

ORAS Observatory, August, 2025

Wrapping up my week-long August trip to Cherry Springs State Park, I decided to spend a few days at the ORAS club's observatory near Clarion, PA. The weather forecast and Moon phase looked promising for more deep-sky observing, especially using the club's C14!

Sunday 08/24/2025:

I pulled-out from the park around 10am and headed westwards to the ORAS Observatory to join several other club members' onsite. The damp cool morning at Cherry Springs soon turned to sunny and warmer skies as I drove off the mountain. Arrived at the ORAS facility a little before 2pm finding Gary S the sole astronomy on the observing field. (Dean S had passed me on the road outbound a few miles from the observatory).

After exchanging greetings with Gary, I quickly setup camp to his north on the western field, plugging in to one of the new power pedestals'. Other than my little S30 SeeStar which I assembled next to my camper, I didn't get my 8" or AllSky out of the car. My plan was to use the club's C14 & ASIAir kit in the observatory.



Got in an afternoon nap. Then heated-up dinner, Joined Gary at his camper to watch the attempted launch of the latest SpaceX Starship, only for the launch to be scrubbed. At dusk, I opened up the observatory and powered on the C14. While waiting for an ASIAir firmware update to download & install, I powered on the S30 and pointed it at the M24 starcloud for a deep-dive, widefield mosaic.

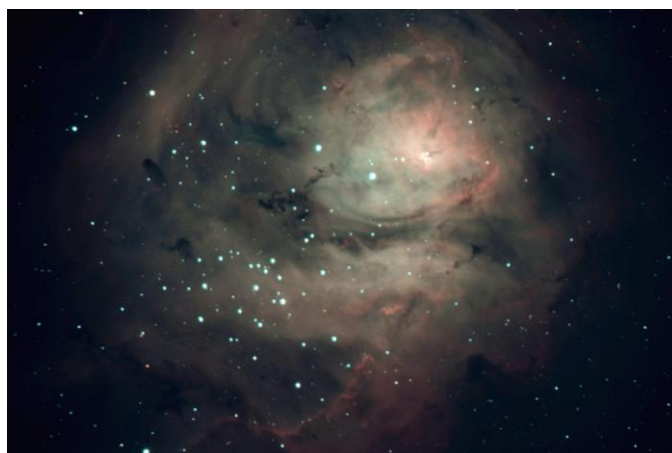


(SeeStar S30, 60 second exposures in EQ mode with the NB filter, livestacked for 95 minutes, then AI noise reduction applied in-app)

Back in the observatory warm-room, I slowly worked my way thru the learning-curve of using the ASIAir to control the C14. Finally got a workflow figured out on my tablet to let me try out the big 14" SCT on some eye-candy!

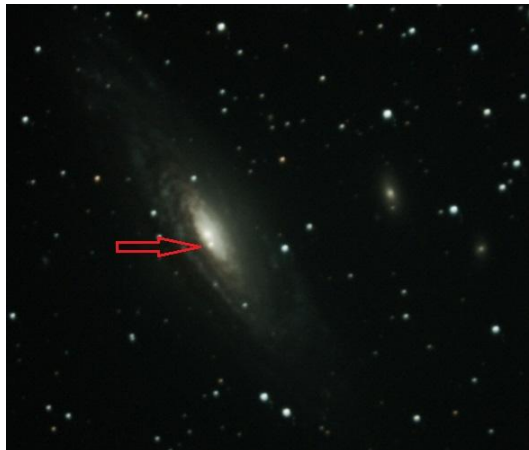


First up was the reflection/emission/dark nebula combo of M20 - Trifid Nebula, on Charles Messier's "Not a Comet" list. Then I dropped-in on M8 - The Lagoon Nebula.



(C14" SCT @ f6.3 on an Atlas HDX110 GEM, ZWO ASI2600MC Pro camera with L-eNhance narrowband filter, 180 second subs, guided, livestacked using ASIAir for 30 minutes).

After taking a break to tend to the S30, I started to work on globular cluster M22 only to run into issues trying to get an image. After wasting some time, I finally figured out what the problem was,,, the C14 was pointing at the 30" Reflector's tarp! LOL!!! So I slewed the 14" up high in the eastern sky to galaxy NGC7331 - the Deer Lick, and its supernova - SN2025rbs. Here's the EAA observation:



(C14" SCT @ f6.3 on an Atlas HDX110 GEM, ZWO ASI2600MC Pro camera with L-Pro broadband filter, 180 second subs, guided, livestacked using ASIAir for 30 minutes).

Gary stopped by a few times to visit while his scope spent the evening on the "Elephant Trunk" in IC1396 in Cepheus. Gary asked if I had heard all the coyotes loudly yipping to our west and north along the observing field, and I told him that I didn't hear a thing inside the observatory warm room.

