

COMET TAILS MARCH 2004

NEWSLETTER OF THE TREASURE COAST ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

EDITORS NOTES & NEWS.

Welcome to new member: Jack Garr, 344-7548, jackgaar2@juno.com.

One of our members requested that e mail to club members have TCAS in the subject line so the message can be identified as club related and not "spam".

HELP WITH NEWSLETTER. Would love to have items for the newsletter contributed by our members. Doesn't have to be an original item as long as you give credit, doesn't have to be long – just something of interest to us all.

T-SHIRTS ARE STILL AVAILABLE – In stock: Navy – 1 large, 3 xl and Royal: 1 xl - \$10.
There is 1 small in the light blue long sleeve for \$12. Call me at 398-9546 if you want me to bring a shirt to a meeting. We will sell them at Astronomy Day so if any members would like to reserve one first please call, Charlotte at 398-9546.

Please make copies of pictures that you have taken at astronomical events and newspaper articles that mention our club for the club scrap book. Sue Prill will be doing this project.

Participate in the New US Space Initiative

Feb 11, 2004 - When US President Bush announced his new space initiative back in January, he said that he'd appoint a special commission led by Pete Aldridge to explore strategies for sending humans back to the Moon and eventually on to Mars. The commission has set up a website at: <http://www.moontomars.org> and began holding public hearings today. One cool thing about this is that they are looking for the public's feedback and suggestions, so if you've got some good ideas, [drop them a note from this page](#).
Taken from Universetoday.com

CLUB CALENDAR

<http://www.ircc.cc.fl.us/atircc/commout/planetarium/astrosoc.html>

Please be aware of the club's calendar on our web page. There are many things coming up in the next few months and we will need help from the club members to make them a success. Please call Patty or David with any questions about the calendar and if you have anything to add to it, please email Patty at TDFLM@aol.com with the information.

Meeting Minutes – February 24, 2004 – by Sue Prill

We had 25 members attending and Jon Bell's students as guests.

Treasurers Report: \$1300 in account of which \$398.92 is earmarked for scholarship (which was just paid to the college for the 2005 year). We also have 45 paid members.

Old & New Business: none

Committees: Astronomy Day is 3/27, please, everyone, come out and help. Guest speakers : Mike Palermitti (3-3:45) Larry Crary and NASA speaker – Gary Dalke (4:30 to 5:30)

Misc: The FPL employee who has been turning off the lights for our observing events has had a family tragedy and is raising two grandchildren. The club voted to use the money earned from the drawings (Astro Day prizes) as a donation to Lee's family..

Camping – February's camping trip to Kissimmee Prairie had 3 attendees, March camping 3/19-3/20 is tentative, Winter Star Party in the keys was attended by Charlotte and Sue and Charlotte won the Grand Prize.. 6 Inch JMI Binoscope.

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David Holko did a Power Point presentation of images (Astrophotography)

Kate will do a presentation at the next meeting.. Meeting adjourned.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 24, 2004 – by Sue Prill

Attended by – David Brown, Pres., Larry Crary, VP, Charlotte Bilder, Treas., Sue Prill, Sec., Patty Mayer, Chairperson of Public Outreach Program and John Biondo, proposed Web Master.

WHAT WE DISCUSSED:

- 1 . John Biondo has suggested and offered to do a CLUB website for us, as IRCC is getting slower about making changes and we could offer more information and site links using our own site.
We (the board) agreed that the name Treasurecoastastronomy.org was a good name to use.
Cost: \$8.95 to register the name one time and \$100.30 annually to pay for the web host. This web page would consist of 800 MB of space and 20 Gigs of transfer memory (people accessing and using the site and downloading data- use this type of memory)
We can also have our own private Email addresses attached to this (1000 available)
30 Search engines for free /Chat site with John B being the Web Master –overseer.
We all agreed it is a good idea (in fact as of today – John has already gotten a good skeleton up and running) and it will be presented to the club for a vote at the March meeting.
2. Discussed raising dues to cover these costs and it is agreed that we do need to raise them. \$15 to \$20 a year. Charlotte to present the board with estimated annual costs to see how much we need to increase it to cover all expenses and any contingencies. We (the board) will discuss the findings and then approve an amount and bring it to the club for voting. This would not go into effect until September 2004.
3. Mission Statement:
We all agree that one is needed. Board members and others try to write up a statement and send it to David and we will then all discuss it and try and find one that best suits our club and use it in future information pamphlets.
4. Meeting agendas and topics.
Sue suggested that we set up the meeting agendas and topics 1 year in advance, using Guest speakers/ Planetarium shows/Terms/Book reports/constellations as topics and having a board member ready with a presentation as a back up in case our meeting person for a particular month is not available.
5. Incorporation of TCAS - This is needed to protect the members of the club from individual liability in the event of any claims against the club or any of its members related to club activities. Incorporation will also make us more "official" (i.e., a legal entity under the law) and allow us to apply for recognition as a 501(c)(3) organization, which would allow contributions to the club to be tax deductible. Larry Crary will set this up for us and will not charge any fees. All the club will have to pay is the cost of forming the corporation which will be approximately \$100. Thereafter, the annual filing (reporting) fee for non-profit corporations is approximately \$75 per year. This will be brought to a vote at the next monthly club meeting.

