaker or ideas for a program. We encourage club members to give presentations, so don't be shy.

Missing Committees?

Respectfully submitted by John Crilly

Congratulations to the new officers and good luck in their endeavors in the coming year. I'd like to suggest that they and the membership at large consider the following.

At the last meeting it occurred to me that committee reports didn't take nearly so long as would be expected in a group so large, established, and well funded as this one. A few "missing committees" spring to mind. I plan to suggest several possibilities in the next few months, including the reasons I feel they would be beneficial and possible goals for them to pursue. Some involve activities to which the Club is already committed but which, in my opinion, would be furthered by having a structured approach. Others are new issues which have either been considered and rejected by the Club in the past (and which may deserve another look due to changing conditions or circumstances), or which simply haven't yet come to the Club's attention. Only one of these is likely to be considered controversial, and it is the one which I address in this first submission.

A center of the club's activities is the excellent observatory at Portage Lakes State Park. It constitutes the largest area of contact between the Club and the public from which future members may be expected to be recruited. We

frequently invite non-members to come out and receive both instruction and an opportunity to observe through our observatory instrument. Given the compromises inherent in choosing a location, the facility is very well conceived and executed.

Watching the public observation sessions, though, a couple of things become evident to someone watching with fresh eyes. The potential observers, many of whom are small children, must mount an aluminum platform with stairs to get to the eyepiece. Since the telescope moves, the stairs are not permanent but are instead a portable platform of limited stability. The pattern which emerges is (1) a club member mounts the stairs to locate the desired object; (2) the observer mounts the platform and looks at the object (3) a club member mounts the stairs to center the desired object; (4) the next viewer mounts the stairs. All this physical activity within a limited space seems excessive and does provide some small opportunity for accidents. It certainly doesn't give an air of professionalism.

The raised platform is required because of the physical layout and size of the Newtonian telescope, in which the eyepiece is placed near the upward end of the optical tube. The constant re-aligning is caused by the difficulty of building a mount for such a large and heavy instrument which is capable of both rigidly holding the instrument in position and tracking celestial objects accurately.

It is apparent to me that the gyrations described in the above paragraph are undesirable and that they are necessary consequences of the instrument currently installed. While there are certainly other publicly accessible observatories where this is unavoidable because of the size of the instrument being used, there are a great many fine instruments available today of the same or greater aperture as the one in current use here - we simply don't have that excuse. While I'm sure the existing reflector is an excellent instrument in many ways, the Club must consider whether it is appropriate to the Club's current requirements and goals. For public viewing, it seems obvious that any currently available 10" to 16" Schmidt-Cassegrain, with its rear mounted focuser and effective tracking capabilities, would be a far superior instrument overall even if the optics were somehow inferior - and in my experience, they wouldn't be. I won't address the desirability of a computerized instrument beyond stating that it seems obvious to me and to others with whom I have spoken of this.

I suggest that the formation of an instrument committee is not only desirable but necessary. Such a committee should be charged with the following tasks:

- 1) determine the primary intended use of the observatory instrument(s)
- 2) realistically assess the degree to which the present instrument fulfills those needs

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Video Astronomy

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Spot. I was lucky this night and the GRS just happened to be well placed. I'm not sure I've ever seen it in real life before, but there it was, as big as life. My field of view included two of the Galilean moons, Europa and Io (I also saw Ganymede if I panned a bit West). I also thought I was seeing a shadow transit! But that turned out to be a bit of shmootz on the Barlow.

I finally tore myself away from Jupiter and navigated to our own natural satellite. It may sound trite by now but, wow! Our moon was in its waxing gibbous phase and was in fact at 81% of full. I left the Barlow in place, having been cautioned by AVA against allowing the camera's sensitive CCD chip to be damaged by intense light. The view was just a grin maker. Panning around with my LX90's control pad, I felt as if I was flying over the moon in a space ship. As the seeing varied, I was delighted with the occasional views of razor sharp clarity. The best area to view was along the terminator, which offered shadows and lots of contrast. The second best area was the fully day lit limb which offered good contrast against the black background of space. The center tended to become washed out and could have used a polarizing filter. I spent a great deal of time "flying" over the moon.

