

The W.A.S.P. newsletter

June 2005



The Warren Astronomical Society Paper

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www.boonhill.net/was

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2005 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 mailed to each member and/or available online www.boonhill.net/was. 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

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.



Astro Chatter

by Larry Kalinowski

The June issue of sky and Telescope has much to say about Deep Impact, the probe that's going to send a small impact probe to the surface of comet 9P/Tempel 1. Amateurs are being asked to make before and after collision shots, around the world. Sadly, the actual time of impact will be about 2:00 AM here in the Michigan area. At that time, Virgo, the constellation involved, will be half submerged below the western horizon, with the comet in the submerged half. West coasters will get a darn good chance to see impact. However, the comet isn't going to shut itself off, so we can get a glimpse of any brightening that might happen, the very next day. In fact there's a possibility that an increase in magnitude could last for days or weeks. How much increase? Hard to say, but two magnitudes are expected and some even say it could be as much as five magnitudes. The ejected material

will spread out and become brighter, then dim as it dissipates into an elongated tail. Could this be the source of a new meteor shower? Yes it could, but only if the Earth's orbit crosses the ejected material.



Phillip Morrison, a well known personality among amateur astronomers, passed away on April 22, at the age of 89. He could often be seen on Channel 56, making an outreach to the general public about the universe and its wonders. A physicist at Cornell University, in the early '50's, he became a public personality because of his association with Frank Drake and Guiseppe Cocconi. All three spent much of their time pushing for the origin of SETI. As a youngster, he grew up with the birth of Commercial radio and listened to station KDKA with his homemade crystal set. His voice can be heard narrating the well known short subject called Powers Of Ten. He passed away in his sleep.

Bob Berta gave an excellent presentation at the May Cranbrook meeting. His astrophotography show covered the old as well as the new in photographic equipment. He saved the best for the very last. It looks as though there has been another breakthrough in astrophotography. Some amateurs have jumped over the bounds of red, green and blue filters and are trying narrower band filters in place of the usual three. Narrower band filters that peak in the red, green and blue colors produce very little skyglow, even while exposing during a full Moon! The best part is the narrow band features that appear in the photos. There is detail never before recognized under normal light conditions. This new methodology is going to bring another wave of amateur astronomical photography. I guess you could call it narrow band astrophotography. The August issue of Sky And Telescope will carry a special article on this type of photography.

Dennis Schmalzal's talk about the Meade DSI camera, at the last MCCC meeting, was quite informative. He talked about all the features of the camera and software and had some examples of his work, as well as others. He even talked about Meade's latest camera the DSI Pro. His well prepared program lasted the entire allocated hour, and left little for additional questions. The camera lacks a refrigerating device but the convection fins and an auto shutoff amplifier feature, during exposures, reduces noise greatly. Auto dark frames handle the rest of the noise generated. It's a nine micron pixel color chip, that deserves your attention for the \$299 price.

The 4th Annual Cadillac West Spring Star Party takes place at Bill Beer's Cadillac hideaway during June 1 through 5. Vince has sent out some flyers to many of the members during May. If you didn't get one or missed the announcement at our meetings, hopefully you'll read this in time to attend. Power is available at his cottage site, as well as some motels, if his cottage is filled to capacity. Camping and RV's are also welcome. Contact him at 586-566-8367 or beezoll@aol.com. An RSVP is requested.

Saturn has twelve more moons. Japan's Subaru telescope in Hawaii found them along with the help of David Jewitt at the University Of Hawaii. All range from two to four miles in diameter and all but one move in retrograde motion around

the planet. Most small, rocky bodies, with retrograde motion, are believed to be captured asteroids. The count is now forty-six for Saturn. Jupiter has sixty-three, Uranus twenty-seven and Neptune has thirteen.

An astrologer has sued NASA for disturbing the solar system. Marina Bai, a Russian astrologer, has taken NASA by the collar and dragged that organization to a Russian court. She claims the Deep Impact probe will destroy the natural balance of the universe. The district court dropped the case but a city court seems to think her case might have some merit. Hhhmmmm.

