



The Faint Fuzzy



The Official Newsletter of the West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers

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UPCOMING MEETING:

The next meeting will be on January 24th. The meeting starts at 7:00pm, with observing afterwards if it is clear. Visitors are welcome (as always).

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From the Editors:

It's a *new* year, and a *new* look for *The Faint Fuzzy*! In addition to our regular annual events—Astronomy Day, Summer Nights, and the Twin Lakes Star Party—this year we'll also be looking for ways to celebrate 2009: the International Year of Astronomy.

As always, the success of these activities depends on *your* participation. Come join us!
— Bob & Melissa

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Club President Dale Baltimore brought the meeting to order. Fourteen people attended—a great turnout for a December meeting! Planetarium assistant Sonya Wood-Mahler joined the club. Sonya has been an avid supporter of WKAA and astronomy and we're glad to have her officially on board!

Treasurer's Report

David Paessler announced that the Star Party is finally in the black—by \$25! Thanks to all who purchased t-shirts! There are still a few shirts left in assorted sizes, and they are now half price—\$10! Contact David if you are interested.

Astronomical League Awards

David handed out two new AL certificates:

- Jim Phfistner—Messier Club (He also has a Binocular Messier certificate pending.)
- Bob Vickers—Globular Cluster Club

David noted that our certificate wall is full! He plans to make some wooden strips to go along the wall to hold certificates more compactly.

LBLA Volunteer Recognition Dinner

The annual LBLA Volunteer Recognition Dinner was held at Brandon Spring Group Camp on November 15. WKAA was well represented by Carol and Dale Baltimore, Harold Meyers, John and Cindy Holland, Vyron and Cynthia Mitchell, Sonya Wood-Mahler, and Bob and Melissa Vickers. Other volunteer groups at the dinner included the Bugle Corps, trail clearers, and maintenance workers.

After the dinner, Planetarium Director Don Partain presented an award to Bob and Melissa for the most WKAA volunteer outreach hours, and

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tennessee Spring Star Party

Join the Cumberland Astronomical Society for their [spring party](#), April 24-26, at Fall Creek Falls State Park near McMinnville, TN. See their website for further information.

Sidewalk Astronomy Program, Dawson Springs, KY

Some club members will be setting up their scopes on Friday night, May 1st, for the 8pm kickoff of the town's seasonal "First Friday" event. Food vendors will possibly be there. Come join us. Mars and Saturn will be spectacular to observe. If it is cloudy, we will not be setting up to observe.



*Starry, starry night,
Flaming flowers that brightly
blaze,
Swirling clouds in violet haze,
Reflect in Vincent's eyes of
china blue.
Colors changing hue, morning
fields of amber grain,
Weathered faces lined in pain,
Are soothed beneath the
artist's loving hand.
—Don McLean*

also gave out certificates to club members who had put in at least 16 volunteer hours.

At the meeting, Sonya presented certificates to club members who were unable to attend the dinner: Alan Dudenhofer, Stan Sprei, and David Paessler.

Thank you, LBLA, for a good meal and recognizing our efforts!

Summer Nights Presentations

Dale reminded the group that Don has asked for volunteers to present short talks at a few of the Summer Nights planetarium shows. Dale has offered to do "Getting Started in Astronomy" on June 6, and David will do "Learning the Night Sky" on August 8. Bill Brockman will present a session on CCD imaging on June 20 and July 18.

Sonya asked for brief descriptions of the talks to be put in the LBLA Planetarium calendar of events. Dale will take care of this.

New Buttons

John Holland handed out newly designed name buttons for members. The new buttons feature a truss Dob similar to the club logo. Dale thanked John for making them.

International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA)

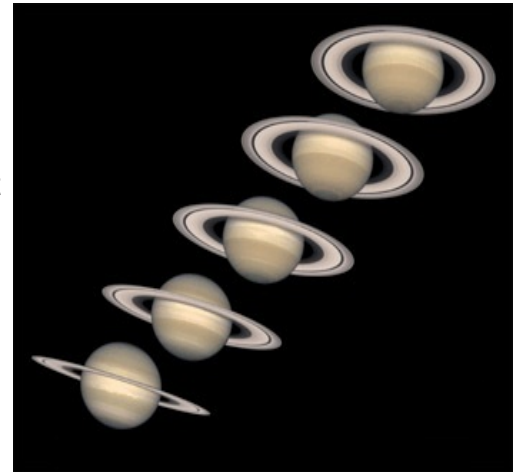
Sonya volunteered to send information that she has obtained on IYA and suggested the club consider doing some of the sponsored activities. See below for more IYA information. She also mentioned an online astronomy education program called "[Astronomy from the Ground Up.](#)" Check it out!

