
Reflections *anotcaritot* of the University Lowbrow Astronomers

August, 1998

Mark Deprest has been taking astro fotos with his 8 cassegrain telescope. Here is The "Coathanger Cluster", aka Brocchi's Cluster, aka Col 339 in the constellation Vulpecula. This star cluster looks best in binoculars and many a beginner has caulked up this as their first open cluster find. To locate this object construct an imaginary line from Altair, Alpha Aquila, mag 0.8 to Vega, Alpha Lyra, mag 0.0. Starting from Altair the Coathanger is a little more than a third of the distance to Vega. Look just beyond the tail feathers of the arrow of the constellation Sagitta.

Now here is the question posed by Mark; which direction is up? With out looking at an atlas, but its OK to use binoculars, determine the direction north. Mark will tell all in his presentation "Star Hopping through Velpecula" at this Friday's meeting.



The University Lowbrow Astronomers

The University Lowbrow Astronomers is a club of Astronomy enthusiasts which meets on the third Friday of each month in the University of Michigan's Physics and Astronomy building (Dennison Hall, Room 807). Meetings begin at 7:30 pm and are open to the public. Public star parties are held twice a month at the University's Peach Mountain Observatory on North Territorial Road (1.1 miles west of Dexter-Pinkney Road; further directions at the end of the newsletter) on Saturdays before and after the new Moon. The party is canceled if it's cloudy or very cold at sunset. For further information call (313)480-4514.

This Month:

August 21 - Meeting at 807 Dennison - A number of Lowbrows will testify at a talk titled: Dream Telescopes, Both Real and Imaginary and after that Mark Deprest will present: Star Hopping through Vulpecula.

August 22 - Public Star Party at Peach Mountain Observatory and New Moon - Tonight the shadows of Io and Ganymede will be visible on the face of Jupiter from 10:20 pm to 11:44 pm EDT !

August 23 - ATM Group - Meeting time and location to be determined.

Next Month:

September 18 - Meeting at 807 Dennison - Rudi Linder will present a talk titled: The University of Michigan's South African Observatory.

September 19 - Public Star Party at Peach Mountain Observatory - Planetary drought ends - Jupiter is just past opposition.

September 20 - ATM Group - Meeting time and location TBD and **New Moon** - 1:01 pm EDT

September 26 - Public Star Party at Peach Mountain Observatory - Moon is 6 days old - enjoy!

All Rise, The Prez Speaks...

by Mark Vincent

Dear Lowbrows,

It has been a great pleasure to be both a member and president of the Lowbrows. The Lowbrows are truly a great group of amateur astronomers and friends. As most of you know, I received my Ph.D. last May, and have been job hunting since then. Well, the job hunt has moved faster than even I expected (actually, the job hunted me down). They would like me to start no later than September 14, and I may spend one week out there before that.

Mark Deprest and I were planning that the September talk on "Dream Telescopes, Both Real and Imaginary" would be my last meeting. Then, I would wow you with my DREAM SCOPE. As it stands, there is the possibility that the July meeting was my last meeting. If I can attend the August meeting, it will certainly be my last in a LONG time, and I will have to give my Dream Scope talk. If I cannot attend, then I will try my best to provide a video taped deposition for a future meeting.

Now, to answer the big question of WHERE. Well, your president is a tease, and the job is not official yet, so you will have to wait. Rest assured that I will be working at a darker, higher and LARGER scope than any around Michigan.

Sincerely,
Mark B. Vincent Ph.D.,
President of the Lowbrows

Upcoming Star Parties

In addition to our regularly scheduled open houses the Lowbrows will be attending a number of other star parties this time of year. If you are considering attending one or more of these events for the first time, see your fellow Lowbrows at Friday's meeting for directions and additional information. - Ed

September 11th, 12th, 13th - The Chicago Astronomical Society will hold **Astrofest 98** at Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See 4H Camp near Kankakee, Illinois. This is the premier annual mid-west amateur star party. Upwards of 900 participants can be expected, but time is running out to register by postmarked mail no later than August 22nd. If you are considering attending and have not sent in a registration form contact Doug Scobel or Chris Sarnecki at this Friday's club meeting (and be prepared to act fast).

