

## Hidden Hollow Star Party 2010

Here's a brief report of Hidden Hollow 2011.

After spending the week watching the weather forecasts for Sept 29th - Oct 2nd go from great to once again 'dismal', I decided to take a chance and go over to Mansfield Ohio for the 2011 Hidden Hollow Convention.

<http://www.wro.org/hiddenhollowinfo.html>

Our good friend Bob Kr from the Richland Astronomical Society, the owners of the Warren Rupp Observatory located at Hidden Hollow, had made sure that electrical outlets were included during their educational building addition this past summer. Up at Black Forest, we had told Bob that if they put in electricity on the observing field, we would be sure to attend. So now, we all felt obligated to go. :)

I arrived Thursday afternoon meeting up with Bob K from the Kiski Astronomers at our usual camping spot. About a half-hour later Denny H arrived and setup. (Bob N came up the next day). We all quite happily plugged into the new electrical outlets waiting for us. While the skies were overcast, the rain held off for most of the early evening, but around 9:00pm, the skies let loose with a good hard rain. That continued off and on for the rest of the night into most of the day on Friday.

We did get a chance to walk around some on Friday and checked out the new education building constructed adjacent to the observatory, where RAS members Bob Kr and Terry M gave Denny, Bob K, and myself a tour:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-01.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-02.jpg>

On one end of the structure was a 'garage', where the RAS members stored their personal telescopes, that could be rolled out to a large concrete pad between the existing club house and observatory:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-03.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-05.jpg>

There was a long covered porch with red lighting:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-04.jpg>

And a large activities room equipped with a big screen TV where we watched movies on Friday night and where they had the portable Planetarium setup :

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-06.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-07.jpg>

After the tour, we all split up for the afternoon. Bob headed off to watch a stack of old movies that he had brought, Denny went to work on processing some of the images he had taken last month up at Black Forest, and I went over to the lodge to read a book I had picked up this summer in a small bookstore over on the Chesapeake Bay, "Boltzmann's Tomb", by Bill Green, a geochemist professor emeritus at Miami U, who grew up in Pittsburgh. I'm about half-way thru - an interesting read. It's sort of a travel-log of his journeys to a number of sites of scientific discovery or places where some of the early great scientists lived and worked.

Friday evening at dusk, the rain let up and a large clearing went over providing us with several hours of impromptu observing. While none of our group had telescopes ready to go, the RAS folks opened up the garage door on their new building and rolled out a bunch of big dobs, saving the day! One in particular, a 20" truss equipped with an image intensifier eyepiece gave spectacular views of deepsky objects.

It was quite interesting to see the glow of the 'Swan Nebula', M17, in the sparkling and shimmering green glow generated by the electronic intensifier.

We also observed with several other large dobs Comet Garrard over near Hercules, the usual showcase deepsky objects, and took in the naked-eye view of the fall Milky-Way arching down to the southwestern horizon. But, by 10:30pm, the sky began to once again shutdown with the clouds rolling in, and after midnight, it was back to the rain.

It continued to rain all thru Saturday, which we spent over in the lodge attending the various presentations. Throughout the day, other folks kept arriving for the talks, so by the end of the day, there were probably about 70 some people in attendance. Most were there for the day, while a few stayed in the bunkhouse, and a handful of us camped on the field.

If it wasn't for the new electrical hookups, I think we all would have gone home Friday afternoon. The last item of the day was the door prize drawing, and the RAS had a large selection.

All of the Kiski club members walked away winners!! though Bob N was the only one to win hardware - an Orion 20mm illuminated cross-hair eyepiece. Bob K won a stony meteorite, Denny won a box of brass celestial thingy's that you dangle from your patio umbrella, and I won one of those glow in the dark glass Saturn garden bulbs,, whoopee!! ;)

After sunset, a few small sucker holes drifted along the western horizon, but nothing really cleared out enough to observe. As the temps were dropping into the upper 30's, we all decided that we had enough of the weather and went to bed. Sunday, we were all up early to a sky that had cleared off sometime around 4:00am, packed up and headed back home ~ 8:30am.

That ended pretty much a cold, wet, not very astronomy worthy weekend!

One last note. The Warren Rupp Observatory contains a large classical 31" f7 reflector, a good 20" tall. You need to ride a lift to reach the eyepiece. Here's a photo from a previous convention:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-08.jpg>

Well, about two weeks ago, several members were tweaking the telescope, adjusting the culmination. They had just loosen the secondary adjustment screws and decided to swing the telescope upright, not knowing that there was no safety wire or bolt holding the secondary assembly:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-09.jpg>

As the optical tube reached toward the zenith, the secondary assembly detached and came crashing down!! The secondary shattered on impact:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-10.jpg>

With the pointed tip of the assembly gouging a large thumb sized divet in the primary mirror, about a 1/3 of the way from the edge:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-11.jpg>

But the worst part was that the force of the impact of the multi-pound secondary falling from such a height fractured the 4" thick mirror in half!!  
<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/HH2011-12.jpg>

What a disaster!!!

Fortunately, the RAS had the mirror insured, and they are currently negotiating with their insurance company for a suitable replacement.

A cautionary tale to keep in mind when adjusting our own telescopes. ...  
Well, this concludes my no longer brief reports of the 2011 Astroblast and Hidden Hollow Conventions.

Larry McHenry

Astronomical Webportal:

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