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ASTRONOMY DAY 2004

Astronomy Day is closing in on us and it is going to be a great day! If you can help put up posters, set up tables and displays on Friday, March 26. Please come up to the college about 7:00 p.m. It should not take long and will make Saturday easier for us all. Also, please remember that Astronomy Day is starting at 2:30 p.m. this year so please come out early. Many of the public have come 30 to 45 minutes before the starting time the past few years.

Kate has a Kids Quiz with lots of new questions on it! The children will be directed to look for the answers around the displays, but if they can't find the answers, they will be asking club members. If you have one, please wear a club tee shirt so the children can spot you easily. A few days before Astronomy Day, the quiz and the answers will be emailed to us all so we are all prepared to answer them!

In an effort to have people linger a while, we are planning to have display tables set up down the science building hall way and outside. Some table suggestions have been Astrophotography, club information, children's table, drawing table, handouts, Dave Holko is hosting a table with a power point presentation, and star charts. The telescope clinic will be outside on the south side of the science building.

Please bring any pictures, posters, displays, etc you have that you would like to have set up for the day. We are planning to set up the hallway on Friday, March 26. Please bring anything you have to set up, at the next meeting or bring it on the 26th .

If you have any old astronomy related magazines that you would like to donate to the handout table, please bring them with you to the February meeting as well.

If you have any suggestions or questions, please call Patty at 460-5264.

WEB PAGE

<http://www.ircc.cc.fl.us/atircc/commout/planetarium/astrosoc.html>.

Please take a look at the clubs web page. If anyone has any suggestions on how we can improve and make our web page more attractive, please let Patty know. New links, an astronomical article, pictures, etc.
(Hopefully our own site will be available soon)

AGENDA FOR THE MARCH MEETING

March 30, 2004 – 7:30 pm.

IRCC, Room S-135 in the Science Building

Program – Presentation by Kate Theisen

REPORT OF STAR PARTIES

Pineland – February 21

David, John Biondo, Cliff, Patty and some friends of David's went to Pinelands. The sky was patchy with light clouds when we first arrived but cleared nicely about 7:30 and stayed clear all night. John had his new lense for his camera and Cliff brought his new telescope, a 13 inch open truss design. Not only an ingenious design, but the views through it were awesome. While Bob and his family were there, they were blown over with the views of Andromeda, Saturn, Jupiter, various other galaxis and globular clusters and before she set, the moon. It was a great night. We all headed out about 11:00.

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David writes, but I don't know the date: We had an impromptu star party last night. Nick Schepis, Scott Frank, John Biondo, Patty Mayer and myself attended. Viewing was pretty good with an occasional high wispy cloud

Pineland, March 20 and 21

David Brown, Dave Holko, Scott Frank, Nick Schepis and a friend of Davids and his wife were at Pinelands on Friday night. Seeing was very good until about 10:30 or so and then the fog moved in quickly. I felt like it was a replay of The Hound s of Baskerville. Saturday was foggy and the wildlife were quite active. David Brown, Nick Schepis, Scott and Charlotte Frank and Patty Mayer were the attendees. Seeing was not nearly as good as on Friday night. However Patty and I found a number of Messier objects as well as a few NGC objects. Both nights we left about 11pm.

WINTER STAR PARTY

Sue and Charlotte attended the 20th anniversary Winter Star Party on West Summerland Key on February 19 thru 22. The event last a whole week, but they could only attend for a few days. There were about 730 people in attendance which means it was more crowded than usual.

We had nice weather, although Thursday night was clouded out. It gave us a chance to visit with all our friends. Friday night was good for about 4 hours and Saturday was good, but dewy. There was a barbeque on Friday night after the drawing for prizes.

