

The OBSERVER

The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.

August 2006 Volume 31, Number 8



In This Issue:

- August Picnic with MOOS.....1
- Lincoln College Event.....1
- “A Shower of Star Dust”.....2
- August 26th POS.....2
- Recent Observing Sessions.....3
- Observing at Perkins Obs.....3
- July Treasurer’s Report
- Sky Map

TCAA August Picnic with MOOS

The next members-only observing session is slated for Saturday, August 19th at Sugar Grove Nature Center. Immediately prior to the MOOS, there will be a club picnic. Arrival time is slated for between 6:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. A lighted grill will be available for use beginning around 6:30 p.m. Drinks and a hot grill will be provided by the club.

Those attending the picnic are asked to bring their own place setting (plate, utensils, cup, napkins), as well as a personal entrée (for grilling, if preferred). The picnic will be a potluck event, so be certain to bring a dish to share as well.

Observing will commence near the end of evening twilight – just after 9:00 p.m. The picnic will be held despite an overcast sky, and a short substitute program has been planned as an alternative if observation is not possible. The picnic and substitute program will both be cancelled in the event of rain. If uncertain about whether or not the event will be held, call the cell phones of either Mike Rogers at (309) 825-6454 or Carl Wenning at (309) 830-4085 immediately prior to the event.

The annual club picnic is one of the most popular events the club sponsors throughout the year, coming second only to the annual meeting. Please make plans now to attend this event.

LINCOLN COLLEGE EVENT FRIDAY, AUGUST 18

The night immediately before the club’s August picnic, TCAA member Mike Miller will host a cookout and observing session at Lincoln College in Normal as part of the Welcome Week events for the Midwest College of Cosmetology students at Lincoln College. This event is for only M.C.C. students, but TCAA members are welcome to attend if they are able to assist with the observing session. Carl Wenning will be giving a brief twilight talk, and telescopes will be used for viewing shortly thereafter – clear sky prevailing.

The event runs from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. and will consist of a “S’Mores and More” party at the school’s fire pit located on the Lincoln College campus in north Normal (on the south side of Raab Road just west of US51 or Main Street). Drinks and snacks will be available, as well as s’mores and hot dogs for roasting. In the event of rain, the event will be cancelled. If the sky is merely overcast, the campfire activities will still take place and twilight talk will be presented.

Volunteers are needed to assist with this event. If you have a telescope and would be able to help showcase celestial objects under the brightly lit sky of town, your assistance would be most welcome. (Here’s

TCAA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- August 11, Perseid Meteor Show Party at Weldon Springs, 10:00 p.m.
Meet at Sale Barn in Bloomington at 9:30 for motorcade (Aug. 12 backup)
- August 18, Lincoln College Welcome Week Observation Session, 7:00 - 10:00 p.m.
- August 19, Potluck Picnic/MOOS at SGO, 6:00-6:30 p.m. arrival, 9:00 p.m. observ.
Bring your own eating ware, personal entrée, and dish to share
- August 26, Public Observing Session at SGO, 9:00 p.m.
Program: “The Milky Way”
- September 30, Public Observing Session at SGO, 7:15-9:15 p.m.

The Observer

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

The Observer is a monthly publication of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization of amateur astronomers interested in studying astronomy and sharing their hobby with the public.

TCAA Officers

President Dan Miller
damiller@mail.millikin.edu

Vice-President Brian Barling
309-454-5493
res2213h@verizon.net

Secretary/Historian Carl Wenning
309-454-4164
cjwennin@ilstu.edu

Treasurer Duane Yockey
309-452-3936
duane@lybinc.com

Publicity/Web Michael Rogers
309-825-6454
mprogers@mac.com

5th Director Neale Lehmkuhl
309-378-4335
PETREALEHM@aol.com

Property Manager

William Carney 309-829-7748
willcarney@aol.com

Observer Editor

Rebecca Wenning Submissions
21 Grandview Dr. must be
Normal, IL 61761 received by
309-454-4164 the end of
rwennin@ilstu.edu each month.

Membership Dues

Individual Adult/Family \$40
Full-time Student/Senior \$25

To join the TCAA, send your name, contact info, and dues payment to:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

where those “go to” telescopes would be a big help!) If you can assist with this event, please contact Carl at 309-830-4085 (cell) or at 454-4164 (home) as soon as possible.

“A SHOWER OF STAR DUST”

by Carol McFeeters Thompson
Weldon Springs SRA Nature Interpreter

Each August 11th and 12th, Earth’s orbit intersects a stream of cosmic debris from Comet Swift-Tuttle. About the size of a grain of sand or a small pea, the particles are incinerated in the Earth’s atmosphere to produce a spectacular display of 50 to 60 “shooting stars” each hour – about one per minute. The show reaches its peak in the predawn hours, with the best general viewing beginning around midnight.

