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april '76 Bulletin

Editor
Jack M. Zeiders

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE CLUB:

MARCH 27: Henry Coe Park, dusk 'till dawn.

This should be a spectacular star party. Weather permitting, there will be a half dozen planets, myriad galaxies, and for a finale, comet West. Yes, Virginia, it will still be highly visible. If anyone missed the spectacular display of March 7th, twenty days later the comet should present 5 to 10 degrees of tail. On the 21st the head was reported to be of first magnitude by Don McGlaulin.

APRIL 2: Olinder Center, 7:30 PM.

This is an Equipment and Slide Night. I wonder if anyone might present a picture of comet West? Kevin Medlock will have his uncompleted 18" telescope there. Amongst the other equipment will be a 12" 'scope featuring the two-station diagonal described elsewhere in this month's bulletin.

APRIL 3: Half Moon Bay

The A.S.P. is having a public star party.

APRIL 7: Canoas Elementary School, dusk 'till 10 PM.

Jim Van Nuland has arranged for a special star party this evening. Ten to fifteen young people participating in a program for gifted minors are to be at the focus of our presentation. The students range in age from 8 to 12 years and have expressed an interest in astronomy. I don't have the complete address, but the school is located on the eastern section of Wren Drive, between Capitol and Curtner.

APRIL 9: Dr. Gregory's home.

The Board of Directors meeting. All interested members are welcome to board meetings.

APRIL 10: K-Mart, Saratoga-Sunnyvale and Bollinger Rds.

Astronomy Day. I plan to be there with my 8" and perhaps a 2.4" scope. Wouldn't you enjoy the opportunity to display your scope and astronomical expertise to the public?

APRIL 24: Henry Coe State Park.

Club star party. Upper site (through the gate and over the woods).

MAY 18 to 22: Lawrence Hall of Science, Berkeley.

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific is having their summer scientific meeting.

MAY 29 to 31: Big Bear.

The Riverside Amateur Telescope Makers Conference.

The Last Star Party:

(or: Tales Of You Should Have Been There)

Arriving late, I bathed the entire site in light while fumbling to set up the 8". Kevin Medlock arrived at the same time, but Celestron 8's only take 3.25 minutes to set up. The crowd was very good for a winter star party. About twenty persons were there at various times. The Moon was up and the breeze was cold, but the seeing and transparency were good. There were telescopes of 16, 15, 12, 10, 8, and 6 inch apertures, and assorted astronomy types to go with them. We had a visiting expedition from the Chabot Telescope Maker's Workshop. I slept part of the evening (burned out from Friday's fiasco), only to be awakened by lung powered C.B. between Rattley and Curtis across the park. The comet was coming up and the tail looked like an aircraft with its landing lights on! Most of us who remained on the hill were tripping our shutters and over our tongues. Those who went home to a nice warm bed were fogged out and missed a super show.

Editorial:

This is the second effort of the new bulletin staff. I hope you find it an improvement over our first edition, because I am going to hit you up for money. Yes, dear friend, it is very expensive to produce a Bulletin like this. We are looking for financial support from those who think the new format is worth keeping. Our treasurer would be most happy to accept donations for printing costs. I thoroughly enjoy producing the Bulletin, and would like input from you on how to improve it. Tech Talk is open to articles by interested people who wish to share their knowledge. Just send a typed or neatly written (readable) copy to Don McGlaulin, 1571 Piedmont Rd., San Jose, CA 95132. Any editorial correspondence should be sent to Jack Zeiders at 725 Minnesota Ave., San Jose, CA 95125.

Ads Infinitum:

Scott Hares needs a new spider and diagonal holder for a 1.25" minor axis diagonal to fit a 7" I.D. tube. Phone 225-0336.

Jack Meyer has a grinding machine for up to a 12" mirror to give away. It needs a 120 R.P.M. motor. Phone 335-7318 (Felton)

rattley rattles

I sincerely hope that no one missed seeing comet West, in the East, earlier this month. Those that did truly missed one of the most spectacular comets of this century. Comet West turned out to be all that comet Kohoutek failed to be. At our last star party at Henry Coe State Park we even overheard truck drivers on Pacheco Pass talking about it on their C.B. radios, and Denni Frerichs said she almost didn't see it because she thought it was just someone shining a beam of light up into the sky.