Lucky Charlotte came away with the first prize, a JMI RBJ-66 binoscope, complete with carrying case and tripod. We tried it out on Saturday night and it worked very well for a first try. It is in February's edition of Astronomy Magazine as the telescope review.

ASTRONOMYOUTREACH NETWORK Announces 1st Annual Outreach AstroOscars.. These Oscars were awarded at the Winter Star Party on February 20 2004 and will be presented on an annual basis at the Winter Star Party.

The recipients were Robert Nemiroff and Jerry Bonnell, Astronomy Picture of the Day, Southern Cross Astronomical Society, Jen and Vic Winter, Editors of the Astronomical League's "The Reflector"

For more information go to www.astronomyoutreach.net.

FUTURE STAR PARTIES

PINELAND SITE, OKEECHOBEE

New moon – April 16 or 17

See directions below

DIRECTIONS TO PINELAND WILDERNESS AREA

FROM FORT PIERCE - Take SR 70 approx. 15 miles west of Kings Highway (713) (713 is a N/S running road that starts at the Turnpike Toll Plaza) Is 9.2 miles from Midway and SR 70 junction. You are just about there when you start seeing "V Bar 2 Ranch" entrance on your right, look to the left.. You will soon see a brown Pineland sign with a picture of binoculars and an arrow pointing to the left.. Take a left onto VPI Grove Rd. and proceed 1 mile where the road makes a sharp left, go 1mile to dead end and parking lot. The road is really not bad to drive on but be careful of the bumps.

FROM PORT ST LUCIE & STUART – travel north on I95 and exit on Midway Rd. (712), go west to end of Midway Road. Make left on SR 70, heading west. When you see the "V Bar 2 Ranch" entrance on your right

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you will be close. Begin looking for the brown Pineland signs on the right with a picture of binoculars and an arrow pointing to the left. Take a left onto VPI Grove Rd. and proceed 1 mile where the road makes a sharp left, go 1 mile to dead end and parking lot.

VPI Grove Rd. is dirt and crushed shell. This is a St. Lucie County wilderness area, there are no facilities

David Brown's cell phone is 772-971-5916 if you need to contact someone.

On clear moonless nights some club members will have an impromptu star party. In the FP/PSL/STUART area call Joey Lopez at 871-0432, or David Brown at 878-6233 (CELL 772-971-5916) or Patty Mayer at 335-4578 if anyone might be planning to observe. (If any members would like their name added to or deleted from the above, please let the editor know.)

OXBOW ECO-CENTER

There will another Eco Friday at Oxbow on March 26, 2004. All are invited to bring their telescopes for public sky viewing. All club members are invited to participate. Please contact Patty Mayer so Wren, the new Oxbow contact, will have an idea of how many to expect.

GIRL SCOUTS

This project has been postponed indefinitely due to inclement weather on scheduled nights.

MISCELLANEOUS

Our new green laser pointer and the laser collimator are available to club members as well as club videos and books. Call David Brown if you need to use the laser pointer or collimator. You may call Sue Prill to borrow club books and videos.

IRCC PLANETARIUM SHOWS WITH JON BELL

Saturn Lord of the Rings – April 16 & 17, May 21 & 22

Shows are going to be presented on Friday at 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. and on Saturdays at 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. They will be on Friday nights and Saturday afternoons, no more Saturday night or Sunday shows. . If you can, please come out Friday nights to share the night sky with the public. IRCC has given Jon permission to have some of the lights turned off for his shows so the club will have better skies and much less glare! We will set up our scopes on the north side of the planetarium.

Listen to Jon Bell on "Skywatch" WQCS 88.9 fm radio Mon-Fri 7:20 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. for daily sky updates.
<http://www.ircc.cc.fl.us/atircc/commout/planetarium/planet.html>

CLUB MEETINGS

Science Building, Room 135, IRCC main campus unless we are having a planetarium show or special program

March 30, April 27, May 25, June 29, July 27, August 31, September 28, October 26, 2004
(No Meeting in December)

Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. the last Tuesday of each month and are open to the public.

TCAS MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are \$12. per fiscal year, ending in September which includes a membership to the Astronomical League, a monthly sky calendar from Abrams Planetarium, discounted

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subscriptions to Sky and Tele (\$32.95) and Astronomy (\$29.00 per year and \$55. for two years) magazines and access to club resources. You will also receive a quarterly newsletter "The Reflector" from the Astronomical League and the monthly TCAC newsletter "Comet Tails". Dues and magazine subscriptions should be sent to Charlotte Bilder, Treasurer, 102 Cove View, Stuart, FL 34994. WHEN RENEWING SUBSCRIPTIONS PLEASE SEND CHECK AND THE RENEWAL FORM WITH THE ENVELOPE FROM THE MAGAZINE TO THE TREASURER .

