

ORAS Observatory Early April, 2025

This will mostly be a 'camping' and 'work session' report with just a few pics.
(Due to the weather, the telescopes never made it out of our cars, lol)

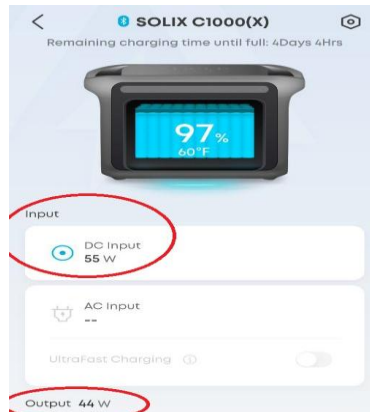
Having my camper out of winter storage for just a few weeks, I hurriedly prepped it for an early April trip to the Oil Region Astronomical Society (ORAS) Observatory for the club's monthly public presentation. My topic was "Obscure Open Star Cluster" scheduled as in-person Saturday evening April 5th.

Friday 04/04/2025:

Having packed the camper the day before, I waited till the weather broke Friday morning before hooking-up the camper and heading north. On the road by 11am with an ETA of mid-afternoon. Along the way on I80, I pulled off at the Rt8 interchange for lunch at a burger joint and having just sat down with my meal, in walks ORAS member Dean M, on his way to the observatory. So I waited for Dean to get his order and we enjoyed catching-up.

Dean M and I arrived at the observatory a little after 2pm to find Dean S setup with his new nifty camper. (Which I didn't get a picture of). Visited with him was his better-half Alice and daughter Robin and son-in-law Ben. After stopping for a few minutes to say 'hello', I proceeded to setup my camp.

One of the things I wanted to tryout this trip is my new Anker brand solar generator and panels. Under a hazy, mostly cloudy sky, I unfolded two 100 watt panels and plugged the camper into the generator. I was able to generate enough solar energy to offset my camper usage and charge the 1k generator, (except when the frig compressor kicked-in, lol)



Still, it was a good test. I let it run for awhile, then anticipating the rain for the rest of the weekend, packed up the solar and plugged in to a power pedestal.

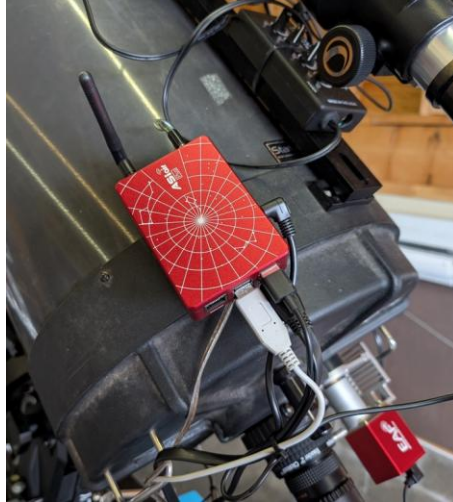
While I was doing solar, Dean M, Dean S and Ben got the tracker and filled the roller with water and rolled the west and north field. Around 4pm, Gary S and his new camper arrived onsite, followed within the hour by Ed K and his observatory on wheels. Around 5:30 we all gathered at Dean S's camp for a delicious dinner of Sausage Barley soup prepared by Alice and Robin. After dinner, Alice, Robin, and Ben headed home, leaving the observing field to Gary, the Dean's, Ed, and myself. We shared a few beverages and stories till darkness and raindrops forced everyone to head back to their campers for the evening.

Back at camp, I discovered that my camper's radiator heater was on the fritz, and after troubleshooting, I still couldn't get it to work. To top it off, I neglected to pack either of my two small portable electric heaters. Fortunately, Dean M came to the rescue and loaned his personal portable heater to get me thru the night.
(The next day, I borrowed another one from Dean S, Thanks Gents!!!).