Speakers for June will include Alan Rothenberg and Riyad Matti. Both have been long time members and have a lot to say about amateur astronomy in general. Alan is a refractor enthusiast with a lot of observing experience. He's the new double star group leader and has chalked up a lot of time observing. His talk is titled The Long Night Of Selenography. You can catch him at the Cranbrook meeting on June 6. Riyad is our observatory chairman with just as much experience as Alan, if not more, and his talk will concentrate on Practical Amateur Astronomy. His talk is at MCCC, 12 Mile Road campus, on June 16, Bldg. B, Room 209. Both meetings start at 7:30 PM.

You say you've spotted something in the sky and have three different days of position data? You can calculate the orbital elements of your object with a program just put into our shareware software library. It's called ORBDet (Orbit determination) V1.0, and it uses the Gaussian method for calculations. Win 98 or better.



What happened to Cosmos I? That's the Russian solar sail that was supposed to be launched sometime during April or May this year. Cosmos I is supposed to be comprised of eight triangular sails, arranged in a circular form, with adjustable sections to help "tack" the sail around in space. The total assembled diameter is to be around one hundred feet.

Comet Machholz is holding its own brightness and changing ever so slowly. As I'm writing this, it's still in the upper eighth magnitude and won't be ninth until the start of June. There's



Clarkston Community Band

"Making Friends and Music"

Vince Chrisman, Director

PRESENTS

STARS OVER CLARKSTON

A Concert of Space Music

With the

WARREN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Ken Bertin, President



June 11, 2005 6:00 P.M.

Concert starts at 7:00 P.M.



FREE ADMISSION

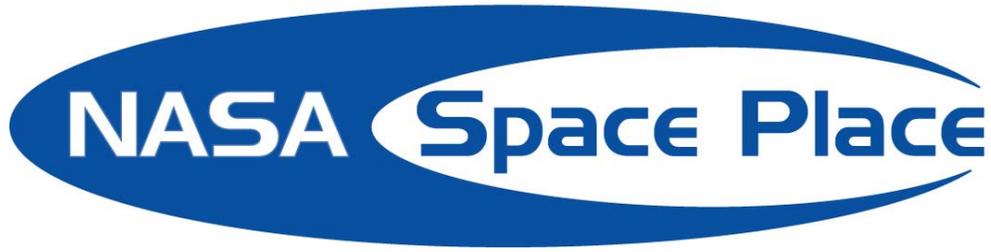
Family & Friends Fun – Bring a picnic, Lawn chairs, Blankets

Clintonwood Park
6000 Clarkston Road
Clarkston, Michigan 48348

- Music of the stars & space
- Multimedia presentation
- Telescope viewing – solar, planetary and deep space
- Astronomy talks
- Learn about telescopes

Independence Township Parks and Recreation

Michael Turk, Director



Seeing in the Dark with Spitzer **by Patrick Barry and Tony Phillips**

Have you ever gotten up in the middle of the night, walked to the bathroom and, in the darkness, tripped over your dog? A tip from the world of high-tech espionage: next time use night-vision goggles.

Night vision goggles detect heat in the form of infrared radiation—a “color” normally invisible to the human eye. Wearing a pair you can see sleeping dogs, or anything that’s warm, in complete darkness.

This same trick works in the darkness of space. Much of the exciting action in the cosmos is too dark for ordinary telescopes to see. For example, stars are born in the heart of dark interstellar clouds. While the stars themselves are bright, their birth-clouds are dense, practically impenetrable. The workings of star birth are thus hidden.

That's why NASA launched the Spitzer Space Telescope into orbit in 2003. Like a giant set of infrared goggles, Spitzer allows scientists to peer into the darkness of space and see, for example, stars and planets being born. Dogs or dog *stars*: infrared radiation reveals both.

There is one problem, though, for astronomers. “Infrared telescopes on the ground can't see very well,” explains Michelle Thaller, an astronomer at the California Institute of Technology. “Earth's atmosphere blocks most infrared light from above. It was important to put Spitzer into space where it can get a clear view of the cosmos.”

The clear view provided by Spitzer recently allowed scientists to make a remarkable discovery: They found planets coalescing out of a disk of gas and dust that was circling—not a star—but a “failed star” not much bigger than a planet! Planets orbiting a giant planet?

