



RVAS

Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society

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



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June 2006

SUN, SCOPES, AND STRAWBERRIES SPELL SWEET SUCCESS!

By John Jardine Goss

On Tuesday, the forecast for Saturday was 63° with a 50% chance of rain. But you just never know about the weather. Saturday morning saw the beginnings of a beautiful day - a few clouds and temperatures in the mid 70s.

RVAS volunteers began arriving at Roanoke's Elmwood Park at 9:15 a.m. to set up telescopes, tables and displays for Astronomy Day held in association with Community School's Strawberry Festival. By 10:30, everything was ready to meet the already gathering public.

A table was positioned along the Park's promenade, bravely staffed by Jeff Suhr. Nearly lost in the sea of happy strawberry eaters, Jeff distributed RVAS handouts while directing people to visit the scopes located "up on the rocks." And up they came!



Throughout the day, eighteen club members shared our hobby with more than 500 people who ventured to the rocky lookout. Fortunately, there were plenty of telescopes on hand - Celestrons, ETXs, LXs, as well as Orion short tube and hydrogen alpha refractors.

Placed among the scopes were displays and demonstrations. Many a festival goer discovered their weight on the moon, which most of them liked, and on Jupiter, which distressed nearly everyone. They learned about stellar formation and evolution, and of our position on earth and, in turn, its position in our solar system. They came away with handouts and the kids had glow in the dark stars.

There was a constant barrage of "Oohs" and "Ahhs" coming from those looking through the scopes. What were they seeing? Try the formation of a sunspot group in the white light filtered scopes. Try the large solar prominence on the sun's lower right side along with many wispy gaseous ejections scattered around the solar rim. Try the 50% phase of a daytime Venus. Last but not least, try the

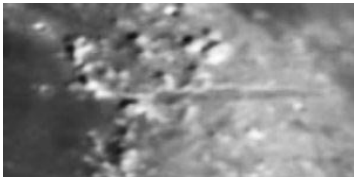


Mill Mountain Star complete with people on its observation deck peering down at us in Elmwood Park.

Not all of the day-long activities were centered on Elmwood Park. The Astronomy Mobile Outreach Vehicle (AMOV), staffed by RVAS Vice-President Mike Overacker, attracted quite a crowd during the 18th Annual Mustang and Ford Power Roundup held at Tanglewood Mall. Six hundred happy Mustang fans caught great views of a safely filtered sun through Mike's Meade LX200.

Club members did not slow down in the evening either. Eight RVASers assembled scopes next to the AMOV parked in Roanoke's Market Square. From 7:30 p.m.

See Astronomy Day - Page 3



MYSTERY OBJECT

This lunar feature won't have a lot of European skiers on it this winter. Can you guess the name of this feature.

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

thomasde-ka8inl@worldnet.att.net

*** IMPORTANT - DUES AND SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE ***

It's renewal time for RVAS memberships, most of which expire on June 30, 2005. If your membership expires at another time, you'll receive a special notice. If you want to know now when your membership expires, call **Frank Baratta at 774-5651**. Membership categories are:

INDIVIDUAL (\$20.00 per year) - RVAS and Astronomical League membership for you.

FAMILY (\$25.00 per year) - RVAS and Astronomical League membership for you and your family.

STUDENT (\$10.00 per year) -RVAS and Astronomical League membership for a full-time student.

Make checks payable to "RVAS," and forward to: **Lynn Slonaker, RVAS Treasurer, 3548 Kenwick Trail, Roanoke, VA 24018**.

MAGAZINES: Members may subscribe to *Astronomy* (\$34.00) and/or *Sky & Telescope* (\$32.95) at the indicated substantial club discount rates. Subscriptions are sent to the publishers each April 15th, August 15th and December 15th. Renewal payments should be submitted by whichever of these dates is at least 4 months prior to the expiration of your magazine(s). Orders may be added to dues payments, or submitted separately.

ASTRO-QUIZ

In what constellations will the Sun and Moon be found at Full Moon this month?

Answer to Last Month's Astro-Quiz: Every culture has viewed the night sky and created its own images and symbols among the stars. The system of images we use retains much that began in ancient Mesopotamia and that was later elaborated by the Greeks. Over half of the currently-recognized 88 constellations have come down to us through the works of Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemaeus), the great astronomer of antiquity. In about 140 A.D., he listed 48 constellations in his book *Syntaxis*, which became 50 when Argo was broken into Carina, Puppis and Vela. The first constellation to be added to his listing was Coma Berenices, which was also an ancient grouping, but had not been recognized by Ptolemy.

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); Roger Pommerenke, Web Master (774-5823)

LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY OBJECT

The Leo Triplet is the mystery object for this month. Located in Leo this trio consists of M65, M66 and NGC3628.

Located at 35 million light years distant it may be associated with the Leo I galaxy group.

NGC3628, located in the upper left of the photo, is an edge on galaxy with a prominent dust lane.



