

The ECLIP TIC

Newsletter of the Lackawanna Astronomical Society

LAS Officers for 2003

President - Jim Spangler

Vice-President - Diane Musewicz

Secretary - Jo-Ann Kamichitis

Treasurer - Joe Kamichitis

At-Large Members - Carol Leola, John Nallin, Bob Smith

SUMMER SCHEDULE

- JUNE**
- 3 Tuesday NO MEETING Moved to Saturday June 7th.
 - 7 Saturday Bus Trip reservations must be in.
 - 7 Saturday Meeting/Cookout/Board Meeting/Observing Session.
(June 3rd meeting moved because of the construction at the observatory.)
Cookout at 6:30 PM, Meeting at 7:30 PM
 - 8 Sunday Solar observing featuring a Coronado H-alpha solar telescope
and white light filters on the C-11
1:30 - 3:30 PM
 - 21 Saturday Bus Trip to Corning NY (See article for details)
 - 22 Sunday Solar observing 1:30 - 3:30 PM
 - 27 Friday Star Party at Lackawanna State Park (LSP) 9 PM
- JULY**
- 1 Tuesday Regular Meeting 7:30 PM
 - 5 Saturday Club Night/Cookout 6:30 PM
(No Board Meeting in July)
(TGC Summer Lectures - Dates to be announced)
 - 12 Saturday Star Party Frances Slocum State Park (FSSP) 9 PM
 - 18 Friday Star Party LSP 9 PM
 - 24 Thursday Star Party Promised Land State Park (PLSP) 9 PM
- AUGUST**
- 1 Friday Star Party LSP 9 PM
 - 5 Tuesday Regular Meeting 7:30 PM
 - 9 Saturday Club Night/Cookout 6:30 PM
 - 12 Tuesday Board Meeting 8:30 PM
 - 16 Saturday Star Party FSSP 9 PM
 - 21 Thursday Star Party PLSP 9 PM
- SEPT**
- 2 Tuesday Regular Meeting 7:30 PM
 - 6 Saturday Club Night/Cookout 6:30 PM
 - 9 Tuesday Board Meeting 8:30 PM

Note: Construction {expansion, actually} at the TGC Observatory has created a dimple in some of our activities there. But we're not complaining. We've had things real nice in the past and we'll have things even nicer in the future. The electricity is still on, water is still running, the bathrooms are still functional.

It'll be worth your while to come up in May or June to see what's being done. Our activities away from the observatory continue unabated. Star Parties this year will feature our refurbished 17 1/2" reflector made into a truss tube design by famous, talented and relatively new member Jamin Merritt. (Thanks Jamin!)

DUES NOTICE

You still have a chance to fulfill your dream of becoming a renewing member of the LAS.

The final dues notice is enclosed. Again, if by some chance you've already renewed and there is a notice enclosed - -sorry. Just let me know and I'll check my records.

Joe Kamichitis , treasurer

KEYHOLDERS LIST

All Keyholders have the keys to the gate and the LAS observatory.

Only the observatory assistants also have the keys to TGC Observatory's classroom building and the dome. So for the most comfort while observing on unscheduled nights, contact Jo-Ann and John first.

Both Dave Barrett and Jim Waltich like to get to the observatory early, sometimes even before nightfall (!), so if you think the same way, call them first.

John D. Sabia 586-0789
Jo-Ann Kamichitis 343-4006

Dave Barrett 488-6421
Joe Krott 587-5917
Carol Leola 586-1582

Ron Murazzi 945-9645
Don Murray 343-2394
Jim Spangler 587-3972
Wendy Tordoff 383-4185
Jim Waltich 822-5245

TGCO phone 945-3665

Please keep in mind that just taking your chances is not the most reliable way to be guaranteed entry and that some of us like knowing that someone else wants to be up there besides us .

LAS members are encouraged to bring up their own scopes but there are several scopes available up at the observatory for member use, including the club's beautifully redone 17 1/2 " truss tube Dobsonian scope , the LAS's homebuilt (even the main mirror) 12"Dob, the LAS loaner scope 6" f/8 Dob, and the equatorially mounted C-11 . In addition, TGCO lets us have the option of using the

9" Clark refractor, the 8" f/10 Dob, the 10" Dob.

On club nights especially but actually any observing night, beginners will find the LAS vets most happy to help you figure out your scope and to share views in their scopes..

Members must be trained and checked out on the use of the club's 11"SCT before they can "solo" on it. Anyone can drive a Dob.

E-Mail Updates

As you may have noticed the newsletter is not out often nor is it always perfectly timely. We take care of many events by means of e-mail reminders and updates.

