

THE FBAC OBSERVER

JUNE, 2003 VOL 17, NO. 6

Fort Bend Astronomy Club, P.O. Box 942, Stafford, TX 77497-0942

WHAT'S UP IN JUNE

Sunday, June 1—A very 'YOUNG MOON' is low in the WNW. Look one hour after sunset.

Monday, June 2—Binoculars show that 6th magnitude Uranus is 10° to the left of Mars and 3.5° from 4th magnitude Theta Aqr. Mars and Uranus will remain within 10° through November 3, 2003.

Tuesday, June 3—Look 40 minutes before sunrise at Mercury. Mercury is at its greatest elongation, 24° from the Sun and 4° from Venus. Use your binoculars.

Wednesday, June 4—Jupiter, low in the western sky, is slowly but surely leaving the night sky. Jupiter and Saturn appear lower each night. Saturn disappears this week.

Saturday, June 7—The Moon is in First Quarter, actually at 3:28 p.m. CDT.

Thursday, June 12—40 minutes before sunrise, look for Venus and Mercury 5° apart in the ENE sky.

Friday, June 13—Jupiter, low in the west, is 15° away from Regulus in Leo.

Saturday, June 14—2 hours after sunset, nearly the last chance to check out Sagittarius before it disappears from our evening skies and re-appears in early Spring. There are no less than 15 Messier objects in Sag. The Moon may be a problem as the Full Moon, (known as 'Rose Moon, Flower Moon, or Strawberry Moon) is at 6:16 a.m. CDT. In the pre-dawn sky look for Mars and Uranus that are 5° apart. This pairing is good through July 2.

Thursday, June 19—40 minutes before sunrise, Venus and Mercury are 1.2° apart.

Friday, June 20—Venus and Mercury have now moved to within 0.7° from each other. Use your binoculars and look 40 minutes before sunrise.

FRIDAY, JUNE 21—FBAC MEETING AT THE ELDRIDGE COMMUNITY CENTER. THIS WILL BE OUR LAST MEETING HERE FOR THE YEAR. OUR NEXT MEETING, JULY 18, WILL BE AT FIRST COLONY CONFERENCE CENTER ON AUSTIN PARKWAY.

Saturday, June 21—Mercury passes 0.4° south of Venus. Look for Capella and the Pleiades before the sky brightens. Last Quarter Moon also occurs on this date at 9:45 a.m. CDT. The Summer Solstice begins at 2:10 p.m. CDT. **Info note:** The two points on the ecliptic at which the Sun reaches its greatest declination of $23\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ north or south of the celestial equator, around June 21 for the summer solstice and December 22 for the winter solstice. At the summer solstice, the Sun lies directly overhead at noon on the Tropic of Cancer ($+23\frac{1}{2}^\circ$) and the northern hemisphere has its longest day and shortest night vice versa in the southern hemisphere. At the winter solstice the Sun lies overhead on the Tropic of Capricorn ($-23\frac{1}{2}^\circ$).

Sunday, June 29—New Moon occurs at 1:39 p.m. CDT.

From The President!

TSP Redux

This year's annual gathering in Ft. Davis was, in my opinion, the best ever. Five out of seven nights were stone clear with a glitch on Tuesday when everyone was scared off by a few rain drops splattering down right after dark. The sound of three hundred scope covers being simultaneously whipped out and slapped on was almost ear shattering.

The high point of the entire week, though, was a run away buffalo wandering through the north observing field. This is the closest to a bull in a china shop I have ever seen.

Dinner At The Ritz

If you missed the last meeting, you missed a lot of good food and good times. I'm always afraid that we won't have enough to eat at these gatherings but, as usual, my fears were unfounded. It took three folding tables to hold all the stuff everyone brought. My thanks go out to all of you who were so generous with your goodies. Several club members have told me they enjoyed having a meeting other than the Christmas party that was set aside strictly for socializing.

Astronomers Have C.L.A.S.S.

Many of you know John Wagoner who coordinates a great deal of the observing program at TSP. At this year's SWRAL meeting at TSP, he announced that he is forming an observing society called C.L.A.S.S., an acronym for City Lights Astronomical Society for Students. This organization is to be dedicated to bringing astronomy to inner city students through an outreach program sponsored by local astronomy clubs. When I heard about this, I naturally thought about the possibility of broadening our Astronomy On Wheels program to be a part of this organization. I don't have complete details yet but will be bringing this before the club at our June meeting. This seems like a perfect opportunity to give inner city kids a chance to learn about the science of astronomy.

Telescopes For Telethon

This annual event is right around the corner. Steve Goldberg has set the date for the first day as July 12. Unfortunately as I write this I don't have the second date in front of me but it will be a Saturday in August. Our club has been participating in this charity event for several years. Please consider helping out with this project.

The Value Of A T-Shirt

Last Saturday I was wandering around slack-jawed in the local Target store. The night before had been club observing at the George observatory and it was 2:00 AM before I crawled in bed. As usual I woke up at daylight so I pretty much felt like the TSP buffalo had just trampled me into the dirt. As I waited for my wife to make a decision on some gee-gaw or the other, I heard someone behind me calling, "Sir, could I interest you in saving ten percent on your purchase?" I turned, gave him what I thought passed as the evil eye but before I could reply he plowed on with, "All you have to do is apply for a Target credit card and we'll give you ten percent off all your purchases today." Since I was in no mood to put up with anything much less a credit card solicitation, I contorted myself into what passed for the aforementioned creature and the guy scurried off without another word. I turned around, went back into a daze, and continued twisting knobs and pushing buttons on the stereos.

