

COMET TAILS JANUARY 2004

NEWSLETTER OF THE TREASURE COAST ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

EDITORS NOTES & NEWS.

Congratulations to Jon Bell who has taken Second Place in the world-wide scriptwriting competition that is sponsored by the International Planetarium Society and the Eugenides Foundation of Athens, Greece. The Award will be presented at the Planetarium Society's biennial conference in Valencia, Spain in July 2004.

The following appeared in the November "Comet Tails".

Remember dues were due in September- \$12. *Dues for new members will be \$12 from Sept. thru February and \$7. from March thru August. If dues are not received by January 15, you will be dropped from all mailing lists. We have 64 members on our Roster and 29 have not paid their current year dues.*

Today I deleted 25 members from our active membership list. A new membership list is attached to this newsletter. Some were old members and some members who had joined just last year. They were notified many times about payment of dues. Although we deleted them from active membership, we would welcome them back at any time.

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 med, 2 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.

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 – November 30, 2003

The November meeting was called to order by Patty Mayer, President, David Brown was on vacation. Guests were welcomed. The Minutes are published monthly in the newsletter so they are not read at the monthly meetings. The treasurer, Charlotte Bilder, gave her report.

Chris Nassburg shared a picture taken from his home of the evening sky.

New business included the next Astronomy Day meeting at Applebees in Port St. Lucie, on December 7, at 1:00 p.m. Members were encouraged to volunteer. Charlotte shared pictures taken by club members at Chiefland. Club members who attend Chiefland Star Party spoke with the members of the Vero Beach club and discussed a group camp at Kissimmee Prairie possibly in March.

Jon Bell asked the club members who might be interested in helping the general public with their telescopes.

Old business discussed Bluefield and that the opening has again been moved back to the beginning of 2004.

Larry Crary brought in his Questar and shared the pros and cons of the telescope with the club. He answered all our questions.

There will be no meeting in December and the meeting was adjourned.

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ASTRONOMY DAY 2004

The date for Astronomy Day has been set for March 27, 2004 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. at IRCC. Please put the date on your calendar and plan to participate.

We have some great ideas! PLEASE come out to the next meeting on **January 25, 2004, at Applebees on PSL Blvd and US1 at 1:00 p.m.** We can have lunch as well as talk about Astronomy Day. You can share any ideas you have and help to make Astronomy Day a great success!! Anyone who wants to serve on the committee is welcome. Let David Brown know if you are planning to attend so he can reserve a large enough table.

If you have any astronomical posters or pictures, please think about letting us use them. We would like to make the hall between the planetarium and the lecture hall a display hall for the public to walk through and spend time in.

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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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SPACE NEWS – contributed by Patty Mayer

With so much attention on Mars the past few weeks, some of us may have missed some other news. The following is taken from Space.com, Universetoday.com and NASA.gov.

Hubble, Its Fate Sealed, 'Has a Place in Everybody's Heart'

It was hard for astronomers to argue with astronaut and astrophysicist John Grunsfeld when he announced that the Hubble Space Telescope would no longer be serviced again, meaning the venerable observatory's days, or at least its years, were numbered.

http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/hubble_special_040116.html

Getting Closer to Saturn

Jan 16, 2004 - NASA's Cassini spacecraft is on track to reach Saturn in summer 2004. Before it reaches Saturn, however, the spacecraft will release a tiny probe called Huygens that will parachute into Titan, Saturn's largest moon, to give scientists an idea of what's underneath those thick clouds. Astronomers think that the environment on Titan is very similar to primordial conditions here on planet Earth billions of years ago. Huygens will take more than a thousand pictures and countless samples as it travels down to the surface in January 2005.

http://www.universetoday.com/am/publish/getting_closer_saturn.html?1612004

AGENDA FOR THE JANUARY MEETING
January 27, 2004 – 7:30 pm.
IRCC, Room S-135 in the Science Building

We will have election of officers – please give some thought to this. We will also have discussion and sign up for Astronomy Day which is two months away.

A planetarium show is scheduled for the February meeting

REPORT OF STAR PARTIES

The following is the only report on star parties in Dec. and Jan. although I think there were a few Impromptu ones. The following one was on December 6 and reported by **Allen Como**. I thought it was worth sharing with all of you – what an example of dedicated amateur astronomers!

