



The Faint Fuzzy

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The Official Newsletter of the West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers

May 2008

From the Editors:

We were very pleased at the large turnout for the April meeting and potluck dinner. Not only do we have lots of passionate astronomers in our club, but we have some good cooks, too! We would like to see this enthusiastic participation continue for the upcoming Astronomy Day and Summer Nights Programs. See you all there!

—Bob & Melissa

UPCOMING MEETING:

Next meeting: May 3rd. The meeting starts at 7:00pm, with observing afterwards if it is clear. Visitors are welcome (as always) to join us for the entire evening!

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: APRIL 5TH

After another wonderful potluck dinner at the observatory, we moved to the planetarium at Don Partain's invitation for our monthly club meeting. Twenty-six people attended the meeting, including Mike Armstrong, long-time TLSP attendee who recently moved to Kentucky (welcome, Mike!); Otto Piechowski, a visiting teacher from Lexington, Kentucky; Stephanie Mathis, Jackie's wife; and Gerald, a visitor from California.

Election of Officers

The meeting was called to order by club president Dale Baltimore, who started with the election of officers. All incumbent officers were reelected:

- *President:* Dale Baltimore
- *Vice President:* Jim Phfistner
- *Co-Secretaries:* Bob and Melissa Vickers
- *Treasurer/ALCOR Representative:* David Paessler
- *Star Party Coordinator and Assistant:* David Paessler and Bill Kassebaum

Thank you to all the officers (and other club members) for your hard work and dedication to the club!

Don Partain Discusses Volunteering for LBL Events

Immediately following the elections, Dale turned the floor over to Planetarium Director, Don Partain, who spoke about the upcoming Astronomy Day and Summer Nights, as well as some changes in the insurance policy for WKAA volunteers at LBL.

Plans are underway for this year's Astronomy Day at Golden Pond Planetarium and Observatory, May 10, 2008. In addition to the free planetarium shows running throughout the day, Don asked if perhaps Jim Hall might be willing to repeat his talk on Beginning Astronomy that was so well received last year. [David Paessler offered to contact Jim and ask him.]

Don's new planetarium assistant, Sonja, has planned hands-on activities for tables inside the Visitor's Center. She would welcome volunteers to help at these tables. Table themes include:

- Astronomy in the Marketplace
- Worlds in Comparison
- Secret Messages
- Cosmic Distances

Don also asked that any time you serve as a volunteer at Golden Pond, please record your time on the sign-in sheet located inside the observatory. Include your travel time to and from the park. Potential funders like to see evidence of a lot of volunteer support for programs. Anytime the public is there, count the hours.

Each club member who volunteers at the Observatory needs to see Friends of LBL employees Sonja, Al, or Don to sign a form to ensure his or her liability coverage.

See page 7 for Don's list of safety guidelines for the observatory and visitor center.

Don thanked Harold Meyers for doing such an excellent job coordinating last year's Summer Nights program. Harold has volunteered to coordinate Summer Nights again this year.

Possible Boy Scout Troop Visit

Dale announced that another Boy Scout Troop has contacted the club about an Astronomy Merit Badge night at the observatory. He is discussing the details of such an event with the scout master and will let club members know if it becomes a reality.

Strategic Planning

Dale also plans to discuss goals for WKAA at the next meeting. Please come with ideas for ways to make WKAA even better than it is. Afterall, it's *your* club!

New Officer Position Discussed

It was suggested that we add a new club office: Publicist. After discussion, the club voted that this position is not necessary at this time as individuals in the various geographic areas are taking care of publicity on an as-needed basis.

Clear Night for Observing!

The skies were clear and club members enjoyed a night of observing after the meeting.

See observing reports on page 3.

Club Memberships Now Due: If you have not paid your dues for 2008, bring them to the next meeting. Contact David Paessler if you have questions.

UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

★ **May 2:** Ross Workman, Mike Armstrong, and Jackie Mathis have planned a sidewalk astronomy event on Friday, May 2nd, at Dawson Springs, KY, at 7:00pm. If you are interested in helping, contact Ross at planetman[[@](mailto:planetman@bellsouth.net)]bellsouth.net.

