

## The Warren Astronomical Society Paper

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**2007 WAS OFFICERS**

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The WASP (Warren Astronomical Society Paper) is the official monthly publication of the Society. Each new issue of the WASP is e-mailed to each member and/or available online [www.warrenastronomicalsociety.org](http://www.warrenastronomicalsociety.org). Requests by other Astronomy clubs to receive the WASP, and all other correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Cliff Jones, email: [cliffordj@ameritech.net](mailto:cliffordj@ameritech.net)

Articles for inclusion in the WASP are strongly encouraged and should be submitted to the editor on or before the first of each month. Any format of submission is accepted, however the easiest forms for this editor to use are plain text files. Most popular graphics formats are acceptable. Materials can be submitted either in printed form in person or via US Mail, or preferably, electronically via direct modem connection or email to the editor.

Disclaimer: The articles presented herein represent the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily the opinions of the WAS or the editor. The WASP reserves the right to deny publication of any submission.

### Special Notice

**Cranbrook meeting for September is on  
September 10th  
due to the Labor Day holiday.**

(Previous WASP issues erroneously had September 3<sup>rd</sup> as the Cranbrook meeting date. – please adjust your schedules accordingly)

### **Astro Chatter**

by Larry Kalinowski



Astronomers have stumbled upon a tremendous void in the universe. That's got them scratching their heads about what's just not there. The cosmic blank spot has no stray stars, no galaxies, no sucking black holes, not even mysterious dark matter. It is 1 billion light years across of nothing. That's an expanse of nearly 6 billion trillion miles of emptiness, a University of Minnesota team announced Thursday, August 23.

Einstein scores again. Warped space has been found around neutron stars, according to the U of M astronomer Edward Crakett. The density of Iron atoms and their behavior near a neutron star's surface cause the spectral lines of iron to smear toward the higher end of the spectrum. It's the typical indicator of warped space which has also been found around black holes.



Nearly three hundred people showed up for our public star party at Stargate Observatory on Saturday, August 11. It was one of the largest crowds we've had at the site. The Macomb newspapers certainly did their job in this case. Bob Berta kept the crowd entertained during evening twilight, as well as Dick Gala with his telescope, table setup and his SkyScout, talking observatory and Jim Shedlowski with his revolving, binocular, lounge chair. The evening started out cloudy but as twilight ended, the sky opened up to reveal fifth magnitude stars and the Milky Way. There were a lot of youngsters getting their first peek through telescopes, looking at Jupiter and Messier objects. Even Iridium satellites blinked on and off along with

the Persied meteors. Every few minutes you could hear an ooohh or an aahhh from the crowd as a flashing light moved rapidly across the sky. I wasn't paying full attention to the sky because of my involvement with telescope and people but I would say that about ten meteors could be seen each hour if you continued with your eye on the sky. The peak of the shower wasn't until the following night on the twelfth.

**Astronomy On The Beach**, at Kensington Metro Park is the big event this month. It happens on Friday and Saturday, September 21 and 22. When the weather is favorable, thousands attend our star show. So we will need some help with the event. Solar telescopes are needed for daytime observing. If you can bring a 'scope or help out at a telescope or our club table, you'll have a chance to win an eyepiece for your telescope. Other prizes are given to youngsters that observe certain objects through some of the telescopes brought by ours and other clubs. There will be speakers from other clubs during the evening. Food will be sold by Kensington personnel. If you don't have a Metropolitan park pass, it may cost you four dollars to get into the park. There's a fifty-fifty chance that the entrance booths may not be manned during the evening. Don't forget to wear your award badges!

Award badge winners are growing in number. The last Cranbrook meeting saw three members get their awards; Alan Rothenberg, for solar eclipses; Bill Whitney, for solar eclipses and completion of four telescope mirrors; Steve Uitti, double stars, comets and general astrophotography. So far, twenty eight awards for accomplishments have been given out. Are you the next winner? Those badges are sure going to look impressive at our next public star party.

During the last Macomb meeting, an old friend of the WAS showed up to claim his observing badges. Jeff Bondono, a very active observer about a decade ago, was given three award badges for his past accomplishments. Jeff, who along with his wife, jointly edited the WASP for about three years, gave us a visit to collect his awards. I gave him three awards, a 110 Messier and a 400 Herschel award. He was surprised that a third award was made. That of completing a fourteen and a quarter inch telescope mirror. He says he's coming back to visit us again. I hope so.

Lou Faix, a very active past member who now resides in Tucson, AZ, e-mailed me with a thank you for his award badges. Lou has won badges for 70 Messier, 30 special astrophotography and telescope mirror production. He's been away now for about four years and says he loves the Arizona skies, when it's not raining. August is the beginning of the monsoon season in Arizona and it spoils any astronomy work for a couple of months. He just

acquired a new address. You can reach him at [ljf747pl@wbhsi.net](mailto:ljf747pl@wbhsi.net).

**MEMBER OF THE MONTH.** Richard Gala has answered the call in more than one way. His concern about getting out the news as soon as possible has made him stand out among club members. In the past he's complained about missing events and meetings because of inadequate communication between members, so he took it upon himself to make sure event news became more timely by providing e-mail announcements to ninety percent of our membership. On the other side of the coin, he made the outstanding effort to clear our observing area of obnoxious material, last month, during our public, Persied meteor night. With nearly 300 people



roaming the observing grounds, that would certainly have caused complaints to skyrocket. We share the grounds with huge animals that belong to a group of Equestrians. Service beyond the call of duty. Thanks Dick, for coming to our aid when we needed it most.

