



Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association

March, 2020

Website: www.midhudsonastro.org

President : Jack Chastain
Secretary: Jim Rockrohr
Newsletter Editor: Rick Versace
Publicity: Open
Speakers: ?

Directors: Joe Macagne, Steve Carey, Willie Yee, Karl Loatman

groups.io Group: mhaa.groups.io

Vice President: Tim Denman
Treasurer: Eric Myers
Membership Coordinator: Open
Webmaster: ?
Outreach: ?
College Liaison: Dr. Amy Forestell

The March meeting has been canceled

Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Mid Hudson Astronomical Association, February 18, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by President Jack Chastain in the Science Hall auditorium at SUNY, New Paltz, NY.

The minutes of the December and January meetings were approved as published in the newsletter.

Officer's Reports:

President: Nothing new.

Vice President: Tim Denman was present but no news.

Secretary: Jim Rockrohr was present. No news to report.

Treasurer: Eric Myers was present.

- See the newsletter for the latest information.
- He reports that he has renewed our liability insurance.
- T-shirts (\$15), sweatshirts (\$25) and pins (\$4) are available.
- Membership dues of \$25 per year can be paid by cash or check to Eric. Eric has PayPal set up which will cost \$1 more. You can also pay through MemberPlanet for a \$2 charge.

Publicity: Tim Denman was present. Press releases are going out to 10 newspapers and WAMC radio. Tim has also successfully put our meeting details on 6 newspaper event calendars.

Newsletter: Rick Versace was not present.

Webmaster: Paul Chauvet was not present. No issues known. MeetUp subscription has been renewed for 6 months and our DNS name for 2 years.

Outreach: Joe Macagne was present.

Upcoming programs: (need leader)

- See MeetUp page for the latest information.

Membership: (need leader)

- Currently 33 paid members and 12 lifetime members.

Solar System Ambassador: Willie Yee was present. He is giving several presentations in the area and in Maryland. He will have a table at NEAF.

Budget for 2020:

- As required by the Bylaws every February, Eric presented a budget for 2020 and a review of 2019 expenditures. (See published newsletter for details.)
- Budgeted expenses for 2020 total \$1,528.00.
- A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to accept this budget.

Old Business:

- The annual club dinner was held at the Lakeview House Restaurant in Orange Lake, NY, just outside of Newburgh, on Friday, January 31. There were 18 attendees and all enjoyed the evening.
- The last club Star Party had 4-5 hours of open sky. 4 people attended. Next club Star Party is this Friday.

New Business:

- MemberPlanet is now accepting membership payments.
- Paid membership entitles you access to all of the club telescopes and our video library.

- The Dutchess County Science Fair will be on March 28. The club sponsors astronomy related awards. We need a couple of volunteers. See Jack for details.

Upcoming Events

- **Next Club Star Party:** February 21, 7:00 PM. Be sure to RSVP with license plate number, make and model of your car by the Thursday evening before the star party, even if there is only a remote chance that you will attend on Friday evening or Saturday, if postponed due to weather. It's better to have too many people on the list rather than someone who isn't registered.

Observing Reports:

- Betelgeuse has been acting strangely.
- (No one observed the Moon occult Mars.)

Visitors/New Members:

There were about 25 people in attendance at the end of the business meeting.

The business meeting was adjourned at about 8:01 PM. **The next meeting is March 17th, 2020, in the Science Hall Auditorium, SH181, at SUNY, New Paltz.**

The presentations that followed were by various members relating to "Telescopes 101"; an introduction to telescopes. We also helped several people who brought in their 'scopes.

Submitted by James Rockrohr, March 12th, 2020.

Notes from the President

The March Indoor MHAA meeting is CANCELED. Precautions due to the prevalence of the CoVid-19 virus are making the cancellation of meetings a wise decision and MHAA will be following along. The April meeting will be considered as the date grows closer, but may need to meet College restrictions that presently end just before the meeting, but could be extended. We will cross that rift when we come to it.

Please do your part to assist in minimizing the spread of this virus, stay healthy and Reduce the Curve! Hopefully, we will see everyone next month.

The Star Party scheduled for March 27 at the time of this writing is scheduled to continue (Weather Permitting, of course) - but that could change if conditions warrant. Please keep an eye on the Meetup and/or Facebook pages for information as the date approaches. Any changes will be noted there, as well as notices sent out on the mailing list groups.

Anyone planning on attending the Dutchess County Science Fair should keep an eye on that as well. We are planning on judging and giving Astronomy-related awards again this year, but that event may also be postponed. If you are looking forward to attending that, you may need to check their information site, though we will also try to notify through the mailing lists if anything changes there.

NEAF has announced they will have a one-day Virtual on-line event on April 4 and will be rescheduling the actual in-person event for sometime in the future. Please see <https://www.neafexpo.com> for updates.

That's about it I think - sigh. Onward.



This article is distributed by NASA Night Sky Network

Dim Delights in Cancer

David Prosper

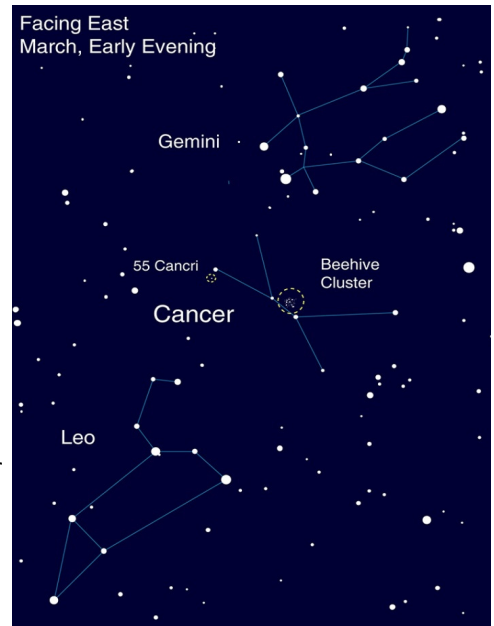
Cancer the Crab is a dim constellation, yet it contains one of the most beautiful and easy-to-spot star clusters in our sky: the **Beehive Cluster**. Cancer also possesses one of the most studied exoplanets: the superhot super-Earth, **55 Cancri e**.