Viewers who trace the paths of shower meteors back across the sky will discover that all paths seem to converge in the constellation of Perseus. Hence, the origin of the name for this event, the Perseid Meteor Shower.

The best way to observe a meteor shower is to lie back on a blanket and look up – the farther from streetlights the better. More meteors are visible after midnight because the Earth is rotated so that we are plowing into the meteoroids rather than having them overtake our planet’s motion from behind. A meteor can appear in virtually any part of the sky, so binoculars or a telescope only limit the field of view. Viewers only need to look up, moving their eyes slowly across the sky.

Each August 11th (Friday night this year), Weldon Spring State Recreation Area invites visitors to gather at Meadowview Picnic Area beginning at 10 p.m. to view the Perseid Meteor Shower. Viewers should bring a blanket and sweater. Bug spray might also be helpful. No special equipment or viewing experience is necessary. A fire and a treat will be provided. Viewers are

asked to observe park quiet hours that begin at 10 p.m. If the sky is not clear on Friday night, the event will be postponed until the following night of August 12.

Editor’s Note: TCAA members who wish to attend this event are encouraged to form a motorcade starting from the Sale Barn (at the junction of US 51 and Hamilton Road in south Bloomington) at 9:30 p.m. It will take about 20 minutes to make it to Weldon Springs SRA from there. If you have not been to Weldon Springs SRA before, you’ll want to join this group as the observing location might be hard to find in the dark if you are not familiar with the park. Carl Wenning will be leading this group; call him at his cell phone on the evening of the event if you have any questions. He can be reached at 309-830-4085.

AUGUST 26th PUBLIC OBSERVING SESSION

The next TCAA public observing session is slated for Saturday, August 26th. The topic of the evening’s program is “The Milky Way.” The program will begin at 8:00 p.m. in the picnic shelter of the Sugar Grove Nature Center. Following a 20-minute orientation to the Milky Way, there will be a brief sky lecture pointing out the Milky Way along with brighter constellations, stars, and planets. Telescope viewing will begin shortly thereafter. If you plan to see everything, plan on arriving early and staying late. If you only want to participate in telescope viewing, be certain to arrive no later than 9 p.m.; the event ends at 10 p.m. Just a few reminders:

- Telescope observing can take place only if the sky is reasonably free of clouds and transparent. In the event of an entirely overcast sky, the observing session and associated talks will be cancelled. If uncertain about whether or not a session will be held, call Carl at (309) 830-4085 or



Michael at (309) 825-6454.

- Please be very careful when driving into and out of the Sugar Grove Nature Center parking lot. Many times there are people, including small children, walking from place to place in the dark. Parking lights only are requested near the observing area.

- You may bring along a flashlight if you wish, but be certain to cover the lens with a red filter so that observers' dark adaptation isn't adversely affected.

- Driving directions to the SGNC can be found on the TCCA web site at <http://twincityamateurastronomers.org/>.

**RECENT OBSERVING
SESSIONS
ASTRONOMICALLY
SUCCESSFUL**

By Carl J. Wenning

The title of this article says it all. One of the TCAA's best public observing sessions in recent memory took place on Saturday, June 3, at Sugar Grove Nature Center. With a crowd of about 55, eight member and club telescopes, and a great talk by Kevin Brown, the night was one to remember. Events began as daylight turned to darkness with observations of the first quarter moon, Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars. At 9:05 p.m. Kevin presented a 15-minute PowerPoint orientation about Jupiter and its 63 moons. At around 9:20 p.m. observing began in earnest. Mike Rogers led observing with the 20-inch telescope; Lee Green put out his C14. There were several 10-inch instruments staffed by "Mac" McAvoy, Duane Yockey, and several others whose names escape the author. Dan Miller commanded an 8-inch, and William Carney ran the SGO 12-inch telescope. The evening was dark and clear, and provided many remarkable images. A warm but gentle breeze kept everyone comfortable, the mosquitoes at bay, and dew away. There was much excited commentary throughout the observing session that lasted until after 11 p.m. Thanks for the many volunteers.

The traditional June picnic was not held as scheduled on the night of the next scheduled public observing session, Saturday the 24th. I understand now it was because I, as coordinator, forgot about

arranging it! (Please accept my belated apologies.) I don't recall exactly why I overlooked this important June tradition, but this was the weekend between a one-week and a three-week workshop I was hosting in Chicago. I think that the picnic got overlooked in the confusion of tending to those events. We are slated for another picnic in August, and perhaps this time we'll make it!