The only bummer of the evening was when I tried to view deep sky objects. I told my telescope

to "go to" the spiral galaxy, M91. I had removed the Barlow and wondered what kind of luck I was going to have without a focal reducer. Then I wondered why M91 looked like M57. Turns out, I forgot to refocus after removing the Barlow. The little doughnut I was looking at wasn't the Ring Nebula but was actually an out-of-focus star. Oops (sheepish grin). I focused and wandered around but didn't detect M91. Okay, maybe I was too close to an almost full moon. I moved on to M51, the Whirlpool Galaxy. Again I had to wander around to see if I could find it. I finally saw a small fuzzy with what looked like a stellar core. I wondered if that was the smaller companion galaxy, NGC 5195. I know that many users of the StellaCam also use focal reducers, which either reduce their f/10 telescope to an f/6.3 or an f/3.3.

At this point I was feeling pretty cold and decided to pack it in for the night. I'm really jazzed about this new tool. I was already putting together my shopping list for the near future. A focal reducer for looking at deep space objects. A Barlow lens for looking at the planets. A polarizing filter for looking at the moon. A camcorder to record all of the above. I could go on and on. I

Want to share your viewing experiences with other club members or have new astronomy equipment you just can't wait to tell other about? Write an article describing your experience and send it to Jeff Hudson to be published in the Night Sky.

ON THE ROAD

June 25 -29 Laurel Highlands Star Cruise Hazelton, WV
Sponsored by the AAAP See www.3ap.org for details.

June 28 Chagrin Valley OTAA see <http://chagrinvalleyastronomy.org> for details.

July 26 Cuyahoga Astronomical Association OTAA See www.geocities.com/cuyastro for details.

The rest of the year ...

Aug 1 – 2 Field trip to Cherry Springs State Park in north central PA.

The area is light pollution free and is called The Astronomers Mecca

Aug 6 Astronomy on the river canoe trip

Aug 7-9 ALPO convention Boardman, OH

Aug 23 Mahoning Valley OTAA Star Party & Pot Luck Dinner

Aug 29-31 Black Forest Astronomy Convention

Sep 19-20 Sandusky Valley Astro Tour

Sep 27 Black River OTAA Star party & pot luck dinner

Oct 4 Scope Out 2003 Cincinnati, OH

Missing Committees?

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- 3) if the current instrument is to be retained, establish protocols to make it less available to the general public, for whom it is clearly poorly suited
- 4) if public use is to be a priority (or to continue at all), to make a determination as to a few of the most desirable replacements and to establish the costs for each
- 5) to determine the best disposition of the current reflector and any other unused instruments owned by the Club in order to partially finance the replacement project.

This would be a major decision and will, like all significant changes, meet some opposition. I'll address some anticipated issues here. Some will maintain that the current instrument is the most suited for our uses - I would suggest that "our uses" be defined as those uses to which it is currently put. Club members don't go to the observatory to look through it; many members own instruments as fine and as large or larger which are actually portable enough to bring out to the site and use instead! I suggest that the primary purpose of the scope is public viewing - and any actual tracking of instrument use will prove this. Reasoned, factual arguments that this is the best scope for that purpose will be listened to - but what could they be? Some may argue that the Club can't afford a replacement. I suggest that the costs be determined before that discussion can take place - and that if it's central to the Club's reason

for existence (as it appears) then how can we NOT afford it?

ADDENDUM:

It has recently come to my attention that the Club has been the recipient of a gift from the estate of a deceased former member. The gift is a telescope; a Celestron Ultima 11. This presents the Club with a decision. We could store it in the observatory and hope that it doesn't become damaged, as has happened to other portable instruments in the past. Or we could view this as an opportunity to address the concerns which drove the writing of this article.