Saturday 04/05/2025:

Woken a little after 4am by wind and a hard rain. Rolled-over and went back to sleep till 7:30am. It was duck-soup out there! The field was soaked and a steady drizzle continued till about 10am. The crew got busy around the observatory, with Ed leading a work crew of Gary, Dean M, and later Chris T, and Karl H in repairing the Roof opener and emergency closer. Fortunately, the rain let up long enough for Ed to successfully test out the repairs. Later, Dean M and Tim S cleaned-up the classroom in preparation of the presentation later that evening. Also during the day, Susan and John P arrived to help, along with Bill W.

Dean S and I successfully installed and configured an ASIAir wireless system on the C14.



Without being able to see stars either Saturday or Sunday evenings, we weren't able to complete the last steps of getting the ASIAir ready to turn over to general usage. Hopefully, before the month is over, we'll have the C14 running for members to use. Club members will just need to download the ZWO ASIAir app to their favorite Smartphone or tablet device, then turn on the power at the telescope pier and turn on the ASIAir unit. Then switch their devices wifi to ASIAir-ORAS and launch the ASIAir app. Once they're done imaging for the evening, insert a USB drive into the ASIAir and copy the files before shutting down the ASIAir and powering off the scope.



A little later, Tim gathered several of us and we did a walk-about around the observing field to discuss the layout of the new outdoor classroom and restroom in the west field across from the observatory. All present then gathered at the Jones building for a club hamburger / hot dog lunch. Afterwards, Tim gave a quick update on the outdoor classroom grant application and presented the proposals from the earlier walk-around and the groups reached a consensus giving Tim approval to move forward. Hopefully, by October's AstroBlast, the new facility upgrade will be in place.

While walking around the outside of the Jones Building I noticed an interesting rock sitting on a cinder block by the corner of the garage. After taking a closer look, I realized the rock contained what looks to be fossilized bones! Pretty cool to think that perhaps it belonged to some type of Dino that had been walking around our observing field 100 million years ago!! LOL.

For safekeeping, I moved the rock inside the building and left it on the floor by the fridge. Whoever found it can claim it there. (or donate it to the club)



At 7pm, I gave my presentation to a nice group of a dozen amateurs including ORAS member Barb R and three public who braved the rain to come to the observatory. Good questions afterwards. But with the rain, there was no observing that night. Soon all but us five campers had headed home for the evening. At 9pm, we gathered in Dean S's new camper lounge for refreshments. Called it a night around midnight.

Sunday 04/06/2025:

Slept in till 8:30am. Was in no hurry to go outside as it was another cold and wet morning with outdoor temps in the 40's. Fortunately, the little electric heater was keeping my camper nice and warm. The drizzly rain soon tapered off. After checking the weather, even though there was no hope for observing that evening, I decided to stick it out for one more night, visiting with both Dean's and Gary who were also staying. Ed needed to head home for a work meeting on Monday morning, but held off hooking up his truck to his camper as the field around him was swampy. But by 3pm the field was dry enough for Ed to make his escape. At 5:30pm, Dean S, Gary, and I headed over to Dean M's camper for drinks and snacks, and leftovers for dinner. Around 9pm, we all sloshed thru the mud back to our campers for the night. Early to bed.

Monday 04/07/2025:

Up early to pack for home. The outside temp was hovering around 32 degrees and a bit of snow covered the tops of the cars and campers. Burr!!!!!!
By 8:30am, everyone was out breaking camp. Dean M nearly got his truck stuck in the muddy west field, having to get a shovel and dig out his tires, and ended-up leaving his camper until the field dries out later in the week, and headed for home. Fortunately the east field where the rest of us were at was still firm.

Gary was the first camper to head out, and I followed shortly afterwards at 9:30am. At Noon, I was backing the camper into the driveway and shortly afterwards begun unloading.

So that concludes this trip. No deep sky images, but at least I got a telescope photo! ☺
Looking forward to my next trip back to the ORAS Bedow Observatory, under sunnier skies and clearer nights.

Larry McHenry

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