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TCAS Officers

President – David Brown Vice-President/Program Chairman – Larry Crary
Treasurer/Comet Tails Editor – Charlotte Bilder
Secretary - Sue Prill
Librarian/Historian/Parliamentarian - Sue Prill
Public Outreach Chairman – Patty Mayer

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Beginning in April Patty Mayer will take over the job of doing the newsletter from Charlotte Bilder. Thank you to those who have assisted me in writing the newsletter the past 2 ½ years.

RESOURCES

Interesting web sites and materials to check out

Treasure Coast Astronomical Society—
<http://www.ircc.cc.fl.us/atircc/commout/planetarium/astrosoc.html>
International Dark Sky Org-----<http://www.darksky.org>
Sky & Telescope Magazine -----<http://www.skypub.com>
Astronomy Magazine-----<http://www.astronomy.com>
Events, links, downloads-astronomy in your face-----<http://www.sorgeweb.com/astronomy>
Space news junky-----<http://www.space.com>
Satellite tracking-----<http://www.heavens-above.com/>
Telescope Construction and automation-----<http://www.efn.org/-mbartels>
American Meteor Society report form-----http://sohowwww.armsmeteors.org/form_1.html
Telescope Construction and automation-----<http://www.efn.org/-mbartels>
Virtual universe tour-----<http://earthspace.net>

MEMBER WEB SITES

John and Marilyn Grage-----<http://community-2.webtv.net/jmimagine/BANANAMOON/>
Dave Holko-----<http://www.atkmotors.com/defaultx.htm>
John Biondo-----<http://skygazersoftware.com>

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I have subscribed to the NASA Space Place column for newsletters which I found in the latest "Reflector Magazine". They will send me one each month and I will share it with you all.

Sciencecraft by Patrick L. Barry and Tony Phillips

Probes that can distinguish between "interesting" things and "boring" things are vital for deep space exploration, say JPL scientists.

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Along with his colleagues in NASA's Space Technology 6 Project (ST6), JPL's Steven Chien is working to develop an artificial intelligence technology that does just that. They call it the Autonomous Sciencecraft Experiment, and it's one of many next-generation satellite technologies emerging from NASA's New Millennium Program.

As humanity expands its exploration of the outer solar system-or even neighboring solar systems!-the probes we send suffer from two unavoidable handicaps. First, commands radioed by mission scientists on Earth take a long time to reach the probe: six hours for the planned New Horizons mission to Pluto, for example.

Second, the great distance also means that data beamed back by the probe trickles to Earth at a lower bandwidth-often much less than an old 28.8 kbps modem. Waiting for hundreds or thousands of multi-megabyte scientific images to download could take weeks. And often many of those images will be "boring," that is, they won't contain anything new or important for scientists to puzzle over. That's certainly not the most efficient way of using a multi-million dollar probe.

Even worse, what if one of those images showed something extremely "interesting"-a rare event like a volcanic eruption or an unexpected feature like glaciers of methane ice? By the time scientists see the images, hours or days would have passed, and it may be too late to tell the probe to take a closer look.

But how can a probe's computer brain possibly decide what's "interesting" to scientists and what's not?

"What you really want is a probe that can identify changes or unique features and focus on those things on its own, rather than just taking images indiscriminately," says Arthur Chmielewski, one of Chien's colleagues at JPL.

Indeed, that's what Chien's software does. It looks for things that change. A mission to Jupiter's icy moon Europa, for instance, might zero in on newly-formed cracks in the ice. Using artificial intelligence to set priorities, the probe could capture a complete movie of growing fractures rather than a single haphazard snapshot.

Until scientists can actually travel to deep space and explore distant worlds in person, they'll need spacecraft "out there" that can do some of the thinking for them. Sciencecraft is leading the way.

Learn more about Sciencecraft at nmp.nasa.gov/st6. Kids can make a "Star Finder" for this month and learn about another of the ST6 technologies at spaceplace.nasa.gov/st6starfinder/st6starfinder.htm.

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This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Caption:

The Autonomous Sciencecraft technology that will be tested as part of NASA's Space Technology 6 mission will use artificial intelligence to select and transmit only the scientifically significant images.

This image may be found at http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/astro_clubs/acquiredata.jpg