



REFLECTIONS / REFRACTIONS

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University Lowbrow  
Astronomers

AUGUST 2017

VOLUME 41, ISSUE 6

## Astronomy At The Beach (AATB) 2017

### Moved to Island Lake

By Paul Walkowski



The location is the Kent Lake Beach site inside Island Lake State Recreation Area. In Google maps, it is labeled Island Lake picnic grounds. If you arrive early, please park along the front edge of the parking area and back in so we don't have headlights shining over the observing field.

- **What:** AATB 2017, the largest multi-club star party in SE Michigan with around 2000 people over 2 nights.
- **When:** Friday Sept 29, 2017 and Saturday Sept 30, 2017, 6pm – midnight.
- **Where:** Island Lake state recreation area, 0.4 mile south of I-696, on Kensington road. Kent Lake Picnic area, first parking lot after you enter the park, keep left to the gravel 2 track that allows access to the grassy area adjacent to the beach.
- **Cost:** A yearly DNR Recreation Passport (\$ 11) which is also good at Lake Hudson and all state parks.
- **Who:** All Lowbrows and family members, all SE Michigan astronomy clubs, Guest speaker Dan Durda, the general public including many 5 to 16 year old youth with their families, scout groups, school groups, and a significant number of seniors.
- **Special talk for Astronomers:** 2:00 pm Saturday afternoon in the main tent. Dan Durda will give a more detailed technical version of his evening talk and field questions regarding Near Earth Asteroids. You may join Dan and the AATB organizers for a meal at Bakers restaurant (BYO) after the talk.

The summer heat and haze has given way to the cooler, clear Autumn nights so we know that Astronomy at the Beach (AATB) must be close at hand. Just 10 days from now as many as 100 astronomers and 2000 guests will be converging at the Kent Lake picnic area and beach to put on SE Michigan's premier star party. Many things have changed this year while the schedule and titles of the smaller talks and demonstrations remain the same.

The Keynote speaker is Dr. Durda, a Principal Scientist in the Department of Space Studies of the Southwest Research Institute's Boulder Colorado office and a specialist on Near Earth Asteroids. He is a native of Alger, Mi and obtained his BS in astronomy from the University of Michigan, and PhD from the University of Florida. As was noted in Friday's meeting, Dan simulates asteroid strikes with cannons and explosives and researches collisional and dynamical evolution of main-belt and near-Earth asteroids, Vulcanoids, Kuiper belt comets, and interplanetary dust. Links to on-line talks below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzWDEKDAEMk>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZFYyOUVh\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZFYyOUVh_g)

The astronomy field is on a flat, grassy area between the parking lot and the beach on Kent Lake. Cars will be allowed to drive to the area, unload, and we assume remain parked there throughout the evening. The length of the field runs almost due East and West with the Southern sky being over the parking lot and pavilion; the lake, and I-696 lie to the North. We are expecting cars to line up on either side of an imaginary walkway centered on the grass parallel to the water. There are a few trees, mostly small in the observing field. Because there is a ditch separating the parking lot from the grassy area, astronomers who want to park in the lot are asked to back into the spaces along the water front to prevent visitor car headlights from flooding the field. Everyone is expected to access the telescope field using a gravel two-track that starts at the west end (left end) of the first parking lot from the park entrance. There are no sprinkler heads to avoid, however there is a large raised rectangle of grass immediately to the west (left) of the brick pavilion/classroom that is a septic tank and field and no one can drive on it. The tent with the speakers and demonstrations is expected to be placed between the brick pavilion and the waterfront. Astronomers requiring power should bring their own extension cords and park nearest the pavilion. We have no idea about the number of amps we can pull before the breakers pop or if the voltage will drop too far below 110VAC because of long extension cords, so if you can run your equipment on batteries, please plan on it. I hope to claim a space just beyond the extension cord area for the Lowbrows. Please email me at [pwalkowski@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pwalkowski@sbcglobal.net) if you are coming and on which nights. Some photos and a map follow on this link. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kNxSqpPOXsm6RNVOzc-0d7hDdHgB5IBPN2ERTwGYJDo/edit>



The friends of the park may be arranging a food truck but this is the first year for AATB at Island lake and I would suggest bring along food and beverages if you have not eaten at home before hand.

