



Sky Watch

Issue #5-07
May

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society

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Summary of April meeting:

No report or minutes available.

Upcoming BAS Meetings & Agenda: May 16th -

It is planned to review and approve the update to the BAS By-Laws.

Moon Phases:

Full: May 2nd



New: May 16th



Perigee: May 15th

Apogee: May 27th

Astronomy Day:

April 21st -

The weather wasn't very cooperative this year however there was still a decent flow of people, and the sky opened up late in the evening. A summary prepared by John Small is provided on second page.

What is in the Sky in May?

Well, the sky hasn't been great lately for anything related to deep sky observing. Between the lack of rain and the smoke from fires, it has been "muddy" for the most part. Let's hope we get a nice cold front to move through and clear things out. We will need it for any chance of observing the asteroid **Vesta** toward the end of May. The asteroid reaches opposition on May 30th. In mid June it will reach a magnitude of 5.4 as it approaches perihelion in the constellation Ophiuchus (SE). See detailed map e-mailed out by Oscar Sifuentes or by your favorite night sky program or magazine.

The Eta Aquarid's meteor shower occurred over the first couple of days (5/2) of the month. (I think I saw one traveling from the south toward the NE).

ISS and HST passes - There appears to be a good pass of the ISS on the morning of 5/16. 5:25am, the ISS will pass SW to NW at a max altitude of 78 degrees. There are several good passes of the HST in the evening during May in the 9pm range. The best will be the week of 7 May. The max alt begins to drop below 70 deg starting next week. As always, check: <http://www.heavens-above.com/> for specific details.

DEEP SKY: May is probably the best month to see the Sombrero Galaxy M104 in the evening, as it reaches its maximum altitude of 50 degrees due south at approx 10:30pm. It is between the constellations Corvus and Virgo at a magnitude of 7.65. The big dipper in Ursa Major is also at it's highest in the evening if your sky is better to the north. A dark sky will reveal M106, M108, M109, and M97 the owl nebula. If nothing else, you can find the double star M40 (Winnecke 4) off the star Megrez, and knock it off your Messier list. If you find those above, try the Pinwheel Galaxy M101 and the Spindle galaxy M102 (toward Draco). All of these will test your limits of a dark sky at magnitudes above 9.0. The north Shilo site will be good for some of these, Harmony is questionable. If you begin to get a little frustrated trying to find these deep galaxies in polluted skies, check out the brilliant globular cluster M13 at the top of the keystone in Hercules to the east. You won't be sorry.....

PLANETS:

Venus remains ever bright in the west in the evening sky, setting approx 11:30 pm(!!) by mid month. If you have (any) view to the west, you can catch a brilliant waxing Gibbous Venus. The planet **Mercury** is also visible to the west in the early evening sky. It sets later each evening so the later in the month, the better. Mercury is also a waxing gibbous phase. See if you can spot it! **Saturn** remains visible but transits the sky at approx 7:15 pm (still daylight) by mid May. It is beginning to set earlier, but good viewing can still be had for another month or so.

Jupiter begins to rise by approx 9:45pm by Mid May, beginning its annual trek into the evening sky by early June. The king of planets will then be visible in the evening through September, so there is plenty of time to catch a good view or two! **Neptune, Uranus, and Mars**, rise in the middle of the night during May. It will be July for any hopes of seeing Neptune or Uranus in the late evening (plus a darn good dark sky and aperture telescope...). For Mars; you have to wait until fall to see it before midnight.

Upcoming BAS Star Parties:

May 12th - Harmony Fl.
May 19th - Shilo North Site

Outreach News:

F. Burton Smith Annual Community Campout Star Party- May 11th

F. Burton Smith Regional Park (SR 520/King St., Cocoa, FL)
- contact Oscar if interested in participating

Sidewalk Astronomy night:

May 19, 2007 - Organized individually by town (or street!). More discussion expected at the May BAS meeting I suspect.....



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Astronomy Day 2007: **BCC Cocoa Campus** **Planetarium & Observatory:**

Members of BAS and MAS participated in **National Astronomy Day** at the Planetarium on the campus of Brevard Community College on 4/21/2007.

Mother nature was not kind to us for most of the event. It was windy and cloudy all day and when the sun did peek through the clouds there were no sun spots to view. The cloudy conditions persisted until late in the evening.

So, why did everyone have such a good time? It was because we spent the day with friends and we all love astronomy.

John Powell had his beautiful images on display in the lobby and also helped to sell raffle tickets for the 5 1/4" Newtonian reflector. We sold 158 tickets and the winning ticket was drawn by Gary Scott and John Small on 4/27/07. The winner, Tony Cimino was notified by telephone. The money collected will be used to raffle another scope at next years Astronomy Day. Other presentations and activities were as follows:

Bill Manley did a presentation on basic Telescope information called "Telescopes 101".

Chuck Greenwood gave several shows in the Planetarium in which he brought attention to interesting celestial objects and many constellations. Jan Ferguson was in the observatory all day and most of the night operating the 24" telescope.

John Norczyk gave very impressive presentations using a projector and a computer program called Stellarium. He also gave laser sky tours, helped the Boy Scouts with merit badge requirements and helped out in the observatory. The Scott family was multi-tasking, Jennifer and Krystina were in charge of launching bottle rockets and Gary was holding the whole event together. Oscar Sifuenetes, Dave Guibert, Laura Hebra, Wyck Hoffler and Tom Callahan (MAS) showed up later in the day to set up telescopes for night viewing. Unfortunately the sky did not clear until about 9:45pm. By then we had given up on the night sky, but the observatory stayed open and we had good viewing of the Moon and Saturn from 9:45 till 11pm. One die hard, (Jon Sotto) still had his 10" Dobsonian set up in the parking lot when the sky cleared and gave some of our visitors one last look as they departed. Megan Boyd helped with construction of bottle rockets, kiddie games and indoor exhibits. We also had a celestial scavenger hunt for the visiting children to participate in to qualify them for a chance to win the 2 smaller telescopes BAS was giving away.

Even though we only had around a 150 visitors there were many compliments on the members of BAS and MAS. It is always great to spend the day with friends and talk shop. It's even better when you overhear visitors talking about what a great service we do by having events like this. A lady was telling Megan and Suzanne how much she appreciated John Norczyk helping her son with his Cub Scout requirements. A man in the observatory was talking on a cell phone to someone out of state describing what a great time his family had at our event and how one of our members helped him decide what type of telescope to buy for his son.

Each time I attend one of these events I am more appreciative of my new friends and of being a member of BAS. If you missed this event you should consider attending the next one, you will always learn something new about astronomy and have fun at the same time.

Clear skies, John Small

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.

In case you missed it:

Potentially habitable planet discovered



ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- For the first time astronomers have discovered a planet outside our solar system that is potentially habitable, with Earth-like temperatures, a find researchers described Tuesday as a big step in the search for "life in the universe."

The planet was discovered by the European Southern Observatory's telescope in La Silla, Chile. The discovery of the new planet, named 581 c, is orbiting the red dwarf star, Gliese 581. The new planet is about five times heavier than Earth. Its discoverers aren't certain if it is rocky like Earth or if it's a frozen ice ball with liquid water on the surface. If it is rocky like Earth, which is what the prevailing theory proposes, it has a diameter about 1 1/2 times bigger than our planet the research team believes the average temperature to be somewhere between 32 and 104 degrees.

"It's a significant step on the way to finding possible life in the universe!" said University of Geneva astronomer Michel Mayor, one of 11 European scientists on the team that found the planet. "It's a nice discovery. We still have a lot of questions."

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