On Saturday, July 22nd, a substitute members-only observing session picnic was informally held by Rebecca Wenning, Chrystian Vieyra, and yours truly. We anxiously awaited the arrival and presentation by Lee Green, and he did not disappoint! Lee, along with his observing companion, Pat Kiley, arrived around 6:30 p.m. to set up his 14-inch telescope, along with the SBIG digital camera and computer. Lee explained that the scope and camera are controlled over an IP connection and supports all handset, photography, autofocus, and guiding features. It took a while to get the system going, but we were finally able to try a quick unguided exposures of Jupiter, but encountered difficulties. We entertained ourselves for the rest of the evening by reviewing earlier images captured with Lee's most impressive system.

The public observing session on July 29th did not have an official host, and it was not advertised in the newspaper. In spite of that, several members of the general public showed up, including the scout group we had planned to meet at Moraine View. Dan Miller and Lee Green both showed up without their telescopes to assist, but Mike Rogers came by later to bail them out. Lee pointed out the constellations while Dan and Mike set up a scope from the observatory.

**OBSERVING AT PERKINS
OBSERVATORY**

By Carl J. Wenning

On June 9th I returned to the observatory where I had done much of my undergraduate astronomical work. The place was Perkins Observatory near Delaware, Ohio. I arrived at 8 p.m. along with my 10-year-old nephew, Jerromy, who had never looked through a big telescope. I promised him an evening to remember using the 32-inch telescope

housed in the observatory's huge dome that was once home to a 69-inch telescope. It was the third largest telescope in the world at the time, constructed in 1923, and is the Telescope in the title of *Sky & Telescope* magazine.

We started the evening by checking in with the "management" and then took a stroll down, what was for me, memory lane – literally. We started with a walk through "Dr. Keenan's Observatory Garden" that had recently been uprooted by workers removing pine trees that had been killed by the Pine Bark Beetle. We then walked past the small observatory dome that once contained a 16"-24" Schmidt camera, and out to the field of the "Big Ear," the radio telescope that had been used for SETI work for many years, and was associated with the "Wow!" signal.

Unfortunately, neither the Schmidt camera nor the radio observatory was still in place. The field that held the Ohio Radio Survey Telescope had been taken down in 1998 and was filled with a golf course and a housing development. The 16"-24" Schmidt camera was carted off at this time to Anderson Mesa in Arizona where it can be used to photograph the sky once again. In 1998, Ohio State University formally broke its ties with Ohio Wesleyan University and Perkins Observatory. Hence, the removal of the radio telescope and Schmidt camera.

The area around Perkins Observatory had become "developed" and the sky is no longer readily visible with a limiting magnitude of about 3 at its best. We were still able to do some viewing that evening with the 32-inch telescope, but better views were obtained with a good 18" Obsession telescope and an 8-inch ball-mounted telescope on the observatory grounds – managed by members of the Columbus Astronomical Society.

All is not lost, however. Perkins Observatory is open many nights each year for public viewing, and has a fantastic educational set up. It is operated by OWU under that able leadership to Tom Burns (an amateur astronomer) in cooperation with some very supportive members of the Columbus Astronomical Society. The observatory and its public observing schedule can be checked out online at <http://www.perkins-observatory.org/>.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – July 2006

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2006 - \$ 1,599.54

Income

None -

\$ 0.00

Expenses

Rebecca Wenning (July Observer) -

\$ 34.98

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2006 - \$ 1,564.56

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2006 - \$ 1,350.74

Income

Interest -

\$ 1.76

Expenses

Mike Rogers (2 eyepieces) -

\$ 329.95

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2006 - \$ 1,022.55

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – July 31, 2006 - \$ 2,587.11

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Sugar Grove Observatory

Listing of Official Keyholders (Paid \$10 deposit/\$5 renewal)

Duane Yockey (April 2001, renewed through 2006)
Michael Rogers (August 2001, renewed through 2006)
William Carney (March 2002, renewed through 2006)
Carl Wenning (January 2004, renewed through 2006)
Brian Barling (February 2004, renewed through 2006)
Lenore Trainor (December 2004, renewed through 2005)
Kevin Brown (May 2005, renewed through 2006)
Sothilingam family (June 2005)
Christopher Franklin (July 2005, renewed through 2006)
Kal Kumar (renewed August 2005)
David Osenga (January 2006)
Gerry Schoeder (February 2006, renewed through 2007)
& Karen & Ed Duran (February 2006)



*Annual Summer Picnic
August 19, 2006
Arrive 6:00 - 6:30 PM
Sugar Grove Nature Center*



Bring your own entrée
and a dish to share!



The OBSERVER
Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

Rebecca Wenning, Editor
21 Grandview Drive
Normal, IL 61761-4071

Are Your Dues Due?

The Dues Blues?

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership, please send your dues renewal to our esteemed Treasurer:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761