

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2010

William M. Staerke Planetarium

President Guy Hampel called the meeting to order at 7:01pm with 15 members and guests in attendance. Guy led a discussion of last year's speaker from India and announced that we were all invited to Venezuela to observe with him! He uses the unaided and some homemade instruments used to measure angles. We all agreed that while his talk was unorthodox, it did make you think about what we know and take for granted.

Dave Leake relayed an email from Savannah Hampson at the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. There were four points:

1. Were we still interested in collaborating with the CCFPD on night programs? YES!
2. Would the club be interested in doing a program at Homer Lake? YES! Homer Lake is roughly half the distance to the Middle Fork so more may come but the skies maybe wouldn't be as dark. Guy asked for a volunteer to scout out Homer Lake for a spot away from security lighting. Dave mentioned that former member Lex Lane used to live adjacent to the area – he will try to contact him.
3. What dates would we like to observe from CCFPD site in spring, 2011? It was agreed that April and May worked pretty well. We could maybe do one on the New Moon Saturday of each month, with one at the Middle Fork and one at Homer Lake. Dave will email some dates to Savannah.
4. Would CUAS be interested in doing a daytime solar program? This came back as a tentative “yes,” but the club would like more information. Is this a weekend? Weekday? Morning/afternoon? General public or focused group (students/teachers)? Again, Dave will email her.

Guy has seven leftover 2010 calendars that he will give away at the public open houses

Mike Rosenberger reported on the observatory site. The shed is coming along nicely with most of the wall repairs completed. He has a metal door on order. The inside is fine despite the fact it has been open to the weather. Mike will also add a roof vent. He took the generator home temporarily so now one of the mowers is on the lower level of the dome for easy access. Mike changed the oil on both mowers and fixed the handle of the one. He'll also work on another set of steps and have them anchored. We all need to scrape paint both inside and outside of the dome itself, down to the block . . . which won't be easy. The scope will need to be temporarily relocated for the inside work, given the dust. Many thanks to Mike Rosenberger for his hard work!

Guy led a discussion of digital setting circles, demonstrating the “Sky Commander.” This unit can be attached to the 16-inch truss-tube Dobsonian at the dome site. It runs on a 9v battery. If you're observing late at night, Guy advised that you put in tomorrow's date for the best results. It is aligned by the “two star method.” After you punch in an object, it will give you a degree offset in both altitude and azimuth and then you move the scope (with encoders attached) until the numbers say zero/zero and you should be close to seeing the object. We have three sets of

these units in the club with one belonging to the club. They retail at \$450 with the encoders included. Encoders are roughly \$60 each by themselves.

Please come to the open houses as we need the help! At the last one, we enjoyed looking at the Moon through Don's telescope and Ethos eyepiece. We also saw a magnitude -3 satellite flare. There was also a short discussion of the latest impact on Jupiter, caught by an amateur astronomer, and Comet McNaught in the morning sky.

Next month, Guy will encourage Bob Holmes to come talk to us!

Dave Leake
CUAS Secretary