The organizers of AATB are representatives of the various astronomy clubs and work in a loose association which we call the Great Lakes Association of Clubs (GLAAC). We have been working over the past year to generate a constitution and bylaws, apply for status as a nonprofit organization in the state of Michigan and soon will apply for IRS 401.c.3 status which allows donors to obtain a tax deduction in exchange for their contribution. The members of GLAAC are members of the member clubs: Lowbrows, Ford, Warren, Oakland, Seven Ponds, and the EMU Clubs. The new Farmington Club is very informal and will be joining us at AATB but is not a member of GLAAC because they do not have officers or a constitution at this time. The officers and Members are: Diane Hall-President (WAS), Shannon Murphy-secretary (EMU), Joe Velez- treasurer (EMU); with Brian Ottum and Paul Walkowski representing the lowbrows. Dave D'Offre, Liam Finn (Ford) also are on the committee.

The park and beach are closer to I-696 than last year's event, but due to construction on US -23 northbound combined with rush hour traffic 30 minutes or more travel time may be required from Ann Arbor on **Friday**. One possible alternative is to take Dixboro Road north from Ann Arbor to Pontiac Trail and then turn west (left) on Silver Lake Rd and North (right) on Kensington Rd to the park entrance (right). I tried this out on a Friday evening a week ago and quite a few cars already figured out this shortcut. This made for a 7-minute wait to get through the red 4-way blinker at North Territorial and a few more delays at red lights in downtown South Lyon, especially near the High School. **Astronomers and Telescopes Needed, Bring Yours!**

### Upcoming Events

Great Lake Star Gaze	Thursday September 21st—Sunday September 24th.
Lowbrow Open House at Peach Mt.	Saturday September 23rd 7:30pm—Midnight
Astronomy at the Beach	Friday September 29th and Saturday September 30th.
Leslie Science Center Star Party Event	Saturday October 7th 8pm—10pm
Lowbrow Open House at Peach Mt.	Saturday October 14th 7pm—Midnight
Lowbrow Monthly Meeting, Speaker Jason Gilbert	Friday October 20th 7:30pm
Open House at Peach Mt.	Saturday October 21st 7pm—Midnight



### Blue Fog

Photo by Brian Ottum Ph.D.

I took this shot just below the Tahquamenon Lower Falls. You can see the blue fog rising from the river. Canon 6D, 14mm f/2.8, 60 seconds, motor drive at ½ sidereal rate.

## Public Outreach at the Cromaïne Library

By Doug Bock

(All Photos by Author)



The Lowbrows convened at the Cromaïne Library in Hartland Michigan on Saturday August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 for a public outreach event. The event went from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Some of us arrived earlier to set up equipment. Charlie Nielsen gave a 45 minute presentation as the rest of us set up our solar telescopes in the parking lot. We had several H-Alpha scopes and some white light solar viewing scopes. We also had solar glasses to hand out to the public, and some solar binoculars. There were 8 of us there. Unfortunately, I don't remember everyone's names. But those I can remember were Clay Kessler, Dave Snyder, Adrian Bradley, Charlie Nielsen and myself. There were 3 more that I didn't catch their names. (editor, Charlie reported John Wallbank, Yasu Inugi, Dave Jorgensen and Mike Kurylo also attended). A bi-product of my age, and lack of attendance at meetings. I'm sure others will pipe up.

It was clear with the occasional puffy clouds most of the afternoon. While we waited for the public to finish up at the talk, we did some viewing and noticed the large sunspot that has been in the astronomy news. It was placed nicely. Along with it was another tiny spot nearby. This made for easy focusing on the sun. I was doing a dry run with my eclipse set up, and all went well, so I'm ready for the eclipse.

We had about a dozen people to show the Sun and chat about the eclipse here in Michigan. We explained what they could expect from here, and how to use the solar glasses, or use projection using a pin hole type "camera". Several were surprised there

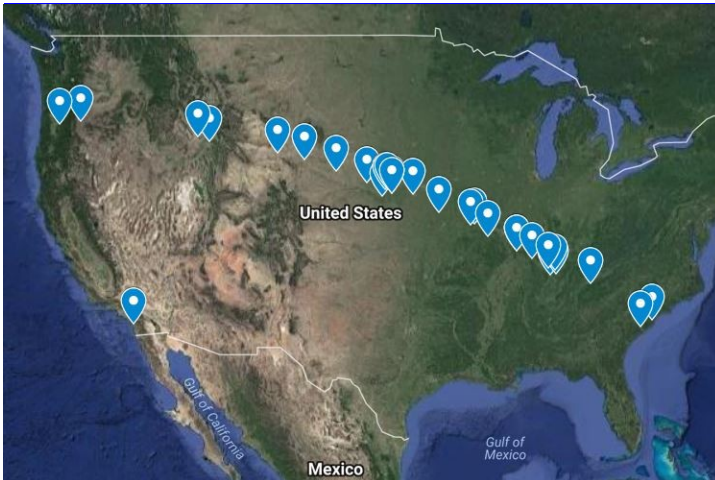


Several were surprised there

were filters and techniques that could be used to safely observe the sun. They enjoyed looking at the sunspot on the surface, which was nice to have for the event.

