

The Faint Fuzzy

The Official Newsletter of the West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers
May 2007

From the Editors: A big thank you to all who helped out on Astronomy Day! We were pleased at the success of the day and were especially glad that so many club members participated.

—Bob & Melissa

UPCOMING MEETING: Saturday, May 12th, 7pm, at Golden Pond Observatory. Visitors are welcome, and if skies are clear we will observe after the meeting.

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: April 14, 2007

Fifteen people attended the April meeting. It was held in the newly refurbished planetarium at the invitation of Don Partain, Golden Pond Planetarium Director. The dedication of the new seats had started earlier that day and continued with our meeting. Don offered finger sandwiches, cookies, brownies, and cold drinks to the club members. The new seats are carseat-style, “purchased” by various donors (including WKAA). The Forest Service had also provided new carpeting.

Astronomy Day

Much of the meeting was spent discussing plans for the upcoming Astronomy Day events. Topics discussed included: the table inside the Planetarium building, the planet walk, the outside tables, John Holland’s tv/video camera setup for solar viewing in the observatory, and night viewing. It was suggested that the main purpose of the tables should be PR for the club as well as for Astronomy Day in general. Another table would be set up outside for children’s activities.

Don reported that an Astronomy Day ad ran in the Murray, Cadiz, and Paducah newspapers. It was in all park brochures, and included a statement that there would be night observing as well. John Holland offered to put an ad in Hopkinsville paper, and Carol Baltimore offered to send him a press release. Carol suggested emailing science teachers in the area with a press release. She planned to take care of McCracken County (Paducah) and could email the press release to anybody else willing to contact teachers in their areas. Astronomy Day was also mentioned in Bob Vickers’ [LBL journal](#), a monthly guide to the night sky for the LBL Association’s website.

Don announced there would be free planetarium shows at 10am, 11am, 1pm, 2pm, and 3pm. Jim Hall’s “Getting Started in Astronomy” talk was set for noon.

See below for a full report of Astronomy Day’s activities!

New Buttons!

John Holland provided new buttons for recently elected officers and new members. Thanks!

Banner News

Bill Kassebaum was unable to attend the meeting, but sent the basics of two possible club banner designs for consideration. (Bob Vickers had one of these developed into a banner for use on Astronomy Day.)

Polo Shirts

Ken Billings couldn't be at the meeting either, but sent shirt design ideas for the club to consider. After discussion, it was decided to keep the shirts simple with just the over-the-pocket club name on the front and not put anything on the back. A design similar to what Bill had suggested for the banner could be used. There is no word on price of shirts yet.

Lake Barkley State Park Opportunity

Dale Baltimore announced that Jenny Howard, Park Naturalist from Lake Barkley State Resort Park, wants volunteers to do sidewalk astronomy programs at their public events. See Sidewalk Programs section for more details.

Summer Nights

LBL Golden Pond "Summer Nights" will start May 26, Memorial Day weekend. We need a volunteer to coordinate signups as Heather Sherbourne did in the past. If you are interested in coordinating this effort, email Dale. It worked well last year for each club member to sign up for a Saturday night each month in addition to the meeting nights.

Planetarium News From Don Partain

1. Make sure you sign in anytime you come to volunteer for public events. The more volunteer hours that are recorded, the more money the park gets. The sign-in sheet is inside the observatory. Print your name, full address, and the hours you volunteer—include drive time as well, and any time spent with public. **Please write clearly.** Don said, "Half the club writes like doctors, the other half like monkeys." LBL gives awards each year to volunteers and wants to provide a dinner as well.

2. Don announced a part-time position for planetarium/naturalist interpreter. Contact Don if you are interested.

As a special treat for the club, Don showed the latest Planetarium show: "Search for Life in the Universe," narrated by Leonard Nimoy. Don plans to unveil a new show in June about the Solar System.

Reminder: Club Memberships Now Due

If you have not paid your dues for 2007, bring them to the next meeting. Contact David Paessler if you have questions.

Treasurer's Report

There was no Treasurer's Report because David Paessler was out of town.

Astronomical League News

There were no AICor awards this month.

Observing

Cloudy skies prevented any observing after the meeting.

ASTRONOMY DAY 2007!

Astronomy Day was a huge success, thanks to all of the efforts before, during, and after by club members. At least 17 club members were on hand at various times of the day. LBL staff counted over 600 people “through the door” of the Visitor Center and 312 people enjoyed the free planetarium shows. Many people, including about 50 children and teens, made their way to the displays and the scopes on the observing field. One club member commented that this was the biggest crowd in memory, and was no doubt at least partially due to the beautiful clear skies all day and into the evening. View Astronomy Day pictures on the [WKAA website!](#)

Club members gave visitors guided tours on the planet walk; provided telescopic views of solar prominences (through special filters), Venus, and the Moon; entertained the children with games and puzzles; and generally talked up WKAA and astronomy. Tables set up both inside the Planetarium building and outside the observatory had handouts and glossy booklets (many from the collection of freebies that Astronomy magazine gave to the club for their 3rd place in the Outreach contest last year).

Jim Hall did an outstanding “Getting Started in Astronomy” talk in the Planetarium.

Special thanks to Jim and Sandy Phfistner for orchestrating the day’s events, and for cleaning the observatory building.

Kudos to Harold Meyers for the excellent BBQ and cake!

We held an informal “debriefing” over dinner to discuss improvements for next year.

The skies remained clear that evening so club members provided telescope viewing for the public—and themselves!

BILL BROCKMAN DONATES IMAGER TO WKAA

Bill Brockman has donated a Meade Deep Sky Imager (color CCD camera) to the club. Bill has upgraded to a newer model of the Meade imager. The club appreciates Bill’s generous donation of this equipment. It may help get a club member interested in Astro imaging.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sidewalk Programs

As mentioned above, Jenny Howard from Lake Barkley has requested on-going public outreach there. The first opportunity came the same weekend as Astronomy Day. Jim and Sandy Phfistner, David Paessler, Carol and Dale Baltimore were on hand that Sunday evening as part of an Earth Day celebration. They had three telescopes set up, and about 15 to 20 people came by. They treated the public to views of the Moon, Saturn, Venus, M42, several double stars, and a few other objects. People really enjoyed this—most had never looked through real telescopes before. Saturn and the Moon were big hits!

Jenny sent an E-mail to Dale and the others saying, “Thank you, thank you, thank you for helping to create a fabulous Earth Week at Lake Barkley. I appreciate the time, knowledge, and genuine dedication that each of you offered our community and Park guests, and which each of you consistently provides through your education programs.” She would like to set up future events with the club as well.

Sheriff's Ranch

David Paessler is exploring the idea of helping out at the Sheriff's Ranch again this summer. This would involve club members setting up at the ranch on Wednesday and Thursday nights and showing the night sky to underprivileged children. If you are interested in helping with this outreach, contact David.

CLUB RESOURCES

Loaner Scopes

The club has two Dobsonians (6", 8") 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.

Library

The club has several books and magazines available 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 and Telescope* or *Astronomy* magazines through the club receive a discount! Annually you can save \$10 on *Sky and Telescope* and \$9 on *Astronomy*. Turn in your renewals to David Paessler in order to receive the discount.

CLUB OFFICERS

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