Not thirty seconds later from behind me, I heard what sounded like the same guy. "Sir, sir," he said. This time I'd had enough. I was tired and I was sleepy, I didn't want to hear anymore about credit cards and I was going to skin the guy alive. I whipped around and was within a microsecond of pouring out a whole host of invectives when I realized it wasn't the same person. Before I could put my foot in my mouth he said, "I always wanted to be an astronomer!" For a second I was taken aback. Then I realized he had seen my FBAC t-shirt. "Does your club have an observatory?" he asked. I replied that we did and explained about the George and about our club. We talked for a while about telescopes, about the one he bought at Wal Mart a couple of years ago and the usual stuff you talk about to strangers when they ask about astronomy. I invited him to a club meeting and he said he would come. Maybe he will, it's hard to tell.

After he left I went back to pushing buttons on the stereos but he left me with a lesson. Life sometimes sneaks up behind us. And when it does, we have to know how to deal with it. Staying up late observing is no reason for turning into an ogre when you deal with people. And when I put on a piece of clothing that identifies me as a member of the Fort Bend Astronomy Club, I should also put on my best behavior. I had no excuse for snarling at the first young guy who approached me about the credit card. Had I done the same with the second, I would have shown him an intolerant crank rather than someone who is interested in furthering the science of astronomy. The world can always use another observer. And it can always use a little more tolerance.

—Wes Whiddon

FBAC MEETING FRIDAY, JUNE 20, ELDRIDGE ROAD

EAST DOME SCHEDULING KEITH RIVICH

The FBAC owns and operates an 18", fork mounted newtonian telescope which is housed at the George Observatory in Brazos Bend State Park. As part of our agreement with the Observatory we are responsible for supplying volunteers during nights of public use, which includes all Saturday nights and some Fridays. In return we are allowed full access to the scope for personal use. Included with the scope are a full set of Televue eyepieces and filters, several sets of star-charts and reference books, a computer with charting programs and a CCD camera. To have access to this equipment you MUST go through a short training program AND volunteer at least once each quarter. The training can take place on the same night that you volunteer.

During the dark-moon period, which runs from several days prior to third-quarter moon to several days past new-moon, use of the scope is scheduled due to demand. At all other times the scope is available on a first come basis. If you volunteer for a public night, even during the dark-moon period, then the scope is yours for the remainder of the night. To schedule a dark moon night I must be contacted no later than the full-moon prior to the next observing runs. Each month I will publish the current East-dome volunteer schedule, observing schedule, and research team schedule.

JUNE SATURDAY NIGHT SCHEDULE

JUNE 7	HISERODT / ELLIS / WEAVER
JUNE 14	DILLON / JANSSEN / OPEN
JUNE 21	MACKAY / OPEN / OPEN
JUNE 28	HISERODT / OPEN / OPEN

See <http://users3.ev1.net/~keithrivich/astronomy/eastdome/calender.html> for updates

DARK MOON OBSERVING SCHEDULE

This part of the schedule will be continually updated and posted at <http://users3.ev1.net/~keithrivich/astronomy/eastdome/calender.html> For more information on how to schedule dark-moon nights call me at any of the numbers posted below.

Also available are the clubs 8" dobsonian reflector and the Solaris scope (for viewing sun w/ H Alpha filter).

The clubs Meade 8" and 10" LX-200 loaner scopes are available for use. For an update on availability please call me or go to

<http://users3.ev1.net/~keithrivich/astronomy/eastdome/page3.html>

For more information or to sign up as a volunteer please contact me at: HM 281-468-8491 or WK 713-771-6944 or e-mail at icgalaxies@cs.com

Club Meetings & Officers

FORT BEND ASTRONOMY CLUB

The next meeting will be Friday, June 20 at Eldridge Park Community Center, 2511 Eldridge road. The time is 7:15 p.m. Dues are \$30/ year for the first member of a household, \$5 for each additional member at the same address, \$15 for students.

HOUSTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The HAS meets the first Friday of the month in room 117 of the University Of Houston Research building. The Novice program begins at 7:00 and the main meeting at 8:00.

JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Refer to the JSCAS web site for meeting sites. There is a link on the FBAC web site.

NORTH HOUSTON ASTRONOMY CLUB

The North Houston Astronomy Club meets on the 4th Friday of the month at Kingwood College. The meeting starts at 6:45 p.m. and the main meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

FBAC OFFICERS AND PHONE NUMBERS

President: Wes Whiddon	265-7614	Newsletter Editor: Leonard Pattillo	980-1175
Vice-President Derek Newton	313-1765	Librarian: Alec Cruz	713-702-9069
Treasurer: Terry Hiserodt	495-4012	George Observatory	242-3055
Secretary: Joe Dellinger	531-5417	Membership Chairman: John Harrison	835-0577
Alcor: Tracy Knauss	(409)-798-7917	Refreshments: Jack McKaye, Jayne Lambert	
East Dome Cord. Keith Rivich (K2)	468-8491	FBAC loaner scopes: Keith Rivich	468-8491

All phone numbers A/C 281 unless otherwise indicated.

FBAC HOME PAGE: <http://www.fbac.org>

NO SECRETARIES REPORT THIS MONTH.....