

AstroBlast 2002

Hi All,

Along with a number of other AAAP'ers, I enjoyed a nice 'hot' weekend at ORAS's AstroBlast 2002. I arrived Friday afternoon, met up with George K, and after a little help from a couple of other attendees, set up camp. (went through two water bottles doing this). After the sun got lower in the sky, and the air temperature became more agreeable, it was enjoyable to stroll around the field and chat with other amateur astronomers from the region, and survey their telescope equipment. There was a mixture of high and low tech scopes, ranging from small aperture scopes to several large truss dobs.

A number of AAAP and Kiski members were there at some point in the weekend. In addition to George K, there was Bob N (who was exhibiting his latest creation, which is sure to win a prize this week at Stellafane), John H, George G, Garry & Donna S, Terry VH and family, Tim H, Charolette & Jim T, and 3 or 4 other AAAP members who I can't remember their names, and Wini & John L, and Ray M, from Kiski. Our VP, Terry T, presented an interesting talk on astronomy software Friday night. (JoAnne was there too). There were a number of friendly ORAS staff members in attendance including Tim S, John O'H, and Pete J in from New Hampshire.

Besides George (Astrocards), and Tim (Helix), there were several other vendors on hand thru the weekend: Highpoint Scientific, Tech 2000, and a fella who makes miniature brass telescopes.

As usual, the ORAS runs a good low key event. They had a nice selection of doorprizes (including a couple of eyepieces, which AAAP members cleaned up on), a number of interesting speakers, food vendor, and something a little different: a mobile exhibit from the NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland which was on a air-conditioned bus! (a popular cooling off activity on Saturday :))

Friday evening started out relatively clear, but soon gave over to a sucker hole filled sky. Eventually the whole thing clouded over around 11:00 PM. I managed to get in a little deep-sky video imaging, mainly M13 & the Ring.

A lightning and thunder show rolled past us to the northwest about 2:00 am, but other than a few sprinkles, missed us.

Saturday dawned with a very clear and transparent sky that lasted all day. Everyone enjoyed solar observing activities (two big prominences!), until the heat started getting obnoxious again. The evening was crystal clear and dark, with a very bright summer milky-way arching overhead, filled with breathtaking rifts, and starclouds. Putting up with the daytime temperatures was well worth the evening rewards.

The only downside was that dew quickly began to take out one telescope after another. Eventually, only the scopes with megawatt heaters were left standing. I managed to stay in the game for awhile, having to rely on my DSC's & laptops when my finders bit the dust. Eventually, the dew nailed me by shorting out my 8" SCT drive electronics. (the scope drive LED's started flashing like a Christmas tree). Hopefully, after drying out for a few days, my scope will recover.

I did manage to video image a number of Messier objects including M22, M8, M20, and M17. The visitors to my campsite all enjoyed the real-time deep-sky views with my Astrovid Stellacam EX video camera. Resolving M22 to the core was very impressive, and it was fun seeing how many stars inside the Ring would fade in & out of view.

Still, even with the dew, the sky was great!
If you haven't been to a convention before, this event is a great way to get started.

Here's the results of my video imaging:

M8: <http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m08-080302.jpg>

M17: <http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m17-080302.jpg>

M20: <http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m20-080302.jpg>

M22: <http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m22-080302.jpg>

M57: <http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m57-080202.jpg>

8" Celestron Ultima SCT (f10).
Lumicon 1.5 A H-alpha solar filter

AstroVid StellaCam EX, 1/2" CCD with 600 line resolution.

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Astronomical Webportal:
<http://home.comcast.net/~lsmch/>