



**APRIL 2006 HAC EVENTS: Saturday, April 1: Public Star Party, Junk Bond Observatory
Friday, April 21: HAC Meeting at Cochise College; 7 pm; Also: Observing at Patterson Observatory at U. of A. South
Saturday, April 22: Earth Day, Sierra Vista; Solar Viewing from 10 am to 3 pm. Corner of Wilcox & Carmichael.
Saturday, April 22 (evening): Doug's Palominas Observatory— Greenway School Students for Public Outreach Viewing.
Saturday, April 29: HAC's Telescopes For Telethon, Veterans Memorial Park, S. V. ;5 pm—10 pm; PLEASE SIGN UP!**

Star Party Corner—Keith Mullen, Star Party Coordinator (520)366-0049; repogazer@wavmax.com

11 Go all the Way—Huachuca Astronomy Club 2006 Messier Marathon

What looked to be an oncoming disaster during the mid afternoon hours unfolded into the most exciting HAC event I've ever attended! The cloudy skies cleared just in time to allow the over 25 HAC members and guests to engage in this year's Messier Marathon held at Keith and Teresa Mullen's RepoGazer Observatory in Palominas. The evening started with a Pot-Luck Dinner that included everything from Hot Dogs to Cheese filled Pasta shells and a killer Carrot cake and other assorted deserts. Dinner alone was worth the trip out. Everyone settled in around 6:30 to setting up the scopes (we had a dozen on site) and praying for some clearing overhead; 7:15 and it was darkening but still overcast, 7:30 arrived and we saw the first real chance of clearing with Sirius breaking through, and within 10 minutes Rich Swanson had bagged M77 and it was on.

M74 looked like it was going to elude us until Bob Keppel caught it peeking out from behind some remaining haze over the Sierra Vista light dome, M's 33, 31, 32 and 110 all were fairly difficult as the skies were still less than stellar but clearing quickly, from there on it was only a matter of locating the objects as the Palominas Curse had been beaten.

While all the scopes had been set up on the north side of RGO, Gary Myers had agreed to docent in the Observatory for those who were unable to bring scopes or who weren't going to stay the entire evening. Gary, confined within the walls of RGO cranked up the 20" Obsession and began bagging M's as quickly as anyone outside, a memorable feat considering all the obstructions he had to contend with, as the evening progressed he seemed to be on an unstoppable mission. Aided by new member Judy Sukol (now considered "one of the guys") it was nothing less than Messier Madness, and the Observatory became the place to see all the favorite objects; Keith was in the corner trying to keep up on the 6" refractor but was outgunned by Gary and Judy working the 20" in tandem. As the evening progressed, Tim Doyle on the club 10" LX200 was running neck and neck with Glen and Bob with Darrell Gore keeping pace too. Now at Rich Swanson's 10" there was a team effort going on including Del Gordon and Denise McConnell with Bob Malone, Tony Selover and Jim McCaw all vying for equal eyepiece time under clearing skies.

An interesting story was developing on Keith's C-11 which had been abandoned for a spell while he was in the observatory trying to keep up with Gary on the 6" refractor, a family that had been invited to stop by for a quick first view through a scope was now behind the 11" knocking off M's like they were old timers. Now remember they had never had their hands on a scope before, they had simply watched Keith when he had made one of his stops by the scope to check out where it was aimed, this family (the Baird's, Josh, Kris and son Brion) are now HAC's newest members! All the while, our President Doug Snyder was running from scope to scope verifying captured Messier Objects, nothing gets past Doug, if it isn't centered in the eyepiece and focused he won't credit you with a bagged M, no such thing as "it was just outside the field", it had to be right there! John Cassella and Past President Frank Zizza hung close to Glen and Bob, knowing that they would see the most action over there, while Neal Galt found his calling behind Keith's new 6" refractor. Our Secretary, Jeanne Herbert with husband Steve and son Andrew were quietly catching every object on the list and threatening to take the lead on several occasions, and Ah Yes, Hans Clahsen, as usual, he was everywhere, and a surprise visit by Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society President Cary Chleboard added to the evenings excitement.

As the evening turned into early morning we all found ourselves staring out over the Naco Border lights, waiting for the last Messier object to be found, M30, there were 11 members all straining to see who would see it first, we still don't know it was as there were several false alarms, but in the end it had fallen to the HAC brigade. Now all that was left was to saunter back into the house to find Teresa and the recently returned Jeanne Herbert fixing a warm breakfast for the 11 survivors of the 2006 Huachuca Astronomy Club's Messier Marathon...

11 Certificates of Achievement and 14 Certificates of Merit were earned that night.

Huachuca Astronomy Club P.O. Box 922 Sierra Vista, AZ 85636 <http://c3po.cochise.edu/astro>; email hac@palominas.com
Yearly Membership: Individual: \$25; Family: \$35; Military: \$20; student:\$10 (with conditions)
President: Doug Snyder (520) 366-5788 (starhaven@palominas.com); Vice President: Wayne Johnson; Treasurer: Tim Doyle 378-5121;
Secretary: Jeanne Herbert; Star Party Coordinator: Keith Mullen 366-0049;
Public Events Coordinator: Jeanne Herbert(jeanne_hrbt@yahoo.com) 366-5690 (early evenings)

This issue of NightFall can also be found on-line at <http://c3po.cochise.edu/astro>. Click on the 'Newsletter' link. There is much more information about astronomy and our HAC activities on our club web site. *To join the HAC-LIST, send an email to haclist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com .