Find **Cancer's** dim stars by looking in between the brighter neighboring constellations of Gemini and Leo. Don't get frustrated if you can't find it at first, since Cancer isn't easily visible from moderately light polluted areas. Once you find Cancer, look for its most famous deep-sky object: the **Beehive Cluster**! It's a large open cluster of young stars, three times larger than our Moon in the sky. The Beehive is visible to unaided eyes under good sky conditions as a faint cloudy patch, but is stunning when viewed through binoculars or a wide-field telescope. It was one of the earliest deep-sky objects noticed by ancient astronomers, and so the Beehive has many other names, including Praesepe, Nubilum, M44, the Ghost, and Jishi qi. Take a look at it on a clear night through binoculars. Do these stars look like a hive of buzzing bees? Or do you see something else? There's no wrong answer, since this large star cluster has intrigued imaginative observers for thousands of years.

55 Cancri is a nearby binary star system, about 41 light years from us and faintly visible under excellent dark sky conditions. The larger star is orbited by at least five planets including **55 Cancri e**, (a.k.a. Janssen, named after one of the first telescope makers). Janssen is a "super-earth," a large rocky world 8 times the mass of our Earth, and orbits its star every 18 hours, giving it one of the shortest years of all known planets! Janssen was the first exoplanet to have its atmosphere successfully analyzed. Both the Hubble and recently-retired Spitzer space telescopes confirmed that the hot world is enveloped by an atmosphere of helium and hydrogen with traces of hydrogen cyanide: not a likely place to find life, especially since the surface is probably scorching hot rock. The NASA Exoplanet Catalog has more details about this and many other exoplanets at bit.ly/nasa55cancrie.

How do astronomers find planets around other star systems? The Night Sky Network's "How We Find Planets" activity helps demonstrate both the transit and wobble methods of exoplanet detection: bit.ly/findplanets. Notably, 55 Cancri e was discovered via the wobble method in 2004, and then the transit method confirmed the planet's orbital period in 2011!

Want to learn more about exoplanets? Get the latest NASA news about worlds beyond our solar system at nasa.gov.



Look for Cancer in between the "Sickle" or "Question Mark" of Leo and the bright twin stars of Gemini. You can't see the planets around 55 Cancri, but if skies are dark enough you can see the star itself. Can you see the Beehive Cluster?

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## 2020 Star Party Schedule

|              |         |
|--------------|---------|
| January 24   | 5:00 PM |
| February 21  | 5:30 PM |
| March 27     | 7:00 PM |
| April 24     | 7:30 PM |
| May 22       | 8:00 PM |
| June 19      | 8:30 PM |
| July 20      | 8:30 PM |
| August 21    | 7:30 PM |
| September 18 | 7:00 PM |
| October 16   | 6:00 PM |
| November 13  | 4:30 PM |
| December 11  | 4:30 PM |
| <b>2021</b>  |         |
| January 15   | 4:30 PM |

### Directions To The Star Party Site

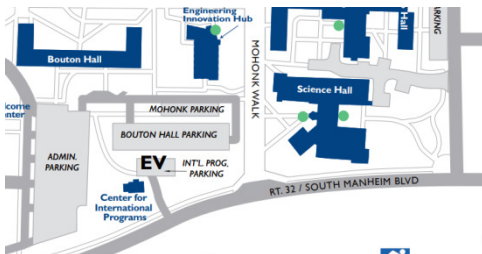
[Lake Taghkanic State Park](#) is in the town Ancram, NY. The park entrance is on the Taconic Parkway 10 minutes north of the exit used for Wilcox park.

Star Parties at Lake Taghkanic are held in the West Parking lot, next to the beach. The skies are darker than in Wilcox, with less stray light to deal with. The horizon is also much lower, especially to the south and east, making many more targets possible.

**IMPORTANT:** all events at Lake Taghkanic State Park require an **RSVP** which includes license plate number of the car you are bringing (please do so via [Meetup](#)). The park is patrolled by state police, and all non registered cars will be ticketed and risk our use of the park.

### General Information:

- ♦ For the foreseeable future, all indoor meetings will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month in the Science Hall Bldg., SUNY New Paltz (directions below) at 7:30 PM. All indoor events are FREE! All are welcome. The presentations are generally geared towards teenagers and up.
- ♦ Dates listed for star parties are the primary dates. The rain date is the following night unless otherwise noted. Only one session is held for a given weekend, usually on the primary date, Friday, unless postponed (usually due to inclement weather) to the backup date, Saturday. Exceptions to this are noted in the “Scheduled Events” section above.
- ♦ All outdoor events are FREE! All are welcome. If you bring small children, it is **your** responsibility to keep a close eye on them. Please do not bring white-light flashlights. Instead, bring a red astronomer’s flashlight or an ordinary flashlight covered with several layers of red cellophane. If in doubt about the weather, check the status of the event at [www.midhudsonastro.org](http://www.midhudsonastro.org).



The Meeting will be in the Science Hall, SH181 (The square at the South entrance area in the image). The building is at the corner of Rt 32 and Plattekill Ave. Parking is available on the road or possibly in the large Admin parking lot. The Bouton Hall and Mohonk parking are not necessarily recommended, particularly when college is in session. Parking is available on the street as well, and there are a couple spaces on the North West parking on the road - MAKE SURE they are unmarked places though!