The Bill Beers' Fall Star Party runs from October 10 thru 14, near Cadillac, Michigan. Registration is required by October 1. His property is large enough for camping and campers, with good access to motels in the area. This is a real dark sky area, so be prepared to see things you never thought possible. There will probably be a flyer somewhere in this newsletter, with more information. You can reach Bill at [beezoll@aol.com](mailto:beezoll@aol.com) or 586-566-8367.

In case you haven't read about the change, our September meeting at Cranbrook will take place on the tenth of the month, instead of the third. Labor day is the first Monday of the month. That also means the MCCC meeting will be the following week on the twentieth. So keep those dates in mind.

Next month is election time at the MCCC meeting. All of our officers have served their volunteered two years of service and cannot run for the same office again. They can run in a different office but most seldom do. So get your nominations ready. How about you? Do you see yourself as president or vice-president? Tired of seeing the same old mistakes made by our present officers? You can make a difference if you really want to.

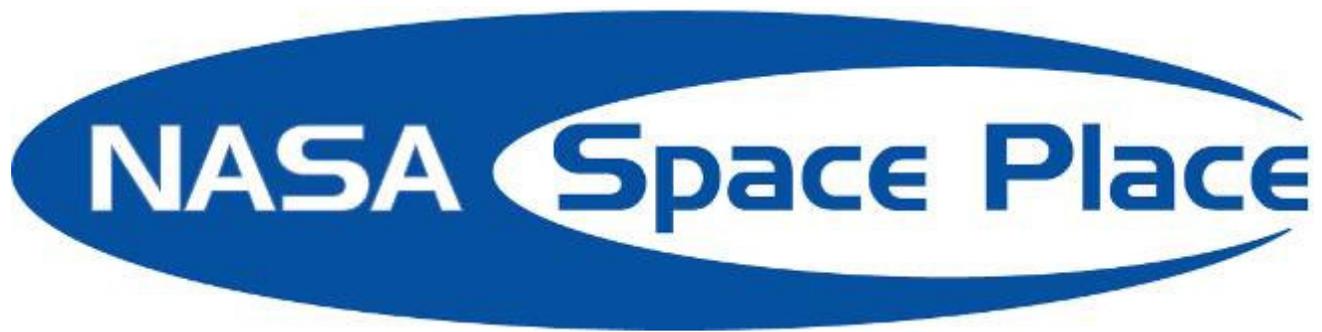
Last month's discussion group meeting broke another attendance record. Thirteen and a half people were there, talking about Magnetars, tracking the space station, the expansion of the universe,











## Cosmic Cockroaches

By Dr. Tony Phillips

Cockroaches are supposed to be tough, able to survive anything from a good stomping to a nuclear blast. But roaches are wimps compared to a little molecule that has recently caught the eye of biologists and astronomers—the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs for short) are ring-shaped molecules made of carbon and hydrogen. “They’re all around us,” says Achim Tappe of the Harvard Center for Astrophysics. “PAHs are present in mineral oils, coal, tar, tobacco smoke and automobile exhaust.” Aromatic, ring-shaped molecules structurally akin to PAHs are found in DNA itself!

That’s why Tappe’s recent discovery may be so important. “PAHs are so tough, they can survive a supernova.”

The story begins a few thousand years ago when a massive star in the Large Magellanic Cloud exploded, blasting nearby star systems and interstellar clouds with hot gas and deadly radiation. The expanding shell, still visible from Earth after all these years and catalogued by astronomers as “N132D,” spans 80 light years and has swept up some 600 Suns worth of mass.

Last year “we observed N132D using NASA’s Spitzer Space Telescope,” says Tappe. Spitzer is an infrared (IR) telescope, and it has a spectrometer onboard sensitive to the IR emissions of PAHs. One look at N132D revealed “PAHs all around the supernova’s expanding shell. They appear to be swept up by a shock wave of 8 million degree gas. This is causing some damage to the molecules, but many of the PAHs are surviving.”

Astronomers have long known that PAHs are abundant not only on Earth but throughout the cosmos—they’ve been found in comet dust, meteorites and many cold interstellar clouds—but who knew they were so tough? “This is our first evidence that PAHs can withstand a supernova blast,” he says.

Their ability to survive may be key to life on Earth. Many astronomers are convinced that a supernova exploded in our corner of the galaxy 4-to-5 billion years ago just as the solar system was coalescing from primitive interstellar gas. In one scenario of life's origins, PAHs survived and made their way to our planet. It turns out that stacks of PAHs can form in water—think, primordial seas—and provide a scaffold for nucleic acids with architectural properties akin to RNA and DNA. PAHs may be just tough enough for genesis.

Cockroaches, eat your hearts out.

Find out about other Spitzer discoveries at [www.spitzer.caltech.edu](http://www.spitzer.caltech.edu).

*This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.*



*Using the IR spectrometer on the Spitzer Space Telescope, scientists found organic molecules in supernova remnant N132D.*



*Announcing...*

# The Cadillac West Fall Star Party

**October 10-14, 2007**  
(Wednesday thru Sunday)

**Hosted By: Bill Beers (Warren Astronomical Society)**

Located 14 miles west of Cadillac, Mich. at Bill Beers cabin (Register for map)



**\*\*\*DARK SKIES\*\*\***

**\*\*Saturday Barbecue\*\***

**----- A/C POWER AVAILABLE -----**



**Registration donation fee:**

**\$15 per person**

**\$20 per family**

**Contact Bill Beers to register before Oct 1**

**Accommodations Available:**

**Plenty of Space for Tents/Campers**

**Best Value Inn (231-775-2458) 12 miles east**

**Driftwood Lodge (231-775-2932) 12 miles east**

**Caberfae Peaks (231-862-3300) 1 mile east**

**For More Info Contact:**

**Bill Beers      Phone #586-321-8207 or E-mail "BEEZOLL@AOL.COM"**