Please make sure that you keep us up-to-date with your e-mail address changes.

Also check the website
<http://members.aol.com/SabiaJohn/LAS.html>

Also, if anyone is interested in taking over the ECLIPTIC, please contact the editor for details.

Corning Bus Trip

Come one, Come all, come join us on our bus trip to Corning Glass Museum (home of the first mirror blank poured for the 200 inch Palomar scope) on Saturday, June 21, 2003.

We will be leaving Keyser Oak Plaza, Scranton at 8:00am and will be traveling by Jo Jo Travelers Bus Company.

Cost of the trip will be \$20.00 a person. Payment to accompany reservations.

We should arrive at the museum by 10:30. The cost of the museum will be \$8.50 and this is to be collected before we get off the bus. This is the group rate.

We are also going to Corning Community College Planetarium to hear the lecture "More Than Meets The Eye". The lecture starts at 4:00pm and the cost is \$4.00 a person.

Hopefully this will leave some time for us to stop for dinner before leaving the Corning area at 8:00pm.

Please send all reservations to:
Carol Leola
16032 Airport Drive
Dalton, Pa. 18414

Please make checks payable to:
Lackawanna Astronomical Society

Reservations must be in by the LAS meeting, Saturday June 7, 2003. (please note the change in date). After this date the reservations are non-refundable, except in the event of the trip being cancelled.

An Update on TGC Observatory

By
Tom Cupillari

Over the past two years there have been some changes and additions at the observatory. And more are planned.

Most immediately obvious as you approach the observatory is the storage shed. It measures 10' by 14'. With equipment from both LAS and TGC needing to be stored, we ran out of space. The shed provides us with the much-needed space and allows us to regain control over space in the observatory.

Computer services were upgraded with a new Gateway computer. It has a DVD player and a CD burner. It is a nice machine. Also, we have added an Internet connection. In addition to being used with our programs, it is a big aid to me now that we are teaching the astronomy course at the observatory on a one night a week basis.

A ceiling mounted projector has been added. It is connected to the computer and to the video player. It is equipped with four speakers and a subwoofer. This addition has met with much favor, as it enhances the quality of our presentations.

Two cameras have been purchased. One is a CCD still camera, a ST7 by SBIG. The other is a digital, color video camera from Astrovid. Both John Sabia and Joe Kamichitis have worked with the ST7, capturing some nice images of the Moon, Jupiter and Saturn. Joe has been experimenting with the Astrovid, "filming" the Moon, Jupiter, Saturn, and an occultation of Saturn by the Moon. I hope to work with him on some future projects.

A wireless weather station was added to our facility. Granted, it has nothing to do with astronomy, but I like to think that it broadens the concept of "observatory." The sensing unit is mounted atop a 12 foot high pole adjacent to the parking lot. It measures wind direction, wind speed, air temperature, wind chill, barometric pressure, relative humidity, dew point and rainfall. The data are sent to a receiver in the observatory via a 412 MHz radio signal. The data can be downloaded to the computer, stored, and printed out when needed. Also, a real time readout can be displayed from the computer. A digital LED display is in the office. The electricity required to operate the weather station and transmitter is supplied by batteries which are kept charged by a solar cell panel which is mounted next to the sensing unit. This is a nice addition for those who like to stay in touch with the weather world as well as the astronomy world.

In the past several years "GO TO" telescopes have become increasingly popular. A casual look through Sky & Telescope and Astronomy shows advertisements by Meade and Celestron and Astro-Physics hawking their GO TO wares. Now Meade and Celestron are offering Global Positioning Systems (GPS) models. Several months ago we placed an order for a 10-inch, Meade LX200 GPS. We are still waiting for delivery but anxiously awaiting its arrival. Addendum, April, 2003. Of course, we now know that this telescope was delivered in April, 2002. We have had varying degrees of success with it, as well as some "glitches." Just recently we upgraded the software for the telescope's computer. Hopefully, this will cure any further difficulties.

This telescope is fairly heavy, 82 pounds. When mounted on the tripod it makes for a bulky load for two people to carry. To solve this problem an order for a Milburn Superwedge has been ordered. The wedge will be installed on the pier that is in the observing yard. The LX200 then can be used in the equatorial mode.

Webbing has been installed on the east side of the observatory fence. It does a good job block of blocking light from cars coming over the hill on Route 107.

Recently the observatory was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Margaret Briggs Foundation of Scranton. Along with matching funds from the college, we are about start on a three-phase project.