September 26th - Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC) hosts its **Island Lake Recreation Area Star Party** at the Spring Mill Pond area of the park. Island Lake is located east of Brighton on I-96 on opposite the side of the freeway from Kensington Lake Park. This is becoming the largest southeastern Michigan one night star party with an emphasis on observing. Over 100 observers and 50 - 60 scopes can be expected at this annual event. Entry fee to the park or an annual State park pass is required to access the park. Contact the FAAC at (313)390-5456 for additional information.

October 3 - "A Night on Peach Mountain and Moonwalk" Once again Bernard Friberg, our esteemed Observatory Director, informs us of this

very popular annual event co-hosted by the Lowbrows with The Friends of Stichfeild Woods (FOSW). On good years we have had large crowds visit to participate in the Moonwalk (search for owls), bonfire, astronomy slide shows, constellation talks, and telescope tours at the 24" McMath site. This date was selected close to full Moon to allow the FOSW to attract owls on their "moonwalk". Lowbrows with telescopes are needed so come prepared to observe the Moon. Up to nine sub events scheduled throughout the evening. Volunteers are needed for parking and for helping with the sub events. You don't have to know astronomy to help. Lowbrows that are not going to be at the August and September meetings may volunteer by calling 480-4514 and leaving a message.

November 17th - The other big event is the annual **Leonid meteor shower**. This event is going to held at the Hudson Mills Metro Park. There is a very good chance that there may be a spectacular display. Volunteers are needed to help with parking and directing traffic. A message may be left at 480-4514.

Sky & Telescope's Weekly News Bulletin for August 14th - *

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* - Sky & Telescope's Weekly News Bulletin is available at Sky Online on the World Wide Web at <http://www.skypub.com>

Perseids Dazzle Skygazers

According to reports received at Sky & Telescope, the annual Perseid meteor shower did not disappoint observers

around the world this past week, despite interference from the light of the gibbous Moon. Many observers were treated to numerous fireballs and meteor pairs. A compilation of radio-observer reports from Shelby Ennis included notice that the first peak was very sharp at about 14:30 Universal Time, August 12th. This "new" peak has diminished a lot since first appearing earlier in the decade. Now that the Perseids are gone, it's time to start anticipating November's Leonid meteor shower -- which observers hope will produce a "storm" of meteors.

Southern Observers See New Comet

On the night of August 10th, Australian observer Peter Williams found a new comet. Announced on IAU Circular 6986, C/1998 P1 (Williams) will reach perihelion on October 16th. The comet will remain a southern hemisphere object for the best portion of its apparition. Observers currently estimate its brightness at about magnitude 8.5. Over the weekend, the comet remains a few degrees away from Alpha Centauri. Unfortunately, as the comet nears perihelion, it will be moving away from the Earth and moving toward conjunction with the Sun. According to Charles Morris (Jet Propulsion Laboratory), by late November, the comet will be visible from both hemispheres at about 10th magnitude. Here are positions for Comet Williams for 0 hours Universal Time (2000.0 coordinates) for the coming week:

| | R.A. | Dec. |
|-----------|---------|------------|
| August 15 | 14h 36m | -59.7 deg. |
| 17 | 14h 26m | -57.5 deg. |
| 19 | 14h 17m | -55.4 deg. |

