Black Forest Star Party October, 2021
Cherry Springs State Park

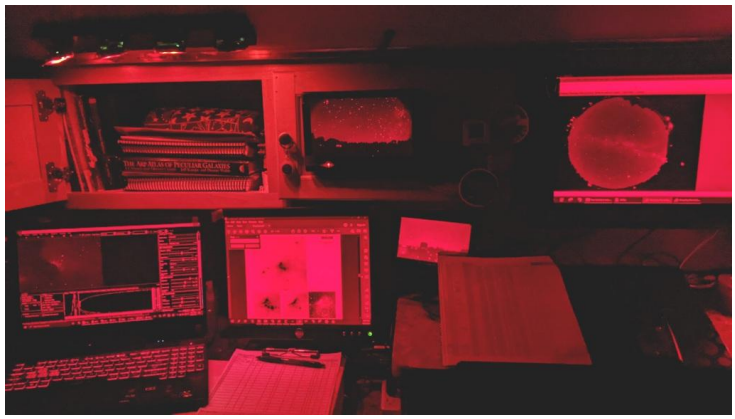
This year's BFSP, marks two years since I last attended a large starparty. I was looking forward to spending time on the Cherry Springs observing field with fellow amateur astronomers. With the Pandemic still keeping the Canadian border closed to casual tourists, the field and facilities shouldn't be as crowed as in prior years. Between being personally fully vaccinated, socializing during the day mainly with my friends who are all also vaccinated, and practicing social distancing and wearing a mask as necessary, I should be able to enjoy the event. During the hopefully clear fall nights under the Milky-Way, I'll be too busy doing astronomy for any socializing! LOL.

Sunday 09/26/2021:

After a partly cloudy Saturday evening, the Sun rose to a clear morning. I had already packed the camper and car the day before and had the two hitched together ready to go. After taking care of a couple of last minute items to load into the camper fridge, I was on the road at 9:30am for the 4.5 hour drive to Cherry Springs. The trip up was uneventful, except for the four separate bridge construction projects that slowed me down along Rt555 past Benezette. The trees along the way were still a deep green for the most part, but there was a sprinkling of rust and brown colors mixed-in. With occasional 'clouds' of fallen leaves stirred up by passing cars, Autumn was in the air!

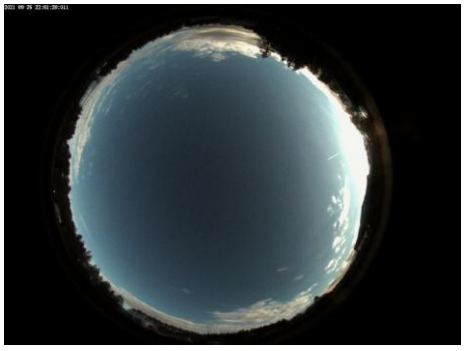
Arrived at the park just past 2pm and picked out my usual camping spot. Fellow ORAS member Dean S arrived about 15 minutes later and setup to the north of me. There were probably already 25 – 30 amateur astronomers setup around the field including Paul and Brad just to my southeast, and Dennis and his wife to my northeast in our section.

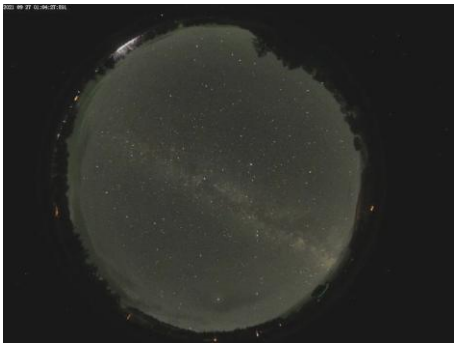
Spent the next several hours getting my camp organized and setting up my travel telescope: a 8” Celestron SCT optical tube @ f6.3 with a ZWO ASI294MC Pro camera on an Atlas EQ GEM mount, along with a Canon CCTV 25-100mm zoom lens with ASI290MC camera, and a 60mm Antaries refractor guidescope with an ASI120MC camera, both piggybacked on top of the 8” SCT. After running a few cables, I then setup the camper’s back clam-shell with my laptops and observing notes and reference books.



I also setup the Allsky cam (ZWO ASI224MC & fisheye lens in a DIY dome), and my ‘Guttercam’ (Samsung SDC435 analog security camera & widefield lens in a drain-gutter enclosure) that I use to monitor the main telescope as it slews. Setting Guttercam up to the south of the telescope also allowed it to do double-duty to monitor for aurora.

And I pulled-out my old StellaCam-3 analog camera, mounted it on a tripod, and attached a small 5 – 50mm canon zoon lens. I pointed this to the south to catch the Milky-Way. Soon the Allsky was accumulating frames for a time-lapse. Here’s a few subframes:





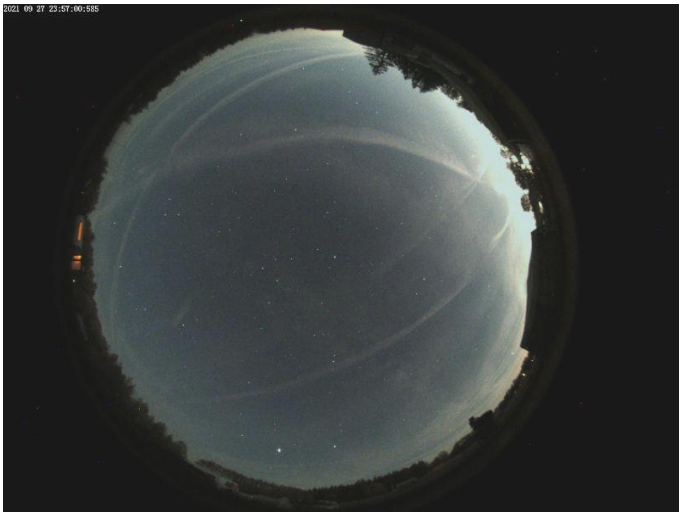
At dusk, I changed into heavier clothes, and with Dean pointing out Polaris above the trees, I was soon polar aligned using my Polemaster mount camera, and had the telescope’s GOTO up and running. Brad and I walked over to close the main gate, and had to chase three cars out of the parking area. Once back at camp, we soon noticed clouds were moving in from the northwest and began to obscure the southwestern sky. Ditching any plans for observing the Sagittarius region, both Dean and I pointed our telescopes to the northeast where Dean began imaging M31 in Andromeda with his SpaceCat 51mm refractor & DSLR camera,

while I settled on NGC7635 – "the Bubble Nebula" in Cassiopeia using the narrowband L-eNhance filter. I was barely able to get in a few minutes on the object before the clouds covered the entire sky at 10pm. After consulting the forecast and satellite images, Dean and called it a night and closed up our scopes and headed indoors. I stayed up for a few hours hoping for a clearing that never came. Finally gave up at midnight and went to bed. At least I got the scope polar aligned!

Monday 09/27/2021:

Up by 8am to a cool sunny morning.(temp ~ 52). After breakfast, spent time visiting with Dean, Paul, and Brad. Around 11am, the park staff began to mow the field, so we pulled back our camping gear for the mower driver to get in close. Later in the afternoon, we used the weed whacker that I had brought to finish around our campsites. Denny H from ORAS & Kiski clubs arrived just as the mower was finishing up our section and he setup camp between Dean and I. After welcoming Denny to the park, we gave him a hand in setting up. Soon after, Tracy N from Delaware arrived and setup across from Denny. Also during the day several other amateurs pulled in and setup around the field. With a little help from Denny and Dean, I put up my yellow canopy for shade and also got out my solar panel to power the camper during the day.

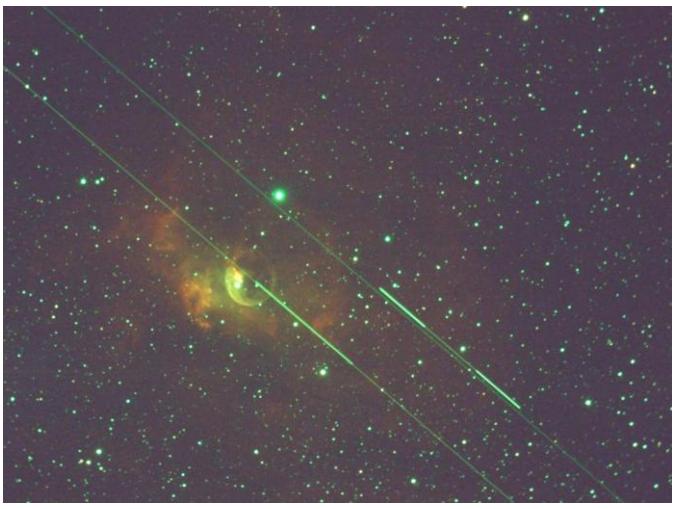
At sunset, the sky had a bit of a hazy overcast, but we were hopeful that it would clear later in the evening, though the forecast was calling for rain the next morning.
Once it was dark, I powered-up the telescope and laptop, slewed the telescope to Altair and focused the cameras. I then headed back over to Cassiopeia to the Bubble Nebula for a 2nd try. The outdoor temps stayed in the mid 60's, so there was no need for the heavier observing clothes. The sky had mostly cleared off, but an occasional band of clouds would cross over the observing field.



Everyone was out with their imaging rigs running, Dean was shooting the North American Nebula near Deneb in Cygnus, Denny, after polar aligning, was imaging nebula over near M8 & M20, and Tracy was spending time practicing with his new 11” RASA telescope, being his first time out with it.

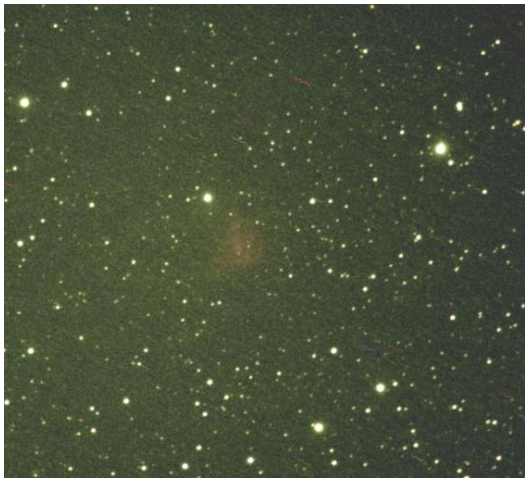
While the 8” SCT & ASI294 camera was stacking 60 second subframes of the Bubble, I adjusted the SC3 camera exposure and swiveled the tripod to show a nice view of the Sagittarius star-cloud and the ‘Galactic Dark Horse’. As the SC3 wasn’t on a tracking mount, I would periodically have to step out from under the clam-shell canopy to re-center the camera. A little after 8pm, Tracy stopped over to visit and while there a bright meteor blazed thru the teapot handle and Capricornus with the SC3 picking it up.

