



ASTROFILES

Auburn Astronomical Society Newsletter

May 2016

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The next meeting of the AAS will be Friday, June 3, 2016. We will meet in Room 215 of Davis Hall (Aerospace Engineering) on the AU campus. The meeting starts at 7:45 PM CT. Specific directions to the meeting location can be found on the AAS web page:

<http://www.auburnastro.org>

Mars Opposition

This past Sunday, May 22nd, marked the opposition of Mars, meaning that Mars appears directly opposite to the Sun from our vantage point here on Earth. It also marks the closest approach of Mars to the Earth, although actually the closest point occurs on May 30th. This will be the closest that Mars has come to the Earth since 2005 and is an excellent opportunity to get out and view the red planet. Currently Mars rises as the Sun sets and remains visible all night. It should reach its maximum elevation around midnight or after local time and will be in the southern sky just north of the constellation of Scorpio. Mars will be the brightest object in that area of the sky and is also easy to pick out due to its reddish hue. Personally I've never had much luck photographing Mars since it is still fairly small even at this relatively close distance, but I may give it another try since I have a little more experience now with stacking and image processing.

Recent AAS Activities

As mentioned in last month's Astrofiles, the AAS held a star gaze at the Wind Creek State Park in Alabama. Wind Creek also scheduled an Astronomy Day event on Saturday, May 14, but with another group and apparently that group backed out and they thought that they would have to cancel the event. Fortunately, AAS member Mike Lewis lives just minutes from the park and he was gracious enough to bring several of his scopes so that the park guests could enjoy the skies. Mike was joined by his wife Phoebe and his son David. Mike said that there were

approximately 20 people that came out for the event. Thanks to Mike and his family for representing the AAS at this event. We hope to have more events with the park in the future. Below are a couple of photos Mike's wife took at the event.



The AAS was also asked to do a star gaze on Saturday, May 21st for the Children's Harbor at Lake Martin. It is a retreat for children with long-term illnesses and this weekend there was a group of children with autism and their parents. AAS members Mike Lewis and Frank Ward volunteered to go and set up their scopes for the enjoyment of the retreat participants. After several days of cloudy and rainy weather, the skies finally cleared Saturday just in time to provide some good viewing opportunities. Mike estimated that around 30 children and their parents came out for the event. Mike had several scopes set up and Frank had his impressive 12-inch Lightbridge dob as well. Thanks again to Mike for providing a few photos of the event before it got dark.





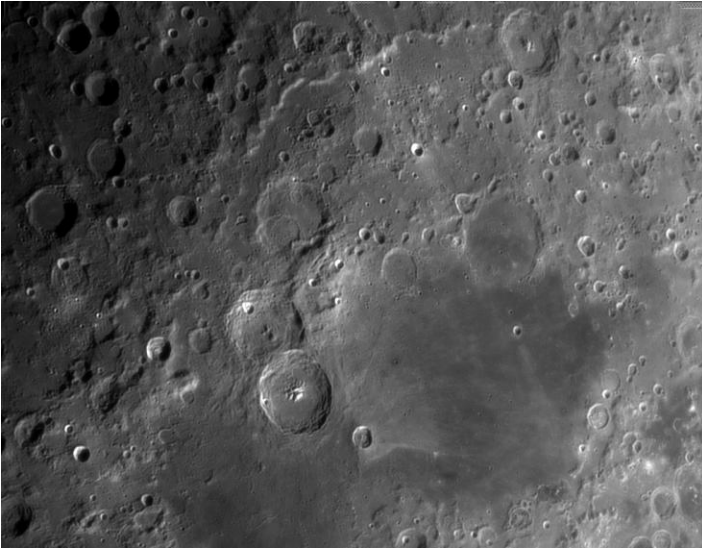
Transit of Mercury

On Monday, May 9, 2016, the planet Mercury did a somewhat rare pass in front of the Sun as viewed from here on Earth. It was visible over a very wide area of the country and since it lasted for over seven hours, there were ample opportunities to view the event. Here in this area, we were plagued with intermittent clouds off and on during the early part of the day, but there were some breaks in the clouds from time to time. I took the opportunity to set up my Questar 3.5" scope on the patio and take a few short video captures of the event when the clouds parted. The photo below is about the best one that I did. I stacked about 30% of 500 video frames in Autostakkert 2 and then did some sharpening in Photoshop to the final composite image. It really gives a sense of scale to the size of the Sun as compared to the size of Mercury.



Lunar Photography

If you happen to have the misfortune of living in a light-polluted location as I do here in Georgia, you don't have a lot of opportunities to view faint deep-sky objects unless you pack up everything and seek out a dark viewing site. Growing up in the 1960's during the moon-landing days, I have always been fascinated with viewing and studying the moon and I still enjoy it and it can be done from virtually any location. Photographing the moon (and the Sun) can be done relatively easily, even without a tracking mount. In fact, I've seen some very good photos taken recently with cell phone cameras. I recently took the photos below from my patio with my 3.5" Questar and ASI 174MC camera.



That's about it for this month. Don't forget the next AAS meeting on Friday, June 3rd. As always, if you have anything to share with the members, whether it be photos or articles, please forward it to me at my e-mail address at the beginning of the newsletter and check out our Facebook page "Auburn Astronomical Society" and our web page <http://www.auburnastro.org>



Auburn Astronomical Society Membership Application Form

Name:

Address:

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Application* ____/____/____

E-mail:

Telescope(s):

Area(s) of special interest:

Enclose: \$20.00 for regular membership, payable in January. *Full-Time* student membership is half the Regular rate.

* If you're joining after January, refer to the Prorated Dues Table below:

Jan \$20.00	Feb \$18.33	Mar \$16.66	Apr \$14.99	May \$13.33	Jun \$11.66
Jul \$10.00	Aug \$8.33	Sep \$6.66	Oct \$4.99	Nov \$2.33	Dec \$1.66

Make checks payable to: Auburn Astronomical Society and return this application to:

Auburn Astronomical Society
c/o John Wingard, Secretary/Treasurer
#5 Wexton Court
Columbus, GA 31907

For questions about your dues or membership status, contact: jwin2485@bellsouth.net

Thank you for supporting the Auburn Astronomical Society!