



Sky Watch

Issue #4-07
April

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society

BAS Contact Info:

P.O box 1084
Cocoa Village
Cocoa Fl. 32922
www.brevardastro.org

Officers:

President:
Gary Scott
Gary.Scott@IEEE.Org

Vice President:

& Newsletter
Bill Manley
bmanley@cfl.rr.com

Treasurer:
Mark Jones
mjones32@cfl.rr.com

Secretary:
Megan Boyd
sds9397@aol.com

Outreach Coordinator:
Oscar Sifuentes
osifuentes@cfl.rr.com

Summary of March meeting:

1. An excellent presentation was given by John Powell on astrophotography essentials & CCD imaging – copy of slides are on the website.
2. A plan was put forward and approved for raffling off the 5 1/4" telescope on Astronomy Day.
3. Gary Scott provided an overview of the proposed changes to the BAS By-Laws. The changes will be voted on at the April or May meeting.

Upcoming BAS Meetings & Agenda:

March 21st -
No specific agenda avail at this time.

Moon Phases:

Full: April 2nd



New: April 17th



Astronomy Day April 21st

I believe the plan for Astronomy Day at the BCC Planetarium is very similar to last year in terms of events; however I think the plan is start a little later in the day so we are all not burned out by 7pm as evening approaches. Chuck Greenwood is the coordinator for BAS if you wish to volunteer for any activities.

What is in the Sky in April?

Leo is the prominent constellation to focus on in April. It is directly overhead along with Saturn at prime viewing times of 10pm to midnight. There are a "plethora" of Galaxies in between the constellations Leo Coma Berenices, as well as a handful within Leo, but most are Mag 12 or higher, so you will need a dark sky. There are several Messier objects in Leo, and many, (although mostly dimmer) NGC objects. One star I would like to draw your attention to in Leo is Algieba (or Gamma Leonis).

Algieba is a magnificent binary system with orange-red and yellow components visible through a modest telescope under good atmospheric conditions; its Arabic name means "the forehead." The brighter component (magnitude 2.6) is a giant K Star with a surface temperature of 4,400 K and a luminosity of 180 L_{SUN}; its partner is a magnitude 3.8 giant G star with a temperature of 4,900 K and a luminosity of 50 L_{SUN}. The angular separation of just over 4" means that the two stars are at least 170 AU apart – four times the Pluto-Sun distance – and have an orbital period of over 500 years.
<http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia>

Ursa Major is also high in the sky in April. It holds many Messier gems as well as Leo, including M51, the Whirlpool galaxy. Observing Mizar (Zeta UMa), pronounced "My Czar" can be done even with Binoculars It is the second star up from the end of the handle on the big dipper asterism, and is said to have been the first double star system to be observed telescopically. On a good clear night you can see companion Alcor (below it) with an un-aided eye. Alcor is an optical binary. Mizar is really gravity bound Quintuple binary star system itself, consisting of Mizar A & Mizar B and two companions. They in turn are binary stars, so the Mizar complex is a double-double. (Only A & B can be resolved visually, *and Alcor of course*).

PLANETS:

Saturn transits the night sky at approx 9:15 pm by mid April. It is nearly directly overhead and continues to advance across the sky ahead of Leo. The view of Saturn on a clear night is always spectacular. **Venus** remains ever bright in the west in the evening sky, setting approx 10:50(!) by mid month. If you have a good view to the west, you can catch a brilliant waxing Gibbous Venus.

On April 6th, **Jupiter** is "stationary" as it begins its retrograde motion through the sky. It will rise by approx midnight by Mid April, beginning its annual trek into the evening sky by May-June.

For the morning observers **Neptune, Mars, and Uranus** rise in the SE at 3:50, 4:50, and 5:15am by mid April.

Upcoming BAS Star Parties:

April 14th – Shilo
April 13th & 14th - Chiefland

Club Telescope News:

The BAS currently has two telescopes for use by club members. Contact Bill Manley (Newsletter Editor e-mail) for additional information.

Bill Manley currently has the 16" Dobsonian, and the 8" Orion is returned to the Planetarium and available for use.

- I checked out & cleaned the encoder card that has been intermittent in the past. It seems to be working fine.



Sky Watch

Issue #4-07
April

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society

Here is a report of the March BAS supported Outreach events as summarized by John Small

Thanks John.....!

Outreach News:

YMCA Star Party was held at Wickham Park in Melbourne on 3/18/07. From:

Sky conditions were clear and dark as they could be for central Melbourne and seeing was also good. Temp was in the low 50's with light winds. [many] objects were viewed. Three bright satellites were also seen. Laser sky tours were given by all volunteers. A teacher who also attended the Girl Scout event last week was so impressed with Oscar's sky charts that she asked him to make copies for her class. This was the first collaboration between BAS and KSCAA. Jason Lehmann is a member of KSCAA and we would like to thank him very much for coming to this event, he was a welcome addition. In the future we hope to have events where BAS, MAS and KSCAA are all present. Point of contact for BAS is Oscar Sifuentes, for MAS is Rick Young and for KSCAA is Mike Cressy. We had at least 400 to 450 visitors look through our scopes this night. There were numerous comments on how impressive our equipment was and many thanks to us for doing this event. If you own a telescope and can come to some of these star parties you will find the experience to be very rewarding. To hear the reaction of someone who is shown Saturn or the Orion Nebula for the first time is something you can never forget. You can be sure you touched someone's life and probably created a couple of future astronomers. *John Small*

Outreach News:

Moonlight Stroll at Erna Nixon Park on March 24, 2007.

The sky was clear with air temperature in the mid 60's and little or no wind. The Moon was waxing one day before first quarter with Earth shine and good viewing with many craters and shadows along the terminator. Viewing of Saturn was more stable than in recent months with at least five moons visible. Other objects viewed were Venus, M42, double stars Castor, Mizar and Alcor, Polaris and Rigel. I know the "star-hopping" Oscar Sifuentes probably viewed some things that I missed but we had more than eight telescopes set up and binoculars so there was more action than I could keep track of. Laser sky tours were given by all volunteers and at times it looked like the show at the planetarium. Gary Scott was busy manning the extra scopes and Dave Guibert had his computer on so the public could see sky maps.

Our visitors were in awe of the views of Saturn, the Moon, and M42. One can never get tired of the oohs and ahs. We have a lady named Cheri that has brought her family to our last three events and has told us how much she appreciates what we do. It's very gratifying to get feedback like this. It makes me proud to be a member of BAS.

We had an estimated crowd of 250 visitors on this perfect night for lunar viewing and again there were many compliments for BAS and MAS. A great time was had by everyone! *John Small*

With space still available; here is an e-mail forwarded by Oscar Sifuentes on April Messier viewing in case anyone missed it:

BAS members:

Hopefully some of you got a chance to do a complete search of all 110 Messier objects last month.... I know I didn't! That is why I am sending you the Aprils Messier list which consists of only 10 Messier objects, Not all objects are Clusters or galaxies, M40 is a double star located in Ursa Major. You will need Dark Skies to locate some of the faint galaxies, If you have clear dark skies,... All objects can be found at Shiloh the North site. Good Luck and have fun!

Oscar BAS member

<http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/12months/m-apr.html>

Sky Watch

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society