About half-way thru my planned stack of the Bubble, a plane photo-bombed right thru the middle of the image and I wasn’t quick enough to stop the image! Arggh!!
So had to re-start the stack, one of the downsides to how I do EAA observing.
(still, with the L-eNhance filter, it did make for a cool ‘Star-Wars’ looking pic)



As I was itching to get started working on my Sharpless Catalog, HII nebula project, I settled for only a 20 minute capture of NGC7635. The L-eNhance filter nicely shows the various HII and OIII regions within the nebula.

I then searched for several nearby SH2 objects there in Cassiopeia. Started out with emission nebula SH2-163 then moved on to observe SH2-164. Cassiopeia is such a rich SH2 object hunting ground! The waning gibbous Moon began to rise at 10:41pm over in the northeast sky in Auriga. Once it cleared the tree tops the sky over in Cassiopeia instantly washed-out. So I slewed the telescope across the meridian to Vulpecula in the western sky and continued the hunt, fist observing the faint nebula SH2-89 and its much brighter companion SH2-90. Here’s a few pictures of the observations, each a 60 second exposure for about 20 minutes. (would have been better under a darker, clearer sky)



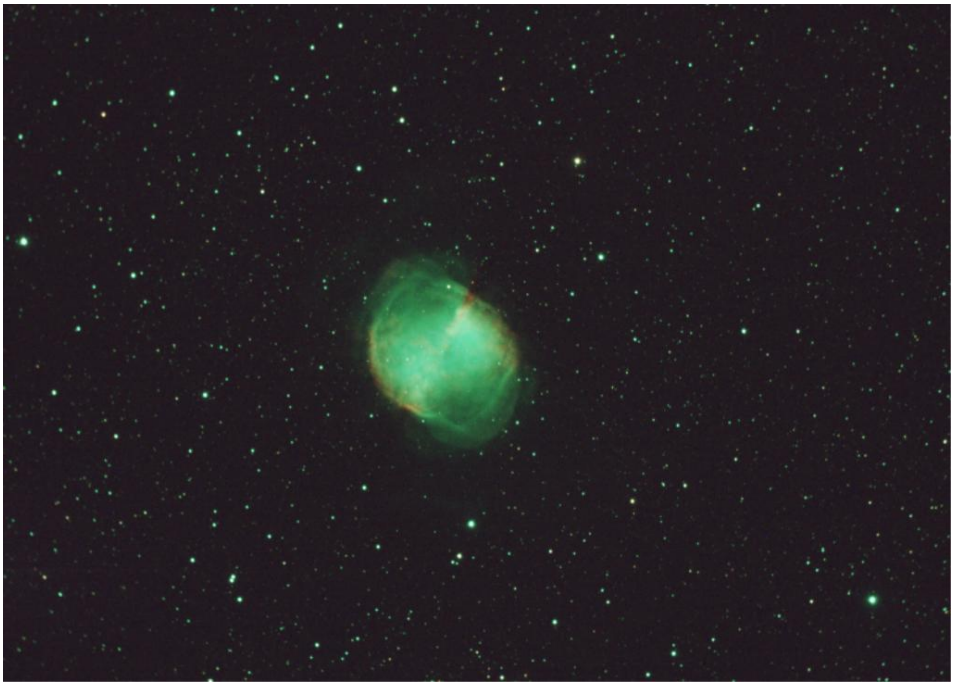
By 1am, with the Moon rising higher in the sky, illuminating the haze which had begun to thicken into a general overcast, I decided to shutdown the equipment and cover up for the night. I had only finished closing out the observing station and headed indoors when about 20 minutes later it began to rain! I could hear a few folks scrambling to cover up their scopes. That goes to show, you have to be mindful of the weather at Cherry Springs as rain can sneak-up on you! After reading thru a few emails, in bed asleep by 2am.

Tuesday 09/28/2021:

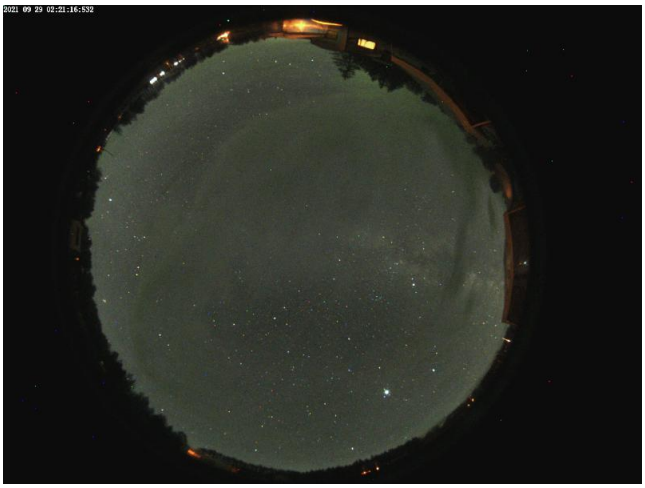
Slept in till almost 9am when I was woken to the sound of distant thunder.
Or it could have been noise from the park maintenance crew who are building a new maintenance garage at the south end of the field. LOL! After breakfast, Denny, Tracy, and I walked back to see what the crew was up to. On the walk back, I snapped a field pic.

Around 10:30am, the clouds began to move out and we're getting brief periods of sunshine. Hopefully the rain will stay away for the rest of the day and we'll get in a little observing tonight. I wasn't the only optimist, as several more campers pulled in during the day. At noon, a short lived shower rolled over, but soon the Sun was back out drying off the observing field. Both Denny and Tracy were out tweaking their telescopes while Dean and I relaxed at our camps. Late afternoon, I re-attached the blackout curtains to t the back of the clam-shell canopy and uncovered my equipment. After dinner, I went for a stroll to the garbage dumpster and once back at camp with the temps dropping fast, changed into my warmer clothes and prepared my observing plan for the night. (more SH2's)

At dusk, Tracy and I walked over to close the gate, while Dean gave a small group of park visitors a tour of our telescopes. Once dark, I focused the camera and headed up overhead to Vulpecula where M27 – "Dumbbell Nebula" was nearing the meridian, for a quick observation before moving on to the SH2. Here's the image, 60 seconds for 3 minutes.