It was fun.





Editor's Comment: Lowbrows traveled all across the country to observe the total eclipse as indicated by the pins placed on the shared google map.

The next issue of REFLECTIONS / REFRACTIONS will be dedicated to the Lowbrow total eclipse experience.

**Submit your article by October 1st!**

### **Tecumseh Star Party** By Dave Jorgensen.

There were 3 Lowbrow astronomers with scopes attending the Tecumseh Star Party on August 11: John Wallbank, Charlie Nielsen, and David Jorgensen. The attendees consisted mainly of young adults with their children ages 6 to 45 - in total about 25 people. We showed them the planets Jupiter and Saturn, and the double star Alberio, and a few other lovely views. There were many questions about our telescopes and the objects we were viewing. The area we set up on was quite nice with little distraction from building and parking lot lighting, thus giving us a nice view of the cloudless night. To the East were pretty lightning flashes. The Perseid Meteor shower gave us several shooting stars to ooh and ah over too! It was a delight to be there and the audience was very friendly and polite. Our host, Sarah Gilmore, formerly at Leslie Science Center, was most hospitable. I'd recommend a repeat appearance next year.

### **AUGUST MEETING WAS CANCELED**

### **Rolling Hills Camping Event** By Adrian Bradley

On Saturday, August 12, a few Lowbrows came out to Ypsilanti Township's Rolling Hills Park. Charlie Nielsen, Jim Forrester, Yasu Inugi, John Wallbank, Bobby Gruszynski, and myself were able to bring our telescopes and show the night sky to around 100 camping families. We were welcomed by Hannah Cooley, the campground coordinator for the event. She initially wanted us there to talk to the campers about the Perseid Meteor Shower, as well as other constellations in the sky.

The skies in the campground were not too bad for the event. We were able to show the campers both Jupiter and Saturn, as well as a few other deep space objects. We pointed out a few meteors that zoomed across the night sky, and pointed out the Milky Way galactic arm, which was faint but visible from this site.

We were pleasantly surprised by the turnout of the event, as well as the joy many campers received after looking into our telescopes. As with all outreach events, many had never looked into a telescope until they looked into ours. We also had our share of knowledgeable campers who gave us tough questions to answer such as 'can energy be turned into matter?'. One young family in particular was very interested in multi universes and the prospects of life elsewhere in this universe.

The campers reported to their tents around 11 pm, and we finished breaking down our equipment around midnight over some spicy chips, a good view of Saturn from Bobby's Nexstar SE scope, and a beautifully rising waning gibbous moon to the west.

Hannah sent us a wonderful thank-you card to us for coming out. There is a strong chance that we may be asked back again next year to do another astronomy night for those campers.

### Lowbrow Open House Saturday August 29th.

In an email Jim Forrester wrote (partial extraction).

“The Open House went well. Jack Brisbin and John Wallbank ran the McMath and myself, Doug Scobel, John Manney, Mike Randwick and Ken Ruble entertained up by the radio telescope. About 70 visitors attended.”

### Lowbrow Open House Saturday September 16th.

In an email Charles Niesen wrote (partial extraction).

“What looked like it would be an excellent night for observing turned out not so much that way. It was clear, but with a great deal of haze, which made finding objects manually difficult as well as limiting us to brighter objects. We had about 50 guests, and a very nice showing of Lowbrows! I show the following list of attendees. Adrian Bradley, Jack Brisbin, Jim Forrester, Don Fohey, Mike Radwick, John Wallbank, John Manney, Jason Maguran, Jim?, Wolf Tytschkowski and Ken Ruble.”

### New Ladder in Observatory Thanks to John Wallbank

By Don Fohey

The old yellow ladder in the observatory has been used for many years by operators and guest. It was heavy and positioning it required dragging and screeching it across the floor. One leg was bent just a little so that sometimes it tottered a little. John Wallbank often helps with the McMath telescope during public viewing events and saw an opportunity to improve the observatory. He researched spring and wheel assemblies that could be retrofitted and not finding anything satisfactory ordered a new ladder with a sprung wheel system that lowers the ladder to the floor under the weight of a child. He considers his effort and expense to be a contribution to the club. Thank John the next time you climb the ladder to the eyepiece of the the McMath telescope.