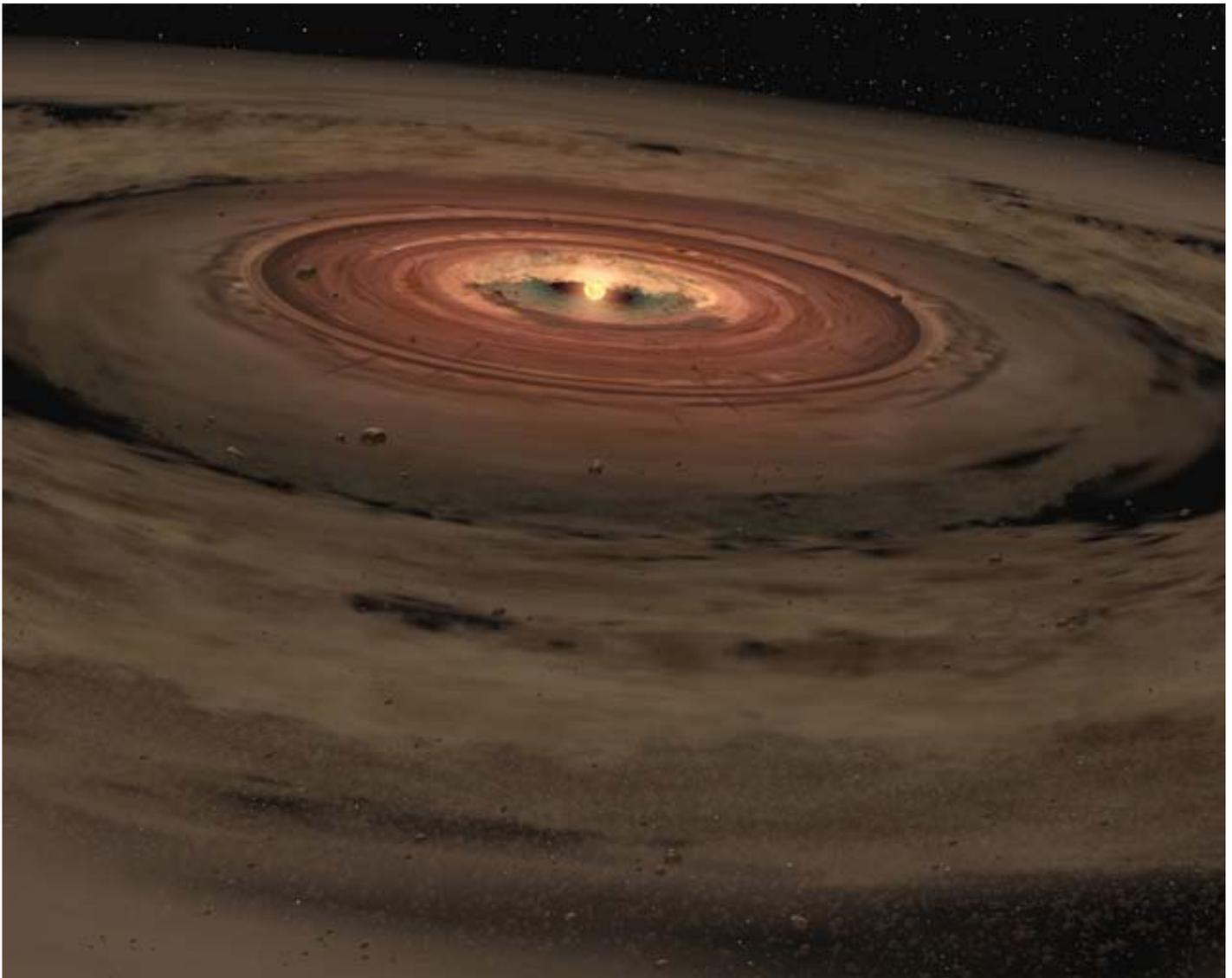
The celestial body at the center of this planetary system, called OTS 44, is only about 15 times the mass of Jupiter. Technically, it’s considered a “brown dwarf,” a kind of star that doesn’t have enough mass to trigger nuclear fusion and shine. Scientists had seen planetary systems forming around brown dwarfs before, but never around one so small and planet-like.

