



Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association

October, 2020

Website: www.midhudsonastro.org

groups.io Group: mhaa.groups.io

President : Jack Chastain

Secretary: Jim Rockrohr

Newsletter Editor: Rick Versace

Publicity: Tim Denman

Speakers: Alexandra Passas

Vice President: Tim Denman

Treasurer: Eric Myers

Membership Coordinator: Open

Webmaster: Steve Dittmar

Outreach: Joe Macagne

College Liaison: Dr. Amy Bartholomew

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

The next meeting is October 20th, 2020, on Zoom. Check MeetUp for details and link. Link will be sent to all those that RSVP.

Speaker for October

Martian Life Mission to be Described by NASA Representative

Mars holds a fascination for us. It is the most intensely studied planet after Earth. It has been the subject of science fiction writings, movies, and television shows.

On Tuesday October 20 NASA Solar System Ambassador John Fontana will be describing the latest mission to explore Mars for evidence of life. Launched in July, 2020, the Mars 2020 probe, officially named Perseverance, is on a journey there to investigate if life existed or could still exist.

A space enthusiast since the days of Gemini, John Fontana is now a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. He is a Human Resources professional and has been profiled in Who's Who in America.



Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Mid Hudson Astronomical Association, September 15, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by President Jack Chastain on the online application Zoom.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved unanimously as published in the newsletter.

Officer's Reports:

President: The meeting is being recorded on Zoom. We will be continuing on Zoom for the foreseeable future. No other news.

Vice President: Tim Denman was present. No news to report.

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

Treasurer: Eric Myers was present.

- See the newsletter for the latest information.
- We have \$3,196.64 in the bank and no debts except \$15 monthly fee for Zoom.
- 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. Middletown Record is giving us good coverage.

- Let Tim know if you see any of our publicity.
- Star parties are published only on MeetUp to restrict attendance.
- We need to set up future Star Parties on MeetUp so people can plan.

Newsletter: Rick Versace was present.

- If someone can supply it, Rick will include upcoming speaker information (bio, topic, etc.) in the Newsletter.

Webmaster: Steve Dittmar was present.

- Working on a proof-of-concept website
 - o Lots of features
- Steve has updated our YouTube account.

Outreach: Joe Macagne was not present.

Upcoming programs: Alexandra Passas was present.

- October: John Fontana, SSA, on "Journey to Mars"
- November: TBD
- December: Traditionally member presentations.
- She has several possibilities for 2021.
- See MeetUp page for the latest information.

Membership: (needs leader; Eric is handling it for now but needs help.)

- 1 new member today (9/15)
- Received a membership with no name.
 - How to become a member? Read about it under "MORE" on MeetUp.

Solar System Ambassador: Willie Yee was present.

- Giving Black hole presentation to Westchester Astronomy club in November

Old Business:

- (none)

New Business:

- Live star parties are restarting at Lake Taghkanic State Park.

- Experimenting with broadcasting images from ‘scopes to Zoom where each telescope is an “attendee” in the Zoom meeting and people can see them all and “pin” one to see it full screen.
- MHAA has received a Meade LX200 from Richard and Gill Watt. (See newsletter for more details.)
 - Finder ‘scope has been fixed.
- Next Friday (9/18) is International Observe the Moon night. If the weather is good SUNY may open the observatory.
- Club scopes and cameras are available to paid members.
- Indoor meetings are not likely for quite a while due to SUNY guidelines.

Upcoming Events

- **Next Club Star Party:** September 18 at Lake Taghkanic State park.
- **Saugerties Science Fair** sometime in October.

Observing Reports:

- None reported.

Visitors/New Members:

There were about 38 people in attendance on Zoom at the end of the business meeting.

The business meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

The next meeting is October 20th, 2020, on Zoom. Check MeetUp for details and link. Link will be sent to all those that RSVP.

The presentation that followed was by Dr. Bruce Elmegreen of IBM Research: “What is Gravity, Understanding General Relativity”

Submitted by James Rockrohr, October 16th, 2020.



MHAA Treasurer’s Report for October 2020

As of 17 October 2020 we have \$3,152.07 in our bank account and \$108.83 in our PayPal account, with the Treasurer holding \$15 in petty cash.

This month we received dues from two new members, both from New York City. We are expecting a donation of \$100 from the SUNY New Paltz Asian Studies program after we helped them with a virtual mid-autumn festival on October 1st. As usual, we paid \$14.99 this month for our Zoom Pro account.

