



RVAS

Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society



News About Amateur Astronomy
In Southwestern Virginia
<http://www.roavas.org>

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November / December 2005

VAAS WAS A GAAS !!!

By Mike Overacker - RVAS VP

I remember that day well... (drifting into memory)... Mr. Overacker, your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to coordinate and work with a team to present the VAAS convention in Roanoke Virginia. This recording will self destruct in..... one second.... Oohh... hot..hot...hot.... (memory fades back to reality, or as close to reality as I ever get).

The annual convention of the Virginia Association of Astronomical Societies (VAAS) was held at Virginia Western Community College on Saturday, November 5, 2005. The day broke with rather warm temperatures and a partly cloudy sky. It was a nice day to drive for those coming from distant parts of the Virginia, and other states. Our team of RVAS members arrived on the VWCC campus early, and proceeded to place all of the directional signs and tables to prepare for the arrival of the registrants. I had parked the Astronomy Mobile Outreach Vehicle (AMOV) near the entrance so I could offload the three

telescopes I had built that would be a backdrop on the stage, and the subject of my short talk on building Dobsonians. Richard Anderson brought his Dobsonian and loaded it from backstage. Mark Campbell from Richmond brought his 10" Dobsonian in as well, and placed it on the stage Also on the stage was the travel 6" telescope from John Goss.

Attendees started to arrive, and the registration table was the center of attention in the early morning. John and Genevieve Goss were doing an excellent job and had registration under control, so I started to sell extra door prize tickets. Rand Bowden quickly took that position over and allowed me to continue to monitor the event. Bob Young and Bruce Jones had arraigned for coffee and donuts for the participants, and I believe that they were really appreciated that morning. Dr. Dwight Holland, Dr. Carlos Salgado, and Mike Good arrived in the morning, and Johnny Horne arrived later in the morning, so we had all of our speakers present in good time. Mark Hodges made sure things were lined up for the speakers, and in short order, the fun began.

Katherine Hix, President of RVAS opened the conference, welcoming the visitors. She then allowed Clark Thomas a bit of time to talk about Equinox Software, a Mac based Planetarium and scope control software that had been donated as door prizes, and to talk about the observing sites for the evening. Clark Thomas would be responsible for the Sunset Fields Overlook for northeast bound attendees, while I would take Devils Backbone Overlook for those heading south after the convention. Although Mark Hodges would introduce most of our speakers at VAAS this year, I had the pleasure of introducing Dr. Dwight Holland to the conference. Dwight is a long time friend of mine and we use to live in the same neighborhood when we were much younger. Dr. Holland spoke on a multitude of subjects and had the audience following his every word. Dr. Holland is an excellent speaker and his talk was well received. After questions, time had run a little long, and we had to cut the break a bit short to make time for the second speaker. Attendees took their morning break, then
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RVAS is looking to fill vacancies in the positions of Newsletter Editor and Webmaster. If you would like to step up and help your club, please contact Mike Overacker at mike@overacker.com.



MYSTERY OBJECT

This could be called a "Star Shadow", but it is much more "ghoulish" than that.

Send your best guess to Dave Thomas, our Mystery Object Columnist, at

thomasde-ka8inl@worldnet.att.net

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it was back into the auditorium for our second speaker, Dr. Carlos Salgado. Dr. Salgado has worked towards having a 24" OGS Ritchey Chretien telescope placed on Fan Mountain at the UVa Astronomy site. This scope will be available to a system that tracks and images GRBs for study. The scope will be available for other interests as well, and will be maintained by University of Virginia, Norfolk State University, and Back Bay Astronomers. Dr. Salgado gave a great talk, and I think everyone was excited by his presentation. Lunch. Bruce Jones had arraigned for Chanticleer Catering to bring in lunches for those who decided to eat at the conference. I think

everyone was pleased with the food, and many took advantage of a chance to look through the RVAS Coronado SolarMax 40 solar telescope during lunch. I found out as we were preparing to start the afternoon agenda that many participants went to Firehouse Subs at Towers Mall and were surprised to see the restaurant decorated with my fire photography images. I received compliments from many attendees about my fire photographs, and I appreciate the nice words.

Johnny Horne was first up in the afternoon, and he put on a very light-hearted display of his fine photographic skill, and his easy sense of humor. Mixed in his talk

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ASTRO-QUIZ

Where in the sky would you look if you wanted to see the most Messier objects at one time in an eyepiece that has a one-degree field of view?

