

Kiski Astronomers @ Cherry Springs: May - 2010

Hi all,

Here's a report on my trip to Cherry Springs on the weekend of May 14 - 15th.

As you all remember, the weather during the week of May 10th was not good. Bob K, Denny H and I kept watch on the forecasts, which seemed to change every other hour.

On Tuesday morning, after seeing some promising info on a big low pressure system was coming through and bringing dry air into Potter County, I was all set on going up Wednesday. But that afternoon, while waiting for the bus home from work, out in the cold, I was thinking heck no!! Then later that evening, the local weather guy was calling for a decent day Wednesday afternoon, and looking much improved for Friday afternoon and Saturday. Now I'm back to heading up!!! I kept seesawing back and forth about going!!!!!!

Wednesday morning dawned cold and wet. After looking at the weather conditions this morning, the three of us decided to bag-it! (I heard that it even snowed in Bedford along the turnpike!)

Bob and I thought that we might go up Friday afternoon if things improved. Denny decided that he was going to pass on the weekend. Well, Friday started out with the Sun peeking thru the clouds, and the weatherman calling for clearing and a sunny afternoon. So Bob and I decided to make the trip. Bob left for Cherry Springs before noon, while I finished a half-day of work and headed-up ~ 2:00 pm. After a mostly uneventful drive, I arrived at around 6:00 PM. I had an interesting GPS adventure with only about 15 miles from the park. My Garmin decided that it would be shorter if I made a quick right turn off of South-Fork road. I trustingly followed it and made the turn. The short-cut road quickly went from asphalt to gravel to dirt. (I did get to drive past the Oil drilling site). There was no good place to turn around, so I ended up driving about 5 miles along this rutted track until I came to an intersection with another dirt road and was able to turn the camper around. Way to go Garmin!!

After finally arriving, I quickly setup camp, my 8" SCT, and had dinner. The skies cleared out nicely, and with a bit of a breeze, there was no dew or bugs. We ended up having a good night Friday evening up at Cherry Springs!!. There were probably about another 15 folk camping out on the field with us. I started the evening off with video capturing three Messier objects in Ursa Major, M97, 108, & 109 using my StellaCam II & 8" SCT. That alone made the trip worthwhile as I was now able to finish my project of creating a video capture album of all the Messier Objects to go along with all the sketches that I have of them.

Here's the webpage link: <http://home.comcast.net/~lsmch/messierobj-f.htm>

After that I went on to vidcap image the quasar in Virgo, 3C -273. Also captured a nice image and a sketch of NGC -4565 with the 8" SCT in Coma Berenices, and used my new Canon CCTV 5.5 - 50mm zoom lens on my StellaCam EX to capture a wide-field image of the Coma star cluster Mellotte -111. Bagged a number of wide-field constellations and the Milky-Way in Sagittarius and Cassiopeia with the Canon lens. It worked very well.

You can find the images on my Constellation Tour webpage under the specific constellation.

<http://home.comcast.net/~lsmch/constellationtour1.htm>

But, here's a few direct links:

(using the StellaCam II with the 8" SCT @ 8 seconds)

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/3C273-05142010.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/ngc4565-05142010.jpg>

(using the StellaCam EX with the Canon CCTV lens @ 2.5 seconds)

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/mellotte-111-05142010.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~lsmch/ophiuchus-v-2010.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/sagittarius-widefield-05142010.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/summer-triangle-widefield-05142010.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/cassiopeia-rising-05142010.jpg>

These images don't hold a candle to what Bob K was able to do with his new color S-Big CCD camera and a 50mm SLR lens. They were beautiful!!

Both of us stayed up late, with me being the last to call it a night around 3:30 am.

Saturday was partly sunny, with haze, and windy, but clear enough for me to get sunburned!! :(

I didn't bother bringing out the solar filters.

Spent the afternoon helping out a couple of fellas who had rented out the sliding-roof observatory.

They were having issues getting a flip-mirror and auto focus to work properly on their 10" Meade SCT, along with their camera.

Saturday evening, the haze continued to build, and did not dissipate with the sun set. I was able to grab a few shots of the young Moon (waxing crescent @ 3%), using the Cannon lens thru the haze before it sat behind the tree line. The image is on my Solar System Tour page:

<http://home.comcast.net/~lsmch/solsystour1.htm> or here's the direct link:

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/moon-05152010.jpg>

Once it got dark, you could tell that it was going to be a poor night of transparency. While you could still make out the brighter stars and constellations, the sky was mostly washed out by the haze.

Around a quarter to 11, we did get about a hour of good clearing, long enough for me to take a couple of wide-field constellation shots that I missed the night before. Then the clearing closed down, and it wasn't long past Midnight that the entire sky was overcast.

We were done for the evening, and went to bed.

Slept in on Sunday, but was up in time to see Bob off on his trip back home. About an hour later, I finished packing and hit the road, and had a pleasant drive home to Baldwin.

A short weekend of observing, but a night at Cherry Springs is priceless!! Looking forward to the CSSP in June!

Larry McHenry

Astronomical Webportal:

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