

Rappahannock Astronomy Club

Minutes, April 13, 2011, Meeting

In attendance:

- Jim Baker
- Elise Bedrosian
- Barton & Linda Billard
- Scott Busby
- Don Clark
- George Clarke
- Brenda Conway
- Rob Friedel
- Leigh Gettier
- Ranny Heflin
- Glenn Holliday
- Victor Lystad
- Mike Masters
- Chris Rupert

President Mike Masters began the meeting at 7 p.m. One visitor and fourteen members were present (one of whom joined at the meeting).

Program

The program was "Landing on a Sunspot," presented by Brenda Conway. She had many images of the Sun's variations from space telescopes like the Solar and Terrestrial Relations Observatory (STEREO) and the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO). Sunspots can be up to 20 times the diameter of Earth. They are cooler than the rest of the solar disk, which makes sunspots appear dark. They come and go, and the number visible at any time varies with a so far unexplained 11-year cycle. An interesting statistic suggests that more earthquakes occur near minima of the solar cycle. A more clear relation between the activity of the Sun and Earth appears in aurorae and magnetic storms. Brenda listed dates of some significant events related to magnetic storms, going back to the Carrington event in 1859 and the aurora seen during the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862. Effects ranged from a radio station that was blacked out while broadcasting a Dodgers versus Pirates baseball game in 1941 to the blackout of the Province of Quebec in 1989. She played a video on the Quebec blackout narrated by Stern Odenwald.

Old Business

- Treasurer's report—Mike presented the Treasurer's report Tim had provided for March 31, 2011. Twenty-three members had paid dues for 2011 by the end of March. The only expenditure for the month was the reimbursement to Mike for the purchase of star atlases to go with the loaner equipment.
- Status of Club loaner equipment—Glenn brought the Coronado Solar Scope to the meeting for Scott Busby to check out. Mike mentioned having a problem with the camera not working outside, then working again after he took it inside. Brenda said that had happened to her also. Mike is waiting on Orion to notify him when it has a knob in stock for him to order for the Orion 6-inch Newtonian German equatorial mount. It will require drilling out to 5/8 inch.
- Events—Early April events at Caledon and Lake Anna were cancelled. Mike said the challenge object list he made for the April 2 star party includes an interesting asterism. Eighty Scout leaders attended Glenn's clinic. Observing was not possible because of overcast skies that weekend. He continues to get inquiries about outreach for scouts. He has tried to get some of the groups linked with the Richmond astronomy club. The next star party at Caledon is April 30, and a Girl Scout group is expected to attend. The backup event is a private star party at Scott's new place for Club members only. Mike led discussion of backup dates to offer for the cancelled Lake Anna outreach. The consensus was a preference for offering the October 29 star party backup date. One concern was the snack bar lights that might be on at night during the summer season. The program for the May meeting is "Effects of Vacuum on Materials," presented by Leigh Gettier.
- Alternate meeting location—Mike, Joe, and Sherry visited the United Methodist Church to see the possible alternate meeting location. Advantages included a more rectangular space with more area and availability until 9:30 in the evening without the need to reconfigure the room at the beginning and

put it back before leaving. It is also a central location with about 58 parking spaces in 2 lots. The front of the room is a window overlooking a gymnasium that might be in use during meetings (a girl's basketball practice was on the schedule for the May 12 date we might consider for a trial meeting). We would probably need to provide a projector screen and the availability of wireless Internet access is unknown. Mike also thought pizza for the election meeting in November would be unwelcome and that it was uncertain if other events would make the parking inadequate. Finally, no room user fee was required but "donations" were mentioned. Mike was able to learn from a photo club that meets there that it donates \$25 each meeting. When Mike asked about a trial meeting there on May 12, there were a number of conflicts mentioned that made the change undesirable. The May meeting will be at the Library on May 11, as scheduled.

New Business/News Items

- Officer candidates for 2012—Mike announced that the Club needs to nominate new candidates for President and Vice President prior to the November election meeting. He wishes to step down after having served as President for 2 years. Joe Francis also indicated he has conflicts coming up that will make him unable to serve as Vice President next year.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is May 11, 2011, 7:00 p.m., at the Central Rappahannock Regional Library Headquarters, 1201 Caroline St., in Fredericksburg. Introductions will begin at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by Bart Billard, Secretary