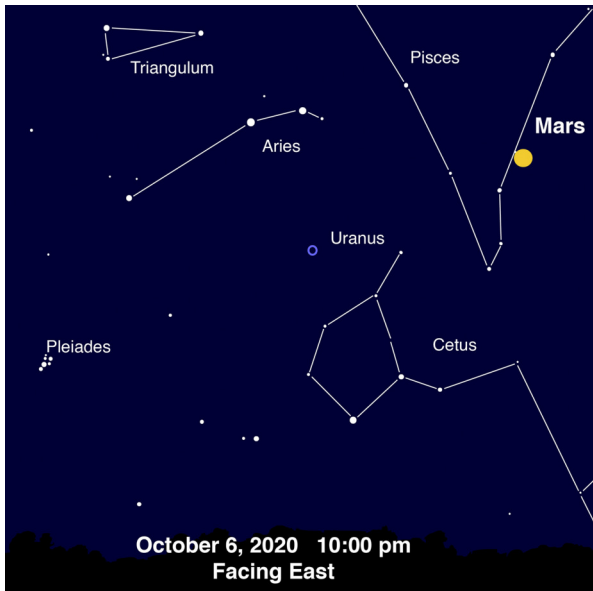
Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Myers

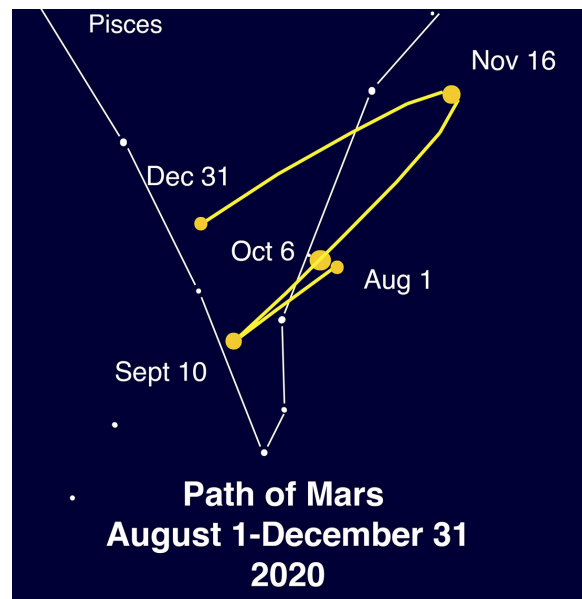
Treasurer



normal eastward movement. This change in the planet’s movement is called “apparent retrograde motion.” While all of the planets will appear to undergo retrograde motion when observed from Earth, Mars’s retrograde appearances may be most dramatic. Mars retrograde motion in 2020 begins on September 10, and ends on November 16. You can observe its motion with your eyes, and it makes for a fun observing project! You can sketch the background stars and plot Mars as you observe it night after night, or set up a photographic series to track this motion. Does the planet move at the same rate night after night, or is it variable? As you observe its motion, note how Mars’s brightness changes over time. When does Mars appear at its most brilliant?



If you are paying this much attention to Mars, you’re likely curious about the skies surrounding it! Find Mars in the constellation Pisces, with constellations Aries, Triangulum, and Cetus nearby. Aries may be the only one of these dimmer patterns readily visible from light-polluted areas. The Pleiades rises shortly after Mars. Dim Uranus is found close by, in Aries. If you are observing Mars up close, use the same eyepiece to check out Uranus’s tiny blue-green disc. If you are uncertain whether you spotted Uranus, you didn’t see it! Unlike stars, Uranus doesn’t resolve to a point at high magnifications.



The path of Mars during the last five months of 2020. Notice the retrograde motion from September 10 to November 16, with prime Mars observing time found in between. October 6 is the day of closest approach of Earth and Mars, “just” 38.6 million miles apart. Images created with help from Stellarium: stellarium.org

NASA has tons of great Mars-related resources! Want to know more about apparent retrograde motion? NASA has an explainer at: bit.ly/marsretromotion. Find great observing tips in JPI’s “What’s Up?” videos: bit.ly/jplwhatsup. Check out detailed views with NASA’s HiRISE satellite, returning stunning closeups of the Martian surface since 2006: hirise.lpl.arizona.edu. NASA’s Curiosity Rover will be joined in a few months by the Perseverance Rover, launched in late July to take advantage of the close approach of Mars and Earth, a launch window that opens two years: nasa.gov/perseverance. Calculate the ideal launch window yourself with this handy guide: bit.ly/marslaunchwindow. The Night Sky Network’s Exploring Our Solar System handout invites you to chart the positions of the planets in the Solar System, and NSN coordinator Jerelyn Ramirez recently contributed an update featuring Mars opposition! You can download both versions at bit.ly/exploresolarsystem. Young astronomers can find many Mars resources and activities on NASA’s Space Place: bit.ly/spaceplacemars. Here’s to clear skies and good seeing for Mars’s best appearance until 2033!

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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 17      | 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 |

## 2021

|            |         |
|------------|---------|
| January 15 | 4:30 PM |
|------------|---------|

## Directions To The Star Party Site

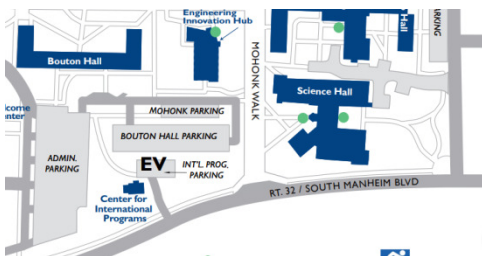
[Lake Taghkanic State Park](#) is in the town Ancram, NY. The park entrance is on the Taconic Parkway 10 minutes north of the exit used for Wilcox park.

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!