A cold time was had by all: Patty, Daves Brown and Holko, John Biondo and myself. The sky was clear but the seeing was a little off, probably due to upper atmospheric conditions. Everyone arrived by dark (6pm), the coyotes were in full howl for 1/2 hour or so after the sun went down. John was taking long exposure photographs with a piggy back mounted camera, Dave B., Patty and myself stuck to the visual arena while Dave H. smoked cigars and mumbled to himself (he was having one of those nights with his imaging setup, which is usually very reliable). I can tell you it got down to at least 5 degree Celsius (courtesy of Dave H. and his bourgeois continental type thermometer). We tried to beat the cold with trips to the propane heaters, even taking our shoes off and holding them upside down over the heat to warm the insides for our feet. We decide to call it quits when we noticed frost on our windshields and ended the evening with a sumptuous feast at the Waffle House in Ft. Pierce.

FUTURE STAR PARTIES

WINTER STAR PARTY

February 16-21, 2004

West Summerland Key, Mile Marker 31. U.S. #1, The Florida Keys

For info contact WSP registrars at heinrich1 @Alltel.net or 386-362-5995

Web Site: www.scas.org

PINELAND SITE, OKEECHOBEE

January 24

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 1 mile 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 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 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.)

OXBOW ECO-CENTER

There will another Eco Friday at Oxbow on January 30.. 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

David and Patty have planned two girls scout outings on January 31, 2004 at 4:00 p.m. and May 29, 2004 at 5:00 p.m. Both viewing sessions will be held at JD State Park in the parking area by the concession stand. We are going to talk with the girls first then as the sun goes down, show them the night sky. We would like to have 10 club members attend and help us both nights. Please let David or Patty know if you can join us!

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**

- Neighborhood World: Venus and Mars – January 23 & 24
- 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. He will have one show per month, except in December when he will have two. 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. The first show is October 17, 2003.

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

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

TCAS Officers

President – David Brown Vice-President/Program Chairman – Bill Armstrong
Treasurer/Comet Tails Editor – Charlotte Bilder
Secretary - Patty Mayer
Librarian/Historian/Parliamentarian/ Comet Tails Co-editor - Sue Prill

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
- 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>

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.

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

NASA Space Place
Flying in Formation
By Patrick L. Barry

You can almost see the tabloid headlines now: "Mid-west farmer spies UFO squadron flying in formation!" "First signs of imminent alien invasion," the subtitle will read.

If only this fictional farmer had been keeping up with NASA's Space Place column, he would have known better. The string of white dots moving in formation across the pre-dawn sky were satellites, not alien spaceships.

Beginning next year, a series of challenging, high-precision launches will insert four satellites into orbits with just the right altitude, position, and orbital inclination to follow in lock-step behind NASA's Aqua satellite (launched in May 2002). Scientists have dubbed this squadron of satellites the "A-Train." Along with Aqua, the celestial parade will include Cloudsat, CALIPSO, PARASOL, and Aura.

In April 2004, NASA will launch CloudSat, an Earth-observing satellite with unique cloud-measurement abilities. These measurements will fill an important role in our understanding of global climate change, making long-term climate change scenarios more accurate and dependable.

So why bother flying in formation? By passing over the same swath of land within seconds or minutes of each other, the satellites will give scientists snapshots of essentially the same scene using a total of 14 different measuring instruments. CloudSat alone carries only one: a millimeter-wavelength radar sounder.

This sounder-the first of its kind put into orbit-lets scientists see a vertical "slice" of the atmosphere that shows clouds, water, and ice between the ground and 30 km altitude, with a vertical resolution of 0.5 km. Even by itself, this instrument would provide an important and unique view of Earth's atmosphere, since the accurate portrayal of clouds is one of the glaring weaknesses with current simulations of climate change.

But this cloud data is even more valuable when combined with measurements from the other satellites in the A-Train-for example, air temperature, trace gases, and radiation into and out of the atmosphere. Scientists can then see connections between, say, temperature and the resulting behavior of clouds. A better understanding of these connections is one of the most sought-after goals of climate research, because changes to global cloud cover would, in turn, have a feedback effect on global temperatures.

The real story of this satellite squadron may not make the tabloid headlines, but at least there's evidence that the imminent threat of climate change is real, which is a lot more than you can say for alien invaders!

Learn more about CloudSat and the A-Train at cloudsat.atmos.colostate.edu . Kids (and grownups) can do interactive cloud picture scrambles and learn "Cloudspeak" (the names of different kinds of clouds) at The Space Place, spaceplace.nasa.gov/cloudsat_puz.htm .

IMAGE available at http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/astro_clubs/A-train_150.jpg

Suggested web sites re Mars and Stardust

"Blast off to a Mars Adventure" at
http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/mars_rocket.htm

"Tails of Wonder" (Stardust) at
<http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/stardust/index.shtml>
Now for this month's column -- and be sure to pick up the accompanying image at
http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/astro_clubs/A-train_150.jpg

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40 members, 37 with e mail addresses
CHANGES IN RED
1/19/04