THE LOCAL GROUP

By Genevieve Goss

As the two-year term for this administration draws to a close, The Local Group extends its appreciation for their hard work and dedication. During the presidency of Katherine Hix, RVAS has become a standard fixture on December 31 at "Enchanted Eve in Vinton", made a bold step in the purchase of a good solar telescope (Solar Max 40) for club use and public outreach, and hosted a very successful VAAS convention in November 2005 under the leadership of Vice-President Mike Overacker. The Local Group anticipates good leadership from the new administration which will be elected at the June meeting. Thanks and good luck to all those who devote time and energy to the Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society!

June 21 - The Summer Solstice occurs in the northern hemisphere at 12:26 UT. The Sun is at its highest point in the sky and it will be the longest day of the year. This is also the first day of summer. The weekend following the solstice is jam-packed with astronomy events: Green Bank Star Quest in West Virginia, Cherry Springs Star Party in Pennsylvania, Sky Tour 2006 in Bellevue, Ohio, Jersey StarQuest in Hope, New Jersey, Bryce Canyon Astronomy Festival in Cedar City, Utah...just to name a few! In other words, amateur astronomy is booming and you can find events all summer long! For more info, see <http://www.amsky.com/calendar/events/> Don't forget that there's no place like home and join The Local Group up on the Parkway for RVAS observing sessions! ✦

MAY RVAS MEETING NOTES

By Mark Hodges - RVAS Secretary

There were 19 members and 1 visitor present.

Katherine opened the meeting and John Goss gave a report on Astronomy Day held on May 6th. The club had 26 members participate in demonstrations to the public at Elmwood Park and Tanglewood Mall with at least 1500 visitors

Lynn gave us a treasurers report and reminded everyone that it is time to pay dues again.

Then Katherine introduced Peter Lewis from Apple Ridge Farms. Peter spoke to us about the future plans for Apple Ridge Farms including an astronomical observatory to teach kids about the

night sky with the involvement of the RVAS.

Next up was Mike Good who spoke to us about General Electric's involvement with the project and the plans for the observatory project itself along with the observing site and what will need to be done to make this happen.

Next month's meeting (June 19) is an important meeting for RVAS members, as it is election night for a new slate of officers. The program will be a Movie Night with snacks and drinks.

It promises to be alot of fun, so everyone should try to attend ✦

ASTRONOMY DAY

Continued from Page 1

until 10:00 p.m., over 200 people saw close-up views of lunar craters, mountains, and plains; and Saturn's famous rings along with Titan and three smaller moons. No one came away disappointed!

The RVAS would like to thank Mother Nature and all those who made this day of outreach possible. Their names are too numerous to list here because over 26 club members donated their time and expertise to make Astronomy Day 2006 a resounding success! ✦

STARS AMONGST THE CARS

By Mike Overacker - Vice President

Stars Amongst the Cars

Saturday, May 6th was the day selected to be Astronomy Day in 2006. The RVAS was planning on having their Astronomy Day festivities at Elmwood Park during the Strawberry Festival. The club members had signed up to help in Elmwood Park in good numbers, so I decided to take advantage of an opportunity to display StarGazer II and promote astronomy at another venue.

I am webmaster for the Roanoke Valley Mustang Club, and every year the RVMC holds an event called the Annual Mustang and Ford Powered RoundUp. Now, since the StarGazer II has a 460 cubic inch, fuel injected, Ford engine, I qualified to enter the event. Granted, it would not be like anything else at the show, I figured I would at least get some attention.

The show would be held at

Tanglewood Mall, in the parking area around the Firestone store. I had pre-registered, so when I arrived, I had to let them know that I was attending, and then get a photo taken before placing my vehicle for display. When I pulled up for the photo, the photographer had no idea that I was an entry, and was waiting for me to move the vehicle. I had to inform him that I was entered in the event, then, with an odd look, he proceeded to photograph StarGazer II as an official entry. The event coordinators allowed me to have a space with enough area around it to set up some telescopes.

As the crowd started to increase, I set up my 8 inch Meade LX200 Classic with a full aperture Thousand Oaks solar filter. From that time through the end of the event, I was showing the sun to a steady stream of attendees. I had to break away from the telescope often to show StarGazer II to interested parties, so I was

in constant motion the entire day. I seemed to me that most people were aware of the fact that looking at the sun through a telescope was harmful to your sight. I had to convince a lot of attendees that it was safe to view through this solar filter, but still, I had several that refused to look, even after my assurances of safety.

I had also set up the StarGazer Scopes 15" Truss Dobsonian as a display. It really is rather impressive in the daylight, and the vast majority of people stopping by had no idea that a telescope could look like that.

Overall, I felt that it was time well spent, and that I was successful in this outreach. I felt that I had introduced aspects of amateur astronomy to a group of people that were there to look at the cars, only to find out that there were other things for them to look at, and learn there as well.