I then restarted by SH2 project observations back over in Cassiopeia, but before too long a thin haze began to form, and soon it filled almost the entire sky. The bright Milky-Way was washed-out in most places leaving only a few scattered clearings.



So I spent the next half-hour of playing the game of chasing sucker-holes with SH2 objects in them, but every time I had setup on a nebula and began to stack an image, the haze would move in. Ended up with only one usable image, SH2-151 in Cassiopeia. (using the L-eNhance narrowband filter, 60 second subs for 30 minutes)

During one of the thicker bands of haze, Dean dropped in for a visit. Afterwards, I stopped over at Tracy's to help him with a few tips on how to use SharpCap's histogram tool while doing a livestack session. Denny, in the meantime was accumulating subs on a nebula, waiting out the haze. By 10:30pm, the sky was mostly overcast and with the weather radar showing possible rain showers to our northwest, we all shutdown and covered up for the night. Another evening headed indoors early to bed.

Wednesday 09/29/2021:

Up early to a sunny, crisp morning. The temperature had dropped overnight to a low of 42. But soon the Sun had warmed the field up to the low 60's. Spent time with Denny and Dean trying to de-bug a balancing issue with Dean's mount. Dean was seeing oblong stars in his images from the evening before. We finally determined the issue was being caused by drag from a power cable that was hanging down unsupported. After a trip down to Lyman Run for a shower and then lunch back at camp, I practiced my presentation for Saturday afternoon. Also got in a late afternoon nap!

All day, campers flowed into the park. The space around us began to fill. Still, we had plenty of room among our campers. Dave from Penn State, (one of the BFSP folks), setup in the next section cross from me. Ed K from the Kiski/ORAS group arrived with his portable observatory and went to our north.

Eric L was back on the western field along with a number of other LVAAS folks. And Mike M from the Rochester Club stopped by to say hello.

The afternoon daytime heating clouds evaporated at sunset and the sky became a beautiful deep blue. At dusk, Tracy and I walked over and closed the gate. We had to wait several minutes for a few travelers from Rt44 to finish utilizing the restroom before they could move their cars and we were able to close the gate. Once back at camp, I quickly uncovered and powered on the telescope and cameras, and headed indoors to change into warmer observing clothes. The temp was dropping quickly; it was going to be a cold night!

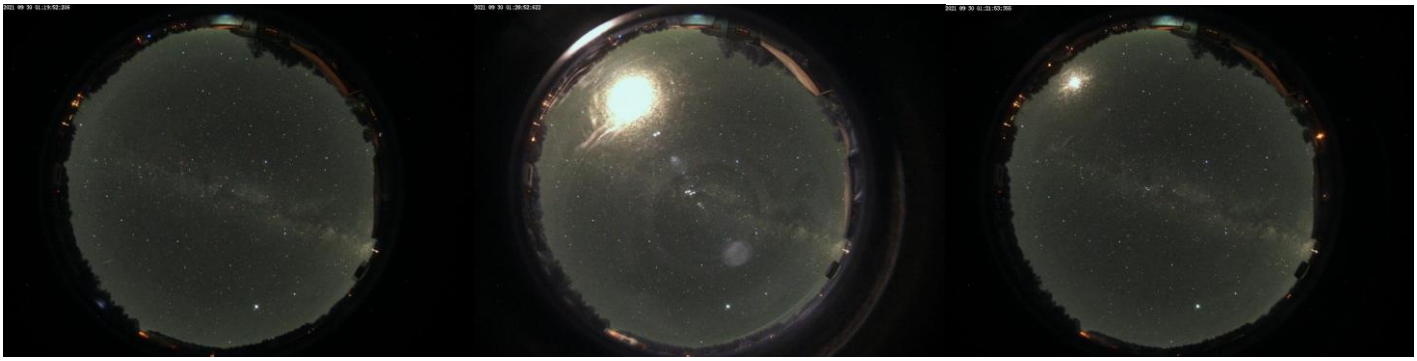
Soon, the Milky-Way star clouds were glowing overhead, and stretching down to the southwest horizon. Here's a frame from the AllSky cam and the SC3:

Once again, I began the night with my continuing hunt for SH2 HII emission nebula objects using the narrowband L-eNhance filter. I slewed the telescope high above Polaris where Cepheus was wheeling toward the meridian and started with SH2-128, SH2-136 (which is actually a Bok Globule), and SH2-140, capturing 60 second subs. The PHD guiding program wasn't very happy guiding above the pole, so I had to keep an eye on the tracking, as occasionally the RA would take off with a large swing. If I was quick enough, I could pause the Sharpcap stack until the tracking settled down, but a couple of times, I was distracted and the image stack was spoiled and I had to restart the observation. Here's the observation for SH2-136 for 30 minutes, and SH2-140 for only 10 minutes:

While I was busy up in Cepheus, Denny was also imaging SH2 nebula in Cygnus, Ed was doing a long series on the Bubble Nebula, Dean was shooting the region around Sadr in the Northern Cross, and Tracy was shooting M8 with his 11" RASA, along with experimenting with an AllSky cam that he had assembled that afternoon. (He soon ran into the same issue that I was having, dew forming on the dome).