While not precisely the model I had in mind when suggesting the need for an observatory instrument change, the Ultima 11 would solve the most important issues. If the observatory is to be used by the public (and it SHOULD be), the Ultima would eliminate the extremely important ladder issue. It also would track well so that constant fiddling would be eliminated. These two major concerns could be addressed at little or no cost and this deserves serious consideration.

Most members are aware of the excellent quality and capabilities of the C11 optical tube. The only negative argument that comes to mind is that it would represent a slight loss in aperture. My contention would be that the greatly enhanced usability of the instrument in this application would far outweigh

this. While not a computerized instrument, the Ultima does have motorized slew capabilities, much greater stability, and better tracking than the current instrument. It also lends itself well to the installation of digital setting circles, permitting the Club to show the public many more objects than are typically the subjects at current public viewings.

We've been given an opportunity and owe the benefactor the duty of maximizing the value of his gift. I submit that the Club should promptly initiate the evaluation suggested earlier in this piece with the goal of either changing over to this instrument or selling it (and other damaged or never-used items) to generate seed money for the purchase of an appropriate new, larger instrument. This issue deserves serious discussion and it is my hope that this article will stimulate that. ✨

Dark Sky Party

By Jeff Hudson

I was told some members were discouraged from attending the last dark sky party. If you did not go, you missed out on a great night. Unfortunately the skies in Akron were clouding but the sky was great at the dark sky site.

The fall dark sky star part is in October, I hope to see more ACA members in attendance.

Above all, enjoy this club and what you can learn about astronomy and have fun doing it. ✨

Classifieds

Contact Rich Ruggles for the following items

90mm ETX new and in the box, has one eyepiece and a erect view finder \$300.00

8" f7 Discovery DOB w/2" focuser and 1 ¼ adapter, Pyrex mirror, 25mm & 10mm eyepiece and a TELRAD base \$450.00

8" f7 Criterion Dynascope Original on EQ pier mount RA & DEC setting circles
8 x 30 finder \$550.00

10 ½ Star-Liner telescope on a heavy duty EQ mount on a rock solid pier. RA & DEC setting circles, RA & DEC drives w/ 8 x 30 finder \$850.00

9mm Nagler eyepiece fits 1 ¼ and 2" focusers \$130.00

42mm 5 element RENI Erfil eyepiece \$50.00

28mm 5 element RENI Erfil eyepiece \$50.00

26mm & 24mm Plossl by University Optics \$30.00

5mm Orion eyepiece \$30.00

7.4mm to 22.0mm zoom eyepiece by Pro Optics \$40.00

6 x 30 Parks Finder scope \$30.00

6 x 30 Discovery finder w/ mount \$35.00

Planetary filter set of 5 in a case \$40.00

Celestron 2x Barlow (short) \$65.00

Mead 2x Barlow (long) \$50.00

Contact John Crilly for the following items

Meade 4504 4.5" F8 reflector on GEM mount with Autostar goto computer - new in box - \$150

Meade DS-60 60mm F11 refractor on altitude/azimuth mount with Autostar - new in box - \$100

Chinese 6" F5 reflector on GEM - new in box - \$175

Extra GEM and tripod with Autostar for 4504 (good for any lighter OTA) - \$100

Celestron 6" F8 refractor OTA - \$350

Meade 1.25" 13.8mm SWA brand new, still in box, never looked through (paid \$150) - \$125

Meade 1.25" 13.8mm SWA, original Japanese smooth side version (better than the new one) - \$125

Meade 1.25" 6.7mm UWA - Japanese version, like new - \$125

Meade 2" 40mm SWA - Japanese, smooth-side version - excellent - \$235

Celestron anniversary eyepiece set (5 Plossl EP's, Barlow, filter set), brand new in box, \$150

Meade anniversary eyepiece set (7 Super Plossls), brand new in box, \$350

If you have items to sell, trade or give away contact Jeff Hudson to be listed on this page.

