



A.S.E.M. Newsletter

December 2013



**PHOTO BY GREG RUPPEL
COMET C/2012 S1 ISON
PHOTO TAKEN 11-13-13**

DECEM

Roman: Decem, the tenth month (from and including March)

DECEMBER COMET UPDATES AND JANUARY PREVIEW!

Wow, a grand swarm of comets graced our morning skies in November. One member reporting sighting four one morning. As you read this, Comet ISON, the much predicted “Comet of the Century” is moving away from the Sun and may have shed most of its nucleus during its Hellfireish passage through our Sun’s upper atmosphere. If you subscribe to updates from spaceweather.com (I do) you would have received email alerts during the day on Thanksgiving and the day after. The early email alerts were writing the obituary for the comet followed by updates that apparently it did survive. Follow up observations with professional solar telescopes indicate we’ve seen the best of ISON before perihelion. If you haven’t seen the “movie” footage of the approach and flyby you’re missing a real treat. Spaceweather.com has at least two clips taken with a solar telescope equipped with an occultation disk showing the movement of the comet against a backdrop of stars. While the early updates indicated the comet had disintegrated the clips on the website Friday morning revealed a different story. The comet brightened, shed vast amounts of material in its final approach, disappeared behind the occultation disk and emerged a mere shadow of its former self.

Please see Jim Twellman’s write-up in this newsletter.

January Preview: In the evening of January 1, 2014 there will be an extremely young moon, I think around 14-16 hours old for our region. If the weather is fine this might be a night to get a lifetime young moon observation in.

DECEMBER CALENDARS

Social

December 5 - 7pm Beginner Meeting @ Weldon Springs Interpretive Center, 7295 HWY 94 South, St. Charles, MO 63304

December 14 – 6pm Monthly Pot Luck & 7pm General Meeting, at Weldon Springs.

December 17 – 7pm DigitalSIG. Astrophoto group meeting Weldon Spring, 7295 Highway 94 South, St. Charles, MO 63304.

December 25 - 7PM DIY-ATMSIG For the telescope maker to display his wares or those who wish to see what folks have been doing in their workshops. Weldon Spring, 7295 Highway 94 South, St. Charles, MO 63304 We’ll poll the usual attendees via our Yahoo group to see if we want to have one the following week, otherwise this will slide to January.

December 6, 13, 20 27 – 7 pm start times Broemmelsiek Park Public Viewing, weather permitting.

Astronomical

Jupiter – Rising shortly after sunset Jupiter is high and bright in the late evening eastern sky.

Venus is the bright beacon in the southwest evening sky. Gaining brightness to -4.9 magnitude is becomes a larger but more slender crescent. It will be plunging towards the sun by late December.

MISCELLANY BUT NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED

Carla Kamp reports that Liz Biddick will be providing ham as the main dish at the December ASEM meeting. *Carla also asks that we need volunteers for the main dish for all meetings in 2014.*

From Steve Boerner: In my "official" capacity as ASEM's web page administrator I get many requests. In fact, I got one today. Rudolph Cool from St. Charles sent me the message below and I offered to pass it on to the STL Astronomy group. I've never met Mr. Cool, but the offer sounds genuine and the price looks good. If anybody is interested in an Orion Skyview Pro 8" drop him a line.

I'm writing to find out if there's any avenue for advertising telescopes for sale to your organization? I have an Orion Skyview Pro 8" equatorial reflector scope that I bought several years ago, but due to various reasons I haven't been able to use it very much and am looking to part ways with it.

I'm offering it for \$350, which includes a color filter set, single-axis drive, and a couple of other accessories. It currently sells for \$699.99 without the accessories, so it might be a good deal for someone looking to upgrade.

Thank you!

COMET FEVER BY JIM TWELLMAN

The hype for comet c/2012 S1 (ISON) started about one year ago, after it was discovered to be a sungrazer. As it neared perihelion, it turned out that we had several comets that were very good targets for observing.

Comet ISON was short of expectations in the month prior to perihelion. Still, it was ultimately observable in binoculars by many in the 2 weeks prior to its' fateful rendezvous with the Sun. I, for one, had a lot of fun "observing" this comet via the LASCO C3 camera, from Nov 28 to Nov 30. Many astronomers had proclaimed it 'dead' on Nov 28, but it seemed to come back to life on Nov 29. Some then called it "the Zombie comet". On the next day, the comet seemed to completely turn to dust. So it goes.

Meanwhile, several other comets were also observable in the morning skies. These included 2P Encke and c/2013 R1 Lovejoy. The real winner has been comet Lovejoy. It has been easy to observe and in clear skies shows a nice tail in binoculars. It is currently both an evening and a morning comet. I encourage you to get out and observe it!

This has been a busy time for yours truly. I made a total of 11 observing sessions, with 12 drawings of two comets, and 14 observing records. All of this between Nov 7 and Nov 30. I hope to finish with a few more observations of comet Lovejoy in the next couple of weeks, then get ready for c/2012 K1 (PanSTARRS) next Spring!

Jim Twellman

**BEGINNER GROUP
SUBMITTED BY AMY WHITE**

The ASEM Beginners meeting will be held Thursday, December 5th at the Weldon Springs Site classroom, 7295 Highway 94 South, St. Charles, MO 63304. We will be continuing with November's topic of discussion, "So you want a telescope for the holidays?" The meeting starts at 7pm and runs until 9pm. Telescopes will be available for participants to look at and handle.

Just a preview: at the January ASEM Beginner meeting, on Thursday, January 2, 2014, the topic will be "Learning How to Use Your New Optics." Telescope and binocular owners are welcome to bring their instruments. This is always a fun evening.