Around 9:20pm, as I was observing one of my SH2 objects image stack building on the laptop monitor, there was a sudden bright flash of light visible on my AllSky and guttercams, quickly followed by loud exclamations from folks on the observing field. It looked like someone at some distance to the north of us was shooting off fireworks of some type. This went one for several minutes, much to the dismay of both visual and imaging observers. Not sure if anyone ever figured-out what it was, distant fireworks? A flare dropped from a military plane on maneuvers? Or perhaps a gamma ray burst? ☺

Here’s a set of AllSky cam ‘before’ and ‘after’ images:



In talking with folks the next day, apparently there were several other 'flashes' further in the distance towards Coudersport, but the trees obscured the view from where I was at, and I didn't catch any additional sightings on my AllSky cam, as ‘someone’ in his excitement in seeing the first event ran out from under his canopy and accidently caught his big foot on the AllSky camera USB cable and it came unplugged!
(I need to pick my big feet up when I walk,,,,,,,)

Around 11pm clouds began to move in from the North. And before long, most of the sky was overcast. After checking the satellite image and verifying that these clouds were forming directly off of Lake Erie & Ontario and would continue to do so, everyone once again called it an early night.

Thursday 09/30/2021:
Up around 8am. It was another cool morning, temps around 45 degrees. The sky was still a little overcast from the night before, but the Sun was starting to break through the low clouds. Joined the gang outdoors during the brief intervals when the Sun warmed up the field. Everyone was comparing observations from the night before and checking weather expectations for the coming evening. The evening forecast looked a little iffy. Throughout the day, the sky alternated between partly to mostly cloudy, but with occasional large sunny clearings. Mid-afternoon, Tracy and I went for a drive and stopped in at the old Keeners Store, now named “Cherry Springs General Store” by the new owners, where I bought a new CS hoodie.

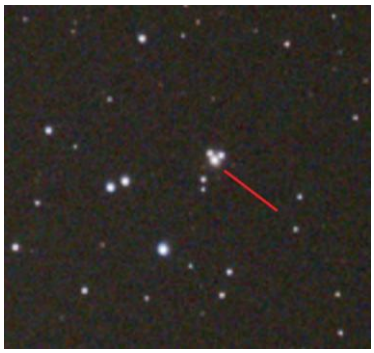
Back at camp I went for a stroll around the observing field with Ed. We stopped-in and visited with several nice telescopes and their owners.

All day more amateurs arrived and setup on the field, and the remaining open spaces in our section and near the restroom began to fill. The vendor/swap tent went up in the north field, and the food trailer arrived to setup by the pavilion and began preparing for opening the next day. Looking forward to that!

After a phone home, I took a late afternoon nap. Once up, I readied the clam shell observing station and started-up the AllSky camera to hopefully make a time-lapse of the coming night. Fixed dinner and sat around for a bit chatting with the group. Based on the Satellite cloud image, it wasn't going to really clear off until several hours after sunset, so with some time to kill, I walked over at dusk and visited with Eric at his campsite to see his setup.

Finally around 11pm, it cleared off enough to allow everyone to begin serious observing. My plan for the evening was to revisit a couple of Local Group galaxy members, M31 – the Andromeda Galaxy, and M33, the Pinwheel or Triangulum galaxy, and try for better observations of several their internal features to use in my upcoming talk.

First stop was Andromeda and one of the largest globular clusters in the Local Group called Mayall-II, a possible remnant core of a small galaxy cannibalized by M31.



(60 second subs for 5 minutes using the broadband L-Pro filter)

Next up within M31 was the super starcluster / starcloud NGC206:

And an HII emission nebula star forming region called: HII-#74

I then moved on to the Triangulum Galaxy, M33, now wheeling overhead.

My target was NGC604, one of the largest and brightest known HII emission nebula in all the galaxies within the Local Group. (60 second subs for 5 minutes using L-Pro filter)

I then went on to observe for the first time the Sculptor Dwarf Galaxy:

(60 second subs for 5 minutes using the broadband L-Pro filter)

During my Local Group observing, the dew became very heavy, and a layer of ground fog crept over the field soaking any exposed surface. I cranked the dew-heaters to high, but the AllSky cam's dome soon lost the battle. Fortunately the main telescope kept up and stayed clear for the evening.

Around 1:00am, clouds and haze began to move thru, and once the Moon rose at 1:30am, the sky transparency nose-dived. That was the signal to once again, call it another short night.

Friday 10/01/2021:

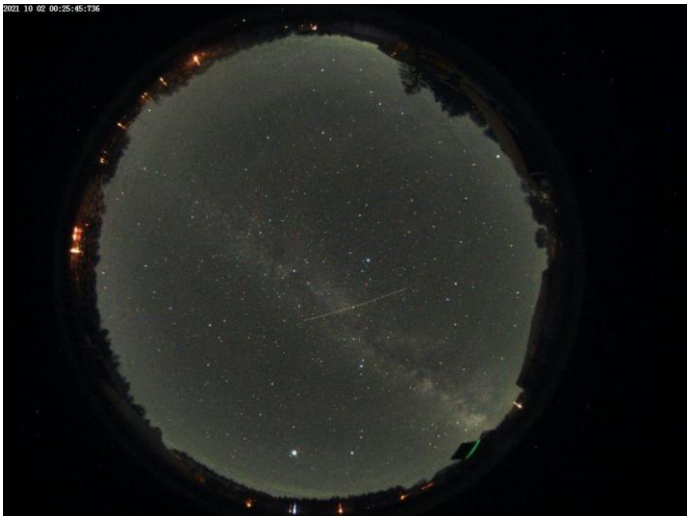
Up early from the noise of the porta-johns being delivered to the field. After breakfast, I worked on including the new images of the Local Group from the night before into my presentation for Saturday. Then spent time around camp relaxing and reading. The day temps was cool, though the sky had cleared, so I alternated between sitting in the Sun for warmth, and then in the shade so as not to get burned. Visited with the gang and walked around our section. At lunch, I walked over to the food vendor for a burger.