Answer to Last Month's Astro-Quiz: Last month we asked which of the 88 officially accepted constellations, bears a name that is also a well-known factor involved in producing the objective of a reflecting telescope. The objective of a reflecting telescope is its primary mirror. And the depth of the parabaloidal curve that must be ground out of the flat glass mirror blank is known as the "sagitta," which is, of course, also the name of the tiny constellation representing an arrow between Cygnus and Aquila. A mirror's sagitta equals the square of its radius divided by four times its focal length. For a 10-inch f/5 mirror, the sagitta would be $25/(4 \times 50)$, or 0.125 inch. Note that if the mirror were f/8, the sagitta would only be 0.078 inch. We leave it to the reader to work out the math and ponder the implications.

The Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society is a membership organization of amateur astronomers dedicated to the pursuit of observational and photographic activities. Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. the third Monday of each month at Center in the Square in downtown Roanoke, Virginia. Meetings are open to the public. Observing sessions are held one or two weekends a month at a dark-sky site. Yearly individual dues are \$20.00. Family membership is \$25.00; student membership is \$10.00. For information, call the RVAS Message Line at 540-774-5651. Articles, quotes, etc. published in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the RVAS, its editor, officers, or individual members.

RVAS web page: <http://www.roavas.org>

Officers/Executive Committee: Katherine Hix, President (334-2443); Mike Overacker, Vice President and Newsletter Editor (776-3092); Mark Hodges, Secretary (774-5039); Lynn Slonaker, Treasurer (774-5695); Bruce Jones, Executive Committee Member-At-Large (774-3844); Paul Caffrey, Immediate Past President (345-2847); Dave Godman, Past President / New Member Coordinator (774-3337); John Goss and Genevieve Goss, Outreach Coordinators (966-4606); Frank Baratta, Membership and Public Viewing Coordinator (774-5651); Mahesh Tailor, Web Master (776-5472)

THE LOCAL GROUP

By Genevieve Goss

Magazines such as Astronomy and Sky & Telescope attract a quarter of a million readers each month, so at least this many people must have an interest in sky quality and have heard of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA). Yet, despite its impact on light pollution and the world acclaim it receives, the IDA does not show a very large percentage of amateur astronomers in its membership roster. Instead, the cost of educating the world about good lighting and creating a demand for full-cutoff light fixtures is carried more by professional observatories, universities and

lighting companies who address the needs for these fixtures. Donating to a nonprofit, educational organization may pose the question of "What do I get for my membership??" to members of the Local Group. Well, how much is it worth to preserve the beauty of our night skies? To conserve energy? To promote quality outdoor lighting to reduce glare and light trespass? Using good lighting is such a win-win solution to a difficult problem, but people have to know that there are alternatives. By joining or making a contribution now to the International Dark-Sky Association, you will be doing a great service to all, especially to all amateur astronomers.

RVAS pays for one club membership per year. While it's a noble use for club funds, it doesn't let individual members off the hook! Your own membership

to IDA is critical to its success in the battle to save dark skies. In addition, there is strength in numbers, and IDA will leverage your support around the globe. If you own one or more telescopes, you should join IDA! If you have subscribed to Astronomy or Sky & Telescope magazines, you should join IDA! If you are a member of an astronomy club (even if your club is a member) you should join IDA! If you think that future generations should be able to observe the heavens, you should join IDA! As you consider year-end donations to offset your income tax burden, you should join IDA! And just how do you join IDA?? Visit: <http://www.darksky.org/membership/membership.html> or mail a check for \$30 (individual) or \$50 (family) to

International Dark-Sky Association
3225 N. First Ave.
Tucson, AZ 85719 USA ✦

LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY OBJECT

The October Mystery Object is a planetary nebula that some say resembles a turtle. The nebula is located in Hercules at R.A. 16h 44m 30s and Dec. +23d 48m 00s.

Glowing at magnitude 9.7 with a decidedly green color, the nebula is viewable with a six inch scope from suburban locales.

Residing in Hercules it has some distinguished neighbors such as the globular cluster M13, one of the brightest in the sky, and a slightly more challenging galaxy, NGC 6181.



NOVEMBER RVAS MEETING MINUTES

By Mark Hodges - RVAS Secretary

There were 22 members present. Katherine opened the meeting with a preliminary report on VAAS. The club made approximately \$300.00 but the financial not quite complete.

