

## Cherry Springs 2009

### 06-16-2009 (Day-1) Tuesday.

Finally, it was time for the starparty trip that I've been waiting for all spring, the Cherry Springs Star Party 'CSSP' in Cherry Springs Park, PA's 1st dark sky preserve. After what seemed like an extra long drive, thanks to all the road construction and the interesting route my GPS took me on, I arrived at the park around 2:30 pm. Bob Kalan was already there at our usual spot, finishing his setup. So I pulled my Wazat teardrop trailer in beside him and got my camp in order. Terry Trees came up the day before and was camping around the corner from us. Terry had a decent Monday night of observing, and enjoyed the dark sky detail visible in the arms of M51 and other galaxies. When I first arrived, it was mostly sunny with scattered clouds. But, thanks to the new Wi-Fi internet connection on the observing field, we could see the approaching storm front. We had hoped to get in at least one night of observing, but the clouds kept thickening and it was not to be. Around 5:30 pm, Terry decided to pack up and head home. About the same time, Denny Hill arrived and setup camp across from Bob and I. Being optimistic, I assembled my 8" LX200 SCT in case we were able to observe.

By 8:00 pm, the clouds had socked in, and the weather forecast was now calling for rain overnight. It became a little chilly, with the temp falling thru the 60's into the upper 50's. Bob, Denny, and I spent the early evening BS'ing about the usual topics, astronomy and such. Bob turned in early for bed, while Denny and I watched a DVD on the Sun that I had brought, sitting under my tent canopy using the equipment in the back of my camper.

We both called it a night shortly after the video ended.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-01.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-02.jpg>

### 06-17-2009 (Day-2) Wednesday.

We all slept in the next morning till about 8:00 am. It was still dry, hadn't rained.

Checking the weather radar, it looked like we were going to get soaked at any time. So after breakfast, I decided to pack up my telescope. I just barely made it, with help from Denny and Bob, as raindrops began falling about 10:00 am. It pretty much rained non-stop for the rest of the day!

We spent the time talking, looking for leaks in our tent canopies, eating snacks, and watching some unfortunate tent campers arrive and setup their tents in the rain.

Throughout the day, about a dozen or so trailers and tent campers came in, but no one packed up and left. Eventually, after getting cold and wet, the three of us crawled into our campers/tent to read, listen to music, or nap.

That evening, the three of us went to dinner down in Sweden Valley. We spent an enjoyable couple of hours indoors, warm and dry. After we got back to CSSP, we checked the weather, which didn't look too good, and checked in at home. Back in the Pittsburgh area, they were getting hammered by severe storms, flooding, wind and lightening, and tornado warnings! After putting away and securing a few items, we all called it a night! It continued to rain all night.

### **06-18-2009 (Day-3) Thursday.**

I woke the next morning to find it still raining.

After breakfast, and checking the weather, Bob and Denny decided to pack up and leave that afternoon. After seriously considering it, I decided to stick it out. I was scheduled to give a presentation on Saturday, and I didn't want to cancel out on the CSSP organizers.

Later in the morning, Jeff from CCTS showed up. (he stayed the entire week).

So after lunch, when he had setup in the vendor's tent, we went over to his tables and spent a few bucks! That helped make up a little for the rain! ;)

You had to be careful as you walked around, as the observing field was filled with some fairly deep puddles. During several dry breaks, Denny and Bob packed, and they both left around 3:30 - 4:00 pm. We continued to get longer breaks from the rain, and the Sun even peaked thru the clouds a couple of times. Amazingly, more and more campers continued arriving and setting up. (I would say by Saturday, there were probably a good 250 people on site).

I spent the early evening talking video astronomy with my neighbor, Mike from NJ, and visiting with Don Pullen and his Hamilton Ontario Astronomy club friends across the road from my teardrop. The weather forecast was calling for possible clearings late that evening into the next morning, but it started raining off and on again after sunset, so it was another early night to bed.

### **06-19-2009 (Day-4) Friday.**

Got up several times during the early AM to see if any clearing had gone thru.

Gave up at 4:30 am and slept in. The morning started out promising, dry with hints of sunshine. Around noon, the Sun broke thru the clouds, the temp rose, and the observing field finally started drying out. More campers arrived for the weekend, along with the other scheduled vendors.

Roz and Tony arrived about 3:00 pm to mostly clear sunny skies.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-03.jpg>

After spending a bit catching up, they took a walk around the observing field while I finished up a sketch that I was working on for the CSSP logo contest.

