



Our next member’s meeting will be held on Friday, November 16th at 7 p.m. For the member meeting, after discussing upcoming VBAS & Astronomy related activities of interest to our Members, VBAS member and UAH astronomy professor, Dr. Russel White, will be the speaker for the evening. His topic will be The Search for Young Planets. Just over one decade ago, the first extrasolar planet orbiting a Sun-like star was discovered. Now there are over 250 extrasolar planets known, many of which have properties very different from the planets within our own solar system. The peculiar properties of these planets forced sweeping changes in the standard scenario describing how planets form. These new theories, however, remain largely untested. Dr. White will summarize a novel on-going search for recently formed planets that potentially offers powerful observational constraints on when and how planets form. VBAS Member Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month at 7 p.m.; they're open to the public and are free.

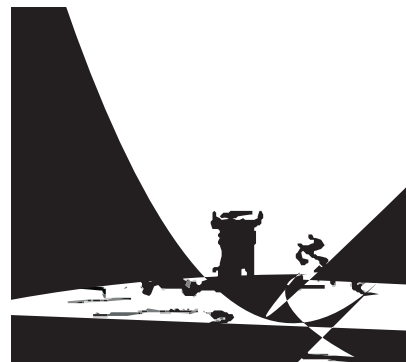
Regular planetarium programs start at 7:30 PM. We have several shows coming up in November and December. Bill Cooke will present “Collision Course” on November 17, and we will be presenting our ever-popular Christmas Star show on three Saturdays, December 1st, 8th, and 15th. Admission to planetarium shows is free for VBAS Members, \$3.00 for Adults, \$2.00 for Children 6-11, and free for children under 6. Observation of the night sky through various telescopes normally follows each planetarium program, weather permitting.

See pictures of our Astronomy Day event, starting on page 4.

Jeff Delmas, Walt Langley and Richard Norman took some very nice pictures of the comet, on page 6.

Page 7 features selected pictures from last month’s Volunteer State Star Party, hosted by Eric Johnson.

Steve Sloan
 Via Stellaris Editor
steve@sloan3d.com



In This Issue:

VBAS Highlights for November..... 1

Calendar of Events..... 2

The Night Sky for November..... 3

Astronomy Day Photos..... 4

Comet Holmes Photos.....6

VSSP 2007 Photos.....7

Friday, November 2, 2007, 6:30 PM

Inaugural meeting of the committee tasked with developing a series of programs to be presented at each of the Society's membership meetings. See page 5 for more details.

Saturday, November 3, 2007, 7:30 PM

Our Magnetic Earth

Presented by Cassie Lofts

Magnets are a part of our everyday lives. We even live on a gigantic magnet – our earth. Come explore the properties of magnets with hands-on activities. We will also discuss where the idea that earth is a magnet came from and how our understanding has changed throughout history, as well as look at the current research on this topic. We will also learn about the most beautiful magnetic phenomenon on earth – the aurora.

Saturday, November 10, 2007, 6:30 PM

Presented by John Young

We'll have a brief tour of the facilities and an intro to the night sky. We'll then get scopes set up and have some fun. With a new moon and colder and drier fall weather the sky is indeed the limit! Celestial treats like galaxies, nebulae, star clusters, and planets await! Members and public welcome to bring your own scopes.

Friday, November 16, 2007, 7:00 PM

After a short pizza social and marketplace swap meet we'll discuss pertinent society business. VBAS member and UAH astronomy professor, Dr. Russel White, will be the speaker for the evening. His topic for the evening will be – The Search for Young Planets. Just over one decade ago the first extrasolar planet orbiting a Sun-like star was discovered. Now there are over 250 extrasolar planets known, many of which have properties very different from the planets within

our own solar system. The peculiar properties of these planets forced sweeping changes in the standard scenario describing how planets form. These new theories, however, remain largely untested. Dr. White will summarize a novel on-going search for recently formed planets that potentially offers powerful observational constraints on when and how planets form. Visitors are welcome.

Saturday, November 17, 2007, 7:30 PM

Collision Course

Presented by Bill Cooke

Join NASA astronomer Bill Cooke as he describes how every year in mid-November, the Earth circling the sun at over sixty thousand miles an hour, passes through grains of rock, most no larger than a speck of sand, left behind by a comet as it travels through the solar system. So small are these granules, and so swift is their destruction, that when we see one of these flashes and exclaim to a friend "Look, a shooting star," and they ask "Where?" the answer always is "Too late." In that second it vaporized. Visitors are welcome.

