



## VBAS Highlights for October

### Public Programs for October

Our member's meeting will be held on Friday, October 20th at 7:30 pm. Walt Langley will present a program on "Hallo Northern Sky", a free planetarium software package for Microsoft Windows capable of controlling "go-to" telescopes, and utilizing the SAO, PPM, and Tycho-2 Star databases. Walt will have his laptop setup along with his telescope to show us how easy it is to use, as well as showing off the sophisticated graphics and database algorithms. It comes with over 26000 deep sky objects and all stars to magnitude 12!

Remember to invite your friends and join us at VBAS for the 7:30 Members' Meeting followed by viewing of the night sky afterwards. VBAS Member Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m.; they're open to the public and are free.

Planetarium programs are back in full swing after our Astronomy Day Grand Reopening on September 30. Planetarium programs start at 7:30 PM. Admission to planetarium shows is free for VBAS Members, \$3.00 for Adults, \$2.00 for Children 6-11, and free for children under 6. Observation of the night sky through various telescopes normally follows each planetarium program, weather permitting.

### President's Message

On page 2, Jeff Delmas discusses Astronomy Day, an upcoming new planetarium projector, and First Light for the Swanson 21 inch telescope.

### C-16 Upgrade

VBAS member Walt Langley has donated a Sky Commander digital setting circle system for the C-16. See page 3 for details.

### Volunteer State Star Party

Eric Johnson's star party at his Tennessee dark sky site is coming up on the weekend of October 27-29. See the calendar on page 4 for more details.

### VBAS Member Meeting Minutes and Treasurer's Report

Page 6 has the draft minutes of last month's members meeting, the Treasurer's report, and a financial summary of Astronomy Day.

### Astronomy Day!

Astronomy Day was a great success. We had an estimated 200-300 visitors. We sold eighteen new memberships, including family memberships for Kerry and Donna Smith, Robert Lee, Stacy Rosenhoover, Jerry and Dawn Suiter, Lonnie and Karen Puterbaugh, Steve and Alison Brown, Jesse and Dianna Gambee, Jeff and Cindy Kennedy, Jim Callahan, and Shawn Wilson. Page 7 offers a small collection of pictures from Astronomy Day on September 30.

Steve Sloan  
Via Stellaris Editor  
[steve@sloan3d.com](mailto:steve@sloan3d.com)



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***Deadline for November 2006 Via Stellaris submissions is Friday, November 6.***



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What an exciting month it's been at VBAS! The September 30 Astronomy Day went off very smoothly, with hundreds of visitors enjoying all we had to offer. Read Melissa Snider's full report on page ?? . As part of Astronomy Day, we held a Grand Re-Opening ceremony for the Planetarium, which had been closed for the summer while improvements were made. The ceremony marked the completion of a major phase of the North Alabama Planetarium Initiative – a NASA grant benefiting



*Jeff Delmas and Otis Henderson Fit the 21" with a Newtonian Diagonal and Focuser Assembly...*



*...While Richard Sims Works on the Drive and Control Software for the 21".*

## VBAS Member to Upgrade the C16

VBAS member Walt Langley has kindly offered to donate a Sky Commander digital setting circle system for the C16. It will greatly improve the usability of the C16 by helping to quickly locate specific objects. His only stipulation – that we actually install and use the system! To meet that requirement, Walt is in progress with manufacturing fittings to attach the optical encoders for both the RA and Dec axes. More information about the Sky Commander system can be found at <http://skyeng.com/>.



*Walt Langley checks the fit of an adapter he manufactured for an optical encoder mount for the C16.*

