



Sky Watch

Issue #4
May 06

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society

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Club News:

1: Astronomy Day -

Saturday, May 6, 2006. The event was slow in the daytime but picked up greatly after dark. Many contributed to the success of Astro-Day 2006.

We also had participation from the MAS; thanks for the help to Pete Scheuter & Rick Young! A special thanks to Chuck Greenwood and Mark Howard from the Planetarium as well for their efforts. All seemed to have fun with the day. Gary Scott's whole family participated (including his dog...). I believe there were 6-7 scopes in the parking lot in addition to the observatory. I believe the "body count" was near 300 people or so.

Next BAS Star Party:

Harmony 27 May

Moon Phases:

Full: May 13th



New: May 27th

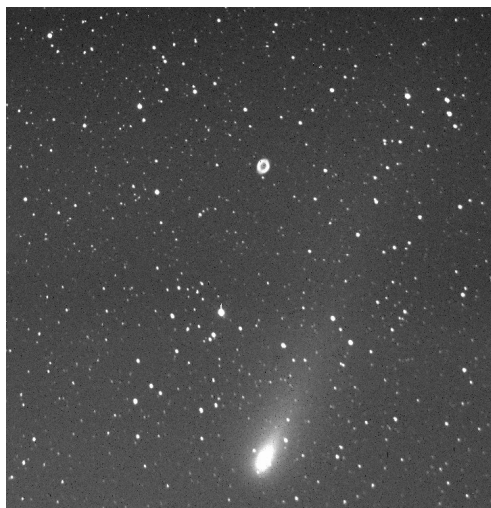


What's in the Sky in May?

Comet Schwassmann-Wachmann 3 (also known as Comet 73P) is the big event for sky gazing in May.

On the night of May 7-8, 2006, Fragment C of Comet Schwassmann-Wachmann 3 passed by the Ring Nebula, M57 in Lyra.

This photograph below was taken by **Wyckliffe Hoffler** of our own BAS. Great job Wyck! Below are some particulars from Wyck's e-mail in case you missed it.



8 May 06, 14:39 EDT

"I took a 2-minute image of each component and stitched them digitally, with the accompanying attached result. Instrumentation was Celestron Comet Catcher (5.5-inch Schmidt-Newtonian x f/3.6 = 20-inch FL) and my Hi-SIS-22 CCD camera (Kodak KAF 0400 with 768 x 512, 9-micra pixels), but in 1x1 (full) pixel mode. With this system, the view is about 48 x 32 arcminutes. Exposures were 2 minutes each image begun at 05:11 and 05:23 UT for M57 (Ring Nebula in Lyra) and the Comet, respectively. Though the Comet was speeding on, its broad tail matched sufficiently in both images separated by 12 minutes.

PLANETS:

Mars Still available in the late evening sky, Mars remains in the constellation Gemini during May. It is still visible up through 11pm in the western sky.

Saturn remains great for viewing. M44, the *Beehive Cluster* can easily be found just below Saturn throughout the month. Both are in the constellation Cancer. Saturn transits at about 6:30pm in mid May.

Jupiter, the king of planets is now visible in the mid evening, rising at about 7pm by mid month, and transiting around midnight. It can be found in Lyra in the east-south-east sky.

For the dawn watchers:

Uranus & Neptune remain visible in the east / southeast sky. Neptune (Capricorn) rises at approx 2am, and Uranus (Aquarius) at approx 3am by mid month. **Venus** rises at around 4:30am by mid May.



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Outreach News:

No specific outreach events are scheduled in May. Oscar is in process of coordinating with Mark Jones to update the website to help organize incoming requests.

BCC Observatory

The BCC Observatory continues to be in need of volunteers from BAS. Please check your schedule to see if you can help out any weekend. The coordinator is now **Chuck Greenwood**.

Upcoming BAS Meetings & Agenda:

May 17th – no

Presentation is scheduled this month.

Summary of Past Meetings and Events:

April 19th meeting – (see meeting minutes for more information)

- ❖ Mostly planning for the Astronomy Day event.
- ❖ Art Ahrens from the MAS attended, and provided help by tweaking the primary mirror collimation, in the observatory and improved star images. Thanks Art!

Telescope News:

The BAS currently has two telescopes for use by club members. Bill Manley just returned the 16" dobsonian (in Bart's old office, or "old Bart's office" as Jan likes to say...), and Bryan Craven has the 8" Orion. Contact Gary Scott for additional information.

For Sale or Trade:

No entry this month

Featured Science Article:

REPEAT this month....

<http://www.universetoday.com/>

“Mini-Comets” to reveal themselves in May

About 10 years ago, Comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann 3 unexpectedly split apart into 3 separate pieces. Now these cometary fragments are going to fly past the Earth, and astronomers will get a closer view than they've had in 20 years. The fragments will get relatively close, passing within 10 million km (6 million miles), but they won't get very bright, unfortunately. It'll take dark skies and binoculars to see much more than a blurry smudge in the sky. The number of fragments is constantly changing. When the breakup began in 1995 there were only three: A, B and C. Astronomers now count at least eight: big fragments B and C plus smaller fragments G, H, J, L, M and N. "It looks as though some of the fragments are themselves forming their own sub-fragments," says Yeomans, which means the number could multiply further as 73P approaches. No one knows how long the "string of pearls" will be when it finally arrives. An expanding cloud of dust from the 1995 break-up of the comet could brush past Earth in May 2006 producing a display of meteors. Astronomer Paul Wiegert at the University of Western Ontario has studied the possibility: "We believe the cloud is expanding too slowly to reach Earth only eleven years after the break-up," he says, "but it all depends on what caused the comet to fly apart—and that we don't know." "The most likely explanation is thermal stress, with the icy nucleus cracking like an ice cube dropped into hot soup: the comet broke apart as it approached the Sun after a long sojourn the frigid outer solar system," he explains. "If this is truly what happened, then the debris cloud should be expanding slowly, and there will be no strong meteor shower."

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