

Star parties serve up dark skies

by Mike Mills

Star parties are an important part of the amateur-astronomy scene. Offering dark skies and astronomical fellowship, these events often attract hundreds of enthusiasts. Here is a list of several star parties in and around the Mid-Atlantic area.

The 21st Annual NOVAC Star Gaze

September 20, 2003

www.novac.com/gaze

NOVAC invites you to the largest public star gaze in the Washington DC area. Learn about astronomy while enjoying the night sky with hundreds of telescopes, binoculars and homemade projects. Many experienced astronomers will be on hand to answer questions and share their knowledge. Easy access, lots of equipment and a dark sky make for a good night under the stars.

The Oil Region Astronomical

Society **ASTROBLAST**

September 23–28, 2003

www.oras.org

ASTROBLAST is an annual event, first held in June 1994, by the Oil Region Astronomical Society. Our organization is blessed with a remote "dark sky" site located far from the light pollution of large urban areas. The event is held in a large field surrounding our observatory in the Lockwood Campground at Venango County's Two Mile Run Park, near Franklin, Pennsylvania.

Big Meadows Star Gaze

September 26–27, 2003

www.racub.org/BMSG/2003/BMSG.html

The Rappahannock Astronomy Club is hosting the Second Annual Big Meadows Star Gaze on September 26–27, a two-night star party located at Big Meadows in Shenandoah National Park in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. The BMSG is an informal star party for amateur astronomers to enjoy great viewing and make new friends.

Blackwater Falls Astronomy

Weekend

October 24–26, 2003

www.kvas.org/astronomy_weekend_2003.htm

Held in West Virginia, KVAS co-sponsors the Blackwater Falls Astronomy Weekend with Blackwater Falls State Park each fall. A Friday night star party kicks off the weekend and is followed by classes and round table discussions on such topics as Astronomy Myths, Astrophotography, Radio Astronomy, and Telescope Basics. A Keynote Speaker kicks off the Saturday

night activities with drawings for door prizes to follow. A star party is always planned where, weather permitting, telescopes of all sizes and types, factory and home made, are set up for public viewing. A flea market for bartering astronomical paraphernalia is also held.

Stella Della XVI

October 24–26, 2003

bmaa.freeyellow.com/Sdv.htm

Stella Della Valley offers you a chance to gather with astronomers and families under some of the most pleasant dark skies in Eastern Pennsylvania, at Camp Onas in Ottsville, PA.

Upcoming NOVAC meeting programs

September 14, 2003

The sunny side of stargazing—understanding H- α solar filters • Greg Piepol

Hydrogen-alpha solar filters have exploded onto the amateur astronomy scene offering exciting views of the active and ever changing sun. Join NOVAC member Greg Piepol as he explains how to observe the solar chromosphere with these interesting filters. Topics include the operation, types, and costs of filters as well as the details you see with them. There will be two different types Hydrogen-alpha filters on hand.

NOVAC meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the second Sunday of each month in Room 80 of the Enterprise Hall at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. See www.novac.com/GMU.htm for a map and directions. **Please note:** The schedule of speakers is subject to change. Please check at www.novac.com/craig/speakers.htm for the latest info prior to the meeting.

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