Mike Good reported observing an occultation of an 11.4 mag. star in Auriga by asteroid "99 Dike" on Nov. 17th. John Goss was not in attendance at the beginning of the meeting so No Jack Horkheimer :-): John was at the Roanoke city Council meeting concerning the city's new lighting ordinance. Genevieve reported that the club has met it's requirements in the Night Sky

Network but that we could be doing more.

December's meeting is our annual winter social, which means FOOD, so plan on bringing a dish to the meeting.

Also on New Years Eve the club will be participating in Vinton's "Enchanted Evening" at the Vinton War Memorial. We will have telescopes set up, weather permitting.

And this spring Astronomy Day will be observed on May 6, 2006. We may try to hold it at the annual chili cook off.

And to close the evening Mike Good presented the nights program "The Top 20 Optical Observatories in the World"

VAAS PRIZE WINNERS LIST

<i>Prize</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Club</i>
Chroma \$500 Gift Certificate	Mike Overacker	RVAS
Trifid Camera Gift Certificate	Dean Spiers	VPAS
Hardin Star Hoc 80mm Telescope	David Miller	CAS
Celestron Axiom 19mm Eyepiece	Richard Drum	CAS
Celestron Axiom 15mm Eyepiece #2	Rand Bowden	RVAS
The Sky 6 - Serious Astronomers Edition	Rick Rader	RVAS
StarGPS LX Autostar System	Mike Haynie	RVAS
Star Atlas Pro - Advanced Edition - Level III	Mike Overacker	RVAS
Images Plus	Glen Howell	NAS
The Sky 6 - Student Edition	Pat DeDonato	CAS
The Sky 6 - Student Edition #2	Glen Howell	NAS
JMI Tripod Carrying Case	Mike Haynie	RVAS
Maxfactory CD	Mike Overacker	RVAS
Maxfactory CD #2	Bob Kirby	
Lumicon \$25 Gift Certificate	Rand Bowden	RVAS
Lumicon \$25 Gift Certificate #2	Clark Thomas	RVAS
Astrostack Registered Software #1	Dave Credicott	RAS
Astrostack Registered Software #2	Terry Barker	RAS
Astrostack Registered Software #3	Glen Howell	NAS
Astrostack Registered Software #4	Dave Credicott	RAS
Astrozap Gift Certificate	Keith Mottas	RAS
Astrozap Gift Certificate #2	Mark Hodges	RVAS
Equinox Software	Rand Bowden	RVAS
Equinox Software #2	Dave Thomas	RVAS
Equinox Software SBIG Edition	Mark Campbell	RAS
Photoshop for Astrophotographers	Glen Howell	NAS
StarGazer Telescopes Gas Money #1	Neil Hobbs	BRAC
StarGazer Telescopes Gas Money #2	Pat DeDonato	CAS
StarGazer Telescopes Gas Money #3	Kitty Wine	
StarGazer Telescopes Gas Money #4	Dave Godman	RVAS
StarGazer Telescopes - Grand Tour Book	Gary Cornick	CAS
StarGazer Telescopes - Grand Tour Book #2	Walter Luhmann	BRAC
Burgess Optical 9mm Planetary Eyepiece	Walter Luhmann	BRAC
OPT 42mm 2" Superview Eyepiece	Jack Wine	
OPT 30mm 2" Superview Eyepiece	Bob Young	RVAS
OPT 1.25" Color Filter Set	John Lyerly	
Planetary Society "Surf Titan" T-Shirt	Joey Reece	SVS
Solarscope Standard Version	Mike Overacker	RVAS

VAAS PRIZE WINNERS LIST (CONTINUED)

Ideal Astronomy Eyepiece Fanny Pack	Paul Caffery	RVAS
Adirondack Astronomy \$50 Gift Certificate	Kitty Wine	
RVAS Mug	Rand Bowden	RVAS
RVAS Mug #2	Thays Teotonio	RVGS
Astronomy Calender	Gary Cornick	CAS
Astronomy Calender #2	Bob Young	RVAS
Johnny Horne Astrophoto Poster	Richard Drum	CAS
Johnny Horne Astrophoto Poster #2	Joey Reece	SVS
Johnny Horne Astrophoto Poster #3	Dave Credicott	RAS

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was a lot of laughter, and large amounts of tips and information to improve your photography and astrophotography. Johnny donated three of his posters to be given away as door prizes, and the winners were pleased to get them. Johnny is a talented photographer and an excellent speaker.

In between speakers, we handed out door prizes, which kept the excitement building for the main drawing of door prizes after the final speaker.

During the mid-afternoon break, several people talked about their home-built telescopes.