About 4:00 pm, they left for the Rangers' office to retrieve the key to the dome they had rented. I pulled out my telescope and prepared for a possible night of observing. Other attendees began uncovering and setting up their telescopes, it finally began to look like a starparty instead of some disaster refugee camp.

After Tony and Roz returned, I gave them a hand with setting up inside the dome. Tony had a nice little refractor on a GEM.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-04.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-05.jpg>

Later that evening, I took a stroll around the observing field:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-06.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-07.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-08.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-09.jpg>

And, I stopped in for a visit with the Hamilton crew:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2009-10.jpg>

Right after sunset, high haze and cirrus clouds began moving in. Also the dew became noticeably bad. While doing my polar alignment routine, the 8" corrector plate began to dew up. I rapidly completed my aligning and attached the dew shield and cranked the heaters on high. The corrector cleared off just in time for full darkness.

I started working on my observing program for the night, where I am vidcapping all of the M-objects to go with all my sketches. There are a number of northern objects that I can't see from my backyard observatory, so I started out with the first one on that list - M40, the little double star. After imaging it, I moved on to the galaxy M108. But right as I was centering the galaxy in the monitor, it was obscured by haze! So I then flipped over to a brighter nearby galaxy, M63, only to have it fade away in the thickening mist.

The earlier haze and cirrus had now gathered into an obscuring cast all around the sky, with an occasional sucker hole scattered about. I realized that the imaging session had come to an early end, so I abandoned my observing program and settled for hopping about the clear patches viewing and showing others the brighter globulars such as M3 and M13 on the video monitors. This continued till about midnight when the sky completely disappeared behind the clouds. Prior to that, I was at least able to get a glimpse of a very 'milky' Milky - Way running from Cygnus down to Sagittarius, where it disappeared into the murkiness. After putting away the cameras and covering up the scope, I took a stroll around the observing field. Most folks had called it a night, so I decided to do the same and went to bed. Around 4:00 am, I was awakened by a hard rain hitting the camper.

**06-20-2009 (Day-5) Saturday.**

It continued to rain all morning.

Once again, the observatory field became a sloppy flooded mess. Many of the tent campers pulled up stakes and left. I had a small 'stream' running thru my tent canopy! Even the back hatch of the teardrop, underneath the canopy, began leaking when I tried to keep it open for more than a few minutes. After a quick breakfast, I closed up the teardrop and went for a shower. While out, I drove down to Coudersport to gas up the van and rummage thru the local hardware store.  
(I didn't feel like going back to the soaked starparty field just yet).

By the time I returned, after 1" 00 pm, the heavy rains had stopped. But there still lots of mist and an occasional quick passing shower. I presented my talk on Solar Observing at 2:30 pm, and it was well attended with lots of follow-up questions. Tony assisted by holding up the various solar filters as I discussed them. Later that afternoon, we started getting longer breaks between showers, and as it was obviously not going to dry up or clear out, I packed up my telescope and as much camping equipment as I could.

After taking in May's famous spaghetti dinner, I headed over to the pavilion to hear the keynote speaker, Bob Naeye - Sky & Tel editor, give a very interesting presentation on the search for extra-solar planets and how amateurs were contributing. Then came the much anticipated raffle! There were lots of goodies - eyepieces, mounts, observing cases. But neither Tony, Roz, nor I managed to win any. But, I did win the contest to design the new logo for CSSP!!! (I'll get a free sweatshirt with it embroidered). The design concept was a representation of the Milky-Way flowing thru the Sagittarius and Scorpius constellations, with a wooded field and observatory dome in the foreground.

After the raffle was over, I finished pacing my tent canopy, and hooked up the van to the camper. I walked around for a bit visiting with the remaining attendees that I knew, and then went to bed at 10:00 pm, as it was still cloudy. About an hour later, I heard it rain again!

**06-22-2009 (Day-6) Sunday.**

I woke up Sunday morning to a rainy sky, so I hurried up and finished packing the inside of the Wazat and reeled in the power cord. I pulled out and headed for home around 8:00 am, took the route that Bob Kalan usually takes, and was home by Noon! A lot shorter trip back than going up. Nice drive. Between Driftwood and Benezette, I saw an Elk by the roadside. It took one look at my Wazat and ran right in front of me to get away. Good thing I was already slowing down! Then the wildlife got better!! Just past Benezette there was a black bear in the middle of the road. He took his time checking me out, and then finished crossing the road. (Also spotted several eagles along the way). Glad I took that way home.

Spent the next couple of hours drying everything out and repacking.

Larry