Spitzer promises to continue making extraordinary discoveries like this one. Think of it as being

like a Hubble Space Telescope for looking at invisible, infrared light. Like Hubble, Spitzer offers a view of the cosmos that's leaps and bounds beyond anything that came before. Spitzer was designed to operate for at least two and a half years, but probably will last for five years or more.

For more about Spitzer and to see the latest images, go to <http://www.spitzer.caltech.edu/spitzer>. Kids and grown-ups will enjoy browsing common sights in infrared and visible light at the interactive infrared photo album on The Space Place, http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/sirtfl/sirtf_action.shtml.

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



Artist's rendering of brown dwarf OTS44 with its rotating planetary disk.

STARS OVER CLARKSTON

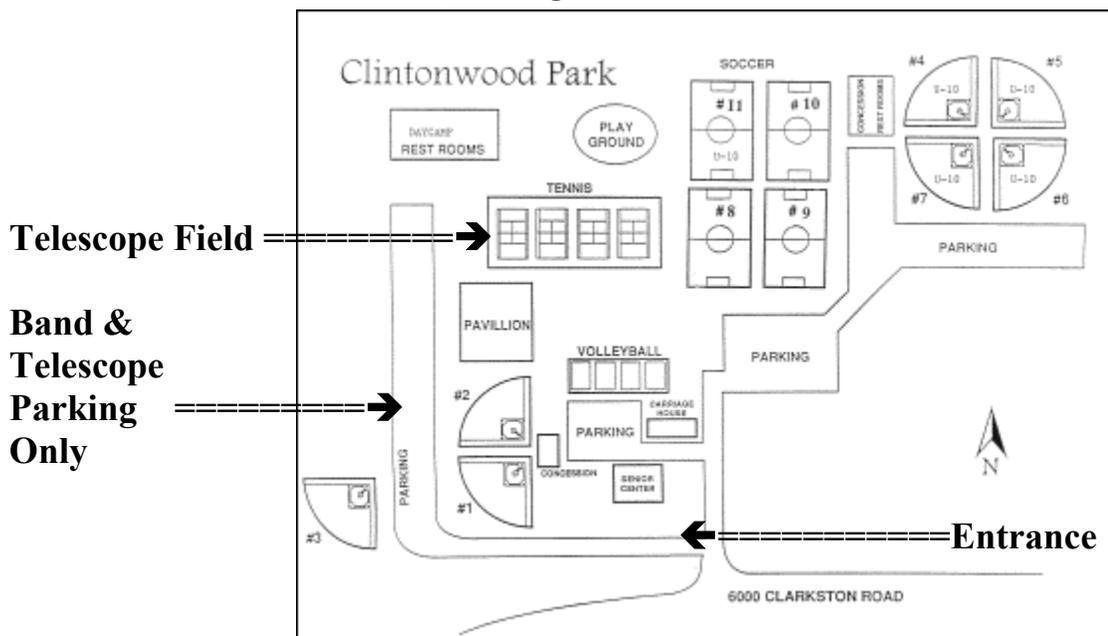
Saturday, June 11, 2005

EVENT INFORMATION FOR ASTRONOMY CLUBS

- Open to:** Any club wishing to participate. THANKS for doing so!
- Setup time:** 5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. You are welcome to stay as long as you like.
- Parking:** First left when entering. This parking is reserved for band members and astronomers with telescopes (See map below).
- Observing Field:** Tennis Courts (See map below).
- Electricity:** Provided, but please bring an extension cord and a power strip.
- Tables:** All participating clubs are welcome to setup a table (you provide) to pass out information on your club and to sell club items. There is no charge. Tables are to be setup along the Tennis Courts north fence.
- Concert:** 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- Location:** In Pavilion (See map below)

During the concert, owners are welcomed to stay with their telescope & equipment. The observing field will be closed to the general public during this period. To help facilitate this, please politely ask the folks to leave the area at 6:50 p.m. An announcement will be made over the P.A.

Address: Clintonwood Park
6000 Clarkston Road
Clarkston, Michigan 48348



More info? Email: clarkstonband@hotmail.com or call Vince at 586.344.5505