The comet's tail was big, broad, bright, and at least 17 degrees long. I compared the brightness of this comet with Altair while the sky was still dark and could easily see that the comet made Altair look like a 3rd or 4th magnitude star. It was my impression that comet West was at least of zero magnitude, but was probably even brighter than that. Later, when Venus rose (in fairly bright skies) I found Venus to be much brighter than the comet, leaving the comet to be either zero or minus one magnitude, but bright anyway.

The latter half of this month, the Moon has been hanging around in the morning skies making the comet seem weak and helpless. But once the Moon gets out of the way, for our next Star Party at Coe Park, I expect that comet West will still be a decent show, though it will have lost much of its glory. For those who have not seen comet West, 1975n, I urge you to please get out to this next Star Party and have a look at this sure candidate for "Comet of the Century".

For those who got pictures and slides of this comet, bring them to the next meeting. This was a very photogenic comet and there were lots of shutters clicking away, and I'm sure a lot of fine pictures were taken. Let's see them.

A few tips for the next Star Party: besides the comet, bring your "galaxy eyeballs" as Virgo will be up to entertain you with a myriad of other worlds (M104, M87, M49, etc.) Also to be viewed will be Leo, Coma Berenices, Ursa Major, galaxies, galaxies galore, plus a few planetaries and several of the large globular star clusters. The following is a short list of a few of my favorite NGC galaxies:

NGC#	RA/Dec	Mag	Size	Type	Description (from NGC catalogue)
2403	0732/66	9	17'x10'	Sc	!! Considerably bright, extremely large, very much elongated, very gradually much brighter in the middle, distinct nucleus.
2903	0929/22	9	11x4 1/2	Sb	Considerably bright, very large, elongated, gradually much brighter in the middle, mottled, has a small faint knot in the north part of the following arm (NGC1902)
2683	0850/34	9.5	8x1.5	Sb	Very bright, very large, very much elongated in the direction 39°, gradually much brighter in the middle.
3115	1003/07	9.5	4x1.25	E6	Very bright, large, very much elongated in the direction 46°, very gradually suddenly much brighter in the middle with an elongated distinct nucleus.
4565	1234/26	10	14x1.25	Sb	Bright, extremely large, extremely elongated in the direction 135°, very suddenly brighter in the middle with a nucleus like a 10th magnitude star.

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RATTLEY CONTINUES RATTLING.....

NGC#	RA/Dec	Mag	Size	Type	Description
4656	1242/32	11	19.5x2	Sc	! Pretty bright, large, very much elongated in the direction 34°, has a very faint companion north following (which I have never seen, personally)

Also viewable will be Saturn, Mars, Uranus, Neptune, and, of course, Pluto. This should turn out to be a good Star Party, so don't miss it!

Contributed by Gerry Rattley

tech talk

By Don McGlaulin

If you are going to do photography with your telescope, wouldn't it be nice to be able to quickly switch between eyepiece and camera, without disturbing the focus of either? Here's an easy way to do it that I have incorporated into my 12" telescope. It's a flip-flop diagonal holder that is easy to make and allows two observing stations on opposite sides of the tube. With an eyepiece on one side and camera on the other; it is a simple matter to center that faint galaxy in the eyepiece, flop the diagonal over to the pre-focused camera, and begin the exposure.

My spider is of the type that has a threaded rod thru it for mounting the diagonal holder. If yours is the smooth slip-type with a setscrew, it will be necessary to add a collar with a setscrew between the spider and diagonal holder. Otherwise, the only other part you need to make is a knob roughly the same diameter as the spider center section. Put a setscrew thru one side and drill the hole for the ball bearing so that the ball fits snugly (put the spring in first!). Two indents in the top face of the spider support completes the fabrication. Screw the knob onto the shaft until it jams, then back off until the ball drops into the first detent. Now you can screw the diagonal holder in and out to get proper collimation, while the knob stands still. Tighten the setscrew and the whole assembly will rotate from detent to detent.

Make sure that you put your second observing station exactly the same distance from the primary mirror as the first to eliminate collimation shift when switching diagonal positions. See accompanying illustrations for added confusion.