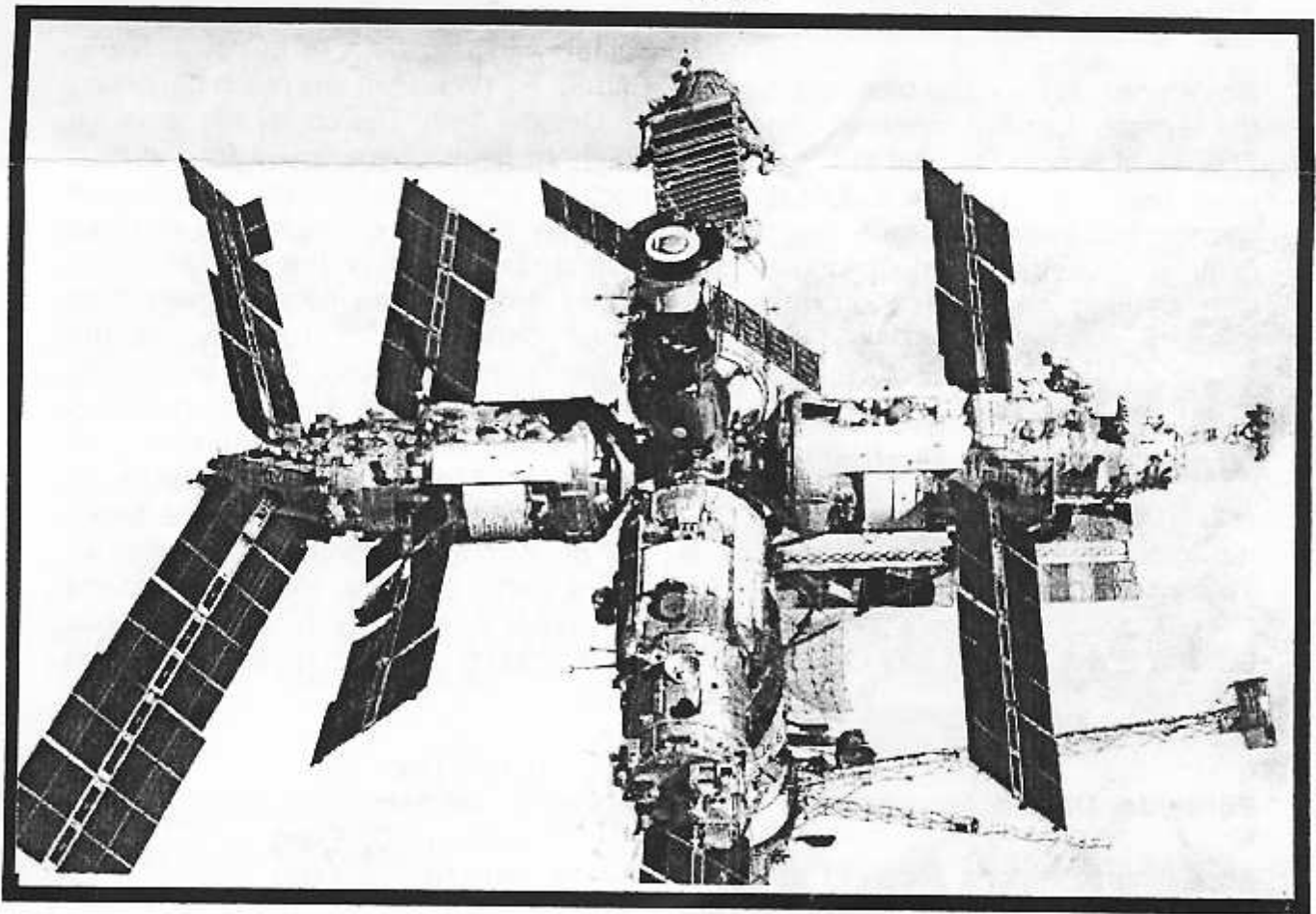
More Nays for Martian Life

Three reports in the latest issue of *Meteoritics and Planetary Science* have frowned upon the possibility that the meteorite ALH 84001 shows signs of Martian life. In August 1996, researchers announced that they had found what appeared to be fossilized signs of life within a meteorite that originated from Mars. A pro/con debate has raged since then. Among the new reports is one by Ed Scott (University of Hawaii) and his colleagues, who used electron and optical microscopes to scan carbonates throughout the meteorite, looking for clues to how deposits of carbonate formed. They concluded that the carbonate crystallized quickly in the high temperatures of impact heating, and not in cooler, more life-compatible temperatures. The other studies reach the

same unlikelihood of life based on different criteria.

SOHO Gradually Recovering

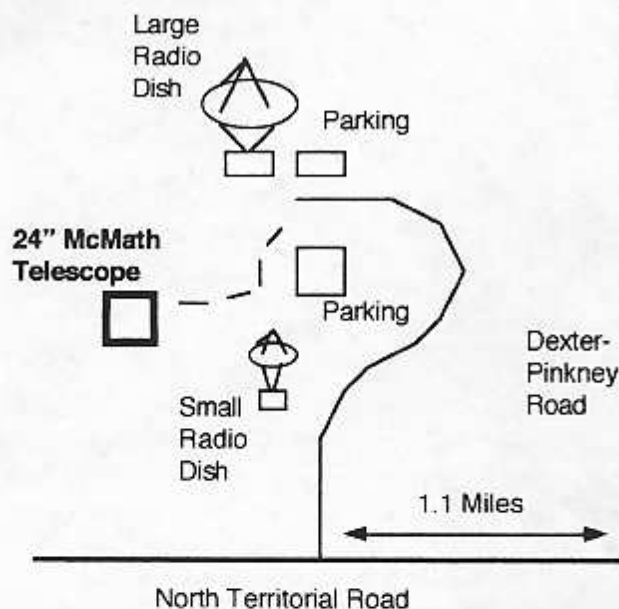
Things are looking up for the recovery effort of the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory. A week after intermittent contact was made, ground controllers have been able to use NASA's Deep Space Network to receive temperature and electrical data from the spacecraft, following a partial recharge of SOHO's batteries. The next step is to further charge the batteries so that more detailed information about SOHO's health can be obtained. A primary goal is to thaw the spacecraft hydrazine fuel so the spacecraft's attitude can be fully controlled. Astronomers fear that the science instruments could have been irreparably damaged by the cold of space.