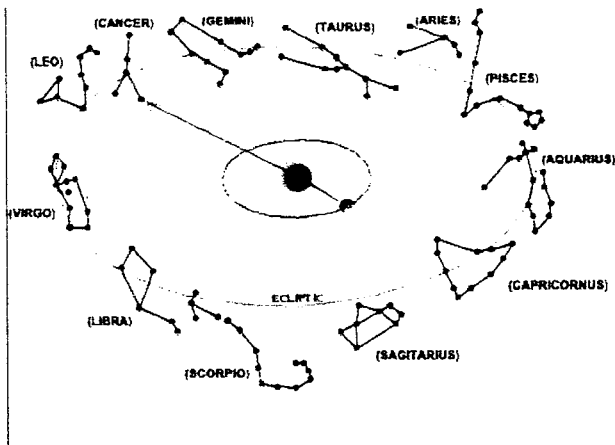
Phase one is to renovate the current auditorium-classroom building and to construct a 10 foot wide addition along the entire 42 foot length. This will be on the west side of the building. The addition will contain a new office, a new storage space, and a small exhibit-museum type space. When this phase is completed, we will be able to seat comfortably about 70-75 people. The plan is to have this part of the project completed this summer.

Phase two is the construction of a new telescope shelter, which will house two telescopes. The first telescope will be the Meade, 10", LX200. The shelter will be the roll-off roof type. The size of the shelter is going to be about 24' x 18'. The new shelter will be completed by spring or early summer 2004, if all goes well. It will require a bit more money than we have currently.

Phase three is the acquisition of a 16" to 18" Ritchey-Chretien telescope. Because of the high cost of this type telescope, I cannot put a time estimate on this phase. But I think it is a desirable instrument to add to the observatory. The quality and precision of this type telescope will allow research grade work to be done.

Just within the past few weeks we have been offered, free of cost, a 20", f/10 mirror. This mirror has a focal length of 16.67 feet. Even on a Dobson mount the viewing position would be dangerously high and the telescope would be difficult to handle as a "portable" 'scope. With this in mind, we are investigating the cost of having the mirror resurfaced at f/4.0 or f/4.5. This would make it a fine telescope for visual work. Building a mount for this mirror could make for a good, joint effort project between the college and the LAS.

AS THE ECLIPTIC TURNS,



LAS SUMMER OUTREACH: Star parties In the State Parks

LACKAWANNA STATE PARK

Directions are straight from the LSP web site. Lackawanna State Park is in Lackawanna County 10 miles north of Scranton in northeastern Pennsylvania. The park is easily accessible from Interstate 81. Visitors should take Exit 60 and travel 3 miles west on PA Route 524. Visitors coming via U.S. Routes 6 and 11 should take PA 438 east about 3 miles to PA 407, then south.

The slide show will start at 9PM. Observing will follow although if your scope is set up earlier I'm sure the campers will want to look at the moon through your scope before that.

We appreciate anyone who shows up ... we need scope owner/operators but scope-free LASers will be needed to watch the scopes and answer questions from the public.

At Lackawanna State Park, get off at I81, exit 199. We meet by the open air amphitheater which is just beyond the entrance to the camping site. Meet by the dumping station next to the ranger kiosk at the entrance to the camping area.

This event will be CANCELLED in the event of RAIN only ... if it is not raining merely cloudy the slide show will go on and we could use people with scopes to display.

we've been going to LSP for at least 5 years.

PROMISED LAND STATE PARK

Directions from the PLSP web site. Promised Land State Park is in Pike County, 10 miles north of Canadensis, along PA 390. The park is easily reached from interstates 80 and 84. The park is within a one to three hour drive from Allentown, Easton, Bethlehem, Reading, Harrisburg, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, and is about 100 miles north of Philadelphia and 35 miles from the New York and New Jersey state borders.

To get to Promised Land State Park, just get off at the Promised Land exit off I-84, follow the signs for the state park and you will take a left at the visitors' center/ranger office. You'll be going to the Deerfield camping area. The slide program here is held indoors and will be given no matter what the weather. We set up our scopes near the dumping station because there is a clear area there. (At least we think that's the reason).

This event does NOT get CANCELLED due to rain.

At each of state parks we run star parties in, we can get between 50 and 150 people so the more members and telescopes we have, the better. We'd like to keep the lines small for the kids.

We've been going to PLSP since 1981.

FRANCES SLOCUM STATE PARK

Directions from the FSSP web site. From exit 170B of Interstate 81, take Route 309 North approximately 7 miles (7.2). Turn right (east) on Carverton Road and go approximately 4 miles (4.2). Turn left (north) on 8th Street Road and go approximately one mile (1.3). Turn left (west) onto Mt. Olivet Road and go one mile. The park entrance is on the left.