★ **May 6:** Space Day 2008 at the Challenger Learning Center in Paducah, KY. This event will be during the day only, so there will be no telescope viewing.

★ **May 10:** [Astronomy Day](#) at Golden Pond Planetarium. Jackie Mathis is coordinating this year's event and is counting on the club's support to make it another success. Volunteers are needed to help all day long. If you would like to help us set up, please arrive by 9:00am (or a little earlier). Jackie has solicited handout materials from JPL and *Astronomy Magazine*. Harold is providing lunch for volunteers.

★ **May 24:** First [Summer Nights](#) program at Golden Pond Planetarium

OBSERVING REPORTS

Bill Brockman's Astrophotography

Bill Brockman shared his astrophotography skills after the April meeting. It was amazing to watch his images build on the computer screen. Here are four of the images taken that night. Bill adds, "It was great seeing everyone again. The WKAA club is one of the finest groups of people I know. These images turned out OK. Some of the very faint distant galaxies will probably not show up if these are printed, but I think show up OK on the computer screen."

(These images are cropped. To see the complete image, click on the object name below.)



⇐ [Messier 104: Sombrero Galaxy](#) in Virgo

April 5, 2008

Golden Pond Observatory

Distance: 50 million light years

6" Reflector, F/5.0 @ 120x

CCD, DSIP2, Luminance = 50 x 30 seconds

[Messier 51: Whirlpool Galaxy](#) in Canes Venatici ⇒

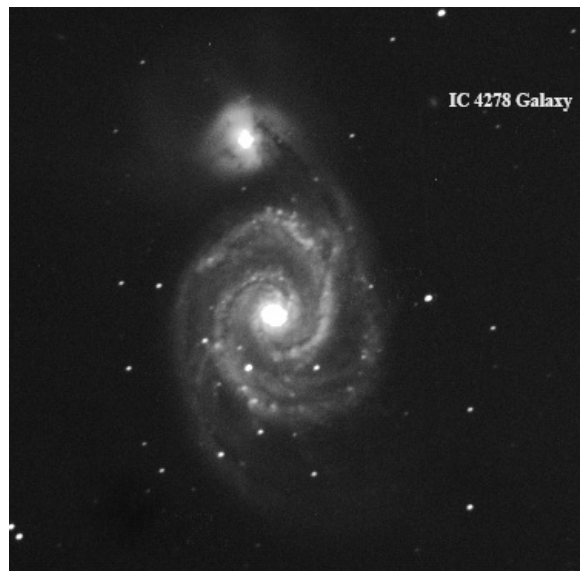
April 5, 2008

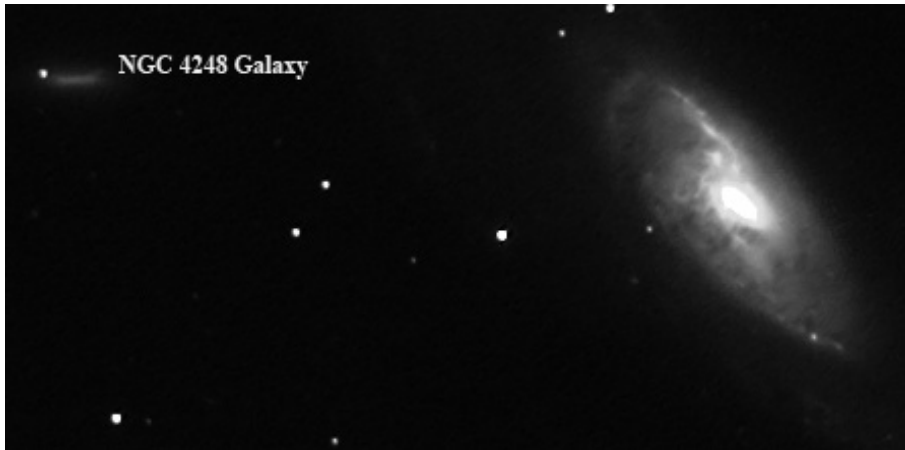
Golden Pond Observatory

Distance: 37 million light years

6" Reflector, F/5.0 @ 120x

CCD: DSIP2, Luminance = 30 x 30 seconds





⇐ [Messier 106: Galaxy](#)
in Canes Venatici

April 5, 2008

Golden Pond Observatory

Distance: 25 million light
years

6" Reflector, F/5.0 @ 120x

CCD: DSIP2, Luminance
= 50 x 30 seconds

[Messier 109: Galaxy](#) in Ursa Major

April 5, 2008

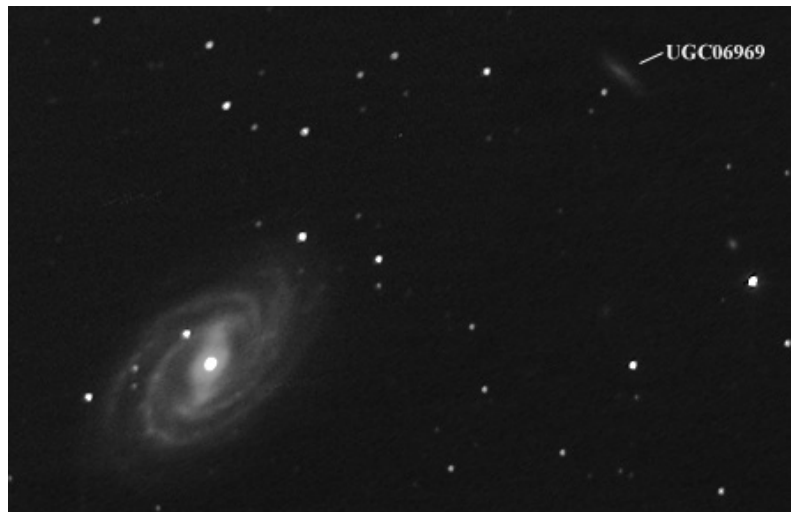


Golden Pond Observatory

Distance: 55 million light years

6" Reflector, F/5.0 @ 120x

CCD: DSIP2, Luminance = 50 x 30
