

# COMET TAILS                      FEBRUARY 2004

## NEWSLETTER OF THE TREASURE COAST ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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### EDITORS NOTES & NEWS.

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Welcome to new members: Nick Schepis, 545-7160, [captotto@aol.com](mailto:captotto@aol.com) and Don Deppen, 460-7915, [dslfittr@yahoo.com](mailto:dslfittr@yahoo.com). Please put former member Herb Giddens back on the list. ( He now lives near Tallahassee, but still belongs to our club.) We now have 45 members.

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.

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 Universtoday.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](mailto:TDFLM@aol.com) with the information.

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### Meeting Minutes – January 2004

The January 2004 meeting was opened by David. Charlotte read the treasurer's report and the minutes were printed in the newsletter.

Three guests were at the meeting and introduced themselves.

The ideas discussed at the last Astronomy Day meeting were shared with the club members. Other public programs were announced: OxBow on January 30 at 6:30 and the Girl Scout viewing at Jonathan Dickenson Park on January 31 at 4:30.

Camping at Kissimmee Prairie State Park was discussed for February 20 and 21. Alan contacted the park rangers about using the open area east of the campgrounds and they are supposed to have it mowed for our use.

Dave Holko talked about the Boy Scout merit badge and if the club might be interested in helping some scout troops earn it.

Elections were held; David Brown ran unopposed for President, Larry Cray was nominated and ran unopposed for Vice President, Sue Prill was nominated and ran unopposed for Secretary, and Charlotte Bilder ran unopposed for Treasurer. Patty was appointed the chairperson for the club's public outreach program.

Patty gave a book report on the book "Man on the Moon: The Voyages of the Apollo Astronauts " by Andrew L. Chaikin.

The meeting was adjourned.

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The date for Astronomy Day has been set for March 27, 2004 from 2:30 to 7:00 p.m. at IRCC. Please put the date on your calendar and plan to participate. NOTE CHANGE OF TIME FROM 3 P.M. TO 2:30 P.M.

We will have an Astronomy Day meeting at Applebees in Port St. Lucie at 1:00 p.m. on February 29, 2004. Everyone is invited to attend and PLEASE bring your ideas! The final meeting will be held at 1:00 p.m. on March 14, 2004 at Applebee's at 1:00 p.m. as well.

In an effort to have people linger a while, we are planning to have display tables set up down the science building hallway 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.

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 are unable to attend either meeting and have any ideas or thoughts, or if you have anything for Astronomy Day and are unable to bring it to the college, please call Patty at 460-5264.

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## 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.

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## AGENDA FOR THE FEBRUARY MEETING

February 24, 2004 – 7:30 pm.

IRCC, Room S-135 in the Science Building

Program – Planetarium Show

Please meet in room 135 first and then we will all go down to the Planetarium

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## REPORT OF STAR PARTIES

No Reports

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## **FUTURE STAR PARTIES**

Sue and Charlotte will be heading to the 20<sup>th</sup> Winter Star Party on West Summerland Key on February 19.

This is a reproduction of an e mail from Allen Como regarding February 20 and 21

I just wanted to let those of you who are not attending the Winter Star Party know that there is an informal camping opportunity at Kissimmee Prairie State Park the evenings of Feb. 20 and 21. Some members have reserved "regular camp sites" others (myself included) will be camping at a "field" site a mile or so from the camp sites. There are no restroom facilities at the "field site" although we may use the facilities at the regular

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camp site. I will be bringing Imodium, trash bags and a bucket to take care of any "needs" during the night. The park rangers put me in contact with a small astronomy club from Winter Haven that is bringing about 20 boy scouts to camp that same weekend. They will be staying at the park's primitive camp site (as opposed to the regular camp site and the field site). The Winter haven group will stop by the field site during the day on Sat. where we will make arrangements for the group to stop by for a visit on Saturday night. The Winter Haven people have assured me that all campers will observe strict "blackout protocols". I've attached a link to the Kissimmee Prairie camp site. Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions, home 337-3224, work 781-3272, cell 486-0079. The field site could be rendered inoperable if it rains too much, in which case I would switch to a primitive or regular camp site. I will be in contact with the camp rangers.

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/kissimmeeprairie/default.asp>

KISSIMMEE LAKE STATE PARK  
March 21 and 22, 2004  
Camping and observing  
See or contact David, Patty or Allen for details

## PINELAND SITE, OKEECHOBEE

New moon – February 21 or 22  
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 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 1mile 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.

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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 and in the Vero Beach area call Terry Grage at 388-2844 to check 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.)

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### OXBOW ECO-CENTER

There will another Eco Friday at Oxbow on February 27, 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.

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## GIRL SCOUTS

Unfortunately, the Girl Scout viewing was canceled due to the rain we had last month. It has been rescheduled for February 28, 2004, at Jonathan Dickenson Park. If you can, please come down with your telescope. We are going to be in the parking lot near the concession stand. If you have any questions, please call Patty at 460-5264.

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## 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.

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## IRCC PLANETARIUM SHOWS WITH JON BELL

Space Songs – February 20 & 21

Bear Tales and other Grizzly Stories – March 5 & 6

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>

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## CLUB MEETINGS

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

Feb. 24, March 30, April 27, May 25, June 29, July 27, August 31, September 28, 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 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

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## 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://sohowww.armsmeteors.org/form\\_1.html](http://sohowww.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://skygazerssoftware.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.

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## Deep Space Network 2-for-1 Sale!

By Patrick L. Barry

Call it a "buy one, get one free" sale for astronomers: **Build a network of radio dishes for communicating with solar-system probes, get a world-class radio telescope with a resolution nearly as good as a telescope the size of Earth!**

**That's the incidental bonus that NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN) offers the astronomy community. Designed to maintain contact with distant spacecraft in spite of the Earth's rotation, the large, widely spaced dishes of the DSN are ideal for performing a form of radio astronomy called "very long baseline interferometry" (VLBI).**

**VLBI produces very high resolution images of the cosmos by combining the output from two or more telescopes. The result is like having a giant "virtual" telescope as large as the distance between the real dishes! Since bigger telescopes can produce higher resolution images than smaller ones, astronomers need to use dishes that are as far apart as possible.**

**That need dovetails nicely with the DSN's design. To maintain continuous contact with deep space missions, the DSN has tracking stations placed in California, Spain, and Australia. These locations are roughly equally spaced around the Earth, each about 120 degrees of longitude from the others-that way at least one dish can always communicate**

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with a probe regardless of Earth's rotation. That also means, though, that the straight-line distance between any two of the stations is roughly 85 percent of Earth's diameter—or about 6,700 miles. That's almost as far apart as land-based telescopes can be.

"We often collaborate with other VLBI groups around the world, combining our dishes with theirs to produce even better images," says Michael J. Klein, manager of the DSN Science Office at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "Since our 70-meter dish in Canberra, Australia, is the largest dish in the southern hemisphere, adding that dish in particular makes a huge difference in the quality of a VLBI observation."

Even though only about 1 percent of the DSN's schedule is typically spared from probe-tracking duty and scheduled for radio astronomy, it manages to make some important contributions to radio astronomy. For example, the DSN is currently helping image the expanding remnant of supernova 1987A, and Dr. Lincoln Greenhill of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory is using the DSN dishes to explore a new way to measure the distances and velocities of galaxies.

**And all this comes as a "bonus" from the dishes of the DSN.**

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

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