Looking Ahead

Dale reminded members that elections will be held at the March meeting. Please start thinking about possible candidates for offices.

Jim and Sandy Phfistner have volunteered once again to coordinate Astronomy Day activities on May 2, 2009. If you have ideas or would like to help, please contact them.

The meeting was adjourned, but the weather was not conducive to viewing—and besides, there were plenty of chocolates and other treats on hand. People socialized and enjoyed the fellowship—and the goodies.



Saturn's rings will be edge on by September 2009. Photo courtesy of NASA



ASTRONOMEDIA

- [The Cadiz Record](#) website includes links to Dan Pope's syndicated column, "Your Handle on the Night Sky" (click on "The Night Sky"), and Jack Horkheimer: Star Gazer (click on "Video Sky Tour"). Thanks to Editor Vyron Mitchell!
- Celebrate "[400 Years of the Telescope](#)" with the upcoming PBS special to air on April 10th at 9pm CDT.



Congratulations to club members Jeremiah and Stephanie Viger on their December 20th wedding in Illinois. We wish you the very best!



CELESTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Venus

Currently at magnitude -4.6, Venus is high in the SW after sunset. By the last half of February it reaches an astoundingly brilliant -4.8, about as bright as it can ever get. Observe its crescent shape in any telescope.

Comet C/2007 N3 Lulin

A good binocular comet at 7th magnitude, [Lulin](#) is visible in the early morning hours throughout January. Early February sees the comet rising around midnight, but by month's end it is about 2 degrees SSW of Saturn and rising not long after sunset. Comets are notoriously fickle but Lulin *may* reach 5th magnitude by the end of February. If so, try finding it with the unaided eye.

Iridium Flare

If you can make it to the club meeting a little early on January 24th, a -7 magnitude Iridium satellite flare is predicted for 6:17:13 PM CST for the Golden Pond location. Azimuth 178 degrees (South). Altitude 35 degrees.

The International Year of Astronomy

2009 has been declared to be the International Year of Astronomy by the International Astronomical Union (IAU). It is the 400th anniversary of Galileo's initial celestial observations using the newly invented telescope. Lots of ambitious projects are planned by the organizers and both clubs and individuals are encouraged to participate. To learn more about the projects and how you can help, check out the web site: www.astronomy2009.org. The January issue of *Sky & Telescope* also has an [IYA article](#).

Next month's *Faint Fuzzy* will feature an article by Sonya Wood-Mahler detailing the various events.

Two New Astronomical League Observing Clubs

In the last issue of *Reflector*, AL announced two new observing clubs, just in time for IYA:

[Galileo Club](#): According to the AL description:

The purpose of this observing program is to experience the thrill that Galileo had when he was the first person to turn a telescope towards the sky. You will make observations like those that caused such a great uproar throughout Europe as you find evidence that shows that the Ptolemaic model of the Universe (geocentric) was wrong and that Copernicus might be right (heliocentric), and that Aristotle may not have been right either...

CLUB OFFICERS

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Interacting Galaxies Arp 147
Photo Courtesy of NASA



Dark Sky Advocate: From the AL description:

Welcome to the Dark Sky Advocate Club! This program is unlike any other. If you have wanted to do something about a topic so important to our hobby — the loss of our dark skies due to light pollution — this is a way you can help.

Here lies a great opportunity for you, as you enter the Dark Sky Advocate program, to make a positive, dramatic impact on your community that will be long lasting and far reaching. Can you imagine any better way you can influence the future?

Somebody Has To

Somebody has to go polish the stars,
They're looking a little bit dull.
Somebody has to go polish the stars,
For the eagles and starlings and gulls
Have all been complaining they're tarnished and worn,
They say they want new ones we cannot afford.
So please get your rags
And your polishing jars,
Somebody has to go polish the stars.

—Shel Silverstein

CLUB MEMBERSHIP AND RESOURCES

Club Membership

Club membership is \$25 for an individual or family, which allows one member to earn Observing Club certificates through the Astronomical League. Additional family members who also want to earn certificates can pay an additional \$5. Contact David Paessler if you have questions.

Club membership fees are due in March each year.

Loaner Scopes/Imager

The club has two Dobsonians (6", 8") and a Meade Deep Sky Imager available for club members to borrow. Anyone who has been a club member for six months, completes a training/safety session, and signs a written agreement may borrow one of the scopes or the imager.

Library

The club has several books and magazines available to members for reference or checkout. Take a look and see what we have at the next club meeting.

Magazine Discounts

Club members who subscribe to *Sky & Telescope* or *Astronomy* magazines through the club receive a discount! Annually you can save \$10 on *Sky & Telescope* and \$9 on *Astronomy*. Contact David Paessler for more information.