

TAURANGA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 5 – Oct/Nov/Dec 2004

Edited by Ursula Macfarlane email ursa.minor@clear.net.nz

Frank Bateson speaks.....

Dr. Frank Bateson, the Society's patron, was the speaker at the October public meeting. A crowd of around 35 people were present, and we were treated to tales of travel, observing, and derring-do, some of which were taken from his book "Paradise Beckons".



We heard how Frank was involved in national expeditions to Japan, Russia and other countries for solar eclipse viewing, and how he was elected to subside over the Royal Astronomical Union in 1964/65, as he was the most knowledgeable person available at the time.

We were also regaled with travel tales including how to get the best table in a Hamburg restaurant, and how the Budapest underground train system preceded that in London.

Frank's observing skills are legendary, and he told us about scanning the night sky for red dwarf variables whereby he would check out the objects at 30 second intervals for 4 hours at a time.

Frank now enjoys listening to talking book stories, and has recently discovered genealogy, during which he learned that the name Bateson comes from the old English sport of 'bear-baiting'.

Thank you Frank, and we hope you find plenty more interests to keep you going after your retirement from astronomy.

COMET COMMENTARY.....continued



Comet 2004 Q2 (Machholz) 5th November.

10th comet discovery for Don Machholz. It's about 25 degrees west of Sirius at the moment.

During October and November, the comet will perform a small loop taking it into the constellations Lepus, Columba and Caelum when its apparent motion will be quite slow.

At the beginning of December it will return to Eridanus which it will cross during the month.

At the end of December comet C/2004 (Machholz) will move north of the Celestial equator and cross into Taurus. By then it may be a naked eye object.

This image was taken by John Drummond of Gisborne.

Date	Hr	RA	dec	r	delta	mag	Elong	
21 Nov	2004	11 05	05.2	S29 28	1.556	0.746	6.8	127.2 Columba
26 Nov	2004	11 05	00.2	S28 24	1.511	0.680	6.5	129.1 Caelum
1 Dec	2004	11 04	53.9	S26 44	1.467	0.617	6.1	131.1 Eridanus
6 Dec	2004	11 04	46.2	S24 16	1.426	0.558	5.8	133.2 Eridanus
11 Dec	2004	11 04	37.3	S20 46	1.387	0.503	5.4	135.2 Eridanus
16 Dec	2004	11 04	27.3	S16 00	1.351	0.453	5.1	137.1 Eridanus
21 Dec	2004	11 04	16.3	S09 43	1.319	0.410	4.8	138.4 Eridanus
26 Dec	2004	11 04	04.8	S01 46	1.289	0.377	4.5	138.3 Eridanus
31 Dec	2004	11 03	53.0	N07 42	1.264	0.355	4.3	136.3 Taurus

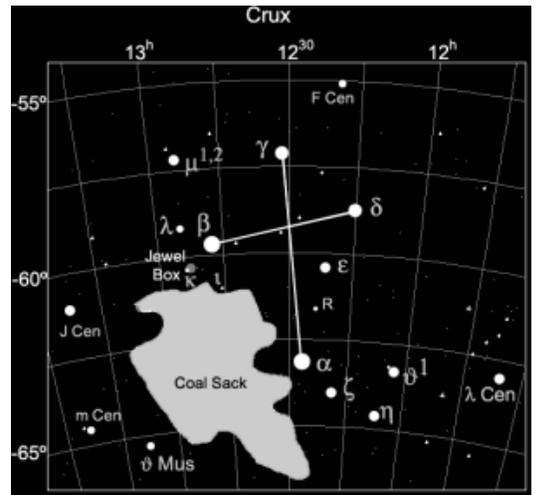
If anyone wants a chart of this comet get in touch with Graeme Mills or Ursula Macfarlane.

In spring the constellation of Crux (the Southern Cross) is at it's lowest in the evening sky.

The nearby Coal Sack, a dark nebula at about 550 light years and the Jewel Box, a brilliant and beautiful cluster of over 100 stars of various colours 'like a superb piece

of jewellery" are also shown.

(Carter Observatory newsletter)



School Star Party

Mt. Maunganui Primary School had a turn with the Society telescopes Friday 22nd October.

There was a good turnout of around 60-100 people, children and parents alike, all keen to get a glimpse of the heavens.

The aim of these Star Parties is to get children interested in what's out there in space, and the actual 'hands-on' experience of looking through a real telescope is an exciting prospect for a lot of them.

The moon is the best object to look at because it's big and obvious, and the features of the moon are brought into focus in a big way! Getting through numbers is also a priority – everyone has to have a turn and the moon is the easiest for children to see and identify with.