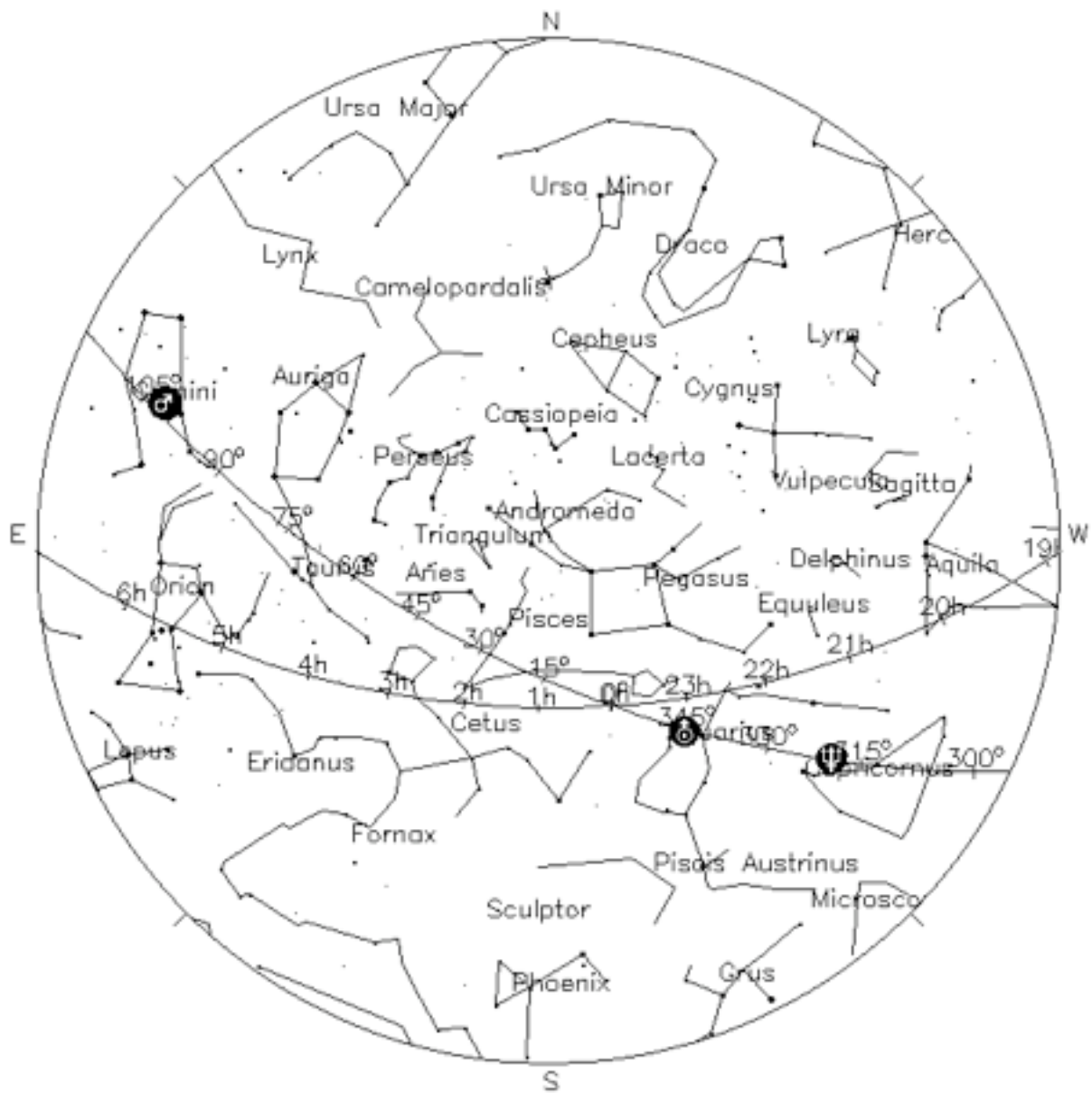
Saturday, December 1st, 8th, and 15th, 2007, 7:30 PM

What exactly was the object that the wise men saw? Was it a star that stood in the sky two-thousand years ago and marked a single location in Bethlehem? Each year at this special time, we turn back the hands of time to look into the sky of long ago and to search for this mysterious object. As we ponder the skies of Bethlehem, we'll explore several possibilities, including comets, meteors, novae and other phenomena.

...And as always, for the most up-to-date information about VBAS events, be sure to check the web site at vbas.org.

Here is the view at 9 PM in mid November, 2007, at 34° N Latitude, 86° W Longitude. Mars, the spear-and-shield symbol, is coming up in the east in Gemini.

Map courtesy of John Walker and YourSky (<http://www.fourmilab.to/yoursky/>).



Saturday, October 20th



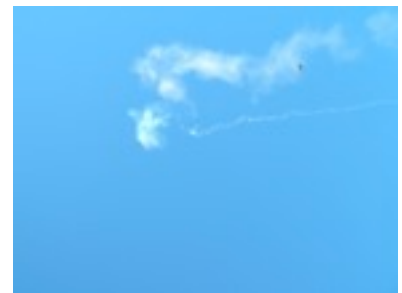
HAL5's National Space Society table.



The full spread of the Huntsville Area Rocketry Association table.



HARA shows off a Porta-Potty rocket to the kids.



Bill Cooke launches one of the many flying saucer rockets to fly that day.



Doug Horacek shows the sun through one of the VBAS Coronado Solar Telescopes.



Looking back at the dome and the many children's activity tables.



Lonnie Puterbaugh's "The Astronomy Channel" van.



The children's activities tent.



At the Space and Rocket Center table, ready to watch the next rocket launch.



Burning leaves in Wesley Swift's optics demonstration.