THINGS RVAS MEMBERS MIGHT WANT TO DO THIS MONTH

1. Attend the RVAS June meeting on Monday, June 19, 2006. This will be a great learning opportunity for all club members. Isn't that why you joined the RVAS?
2. Let the club know what you would like to know more about involving Astronomy. Also, areas that you might have the sufficient knowledge to help others. Write an article for the Newsletter, something that every member of this club should do. More members involved means a better club. Send it to me at : mike@overacker.com
3. Do some observing. Preferably, do some observing with some other club members. The weather is getting warmer, so you need to shake off the winter blahs and get out under the stars. The majority of club members have never been seen at RVAS programs, or out observing with other club members. Why not start now?
4. Volunteer to help with club activities. A large part of the activity and outreach of the RVAS is being done by a few people. This is not fair to those few, or the club. It makes no difference how much, or how little, you know. What counts is that you are willing to be a part of the RVAS. Remember, the RVAS is here to promote astronomy, the club, and to have fun. You can't have fun if you don't show up.

UPCOMING EVENTS

GREEN BANK STAR QUEST III - GREEN BANK, WV - JUNE 21-24, 2006

Central Appalachian Astronomy Club of West Virginia, Kanahwa Valley Astronomical Society, and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) is pleased to announce that we will be holding our third annual Green Bank Star Quest in Green Bank, West Virginia on June 21-24, 2005. The event will feature speakers including: Seth Shostak, Bob Royce, and others. Classes will be available for assorted subjects, as well as children's activities. For further information, please visit <http://www.greenbankstarquest.org>.

CHERRY SPRINGS STAR PARTY - COUDERSPORT, PA - JUNE 22-26, 2006

The Astronomical Society of Harrisburg is pleased to announce dates for the 2nd Annual Cherry Springs Star Party! The Cherry Springs Star Party or CSSP will be held June 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 of 2006 at Cherry Springs State Park near Coudersport, PA. Cherry Springs State Park is well known for nice dark skies and we hope you'll enjoy them with us at the Cherry Springs Star Party! The Star Party will run from Thursday Night thru Monday Morning. If you don't live as close to Cherry Springs as you'd like, our 4 night Star Party offers you the ability to have an extended stay at the park, instead of spending a large amount of time driving to the park for just 2 "official" nights of a Star Party. The Registration Desk will open at approximately 3 PM on Thursday and will be open throughout the weekend. We hope to see YOU at the Star Party! May's Munchables, absolutely the best food service provider for a Star Party, will be providing food 24/7 for the Star Party attendees. More info can be acquired at <http://www.astrohbg.org/s4/index.php>

STELLAFANE - SPRINGFIELD, VT - JULY 28 - 29, 2006

Stellafane is the premier telescope builders conference, and it is held every year in Vermont. For further information, please visit <http://www.stellafane.com>



ALCON EXPO 2006 - ARLINGTON, TX - AUGUST 4-5, 2006

ALCON is the annual convention of the Astronomical League. This year it is in Arlington Texas, on the beautiful campus of the University of Texas at Arlington. Located near Dallas, it is easy to get reasonable flights to the convention, and lodging is reasonable as well. This is an excellent opportunity to show your support for the Astronomical League, as well as spend a little time in Texas.

Further information is available at <http://www.alconexpo.com>

ALMOST HEAVEN STAR PARTY - SPRUCE KNOB, WV - AUGUST 24-27, 2006

NOVAC is pleased to announce that we will be holding our second annual Star Party at Spruce Knob, West Virginia on August 24 - 27, 2006. The event will be held at The Mountain Institute in one of the darkest areas on the east coast at an elevation of about 4200 feet. Please check the web site for more information. We will be adding details over the next few weeks. <http://www.novac.com/AHSP/index.php>

Registration will open on February 15, 2006 and it can be done completely on-line. If you have questions, send an email to AHSP@NOVAC.COM.

VAAS 2006 - RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE - ASHLAND, VA - SEPTEMBER 30, 2006

RVAS is happy to announce that the Richmond Astronomical Society (RAS) is the host club for the Annual Convention of the Virginia Association of Astronomical Societies (VAAS). This year's convention will be held at Randolph-Macon College on Saturday, September 30th, 2006. Speakers are being acquired at this time and will be listed in the RVAS newsletter as the details become available. The Richmond club had good attendance at our event in 2005, and I hope that the RVAS members will attend their event as well.

This is a "Must Attend" event for any astronomy enthusiast.

Society Events and Activities for June 2006

MONTHLY MEETING: Monday, June 19th, 7:30 p.m. fifth floor meeting room, Center in the Square, downtown Roanoke. The meeting program will be *RVAS Movie Night*. Join RVAS members for a night of Astronomy related movies, drinks and popcorn. This will be alot of fun for all.

“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, 16th and 17th. Sunset is at 8:43 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 10:36 p.m. The Moon rises at 12:52 and 1:19 a.m., respectively.

Friday and Saturday, 23rd and 24th. Sunset is at 8:44 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 10:38 p.m. The Moon sets at 7:19 and 8:23 p.m., respectively.

July Sessions: 21st and 22nd; 28th and 29th.

FRANKLIN CO. PARKS DEPT./RVAS PUBLIC STARGAZE: Next session: August 26th, 8:30 p.m.

ROANOKE CITY PARKS DEPT./RVAS PUBLIC STARGAZE: Saturday, June 17th, 9:30 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: July 22nd, 9:15 p.m., Cahas Overlook.)

RVAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING: To be announced.

Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society
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Roanoke, VA 24018