While I was having fun with the C14, my little S30 SeeStar was busy. In addition to M24 (above), I also made a quick observation of the "Coathanger" asterism, CR399 in Sagitta, And observed the "Helix Nebula" - NGC7293 in Aquarius.



(SeeStar S30, for CR399: 10 second exposures in EQ mode with the IR filter, livestacked for 8 minutes, then AI noise reduction applied in-app. For Helix: 60 second exp, with the NB filter, stacked for 41 minutes)

Closed up the observatory around 2:30am as the sky was clouding over, in bed by 3am.

Monday 08/25/2025:

Woke around 9am to a partly cloudy sky. After breakfast visited with Gary. Around noon, the two of us attempted a USB cable repair to the club's AllSky camera, getting it back online. After cleaning and taping up where the two USB cables joined outside (one short cable from the camera and a longer cable heading inside the observatory), we determined that a new single cable should be purchased and installed, replacing the two problematic cables. Had a spider hanging-out on top of the AllSky dome, occasionally moving about. Even after dark, he could still be occasionally spied against the starlit sky, looking like a 'space invader'!!

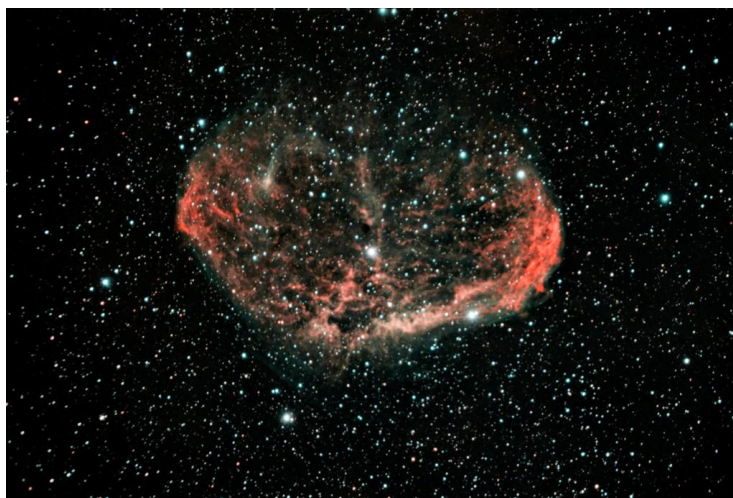
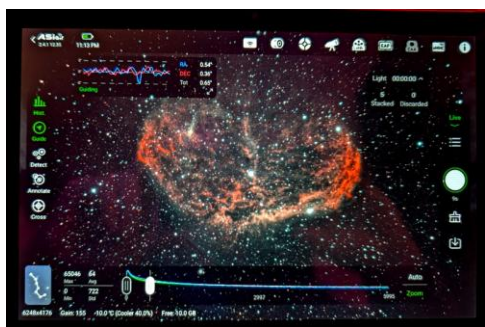


Later that afternoon several heavy rain showers went over the field while I was inside the observatory warm room working on images and reports. The rain was really loud hitting the metal roof! LOL! Joined Gary at his camper at 7:30pm to watch the 2nd attempted launch of the latest SpaceX Starship, only for the launch to once again be scrubbed, this time due to weather. As they say, "three's charm",,,, The new wifi signal is blazingly fast!

At dusk, fog began to build on the field, but overhead stayed clear. Off to the SE, there was an occasional distant flicker of lightning from storms over near Dubois.



Having put away the SeeStar, I opened up the observatory and powered on the C14. Over the course of the evening, I observed the Ring Nebula - M57, the Dumbbell - M27, and the Crescent Nebula - NGC6888.



(C14" SCT @ f6.3 on an Atlas HDX110 GEM, ZWO ASI2600MC Pro camera with L-eNhance narrowband filter, for M57 & M27: 180 second subs, guided, livestacked using ASIair for 30 minutes. For NGC6888: 5 minute subs, also stacked for 30 minutes)

Gary dropped-in to visit for awhile, but with the fog on the observing field, he closed up his scope and headed to bed early.

With the weather radar showing storms coming towards the observatory from the NW, I powered down and closed up around 1am. In bed a little before 2am.

Tuesday 08/26/2025:

Up at 9am to pack for home. Visited with Gary, who was also prepping for traveling home. On the road back to Pgh by 11am, and after a pleasant sunny drive, pulled into the home driveway about 1:20pm.

This brings to an end my August astro-camping trip, which started way back on the 15th traveling first to Ionia NY for the Rochester club's starparty for a few days, then on to Cherry Springs for a week, wrapping up at ORAS for the last few days. Eleven nights under dark skies, with some observing on seven nights. Not too bad. Here's hoping for a great, lengthy run of clear nights for my next astro-trip out to the Southwest for September's Okie-Tex and October's Enchanted Skies Starparties!

Larry McHenry

Astronomical Webportal: <http://www.stellar-journeys.org/>