seconds



All photography by Bill Brockman

Thank you, Bill, for sharing these beautiful pictures!

Harold Meyers and his Late Night Report (April 5, 2008)

Harold gets the Late Night Viewing "Award" for April with this report:

"I stayed too late last night! Otto Piechowski and I left at 4:30am, but we had fun. He kept talking about how good the viewing was--he would flip out if he came on a good clear night! We saw Omega Centauri and the southern Milky Way was shining bright above the trees before we left. He spotted M24 in his scope and called me over to identify it. He said that at their astronomy club in Lexington [Kentucky] they can't see the detail in the Milky Way because of the light pollution. I have observed that many guests have commented on our skies at Golden Pond. We are extremely lucky to have an astronomy club with good dark skies."

WHO, ME?

WKAA has a strong history of public outreach. The annual Summer Nights program in conjunction with the Golden Pond Observatory held every Saturday from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend is one of our showcase events. Hundreds of visitors will attend these viewing opportunities for a glimpse at the night sky through a telescope. This kind of weekly event requires a serious commitment by the club and its members to be

willing to show up and set up enough telescopes to keep the crowd happy. That's where YOU come in.

Maybe you are a "newbie" and have not yet memorized the sky coordinates of all 110 Messier objects. But if you can point your telescope at the moon or visible planets or some of the major, easy-to-find not-so-faint fuzzies, you can help at a Summer Nights session. Some of the people who attend these events have *never* looked in a telescope before and are happy to have the chance to do so.

Experienced club members are more than willing to help the newer members learn how to find objects in the night sky. If you set up next to a more experienced member, you'll get help when you need it.

We need as many volunteers as possible for the Summer Nights programs to help spread out travel costs, so please come help us out.