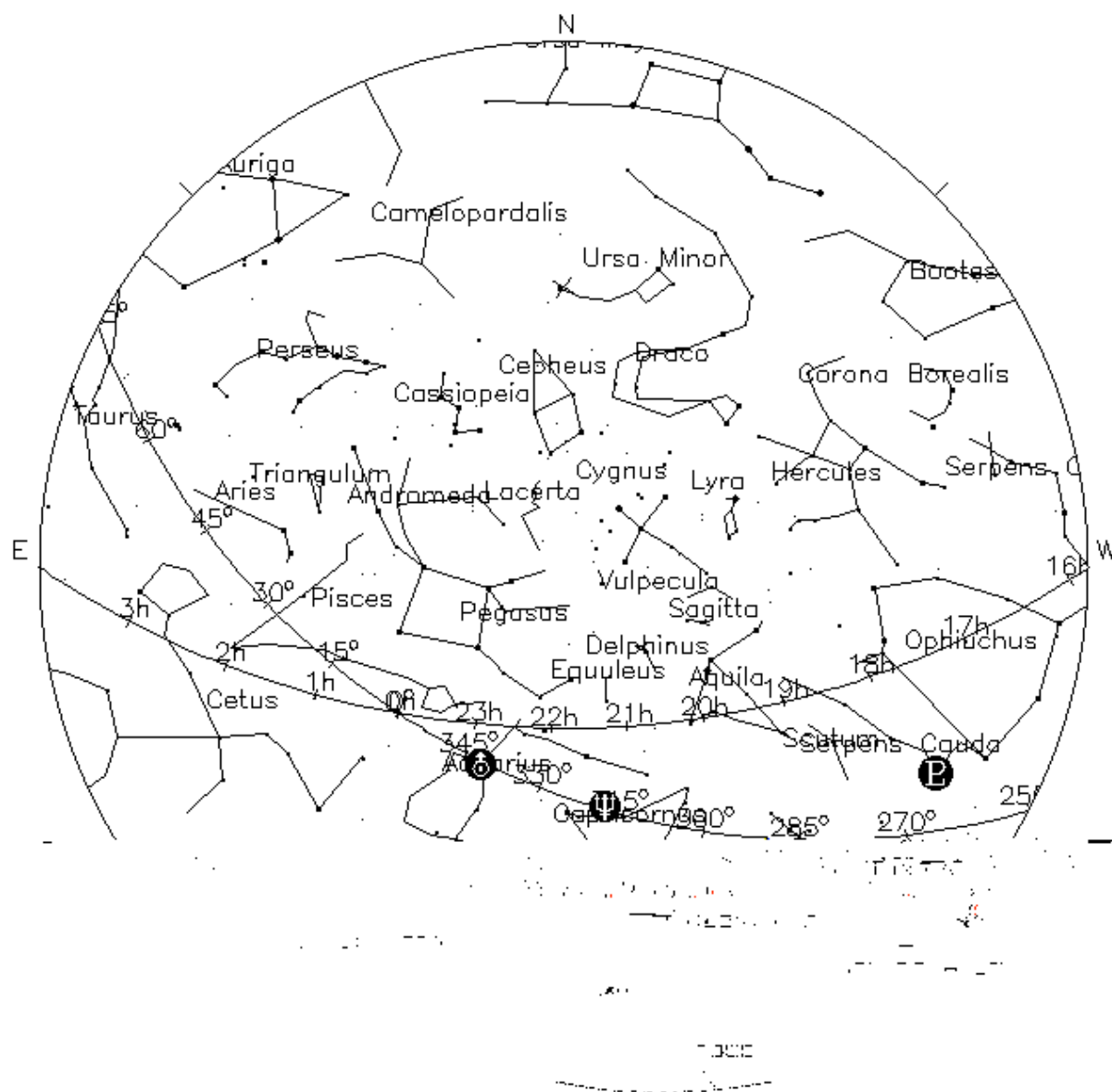
## The Night Sky for October, 2006

Here is the view at 9 PM in mid October, 2006, at 34° N Latitude, 86° W Longitude. Uranus, the circle-and-arrow symbol, will be near Aquarius. Neptune, the trident symbol, will be visible by telescope in Capricorn. Pluto will be between Sagittarius and Ophiuchus. Uranus and Neptune are easily visible by telescope, Pluto not so easily.

According to the International Meteor Organization's 2006 Meteor Shower Calendar, at <http://www.imo.net/calendar/2006>, there are three meteor showers coming up in the next few months. On Oct 21, the Orionids meteor shower will peak during a new moon, and the Zodiacal light will be visible in the East just before twilight. On Nov 19th, the Leonids will peak during a new moon. On Dec 14, the Geminids will peak during a waning crescent moon.

To catch the peak, watch during the early morning hours of the day of the peak. For example, watch the Orionids from midnight Oct 20 until 5 am on the 21st. This is when your location on Earth is facing the direction the Earth is moving around the Sun. There will also be increased meteor activity during the days just before and after the peak. More info can be found online at the IMO, and places like <http://skytour.homestead.com/met2006.html> by Wes Stone.

Map courtesy of John Walker and YourSky (<http://www.fourmilab.to/yoursky/>).



