



Observer

Newsletter of the Racine Astronomical Society

www.rasastro.org

Summer 2012

~ General Meeting & Star Party~

Please come out and join us Saturday July 21st 7:30pm at the Observatory for our General Meeting and our Summer Star Party. Pizza will be provided.

~ Public Night ~

Our next Public night is July 27th from (8:30-11:30 PM). Your help will be greatly appreciated.

~ New Member Nights ~

We added two Member Nights to the calendar. August 18th : (8-11 PM) and November 17th (7-10 PM). On these nights Key holders will be on hand to set up telescopes for viewing for the club members. It also gives you a chance to ask questions about your scope or other gear if you need to know to use it. You could call it a mini star party only for club members. Should be fun!!!

~ News ~

We would like to thank you for your help with the public on the day of the Venus Transit. We could not have asked for a better day and the view was GREAT! Thank you for making it a day we will not forget. Here are some Pictures from our club members.



~ Highlights for August in the Sky~

Next month Bright planets occupy both evening and morning skies this month while one of their fainter siblings, distant Neptune, reaches opposition and peak visibility. As darkness falls, Mars, Saturn, and Virgo's prominent star Spica form an elegant, color-contrasting trio. A crescent Moon adds to their beauty when it passes by on the 21st.

~ Meteor watch: Perseids set to put on a great show ~

If weeknight observing leaves you tired and cranky, here's some good news: One of this month's premier events occurs Saturday night, August 11/12, when the Perseid meteor shower reaches its annual peak. Start observing around midnight local daylight time. Although a waning crescent Moon rises shortly after 1 A.M., it won't have much impact because the shower consistently produces lots of bright, fast-moving meteors.

Observers under clear dark skies likely will see 60 to 80 meteors per hour streaking across a spectacular predawn sky that includes the bright planets Venus and Jupiter. Perseid meteors are tiny chunks of rock and dust from Comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle. When Earth plows through this debris stream each August, our planet's atmosphere incinerates these particles.

~ Comet search: Spy a comet among Boötes' flock of stars ~

Whether you're breaking in a new telescope or reacquainting yourself with a dark sky at a summer star party, get ready to test your comet-hunting skills. This month's brightest visitor from the solar system's depths likely will be C/2011 F1 (LINEAR), which should glow feebly at 11th magnitude.

The comet floats above brilliant Arcturus in the western sky as night sets in. Wait until the Moon is out of the evening sky during the second and third weeks of August to hunt for LINEAR. Use the finder chart at right to zero in on the comet's position. Rho (ρ) and Sigma (σ) Boötis, the pair of 4th-magnitude stars at the map's top left, lie 12° north-northeast of Arcturus.

Using at least a 6-inch telescope, bump up the power past 100x to darken the background sky and make the comet's small diffuse patch a bit bigger. Gently tapping the scope's tube can help you pick up the ghostly glow because it brings your motion-sensitive averted vision into use. View the star chart with your non-observing eye to protect your dark adaptation as much as possible.

~ News on Mars ~

On the night of August 5/6, NASA's Curiosity rover is set to touch down on the Red Planet.

~2012 Event Calendar~

March

24 - Spring Star Party

April

7 - Work Party (9 AM)
14 - Work Party (Rain Date)
21 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)
28 - Astronomy Day (8-11 PM)

May

11 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

June

5 - Venus Transit Day (5 - 8:30 PM)
15 - Public Night (8:30-11:30 PM)

July

21 - Summer Star Party
21 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)
27 - Public Night (8:30-11:30 PM)

August

10 - Public Night (8-11 PM)
18 - Member Night (8-11 PM)

September

15 - Picnic (4 PM)
22 - Public Night (8-11 PM)
(Observe the Moon Night)

October

13 - Fall Star Party
13 - General Meeting (7 PM)
20 - Astronomy Day (7-10 PM)

November

10 - Work Party (9 AM)
17 - Work Party (Rain Date)
17 - Member Night (7-10 PM)

December

15 - Christmas Party (7:30 PM)

If you have submissions for the newsletter, questions, comments, or ideas, please send me an e-mail.

Also, if you are still receiving you're newsletters via postal mail and have access to e-mail you can opt to receive them in a PDF format via e-mail instead. You'll get them a little faster and save the RAS a few bucks. Club updates and reminders are sent out on regular basis via e-mail. If you would like to change you're delivery method please let me know.

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The free Adobe Acrobat reader can be downloaded here:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

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~ From the Editor~