Dean and I headed down to the swap meet at 3pm and we both sold a few things. I promptly recycled my earnings and purchased a 2" 5-position filter wheel, LOL.

Dan and Sharon from ORAS arrived in the afternoon, (they were staying down at Lyman), and visited with us. Even though most of the available camping space was taken, it still didn't seem to be as crowded as past starparty conventions. Perhaps it was all the missing Canadians from the border being closed that we would have normally had.

For dinner, I was invited to join the CPO BFSP organizers as their guest over at the pavilion, where they held a cookout. Very nice of them to include me!

At sunset, the sky was a nice blue, though there was a very slight haze due to upper level smoke from the western wildfires. At dusk, I uncovered the telescope and powered up the equipment. My observing plan for the night was to hunt Arp Peculiar galaxies over in the eastern sky in Pisces. Before long, the Milky-Way was shining brightly overhead with brilliant Jupiter in the southeast and Venus putting in an appearance in the southwest. The AllSky camera was busy collecting frames for a time-lapse, here's a subframe from the early evening. The AllSky dome got a little dewy part of the way thru, but I fixed that by removing the dome altogether and cranking the heater strip to high, LOL.
(Need to figure out a better dew system that keeps it off the dome, both inside & out).

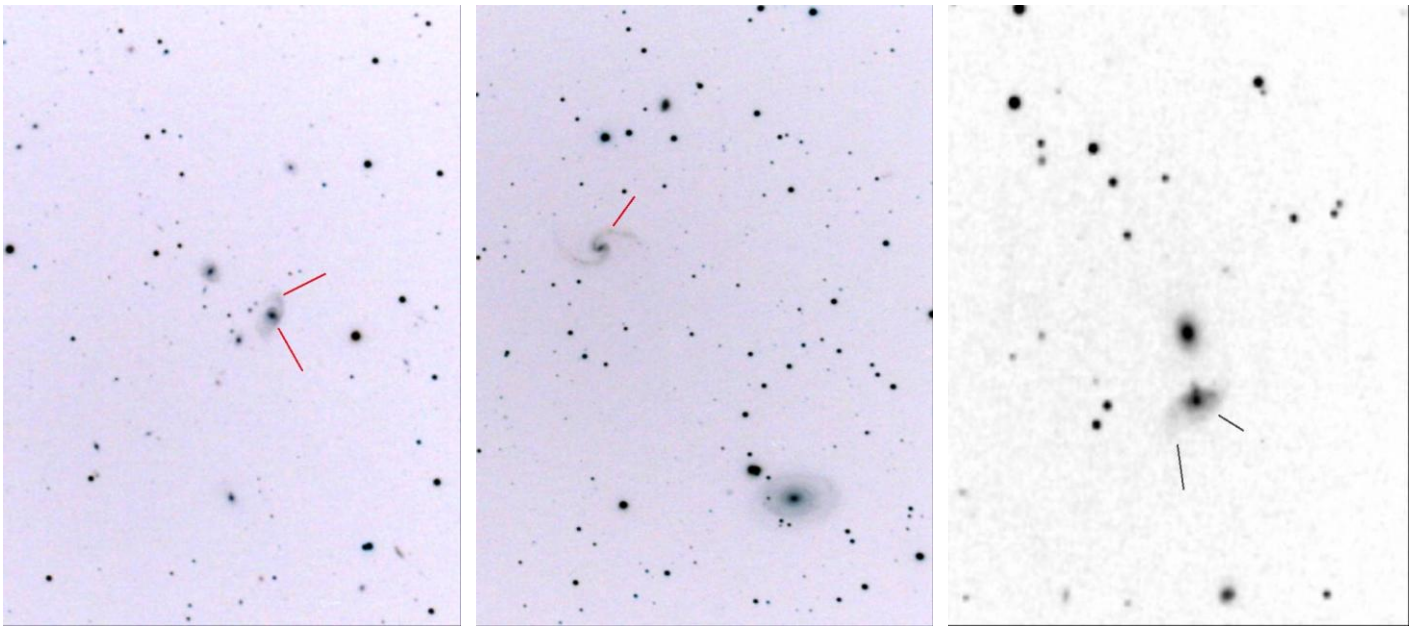


Here's the completed time-lapse vid of the night of Friday: https://youtu.be/Jdqkw27pHR0

While waiting for full astronomical darkness, I visited a couple of nice Messier globular clusters in that area of the sky, M2 in Aquarius, and M15 in Pegasus, just off the nose of Enif. Here are images of both, 15 seconds for 5 minutes. (M2, then M15)

To properly kick-off galaxy hunting, my first observation was non-Arp galaxy NGC7331 – "The Deer Lick", along with her 'flea' companions: (60 seconds for 24 minutes & L-Pro)