Try to get there by 8:30 PM in order to set up while it's still light. You will all be relieved to see that while we are not setting up at the dumping station we will be close to it ... tradition continues :). We have been assured that we will be able to set up our scopes in a darker area than last year.

Hope to see you all there. We've had anywhere from 50 to 90 non LAS public at our other star parties ... we'll need LASers to show things in their scopes or to watch the equipment or to answer questions the public may have.

This will be CANCELED if it is raining since the slide show is held out of doors.

This is our second year at FSSP.

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FLASHBACK ... The GREAT LEONID METEOR SHOWER of 2001

as recorded by the Pluciennik sisters

PART I By Diane Musewicz

The night of the Leonid shower was amazing in many ways. If you want actual statistics, talk to John Sabia. If you want "Oohs and Aahs" version, read me.

First, I was able to find all the layers of clothing I needed to keep warm. This included taking my husband's knit skull cap, one of his sweat shirts, and gloves. (I couldn't find my own gloves or hat.)

Next, Sarah, my daughter, came along to the observatory. The thought that she would willingly spend a whole night outdoors away from her nice warm bed was amazing. She also convinced two of her friends to come up to Fleetville too.

Even though we arrived close to 10:00 PM, many club members were already there. I still drove to the back of the college's compound with my parking lights on. You don't want me driving with my lights off, believe me. We brought our lounge chairs from the front porch. They were cushioned and sturdy. A few members had those adjustable chairs that fold in thirds and through the night you could hear thuds as their heads hit the ground, which might explain their additional counts of meteors.

Sarah chose to sleep in the car until it got more exciting. When her friends arrived, we directed them to the back seat of the car. I can remember thinking the headline would read "Unfeeling Mother Lets Daughter Freeze to Death While She Watches Leonids." They immediately adjourned to the classroom to warm up and weren't seen for at least one hour.

John Sabia started yelling out his count. Everyone tried to get their sightings added in to his count, but this was his own personal count. Some meteors were spectacular and some left dust trails. Dave Barrett brought a night scope with him. It was really amazing to look at the dust trails with it.

While I was out in the field, Tom Cupillari walked out with the cellphone with a call for me. It was 2:30AM and I couldn't imagine who it was. Who would be up at that hour that wasn't already up at the observatory? It was Vince, my husband. He pictured just Jo-Ann, Joe, Sarah and me out in the field, so he was calling to see how things were going. I told him to get up here ASAP, and amazingly he did come up. When he got here, he was complaining that he could find his skull cap, his gloves or his one sweat shirt. I had to confess that I had taken them.

As the counts increased each hour, the Leonids delivered all they were supposed. The club members were not disappointed. By 5:00 AM I stopped counting. The meteors were coming down like rain. If you just did a slow spin around, you could see meteors in all directions. By 6:30 AM it was getting daylight, so my group left. Other mem-

bers stayed. I went to bed as soon as I walked in the door and was able to fall asleep. Another way the night was amazing.

PART II By Jo-Ann Kamichitis

I've been interested in stargazing and astronomy since I was a kid. There have been many memorable astronomical events in those years but nothing prepared me for this one. Joe and I just spent 9 hours sitting out in an open field with 36 other astro club members ... we saw thousands of shooting stars, many were truly spectacular, lighting up the ground and showing dust trains that lingered ... just a glorious night. Wonderful., and that's true even while knowing I missed seeing the brightest meteor of the night because I went in to warm up!

John Sabia kept a personal count of meteors, 95 seen by him between 2 and 3 AM, 207 between 3 and 4, 473 between 4 and 5 and after that he gave up counting. Since this was his personal individual count he didn't count those he did not see himself, even though he knew they existed because of all the hooting and WOWing.

Everyone was looking in different directions so we never did get a WAVE coordinated together for either Leo or Comet Tempel Tuttle, although my family tried.

By the peak at 5 AM it was like living in the ending of Disney's Beauty and the Beast (almost). Besides all the meteors we also saw the best zodiacal light display I have ever seen and the first I had ever seen in the morning sky. It was just the way you always dreamed a meteor shower would be. Nonstop excitement at the peak. We were even seeing meteors in the bright just-before-sunrise sky.