The photo shows two small, relatively inexpensive telescopes set up in our driveway. These telescopes, and others will be on display at the December 5th Beginners meetings, as well as other small instruments.



Happy Holidays to all my astronomy friends!
Amy White

DIY-ATM GROUP

SUBMITTED BY CARL TUREK, GRANT MARTIN

Carl reports that the meeting on the eve of Thanksgiving wasn't well attended.

Our meeting was a victim of T-Day. It was just John Beury and I.

I've been making more add on's and mods to the C8:

Added a small spacer ring in between the secondary mirror backup plate and the post it sits on to allow more "tilt" of the secondary. (this issue on my C8 is a long story to tell).

Cleaned the primary mirror and corrector plate.

Flocked the interior of the OTA.

Added a 2" Crayford focuser and 2" diagonal.

Dismantled the base and replaced the 35 year old grease in the drive system. Adjusted the two synchronous motors to remove slack in the RA drive.

Revisions to my counterweight system to allow for the added weight of the new focuser and 2" diagonal and EP's.

I reinstalled the optical encoders and made a small articulating platform that holds the Sky Commander and SkyFi unit to the fork so you can see the SC display while pushing the scope to the target. This also keeps the cords short and eliminates tangle as everything now moves with the OTA. When not in use, the platform folds and locks into a guard to protect the Dec encoder during transport and storage.

Grant Martin, reporting in via email from somewhere in the American Southwest with action shots of his solar panels recharging his batteries:





NOVEMBER DIGITAL SIG MEETING NOTES SUBMITTED BY DAN CROWSON

The theme of November's Digital SIG meeting was using saving and displaying your images. See my notes on the following page. Eddie Agha demonstrated ControlMyNikon - <http://www.controlmynikon.com/>. This program could fill the gap for people who have Nikon's since there really isn't a really good program for astronomical work (until BackyardNIK comes out?). Eddie mentioned that the programmer was willing to make changes and updates to help out. We should re-visit this one soon.

With the holidays approaching, we've decided to cancel the December Digital SIG meeting. The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 21st, 2013 at 7 PM at the Weldon Spring Interpretive Center. The main topic is currently open. Please check out the ASEM Digital SIG Yahoo Group (link below) for updates.

Building on what we've learned over the last few months, December will give us another opportunity to put things into practice. The nights are getting longer (and colder). An imaging party will take place at the Danville Department of Conservation site on Friday, November 29th and/or Saturday, November 30th. I'll probably head up other days around the new moon if the skies are clear. This is a good time to see some dark skies, get help and spend time with others doing the same. We'd really like to see some new people come out. Visit the Yahoo Group for more up to date information including weather backup plans (link below).

ASEM Digital SIG – “Saving and Displaying Your Images”

November 19th, 2013

Dan Crowson – dcrowson at crowson dot com

1. Saving your data
 - Hard drives – they don't last forever
 - RAID

- USB external drives
 - Cloud Services
 - o Carbonite – <http://www.carbonite.com> - \$60 a year
 - o Mozy – <http://www.mozy.com> - \$6 and up a month
 - o Dropbox – <http://www.dropbox.com> - \$8.25 and up a month
 - o Google Drive / Microsoft SkyDrive
2. Displaying your images
- Picasa – <http://picasa.google.com>
 - Flickr – <http://www.flickr.com> – free terabyte of storage
 - AstroBin – <http://www.astrobin.com> – for astrophotographers
 - o Plans for storing RAW data start at \$3 a month for 5 GB

The latest news can always be found in the [ASEM Digital SIG Yahoo Group](#).

BROEMMELSIK VOLUNTEERS

BY JIM TWELLMAN

Our friends at the St Charles County Parks are asking us to voluntarily provide them a release form to run background checks for the safety of children utilizing the Parks. If you are a regular volunteer at our Friday Night Open House events, please fill out one of these forms and fax it to Nancy at SCCP if you have not done so already. A form can be obtained from either Jim Twellman or from anyone within the Broemmelsiek Observatory Yahoo! group. Thank you!

CLUB CONTACTS

Membership

Membership issues can be addressed through our executive director Stacey Thater (pronounced “totter”) at these addresses:

Email: stater@stchas.edu

Snail mail:

Alliance for Astronomy (ASEM)
PO Box 141
New Melle MO 63365

Committees

Comments, questions, suggestions and money (just kidding) may be sent to the following addresses:

program@asemonline.org

Use this address to communicate with the program committee. If you have something to present at a meeting or wish to contribute and let someone else perform, send it here. Questions and/or suggestions about programming etc. Remember, they are here to help you. This is a user friendly society and we like to see members get up and share.

equipment@asemonline.org

This address is used to find out about ASEM loaner equipment. If you find something amiss at BPark by all means report it here. If you are curious about borrowing an item, put in a request via this address.

hospitality@asemonline.org

Got a main dish you'd like to bring to the potluck? We sure could use it AND you will be reimbursed for your expenses.

newsletter@asemonline.org

Primary contact for the newsletter. Got an article or notice you'd like to see published? Send it here and be famous!

Outreach@asemonline.org

Special requests for groups at Broemmelsiek Park including:

- Notice of large party (more than groups of twenty)
- Request for specific requirements needed (school assignment, merit badge requirements, etc.)
- Requests for Star Party / Telescope event at another location

steve.boerner@asemonline.org

Web page and all other communications not covered above

ENTERTAINMENT

Late breaking news and member adventures (or shenanigans as the case may be) can usually be found at STLAstronomy in yahoo groups. If you aren't a member, you should join. Go to

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/STLAstronomy/>

and click "Join"

Think Clear, dark skies