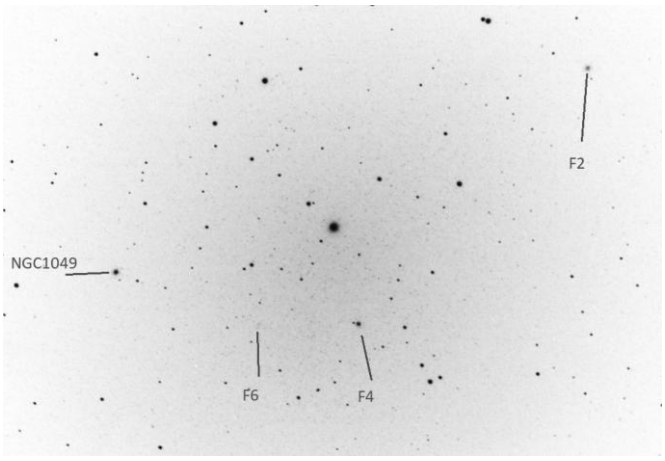
I then began my Arp galaxy observing, spending the next four hours fishing my way slowly thru Pisces, over into Aries, and up into Andromeda. The haul included Arps 11, 31, 48, 70, 88, 119, and 128. The best of the catch were Arp11, Arp31(with NGC691), and Arp119. Here's a color inverted image of each with the peculiarity indicated.



(60second subs for about 30 minutes each, using the L-Pro broadband filter)

In-between Arps, I visited and was visited by Dean, Tracy, Ed, and Dean. Also took an occasional break from under the canopy to visually admire the beautiful delicate splendor of the Milky-Way. It was a great night of observing!

Around 2am, I realized that the Local Group member – the Fornax Dwarf Galaxy was rising over in the southeast, so I slewed the telescope over to it, catching the galaxy as it neared the meridian. Here's a 30 minutes image using 60 second subs:



The Fornax Dwarf is very faint, but a bright field star helps to mark the galaxy, and I was able to capture both the galaxy and several of its internal globular clusters!

As the clock was getting towards 3am, and I couldn't sleep in late on Saturday, I reluctantly called it a night, turned-off the equipment and headed in to bed.

Saturday 10/02/2021:

Up early, after a quick breakfast, headed down to Lyman Run for a shower.
Once back at camp, headed over to the swap tent to try and sell a few more items.
Afterwards, hung around camp and visited with the gang, including Ray L from ORAS.
The day was mostly sunny and warmer, but the weather forecast for the evening was looking bad, with rain expected early Sunday. While a few amateurs were still arriving and checking-in, there began to be a greater outflow packing-up and leaving. I realized that if I was going to walk around and get any field photos, I'd better do it now while there was still telescopes setup. So here are a few pictures from my quick walk-about:

During my stroll, I ran into old acquaintance Tony D from the Ash club, packing up.

There was a lot of empty space from people leaving early.
Wish I'd walked around Friday evening when there were more telescopes out,,,,,

Back at camp, Denny, Dean, and Ed, along with everyone else around us were starting to pack-up their equipment, but Tracy and I decided to leave our telescopes setup until after dinner, in case the forecast improved. I did pack away the AllSky and other tripod mounted cameras and took down my yellow canopy, and put away a few other camping items.

I then gathered my laptop and presentation notes & handouts and headed over to the pavilion and caught the last half of Carol Hundal's talk on Martian volcanoes. It was very interesting, wish I'd gotten there sooner to hear her whole talk.

Then at 2:30pm, it was my turn to give my presentation on the "Local Group Galaxies". There was a nice size crowd of about 60+ folks, including my personal peanut gallery of friendly hecklers: Denny, Tracy, Dean, Ed, Dan & Sharon. Had a number of good questions afterwards, I think those attending were pleased with the talk.

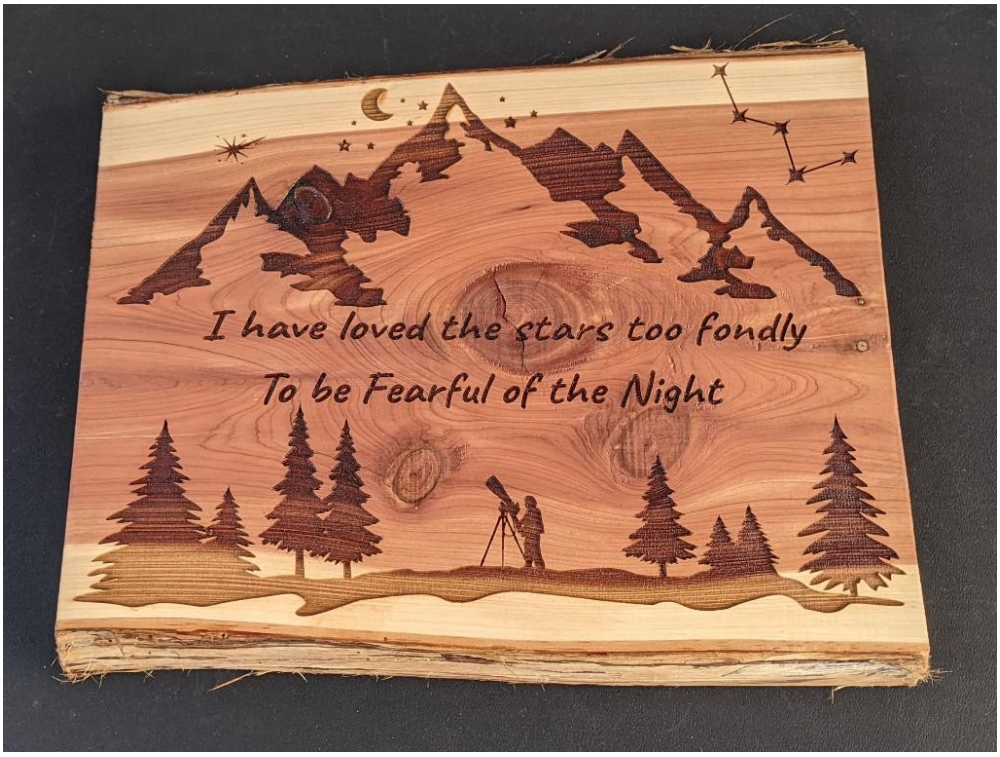
I then joined the 'nut gallery' for the keynote presentation "The Termination Event: The Death of Solar Cycles", by Dr Robert Leamon, on expectations for the upcoming solar cycle. It was very interesting hearing the science behind what I had already read about over the summer.