John Wallbank standing near ladder. Photos by Jim Forrester

### CORRECTION

Front Page of the August REFLECTIONS/REFRACTIONS listed the issue as VOLUME 41 ISSUE 4. It should have been VOLUME 41 ISSUE 5.

University Lowbrow Astronomers  
Meeting Minutes  
Sept 15, 2017

President, Charlie Nielsen, opened the meeting at 7:39 PM. He introduced Dr. Stacy McGaugh, from Case Western Reserve. Dr. McGaugh gave a talk about using modified Newtonian dynamics (MOND) to explain the formation and motion of the galaxies, as opposed to the current view that dark matter must be considered. His talk was well received. He fielded several questions from the audience of 45 people during the following Q and A period. Charlie presented him with a Lowbrow hat as an appreciation for speaking to us. A short break in the meeting followed.

**Business Meeting:**

- President, Charlie Nielsen, reported that: (1) MMSC sent us a thank you note and box of candy for our work, and (2) we received a \$50 donation check from Cromaine Library for that event, and (3) we received a thank you note for our participation at the Rolling Hills event.
- Webmaster, Krishna Rao, reported about some website access issues he is working on. He went on to say (1) the RASC calendars and handbooks can now be ordered on our "members only" section of our website, and (2) club assets are now listed on the "members only" section and a spreadsheet showing availability, and who has them, and (3) the Young Astronomers section has been maintained by Jack Brisbin with monthly hits at about 1100, and (4) he suggested a location be made so that new members had a better idea of where various club information could be found.
- VP, Larry Halbert, is continuing to distribute Lowbrow brochures at locations around the area.
- VP, Adrian Bradley, reported that (1) He continues to monitor and update our Facebook page, and (2) he received a request for help to correct a loose secondary mirror, and (3) he had hosted an Auburn Hills event with 10 people attending.
- Observatory Director, Jack Brisbin, reported that (1) he will be at the Sept 16 Open House, (2) Some TPAS work remains to be done on the McMath (the dec location is still not quite right) and (3) he continues to maintain the observatory dehumidifier, and (4) the observatory door opening handle has not yet been repaired.
- VP, Dave Jorgensen, reported that (1) 4 Lowbrows, Jack Brisbin, Larry Halbert, Claude Pruneau, and Dave Jorgensen, attended the physics colloquium on the WSU campus featuring Dr. Kip Thorne on Sept 14, and (2) Jason Gilbert, U/M Associate Research Scientist at Space Research will be our speaker for Oct. 20.
- Newsletter Editor, Don Fohey, reported that the newsletter is being worked on.
- VP, Jim Forrester gave a report about Doug Scobel and his experience during the solar eclipse. He also reported on the Kip Thorne presentation on Sept. 13 at the Rackam Auditorium in Ann Arbor. Adrian Bradley will be OHC for Sept 16, but requested support. Charlie will make the weather call. Don Fohey will also be there. Gate will open at 7:30PM.
- Treasurer, Doug Scobel, reported membership at 141, with a treasury of \$5059, after buying a 2 inch UHC filter for the 17.5" scope. He collected member dues and reported that the RASC calendars and handbooks would likely be \$20 and \$30 respectively.
- Member, Paul Walkowski, reminded us of AATB event on Sept. 29, 30.
- Member, Brian Ottum, distributed "flyers" for the AATB event at Island Lake Park and requested support telescopes and even binoculars for this event. He mentioned that AC power may not be available.
- VP, Jim Forrester, reported that the Camp Burt Shurly events this year entertained about 600 youngsters, and recommended a repeat of our support for next year.
- President, Charlie Nielsen, reported that he has been working with a U/M group for reduction of Ann Arbor light pollution.
- Member, Brian Ottum, reported that an interview with him about his remote telescope operation will be broadcast on WEMU on Sept. 25 on WEMU.

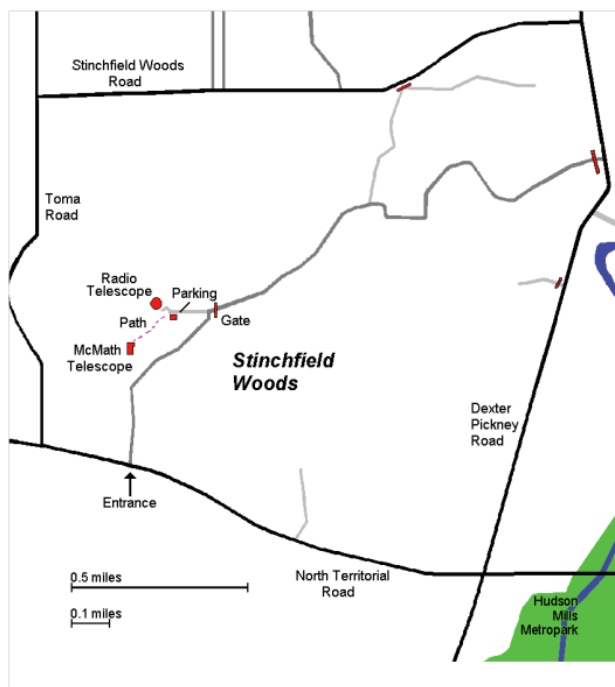
Charlie Nielsen closed the meeting at 9:54PM