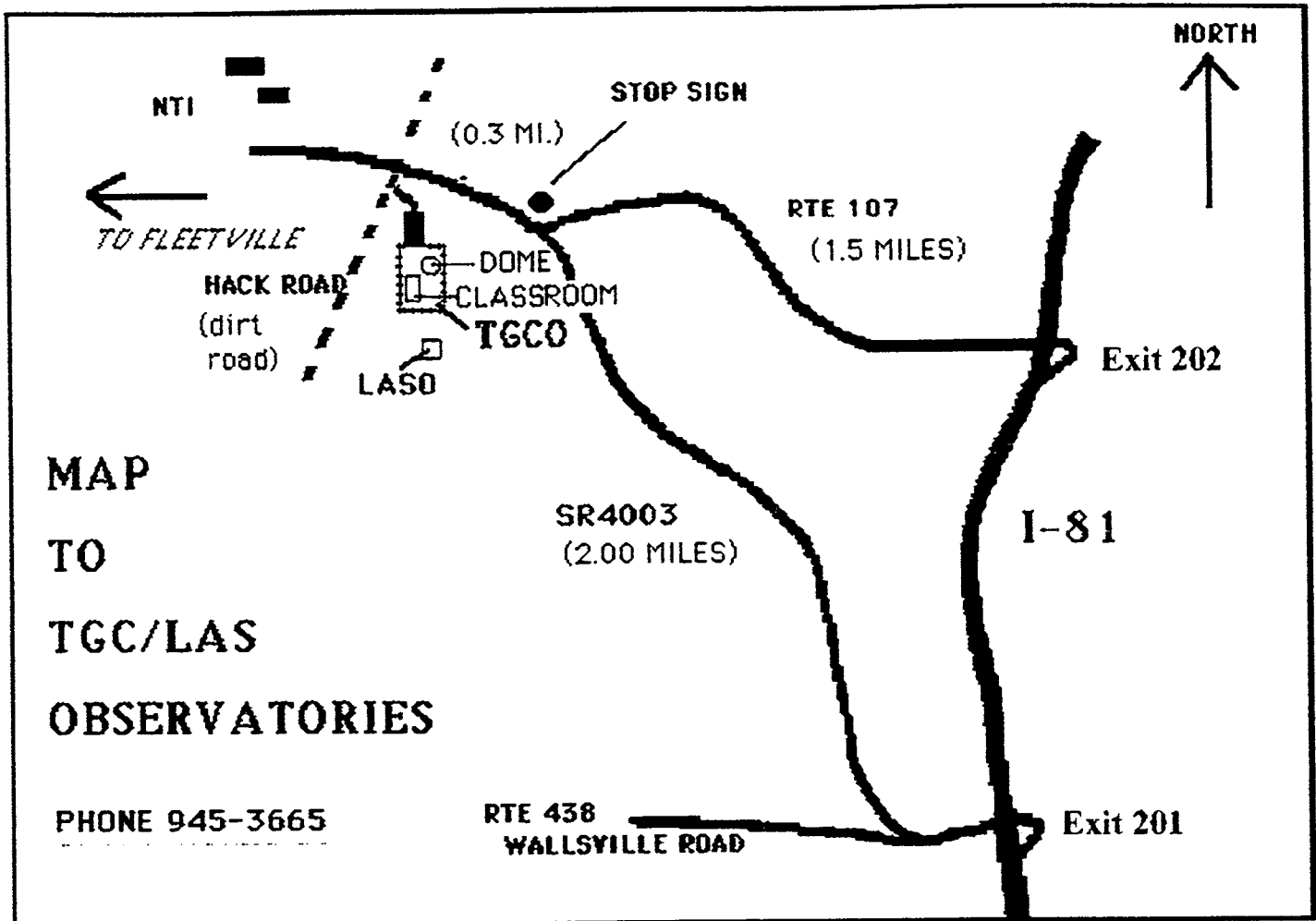
This was a rare event indeed. Temperatures just above freezing, no wind, only a thin crescent moon that set early after sunset so no glare interfered, dark very clear skies PLUS a rare meteor storm? Unheard of for Scranton to have such a rare combination of luck.

We got up there at 10PM and didn't leave until the sun was above the horizon at 7 AM. We got a bit delayed leaving because Jay Ceglia had made breakfast for everyone ... orange juice and an egg and ricotta strata casserole. (God bless Jay! He's a great cook and a generous man!) Normally we do try to leave the place in time to get home under cover of darkness.

Days later I'm still seeing meteors when I close my eyes ... obsessed you say? Yes and happy and amazed I didn't freeze up. I may have got the correct number of layers all figured out! Finally!!

These were submitted to the ECLIPTIC just after the meteor storm but never made it into print. If anyone else out there has a most memorable astronomical story to tell let us have it!

If your article doesn't get printed right away, just remember we even do it to our own stories!



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Web page: <http://members.aol.com/SabiaJohn/LAS.html>

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