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## VBAS Calendar of Events, October through November

*Saturday, October 14, 2006, 10 AM*

### **Pre-Volunteer State Star Party Site Cleanup**

*Location: Meriwether Lewis Observatory Dark Sky Site, in Tennessee*

In preparation for the Volunteer State Star Party, please join us for a site clean-up day on Saturday, October 14th from 10 a.m. until the sun don't shine. We will be clearing brush, doing a little mowing, and some general facilities cleanup. Please contact **Eric Johnson** at 931-427-8048 (home) or 256-876-2291, option 3 (work) if you can make it. You can also email him at [ejohnso4@yahoo.com](mailto:ejohnso4@yahoo.com). Please go to the following link for more info and directions: <http://www.vbas.org/mlo.cfm>

*Saturday, October 14, 2006, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Sailing the Photon Sea***

Getting around in space is tough. Once in orbit it takes lots of fuel to send a space ship to other parts of the solar system. Imagine if you could travel without fuel just by using light. Join VBAS Planetarium Director **Roy Young** as we explore the many uses of solar sails, large, light weight sheets that reflect sunlight to provide propulsion.

*October 16-22, 2006*

### **PSSG '06 (13th Annual Peach State Star Gaze)**

*Location: Whitewater Express High Adventure Camp, Copperhill, TN near the Georgia State Line*

Dark skies and fall mountain views. Keynote speaker, Bob Berman of Astronomy and Discover mags. Vendors, workshops and door prizes. Jonn Serrie, back again for the second year, will entertain us Friday night with music from "Stargazer's Journey". Daytime adventures can be booked through the Whitewater Express offices. Plenty of other daytime excursions available in the surrounding mountain communities. Check our website for more information. Sponsored by the Atlanta Astronomy Club.

Website: <http://www.atlantaastronomy.org/PSSG/>

Email: [PSSG@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:PSSG@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

*Friday, October 20, 2006, 7:30 PM*

### **Regular Monthly Meeting and "Hallo Northern Sky" Presentation**

**Walt Langley** will present a program on "Hallo Northern Sky", a free planetarium software package for Microsoft Windows, capable of controlling "go-to" telescopes, and utilizing the SAO, PPM, and Tycho-2 Star databases.

*Saturday, October 21, 2006, 10 AM to 3 PM*

### **Facilities Committee Meeting and Working Party**

Work parties will be scheduled on the first and third Saturdays of every month, from 10 AM to 3 PM. This will also be the first official meeting of the Facilities Committee. Please contact **John Young** at 464-7998 or email [jgy71@bellsouth.net](mailto:jgy71@bellsouth.net) if you can make it.

*Saturday, October 21, 2006, 2:30 PM to 5 PM*

### **Planetarium Training Session I**

This training is designed primarily for people interested in helping with our school field trip programs. However, everyone who is interested in helping with any of our public shows is welcome to attend. Training session I includes Kinesthetic Astronomy (Seasons Demonstration), training for use of slide projectors and computer projector, and training on the Ernst Stuhlinger Solar Telescope. Sessions II and III are on November 4 and 18.

*Saturday, October 21, 2006, 7:30 PM*

### **Children's Show: *Are There Other Worlds Out There?***

*Presented by Gena Crook & Sara Neale*

*Friday October 27 - Saturday October 28, 2006*

### **Third Annual Volunteer State Star Party**

*Location: Meriwether Lewis Observatory Dark Sky Site, in Tennessee, Presented by Eric Johnson.*

"The Volunteer State Star Party hosted by long-time VBAS member Eric Johnson is quickly approaching (Oct 27-29th). As you may know, this gathering draws visitors from the tri-state area, including VBAS, Cumberland A.S., and BSAS members, and I'm told Eric's hospitality is as much of a draw as the dark, dark skies west of Summertown, TN. Please go to the following link for more info and directions: <http://www.vbas.org/mlo.cfm>"

*Saturday, October 28, 2006, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Quasars and Black Holes and Comets, Oh, My!***

It's fun to be scared by pretend things at this time of year. Come to the Planetarium and learn about REAL things to be scared of! Join professional educator **Beth Bero** as we discover a universe of scary and impressively dangerous objects.

*Saturday, November 11, 2006, 7:30 PM*

### **Planetarium Show: *Severe Weather***

WHNT Chief Meteorologist **Dan Satterfield** discusses the various types of severe weather that occur in North Alabama while explaining how storms are affected by the Sun and the seasonal changes. Learn how to protect yourself from dangerous weather and how meteorologists track weather systems from the Earth and space.

...And as always, for the most up-to-date information about VBAS events, be sure to check the web site at <http://vbas.org/events.cfm>.

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## VBAS Draft Member Meeting Minutes

*VBAS Planetarium, 7:30 PM on Friday September 15, 2006*  
by Steve Sloan

President Jeff Delmas introduced the meeting. There were no guests or new members to introduce this month. Linda announced that our newest members are Jim Callahan, David Tandy, Orea Norton, James Brelsford, James and Mary Francis Hales, and Shawn Wilson and family.