Walt Langley took this at 3:30 AM on October 27. He registered the image against the GSC catalog. The dot in the lower part of the halo is a star. The white dot near the center of the comet may be part of the nucleus.



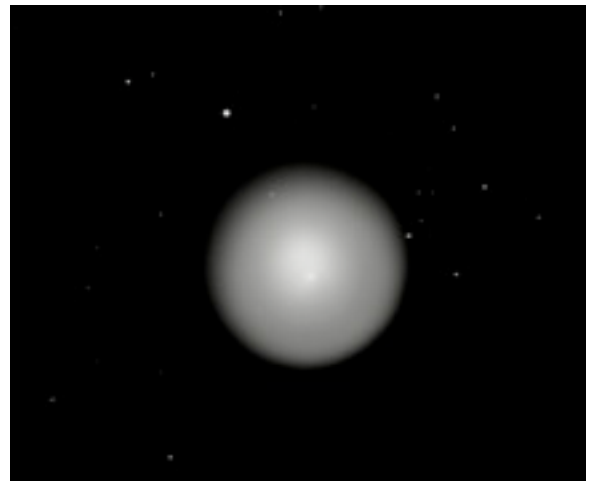
Jeff Delmas took this photo of comet Holmes on October 27, at 11:51 PM, using 2-second exposures.



Jeff's image from 10:45 PM, on October 28.



Richard Norman used the C16 and a Sigma SD10 digital SLR with Meade 3.3 focal reducer. 30 sec exposure at ISO 100. Single frame with no enhancements. In the 55 mm ep, he could see that the bright area was still oriented in the same general direction that Starry Night showed the tail should be pointing.



Walt Langley took this on October 29, using a Celestron 8 with focal reducer. The photo is in color, with no enhancements.

From <http://picasaweb.google.com/JeffDebDelmas/VSSP2007>



Saturday Morning Before Breakfast - Photo by Jared Cassidy



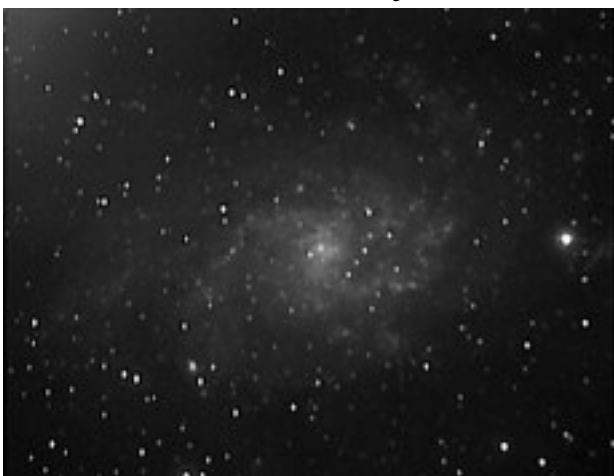
Saturday Breakfast Is Served - Photo by Jared Cassidy



John Viescas, Tom Burleson Sr., Lonnie Puterbaugh, and Tom Burleson Jr.



Host Eric Johnson Preparing Saturday's Feast.



M33: The Pinwheel Galaxy, Photo by John Miele



M42: The Orion Nebula, Photo by John Miele

Contributions to Via Stellaris

We welcome contributions to our newsletter that may be of interest to the astronomical community. Contributions are best sent by email to Steve Sloan at editor1@vbas.org. If you don't have access to email, you can send articles in either Word or ASCII format to Steve at 2110 Vilaret Dr, Huntsville, AL 35803.

Membership and Renewal

The VBAS currently has four categories of membership. All four include free admission to the planetarium shows; subscription to this newsletter; membership in the Astronomical League; and use of VBAS library and equipment. The four categories of membership, and the dues for each, are: REGULAR at \$24.00 per year, FAMILY at \$36.00 per year, STUDENT (must be full-time student) at \$12.00 per year, and LIFE at \$500.00. Newsletter Only is also available for \$12.00 per year. Membership renewal occurs for all members annually on March 1st.

All VBAS memberships have been renewed until March 2008. If you have questions regarding membership, please contact Jared Cassidy.

Please send your renewal to the Membership Secretary at VBAS, P.O. Box 1142, Huntsville, AL 35807. Make checks payable to the Von Braun Astronomical Society. If your mailing or email address changes, please report the new address promptly to the Membership Secretary, Jared Cassidy, at 539-4392, or jared@harc.net, to avoid missing issues of *Via Stellaris*.

Reprints

Permission is hereby granted to any non-profit astronomical association to reprint, in whole or in part, any article in this or past *Via Stellaris*. We ask that credit be given to the *Via Stellaris*, Von Braun Astronomical Society, date of issue, and author of article used.

VIA STELLARIS



A Publication of the
Von Braun Astronomical Society
A Member of the Astronomical League
P. O. Box 1142
Huntsville, AL 35807-1142

Address Service Requested

We are trying to limit the paper copies we generate, to save costs, clutter, and a lot of work for everyone. If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically, please send your email address to editor1@vbas.org, and let me know.

Steve Sloan, Via Stellaris editor