For those who enjoyed the BFSP Keynote speaker - Dr. Robert Leamon: here's a link to a Spaceweather article from this past June that covers what he talked about: https://spaceweatherarchive.com/2021/06/11/the-termination-event/
Here's the main take-away from the article: "*If the Terminator Event happens soon, as we expect, new Solar Cycle 25 could have a magnitude that rivals the top few since record-keeping began,*" says Scot McIntosh. Dr Leamon is also quoted in the article.

Could be good times ahead for us solar observers!! Fingers crossed.

After the keynote talk, the CSSP Parks folks and the DarkSkyFund folks both gave reports on this past year's activities and future plans. The park hopefully plans to break ground next year on the new entrance to the overnight observing field, which will take care of a lot of nighttime light issues that we currently have. Looking forward to the project! The fund folks are planning on adding a dedicated SQM meter and AllSky camera to the field that will be internet accessible. Plus, more power pedestals are in the works! (It was also good to see Max and Chip back on the field earlier at the DarkSkyFund tent.

The last planned event of the day was the famous BFSP door prize raffle. Dan won a Celestron Lithium powertank flashlight, and I won a really cool wood-carving.



Afterwards we sat around Dean's campsite for a pizza party that Tracy and Ed drove to Coudersport to pickup. Tracy and I had originally planned on staying into the following week for New Moon, but after checking our various weather sites and watching the exodus around us, decided that most of next week was going to be cloudy. We finally gave up on any clearing and at dusk hurriedly disassembled our telescopes and had everything packed in our cars by dark. We then all sat around Dean's camper to discuss and solve the astronomical problems of the world.

After about an hour, to our amazement, Cherry Springs worked its magic and the sky cleared to a beautiful glowing Milky-Way!! Too Bad most of the folks had left for home, or like us had packed away our telescopes. Denny and I got out our binoculars to observe various Messier objects, first over in Sagittarius, M8, M22, M17, and star clouds, working our way up thru Scutum to M11, following the Milky-Way thru the Great Rift in Cygnus to the glow of the North American nebula near Deneb. We then continued into Cassiopeia to M103, down to the Double-Cluster and Melotte-20 in Perseus. We then went into deep-space and pulled-in M31 in Andromeda, and M33 in Triangulum. During our binocular journey, Tracy and Ed had pulled-out their SQM meters and were taking dueling measurements across the sky. It was a good time!!

Finally, around 10pm, feeling the cold and heavy dew that was soaking all of us, we all said our goodnights and headed indoors. I stayed up another hour to read.

Sunday 10/03/2021:

Woke to a dreary damp morning. The forecast had proved correct, showers had gone over in the middle of the night. Ed had already pulled out for home, and while I was eating breakfast, a heavy downpour rolled over the field giving it a good soaking. I was really glad that I had packed-up the telescope and cameras the night before!!

After the rain stopped, I headed outside to chat with the guys as we all slowly hooked-up our campers to our Tow Vehicles. We took a break from packing and gathered under Dean's camper awning to give our buddy Bob K a call at home. Bob couldn't make it this year, and we wanted to let him that that he was missed! Everyone enjoyed the phone call.

At that point, except for Tracy who was sticking around for another hour or so, we were all ready to leave, so we said our goodbyes, and headed for home.
The drive was a little misty at first, but eventually the clouds lifted and the Sun had broken thru by the time I made it to I80. Arrived home mid-afternoon.

Unpacked the clothes that needed washed, along with a few things such as the weed whacker, but left most of the camping and asto gear loaded, as I hoped to travel south to Calhoun Park in West Virginia within the next day or two. Unfortunately that didn't pan-out as Calhoun was also clouded out for the week, so spent Wednesday finally unpacking everything. I'll have to do the New Moon from my backyard observatory.

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A few days later, Bill G, the BFSP Chairman reached-out to thank me for being a speaker this year. I've been feeling a 'mixed vibe', post BFSP, in reflecting back over the past weekend on how 'less crowded' this year's BFSP felt, so I mentioned to Bill that I had read on 'Cloudy Nights' that the attendance was around 350, and asked Bill what he thought.

Bill replied that 350 were around how many folks, (out of the 500+ registered), that had actually arrived onsite and checked-in at the registration tent from Noon Friday to by late Saturday afternoon.

But, in his opinion, with everyone bailing out due to the weather forecast and leaving during the day Saturday, that there was never that many people on the field at the same time. It didn't feel crowded to him, there being much more open space, especially compared to other years. Bill was surprised at 'how much less' crowded the event was.

So I guess that the missing Canadians really made a difference! Hopefully, this was just fallout from the pandemic, and not a new normal. I would hate to see the large star parties become a thing of the past. Here's to hoping that the 2022 BFSP will be back to its usual fun 'busting-at-the-seams' event!

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So that wraps up my BFSP 2021 trip report to Cherry Springs!
I hope to be back somewhere in "the wild" for the November New Moon!

Larry McHenry
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