Treasurer Gena Crook gave a brief Treasurer's Report [See below]. The month of August saw some monthly stuff and a new secondary mirror, and the new carpet was paid off. The Society's bank balance is currently \$61,705.36.

Jeff Delmas discussed the reallocation of the NASA grant. We have renewed the school programs. There is money left for sidewalk astronomy, and some money left for the planetarium.

### Committee Reports:

There is a work party planned for Saturday, September 23. The gutters around the vestibule must be dealt with, and the planetarium doors should be repainted or replaced.

Eric Johnson's Volunteer State Star Party is coming up. It will be held near Lewisburg, TN, about an hour and twenty minutes from Huntsville. There is a lovely southern view. The event will be free of charge, but it would be nice to bring additional food. There will be a work party on the weekend of October 14 to October 15.

There has been pro-

gress converting the 21 inch telescope to a Newtonian, because it is currently difficult to use for viewing. Wesley Swift is coordinating with NASA for the new primary and secondary mirrors. The control system is working, but it hasn't been fine-tuned. The focuser has been mounted. Mike Maples is working on a retaining ring for the mirror and mount. The telescope should be ready to use by Astronomy Day.

Melissa Snider discussed the current status of Astronomy Day. There is a longer 4-page version, and a

3:43 PM  
10/08/06  
Accrual Basis

### Von Braun Astronomical Society, Inc. Profit & Loss September 2006

	TOTAL
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
donation	! "##%
donation /aquarium	!&\$ ' '
Food sales	# ( )\$# ' '
Gift Shop Sales	& "%\$ ' '
Magazine Income	!&\$ ( +
Membership Dues	! " +\$ ' '
Program Fees	# + '\$ ' '
Total Income	#, ) )&\$%*
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Expense	
Astro League Dues	% + '\$ ' '
Bank Service Charges	& '\$ ' '
Buildings Maintenance	!& (\$) ' '
Food expense	&# +-\$#*
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GRANT expenditure	& ! +\$& --- . / 0!234!052-6. 7!59
Magazine Expense	!&\$ ( +
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Supplies	& "%\$ ' '
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*Treasurer's Report by Gena Crook*

shorter 1-page version, of her A-Day summary available.

Please sign up to help!

Jeff reported that the day before, Mayor Loretta Spencer confirmed that she will be at Astronomy Day. Jeff had not heard back from Congressman Bud Cramer. We have giant scissors! There are two A-Day speakers planned, including Dr. Phil Stahl.

How many people are likely to attend Astronomy Day? The next-to-last A-Day was attended by about 300 people, and the last one in May had about 100 people.

Melissa has prepared a press release for comments.

Meeting Adjourned

*James Webb Space Telescope (JWST): The First Light Machine*

Item	Cost	Revenue	Profit
Expenses			
printing	\$57.13		
publicity	\$70.79		
supplies	\$27.00		
Food	\$191.16	\$170.10	(\$21.06)
pizza	\$106.37		
chips & drinks	\$84.79		
Memberships		\$273.00	\$273.00
Individual	1		
Family	7		
Gift Shop Sales		\$192.00	\$192.00
Raffle		\$175.00	\$175.00
Pluto Votes			
Planet		\$27.27	\$27.27
Dwarf		\$5.99	\$5.99
Donations		\$123.45	\$123.45
Total	\$537.24	\$966.81	\$429.57

*September 2006 Astronomy Day Treasurer's Report  
by Gena Crook*



**Astronomy Day Moments**

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### Contributions to Via Stellaris

We welcome contributions to our newsletter that may be of interest to the astronomical community. Contributions are best sent by email to Steve Sloan at [editor1@vbas.org](mailto:editor1@vbas.org). If you don't have access to email, you can send articles in either Word or ASCII format to Steve at 2110 Villaret Dr, Huntsville, AL 35803.

### Check Your Label

Look at the address label on the outside of your *Via Stellaris*. The first line contains the expiration date on the right-hand side. Please send your renewal to the Membership Secretary at VBAS, P.O. Box 1142, Huntsville, AL 35807. Make checks payable to the Von Braun Astronomical Society. If your mailing address changes, please report the new address promptly to the Membership Secretary, Linda Farnell, at 534-5060, to avoid missing issues of *Via Stellaris*.

### Membership Dues Reminder

The VBAS currently has four categories of membership. All four include free admission to the planetarium shows; subscription to this newsletter; membership in the Astronomical League; and use of VBAS library and equipment. The four categories of membership and the dues for each are: REGULAR at \$24.00 per year, FAMILY at \$36.00 per year, STUDENT (must be full-time student) at \$12.00 per year, and LIFE at \$500.00. Newsletter Only is also available for \$12.00 per year.

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