First to speak was John Goss, and he showed his transportable 6" Dobsonian telescope. This is a really nice design and there was plenty of interest in this scope, including yours truly. Hopefully, he will make the plans available to the club. Mark Campbell from the Richmond club brought his traditional style dobsonian to show. It was a 10" dob that he had built on a budget, and it was a truly nice homebuilt scope. It was nice to see such a good example of a home-built scope. I, Mike Overacker, finished up the "home built telescope" break with the three

scopes I have built. All three were Kreige/Berry design Dobsonians, and of the three, two are mine, and one I built for the RFDA President, Katherine Hix. I had my first homebuilt scope, a 15" f4.8 truss style Dobsonian, a 13.1" f4.4 truss style Dobsonian that belongs to Katherine Hix, and a 12.5" f8 Dobsonian that I call a Multi-truss Dobsonian of my own design. It has 16 truss tubes, 8 tubes on two layers to provide the length needed for the f8 mirror, without having extremely long truss tubes.

Our final speaker was Mike Good, one of our RVAS members. Mike spoke on astrophotography, photometry, and AGN's. Mike kept the audience listening closely to his wealth of knowledge and experience in these subjects, and I and the RVAS members consider ourselves lucky to have him in our club. His talk was an excellent cap to our presentation activities.

The final duty of the day was to draw for the door prizes. VAAS had 47 door prizes to hand out to lucky winners, with a combined value of almost \$3600. There were a lot of happy attendees when all of the door prizes had been handed out. Mark Hodges and Katherine

Hix did almost all of the drawings, and I was on the microphone to announce the numbers. It went relatively fast, given the amount of prizes to be given away. Buying extra tickets seemed to be a good idea, as several people won multiple drawings.

The list of winners is in this newsletter.

I wish to thank all of my fellow RVAS members that helped, or attended VAAS 2005, for helping make it a success. If you did not take advantage of this event, you missed a good one.

I want to also thank the speakers, Dr. Dwight Holland, Dr. Carlos Salgado, Johnny Horne, Mike Good, and ATM's, John Goss and Mark Campbell, for taking their time to do their presentations and help us move astronomy forward for the benefit off all.

And a special thanks to Katherine Hix, Mark Hodges, John Goss, Genevieve Goss, Rand Bowden, and Bruce Jones for doing such a great job, and helping keep my spirits up when the planning started to get me down. It would not have been as much fun as it was for all without you. ✦

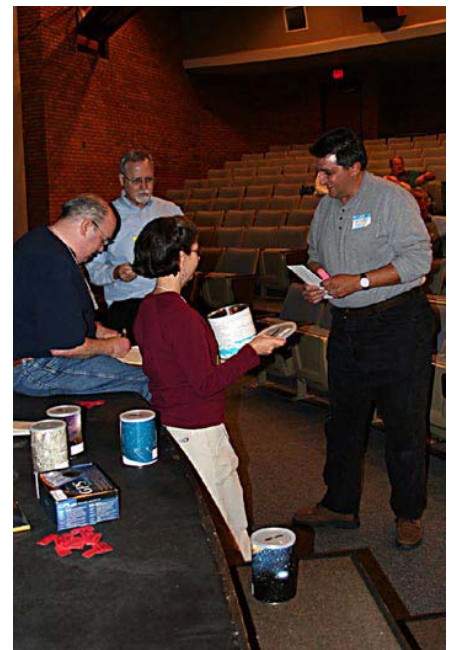
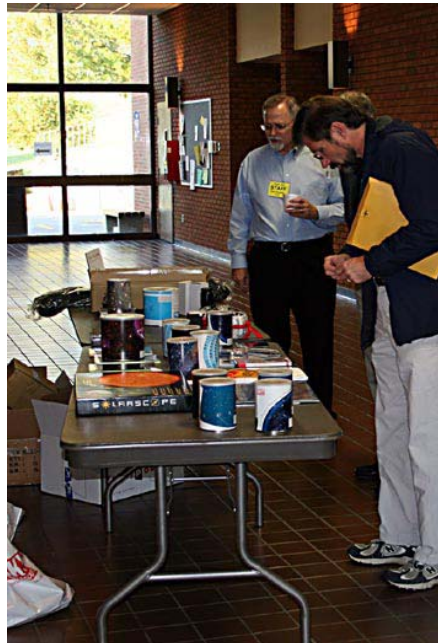
RVAS PICNIC 2005

Picnic Images by David Thomas



VAAS 2005

VAAS Images by Mike Overacker



UPCOMING EVENTS

ENCHANTED EVE - VINTON WAR MEMORIAL - VINTON, VA - DECEMBER 31, 2005

RVAS has been invited back to help Vinton ring in the New Year with Vinton's Enchanted Eve. Last year, the weather was warm, but the clouds were abundant. RVAS members were able to give a good number of interested viewers a glimpse at the heavens through the "sucker holes" in the night sky. Enchanted Eve last year was the first outreach program for the StarGazer II (<http://www.stargazer2.com>).