Submitted by David Jorgensen

### Places & Times

Monthly meetings of the University Lowbrow Astronomers are held the third Friday of each month at 7:30 PM. The location is usually Angel Hall, ground floor, Room G115. Angell Hall is located on State Street on the University of Michigan Central Campus between North University and South University Streets. The building entrance nearest Room G115 is the east facing door at the south end of Angell Hall.

Peach Mountain Observatory is the home of the University of Michigan's 25 meter radio telescope and McMath 24" telescope which is maintained and operated by the Lowbrows. The entrance is addressed at 10280 North Territorial Road, Dexter MI which is 1.1 miles west of Dexter-Pinckney Rd. A maize and blue sign marks the gate. Follow the gravel road to the top of the hill to a parking area south of the radio telescope, then walk about 100 yards along the path west of the fence to reach the McMath Observatory.



### Public Open House / Star Parties

Public Open Houses / Star Parties are generally held on the Saturdays before and after the New Moon at the Peach Mt. Observatory, but are usually cancelled if the forecast is for clouds or temperature below 10° F. For the most up to date info on the Open House / Star Party status call: (734) 975-3248 after 4pm. Many members bring their telescope to share with the public and visitors are welcome to do the same. Mosquitoes can be numerous, so be prepared with bug repellent. Evening can be cold so dress accordingly

### Lowbrow's Home Page

<http://www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/>

### Membership

The University Lowbrow Astronomers membership dues are \$30 per year for individuals or families, \$20 per year for students and seniors (age 55+) and \$5 if you live outside of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Membership entitles you access to our monthly Newsletters on-line at our website and use of the 24" McMath telescope (after some training). A hard copy of the Newsletter can be obtained with an additional \$18 annual fee to cover printing and postage. Dues can be paid at the monthly meetings, by PayPal, or be check made out to University Lowbrow Astronomers and mailed to:

**The University Lowbrow Astronomers**  
**P.O. Box 131446**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48113-1446**

Lowbrow members can obtain a discount on these magazine subscriptions:

**Sky & Telescope - \$32.95/year or \$62.95/2 years**

**Astronomy - \$34.00/year, \$60.00/2 years or \$85.95/3 years**

For more information about dues or magazines contact the club treasurer at: [lowbrowdoug@gmail.com](mailto:lowbrowdoug@gmail.com)

### Newsletter Contributions

Members and non-members are encouraged to write about any astronomy related topic. Contact the Newsletter Editor: Don Fohey [donfohey@gmail.com](mailto:donfohey@gmail.com) to discuss format. Announcements, articles and images are due by the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month as publication is the 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Telephone Numbers

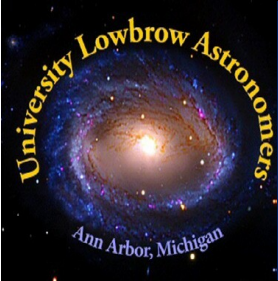
President:	Charlie Nielsen	(734) 747-6585
Vice President:	Adrian Bradley	(734) 354 5346
	Jim Forrester	(734) 663-1638
	Larry Halbert	
	Dave Jorgensen	
Treasurer:	Doug Scobel	(734) 277-7908
Observatory Director:	Jack Brisbin	
Newsletter Editor:	Don Fohey	(734) 812-3611
Key-holders:	Jim Forrester	
	Jack Brisbin	
	Charlie Nielsen	
Webmaster	Krishna Rao	

**A NOTE ON KEYS:** The club currently has three keys each to the Observatory and the North Territorial Road gate to Peach Mountain. University policy limits possession of keys to those who they are issued. If you desire access to the property at an unscheduled time, contact one of the key-holders. Lowbrow policy is to provide as much member access as possible.

### Email to all members

[Lowbrow-members@umich.edu](mailto:Lowbrow-members@umich.edu)





# University Lowbrow Astronomers



Member Club



Astronomical League Member Society  
#201601, Great Lakes Region

University Lowbrow Astronomers  
P.O. Box 131446  
Ann Arbor, MI 48113

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