News Briefs

Shuttle may fly in December

It is reported that NASA officials currently believe they can resume shuttle flights and the assembly of the international space station as soon as December. Initially, missions will be restricted to daylight launches so tracking cameras can keep a close watch on the launch.

Antenna Problems on SOHO

The NASA/ESA SOHO spacecraft, which observes the Sun, is having problems pointing its high-gain antenna, which it uses to transmit data back to Earth. The cause of the problem hasn't been figured out yet, but experts think there's something wrong with its motor or in the gear assembly that steers the antenna - fortunately, its low-gain antenna is still working, so they can still communicate with the spacecraft. If they can't figure out the problem, SOHO isn't going to be able to transmit data back as quickly, so there will be black-out periods.

Soyuz Tourist Flights

Two space tourists will have a chance to fly to the International Space Station in 2005, at a cost of only \$20 million each. The flight will launch on board a Soyuz rocket from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. ✨

ACA Membership

The following people have renewed their membership for 2004

Tom Alexander
Jim Anderson
Kurt Bauch
Marty Breyer
Glenn Cameron
Mrs. Frank Comunale
Gregg Crenshaw
Deborah Crenshaw
Sharon Davis
Ed Eaken
Willis Else
Robert Girard
Ken Goldinger
Les Halasz
Dave Hartsook
Catherine Hartsook
Carl Hervol
Betti Hervol
Bob Hirst
Jeff Hudson
Fred Huffman
Dave Jessie
JoAnna Johnston
Ron Kalinoski
Bill Karas
Becky Kelly
Mark Kochheiser
Tom Lee
Ethel Lillie
Lillian Mayer
Doug Mercer
James Messerly
Tom Mino
Randy Morton
Peter Ossai
Ray Paul
Pam Reguls
Ron Sattler
Jeannie Sattler
John Shaffer
John Shulan
Gary Smith
Peggy Stabholz

Jay Svitko
Mary Svitko
Kevin Turkovich
Rosaelena Villasenor

Renew your membership in the Astronomy Club of Akron by using the membership form on the back of this newsletter or by contacting Gary Smith.

President's Column

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invited to set up telescopes at Camp Christopher for the Camp CHOPS attendees. Unfortunately the skies were cloudy that night so I had to give a slide show. Thanks to three boys for staying for the entire time and for asking such great questions. Rich Ruggles came out and showed attendees the top of a cell tower through his 8" Dob and lended moral support. Thanks Rich.

Mars is coming, Mars is coming. I am already hearing about observations of the surface of the red planet by ACA members as the Earth and Mars move toward the historic opposition August 28. The August 23 Mars program is shaping up to be a doozy. Please support the public programs at the ACA Observatory in Portage Lakes State Park by attending programs and sharing your love of the night sky with the public. ✨

Have something that really needs to be said? Want to share it with the rest of the club? Write it up and send it to Jeff Hudson to be published in the next edition of the Night Sky.

Book Review

By Jeff Hudson

Mars Crossing
by Geoffrey A. Landis

Hardcover: 320 pages
Publisher: Tor Books

Many club members have talked with Dr. Landis about his career with NASA and his interest in Mars, but have you taken the time to read any of his award winning fiction.

Mars Crossing is about the third attempt to send humans to Mars. The first two attempts were successful in getting humans there; but, in both cases, disaster struck and no one returned. The third mission, crewed by 4 men and 2 women, make it to Mars, but disaster strikes and the crew is forced to begin a 4000-kilometer trek to the Martian North Pole.

Landis uses constant back-and-forth flashbacks to a great advantage in portraying his characters, making it seem just as natural as anyone reflecting on the past events of their lives. This makes the characters feel realistic and compelling. In addition the plot includes a decent string of clues and surprises ending in a satisfying plot twist.

The hard cover version is out of print, but you can find the mass-market paperback edition in many book stores. ✨