I believe everyone that attended had a good time, and I think we will this year as well. It is an excellent opportunity for RVAS families to go out on New Years Eve. While the astronomy-minded members of the family do their thing, other members can take advantage of the multitude of other activities at the event. Please let either Katherine Hix or Mike Overacker know if you wish to attend.

NEAF 2006 - ROCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE - SUFFERN, NY - MAY 6 AND 7, 2006

NEAF (North East Astronomy Forum) is an annual event held by the Rockland Astronomy Club in New York. The event is held at the Rockland Community College at 145 College Road in Suffern NY. This event is heavily attended by astronomy enthusiasts from up and down the east coast and by astronomy vendors from around the world. Information will coming soon at the Rockland Astronomy site at www.rocklandastronomy.com.

THANKS TO THESE RVAS MEMBERS FOR THEIR HELP WITH VAAS 2005

Mike Overacker	Bruce Jones	Bob Young	Ellen Holtman
Katherine Hix	Lynn Slonaker	Steve Manuel	Fred Davis
Mark Hodges	Mike Good	Barbara Manuel	Sharon Stinnette
John Goss	Rand Bowden	Roger Pommerenke	Rick Rader
Genevieve Goss	Jeff Suhr	Jeff Wood	Margaret Reamy
Clark Thomas	Ed Stinson	Liana Arias	Mike Haynie
Paul Caffery	Bill Green	Chris Tschappatt	Randy Sowden
Dierdre Caffery	Dave E. Thomas	Harry Montoro	
Dave Godman	Dave W. Thomas	Roger Holtman	

THINGS RVAS MEMBERS MIGHT WANT TO DO THIS MONTH

1. Consider signing up to help the RVAS in a public outreach session at the Enchanted Eve event at the Vinton War Memorial on the evening of December 31, 2005
2. Attend the RVAS December meeting on Monday, December 19, 2005. It is the Winter Social and we ask everyone attending is to bring a dessert treat or snack.
3. Think up things that you would like to know more about involving Astronomy. Also, areas that you might have the sufficient knowledge to help others in that realm of knowledge.
When you come up with a list, send it to me at : mike@overacker.com
4. Do some observing. Preferably, do some observing with some other club members. Sure, it might be cold, but that is what layers of clothing are for. The vast majority of club members have never been seen at RVAS programs, or out observing with other club members. Why not start now?
5. Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season.

Society Events and Activities for December 2005

MONTHLY MEETING: Monday, December 19th, 7:30 p.m. fifth floor meeting room, Center in the Square, downtown Roanoke. The meeting program will be the December Social and a tour of the "Alien Earths" exhibit at the Science museum. .

"MEMBERS ONLY" WEEKEND OBSERVING SESSIONS: Unless otherwise noted, observing sessions are held at Cahas Mountain Overlook, milepost 139 on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Friday and Saturday, 2nd and 3rd. Sunset is at 5:02 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 6:35 p.m. The Moon sets at 5:56 and 6:52 p.m., respectively.

Friday and Saturday, 23rd and 24th. Sunset is at 5:08 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 6:41 p.m. The Moon rises at 12:43 and 1:43 a.m., respectively.

Friday and Saturday, 30th and 31st. Sunset is at 5:12 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 6:46 p.m. The Moon sets at 4:32 and 5:45 p.m., respectively.

January Sessions: 20th and 21st; 27th and 28th.

FRANKLIN CO. PARKS DEPT./RVAS PUBLIC STARGAZE: No sessions are planned until March 25, 2006.

ROANOKE CITY PARKS DEPT./RVAS PUBLIC STARGAZE: Saturday, December 3rd, 5:30 p.m., Cahas Overlook, milepost 139, Blue Ridge Parkway. For City, County and other area residents; RVAS members welcome to participate. Call the RVAS Message Line, 540-774-5651, for information. (Next session: January 21st, 6:00 p.m., Cahas Overlook.)

Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society
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