

## Cherry Springs tarparty - June, 2013

The Spring of 2013 has so far been awet one! A trip down to Calhoun County Park for the April New Moon lasted for one night, and all day trip was cancelled completely.

The weather prospects weren't looking too great either for the Cherry Springs tarparty weekend. Still, a group of Kiski Astronomers decided to make the trip to Potter County on the Monday prior to the convention, to take advantage of at least a few clear nights. To our complication matters, the day before we were to leave, there was a landslide on Rt 28 that completely closed the road for the next three weeks. So we had to take longer alternate routes to the park.

### Monday 6/3/2013:

After reviewing Google Maps I decided to take I-79 up to I-80 and then on to Dubois. Even though the mileage was much longer than the usual way I go, taking Rt 28, it really only added an extra 15 minutes to the overall trip time. Must be from that 'highway speed' driving, ...

Started the Drive off in cloudy skies, but by the time I had turned onto Rt 555 the weather had cleared. It was a beautiful drive from Benezette on to the park, with very little traffic. Verdant green hills rising up to an aqua blue sky, with eagles flying over the white-crested streams.

Arrived mid-afternoon to find Bob K, Denny H, and Fred K already setting up in the usual 'Kiski' spot. Dennis from York and Don P from Hamilton Canada were also there. There were actually quite a few folks already at the park to take advantage of the good weather, including Tom P who was setup directly across from me.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-01.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-02.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-03.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-04.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-05.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-06.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-07.jpg>

After setting up the 6" RC & StellaCam videocameras (SC-II & SC-3) on the Celestron CG-5 mount and obtaining a polar alignment, had a very good evening of observing and video-capturing, working on my Herschel-400 list of galaxies in Ursa Major.

Took time out to capture a wide-field shot of M 81 & M 82 made using the SC-II & 50mm:

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m81-m82-06032013.jpg>

Bob, Denny and the rest of the gang also got polar aligned and spent the evening capturing photons. Stayed up till 3:00am.

### Tuesday 6/4/2013:

Spent the day trying to stay out of the Sun, hanging out with the group. Mike from Niagara Canada and Nick from Philly arrived and setup camp.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-08.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-09.jpg>

The observing field continued to fill with attendees

For the night, I setup the Samyang SDC435 with a 3mm wide-field CCTV lens on a tripod and pointed it to the southern half of the field. Throughout the day I captured several daytime avi clips and later several hours of dark sky with Sirius and Altair rising. Here's a link to a time-lapse video that I made: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDJZugwFYRQ&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDJZugwFYRQ&feature=player_detailpage)

Once the sun set, it was another good night of observing! Using the 6" RC, I video captured the last few galaxies in the major and finished up the Herschel-400 project. I'll have my website's Herschel page updated later this month with the images. I then turned to my Collinder Open Cluster project and began bagging objects over in the Altair region of the sky. A number of these objects are quite large and actually looked better using the 50mm SCT 'video-finder'.

In between objects I would take an occasional break to just sit back and enjoy the Milky Way rising in the south-east, or stroll over to visit with Denny, Bob, or Don. Around 3:30am, I called it a night.

### **Wednesday 6/5/2013:**

The day once again started off sunny. Discovered that my car battery had died overnight.

After several efforts from Denny and Bob, we got the car started and I drove down to Couder'sport for a new battery. Upon returning, I disassembled the 6" RC and CG-5 mount.

Bob was getting a new Altair mount and had sold his Celestron C-Gem to me. We carried it over to my campsite and slapped the 6" RC on it. It looks and works great!!!

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-10.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-11.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-12.jpg>

Unfortunately, I picked up a bit of sunburn during the process, and had to go lay down for a while.

The weather forecast was not looking good for the evening, and through the rest of the week, so Fred K packed in and left for home. That afternoon, Bob arrived, along with hazy skies that slowly thickened. By sunset it was obvious that no good observing would be done that night, but I was still able to polar align and practice using my new C-Gem mount. What a great piece of equipment!!!

By midnight, clouds had completely closed down the sky, so after throwing as much as I could back into the car, it was off to bed. Began raining in the wee hours,...

### **Thursday 6/6/2013:**

Rained 'Cats and Dogs' the entire day!!! We received close to 1.3" of wet stuff, along with steady winds

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-13.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-14.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-15.jpg>

Nothing to do but to stay inside my little teardrop camper and catch up on reading and DVD's ('From the Earth to the Moon' is a great mini-series)

A number of campers packed up during breaks in the rain and pulled out.