Mir Above credit: STS-89 Crew, NASA. This photo was made from the Space Shuttle Endeavor in January, 1998 as the STS-89 crew approached the MIR Space Craft for the last docking mission. This Astronomy Picture of the Day is available at <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod>

Places and Times:

Dennison Hall, also known as The University of Michigan's Physics and Astronomy building, is the site of the monthly meeting of the University Lowbrow Astronomers. It is found in Ann Arbor on Church Street about one block north of South University Avenue. The meeting is held in room 807.



Peach Mountain Observatory is the home of The University of Michigan's 25 meter radio telescope as well as the University's McMath 24 inch telescope which is maintained by the Lowbrows. The observatory is located northwest of Dexter. The entrance is on North Territorial Road, 1.1 miles west of Dexter-Pickney Road. A small maize-and-blue sign marks the gate. Follow the gravel road one mile to a parking area near the radio telescopes. Walk along the path between the two fenced in areas (about 300 feet) to reach the McMath telescope building.

Monthly meetings of the Lowbrows are held on the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 PM in 807 Dennison Hall. During the summer months, and when weather permits, a club observing session at Peach Mountain will follow the meeting.

Public Open House/Star Parties are held on the Saturday before and after each new Moon at the Peach Mountain Observatory. Star Parties are canceled if the sky is cloudy at sunset or the temperature is below 10 degrees F. Call 480-4514 for a recorded message on the afternoon of a scheduled Star Party to check on the status. Many members bring their telescopes and visitors are welcome to do likewise. Peach Mountain is home to millions of hungry mosquitos - bring insect repellent, and it does get cold at night so dress warmly !

Amateur Telescope Making Group meets monthly, with the location rotating among member's houses. See the calendar on the front cover page for the time and location of next meeting.

Dues:

Membership dues in the University Lowbrow Astronomers are \$20 per year for individuals or families, and \$12 per year for students. This entitles you to the monthly REFLECTIONS newsletter and the use of the 24" McMath telescope (after some training). Dues can be paid to the club treasurer Doug Scobel at the monthly meeting or by mail at this address:

1426 Wedgewood Drive
Saline, MI 48176

Magazines:

Members of the University Lowbrow Astronomers can get a discount on these magazine subscriptions:

Sky and Telescope: \$27 / year

Astronomy: \$20 / year

Odyssey: \$16.95 / year

For more information contact the club Treasurer. Members renewing subscriptions are reminded to send your renewal notice along with your check when applying through the club Treasurer. Make the check payable to "University Lowbrow Astronomers".

Newsletter Contributions:

Members and (non-members) are encouraged to write about any astronomy related topic of interest. Call or E-mail to Newsletter Editors at:

Bernard Friberg (734)761-1875 Bfriberg@aol.com

Chris Samecki (734)426-5772 chrisandi@aol.com

to discuss length and format. Announcements and articles are due by the first Friday of each month.

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Lowbrow's WWW Home Page:

<http://www.astro.lsa.umich.edu/public/lowbrows.html>

Monthly Meeting: August, 1998

7:30 pm

*Room 807 Dennison Hall
Physics & Astronomy Building
The University of Michigan*

Selected Lowbrows

Speak on:

*Dream Telescopes, Both
Real and Imaginary*

and

Mark Deprest presents:

*Star Hopping through
Vulpecula*



Ganymede: Torn Comet - Crater Chain credit: Galileo Project, Brown University, JPL, NASA. This image was photographed by the Galileo spacecraft in 1997 and the crater chain may have been created by pieces of a torn comet similar to Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9. This 8/5/98 Astronomy Picture of the Day image is available at <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod>

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Check your membership expiration
date on the mailing label!

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