Jim, Les and Ursula took out an 8" cassegrain, and a 6" dobsonian to the school, and a couple of children were inspired to have a go at making their own telescopes, much to the amusement of parents – but we were all for it!

The senior science teacher David Nesham was very welcoming, and we'd like to thank him for the opportunity to come to the school and also for the gifts which were a lovely surprise.

If you think your local school would like us to do a star party, then get in touch!

Websites

Recent aurora images.....

<http://homepage.mac.com/stevoss/Aurora/PhotoAlbum48.html>

Backyard amateur astronomy.....

<http://www.backyard-astro.com>

Deep sky objects catalogue project.....

<http://www.ngcic.org/default.htm>

Comets.....

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CometObs/>

David Moorhouse's "Retina Wrecker"

<http://www.binoscope.co.nz/>

Further Society Information

Upcoming Public Meetings of Tauranga Astronomical Society.....

24th November *****Bring a Plate *****

No December meeting

Committee meetings;

1st December 2004

TROG.....Tauranga Roaming Observers Group

This is a phone/email list which you can put your name down for if you are interested in 'spur of the moment' observing. This has normally been down at Fergusson Park in Matua, Tauranga, but other sites are being checked out constantly. Contact Ursula or Jim if you are interested in joining the observing group.

Library Display

We will be having a display in the Tauranga Library in February, to promote the society. Anyone willing to help here please contact Ursula.

2005 Yearbook and Almanac

These will be available from Gunther – speak to him at the next public meeting. The almanac is an extremely professional and beautiful publication and is produced to promote New Zealand astrophotography. It includes contributors from Invercargill to Gisborne and many points in between.

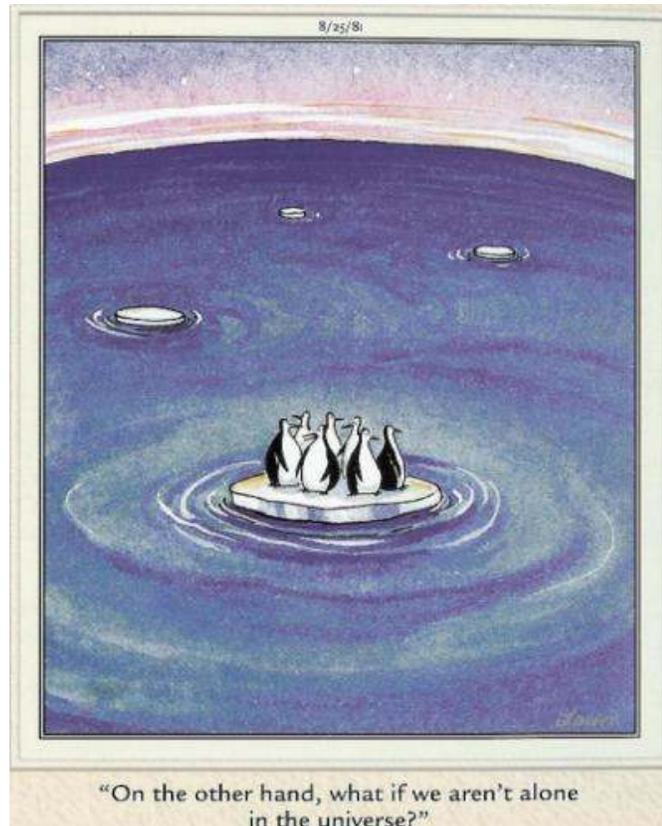
The Yearbook is full of useful astronomical information and will be a good read over the Christmas holidays.

Committee news ;

- the elected President, Bill Simms has resigned from his position. Thanks to Bill for his enthusiasm and motivation with the running of the Society. He is now on his way south to Cromwell to live, where he will no doubt make his mark.
- Also welcome to Les Smith as our newest committee member. He hails from the Shetlands, and produces pretty mean video films!
- Ursula Macfarlane was asked to take up the position of Vice-President in the October committee meeting, which she accepted.
- Jim Barrowclough has completed the strengthening of the tripod structure for the 8" cassegrain 'scope. We now have a few problems to iron out with the 10" dobsonian. Anyone a whiz at electronics could be handy, so please get in touch with Jim!

NOTE: Public Meeting Visitors;

Casual visitors to public meeting nights will be able to come along free of charge for two public meetings or viewing nights, thereafter a charge of \$5 per meeting or viewing night if the person does not pay the annual subscription.



Contributions to the newsletter most welcome !

email Ursula on ursa.minor@clear.net.nz