Went to bed early.

### **Friday 6/7/2013:**

The rain continued off/on throughout the day, with occasional heavier showers and winds.

More folks packed up and left, but then were replaced by new arrivals.

Here's a pic of John, Karen, Don, and others from the Hamilton club:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-16.jpg>

Also, a couple of regional fellows, Bill Cassidy and Tom, who are making a documentary about the Cherry Springs Star Party, set up on the other side of the road from us.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-17.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-18.jpg>

Probably a good 150 people on the observing field enjoying the rain. Mid-morning the vendors began opening for business, so we all had to spend a few bucks. I picked up a new three-way LED flashlight (red, green, white), along with a book on Photoshop astronomy. Bob K took possession of his new Atlas mount, and we all gathered round and drooled over it. Unfortunately with the rain, all he could do was open the boxes, verify that everything was there, and put it in his car.

Mid-afternoon, the rain tapered off to an occasional drizzle. Just enough to keep things damp.

At 2:00pm, I gave my new presentation on the Venus transit. It was a combined historical review of the 17th, 18th & 19th century attempts at observing the transit and why it was so important, along with my personal observations from 2004 and 2012. The talk was well received by the audience, with good follow-up questions afterwards.

After the spaghetti dinner, we stood/sat under Denny's tent canopy shooting the breeze and looking at everyone's pictures that they had taken earlier in the week. At dusk, a more persistent rain and wind began with a drop in temperature, and that forced everyone back indoors.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-19.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-20.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-21.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-22.jpg>

After a bit of reading and movie watching, it was another early night to bed.

### **Saturday 6/8/2013:**

Saturday morning, the rain continued to drizzle on/off. The swap table started off 'dry', but after a while I could feel my hair curling from the light mists. Did manage to sell the majority of astronomy hardware that I had from spring cleaning. Eventually by early afternoon, the cloudy weather began to lift.

Took in a few talkovers at the pavilion, and uncovered my equipment. The Kiski Astronomers kept up our winning streak with Denny taking home a free magazine subscription.

I went for a stroll around the observing field and took a few shots.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-23.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-24.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-25.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-26.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-27.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-28.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-29.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/cssp2013-30.jpg>

By 7:00pm, the sky had completely cleared and a large group of public attendees for the park program began to walk around asking questions of the amateur astronomers about their equipment. Unfortunately, with sunset, the clouds began to return, forming right over our heads. Additionally heavy dew began to settle in, requiring the dew heaters to be fired up to high even before it was dark. After a quick mount power-up and starsync, I started chasing the rapidly closing suckers in an attempt to show the public some deep-sky objects with the video cameras. I managed to get a 60 second shot of the 'Whirlpool Galaxy' (M 51) with the SellaCam-3 and 6" RC right before the sky totally closed up and was able to freeze that image, along with a 8 second image made with the SC-II on the 50mm on both monitors. <http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m51-06082013.jpg> I kept these images up and running as a consolation prize for the disappointed public who stopped in on their way out of the park. Many of the observers on the field gave up on the sky and began packing up for the night.

But, shortly after midnight, the local conditions stabilized and the sky cleared off, revealing a beautiful glowing Milky Way! I stayed up till close to 4:00am, when the fog rolled in, showing however as about the show case seasonal objects: the Lagoon, Swan, Eagle, Ring, Dumbbell, M 22, M 51, M 81 & M 82, M 101,, etc. (captured using the 6" RC f5 & SellaCam-3 @ 60 seconds unguided)

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m8-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m16-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m17-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m22-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m27-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m57-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m81-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m82-06082013.jpg>  
<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m101-06082013.jpg>

I also was able to capture the jet in M 87:

<http://home.comcast.net/~lemastro/vidcap/images/m87-jet-06082013.jpg>

The C-Gem put each slew right on the chip! Love that new mount!!

So the final night of the 2013 Cherry Springs Star Party was saved.

### **Sunday 6/09/2013:**

I slept in as long as I could, but soon the noise of campers packing woke me up.

After a few hours of breaking down the telescope and campsite, I headed back to Pittsburgh.

Next trip when I head up to Potter County will be for the Black Forest Star Party in September!

Larry McHenry

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