Harold Meyers will once again be coordinating volunteers for Summer Nights. Check your calendars for dates you can help out and let Harold know. Contact him at hambone10100[[@](mailto:hambone10100@yahoo.com)]yahoo.com.

Summer Nights Programs are win-win-win for everybody--the public gets to see some pretty amazing sights; LBL folks get the benefit of our volunteer hours; and WKAA furthers its reputation as a club dedicated to sharing the beauty of the night sky.

See you there!

ASTRONOMEDIA

"The Big Picture"

This is an interesting website showing details of a 152 foot wide by 20 foot high mural at Griffith Observatory, Los Angeles, showing part of the Virgo cluster of galaxies. It is derived from sky survey images.

Colliding Galaxies

NASA has just released a collection of 59 stunning images of interacting galaxies. Visit this website to see the individual photos and find links to videos depicting galaxy interactions and mergers.

ASTRONOMY EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

Dave Byrd, former member of WKAA, has the following items for sale. Please contact him directly at [byrdman181\[\[@\]\(mailto:byrdman181@yahoo.com\)\]yahoo.com](mailto:byrdman181@yahoo.com) if you are interested in more information.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Orion Skyquest XT10 classic – with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25mm Sirius Plossl eyepiece (1.25") • 10mm Sirius Plossl eyepiece (1.25") • Orion 8x50 finder scope and mount • Moon filter • Complete XT10 Dobsonian base | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Orion 9x50 right angle finder scope with mount ★ Telrad reflex sight ★ 1.25" prism star diagonal ★ Orion 1.25" laser collimator ★ Orion 1.25" color electronic imaging eyepiece ★ Orion 1.25" Ultrascopic Barlow lens ★ Televue Panoptic 27mm 2" eyepiece ★ DSO SP40mm 2" eyepiece |
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CLUB RESOURCES

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.

CLUB OFFICERS

President: Dale Baltimore—Paducah, KY; 270-554-6603; w.daleb[[@](mailto:w.daleb@comcast.net)]comcast.net

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Secretary: Bob & Melissa Vickers—Huntingdon, TN; 731-986-3082; Vickers[[@](mailto:Vickers@aeneas.net)]aeneas.net

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Website: John McCubbin—Hopkinsville, KY; mccubbin.astronomy[[@](mailto:mccubbin.astronomy@gmail.com)]gmail.com and John Holland—Hopkinsville, KY; yojohn_ng[[@](mailto:yojohn_ng@newwavecomm.net)]newwavecomm.net

GOLDEN POND OBSERVATORY and VISITOR CENTER (GPVC) SAFETY RULES**OBSERVATORY****Red or Green**

Never point the laser at any person as serious eye injury may result.

Laser**Extension Cords**

Use as short a cord as is needed for task. REMEMBER the tripping hazard from such cords and be careful to warn co-workers or visitors about use of them. Try to place the electrical equipment as close to the electrical pedestal on the patio as possible to be as safe as possible.

Telescopes

Set up as close to electrical pedestal as possible to prevent tripping hazard from telescope base.

Permanent**Mount Ladder**

Position someone inside the observatory to supervise visitors or staff using the permanent mount ladder to the 12 ½ inch Newtonian telescope.

Club Room**Clutter**

Keep items in their place so as to prevent hazards to members or to visitors or employees. When room is open, someone from the club should be present.

Glass bottles or**Glasses**

Glass will shatter on concrete of patio or within the observatory building. Refrain from using glass bottles, glasses, or other materials which could shatter if broken.

Travel to GPVC**with no lights**

Assist visitors or others by using red light sources to walk them to the GPVC from the observatory as needed.

Grassy Area Tire**Ruts**

Refrain from parking on the observatory side of the gravel road adjacent to the observatory to prevent forming ruts which are tripping hazards for staff, volunteers, and visitors alike.

VISITOR SAFETY**Electronic****Devices**

Remind visitors to shut them off with no in-theater photography. This could cause visitor issues.

Visitor control**Issues**

Group leaders should be reminded of their group responsibility but you should take charge if necessary