

DIRECTIONS TO THE TWO NEW OBSERVING SITES

To get to the Fauquier observing site:

Take I66 West to Route 28 (Centerville),
Turn right onto Route 28 South,
Continue through Manassas and go entirely across Prince William County.
When you cross the Prince William County and Fauquier County line,
go about 6 more miles until you get to Route 643,
The first 643 you come to will only turn left,
Go another 1/2 mile and you will see another route 643 that turns right.
This is located just before a little country store.
Turn right onto 643,
Go about 1 mile and make a left turn onto the first real road you come to.
Just prior to this road you will see a sign announcing the turn for
C.M. Crockett Park.
Shortly you will see a sign that says ROAD ENDS 1/2 MILE.
Continue to the end of the road and you will come to the booth at the park
entrance.
A combination lock will be placed on the gate. Its combination is 1961.
Open and go through then relock the gate behind you.

The park manager's name is Roger Pence (703-788-4867).

To get to the Greenville site:

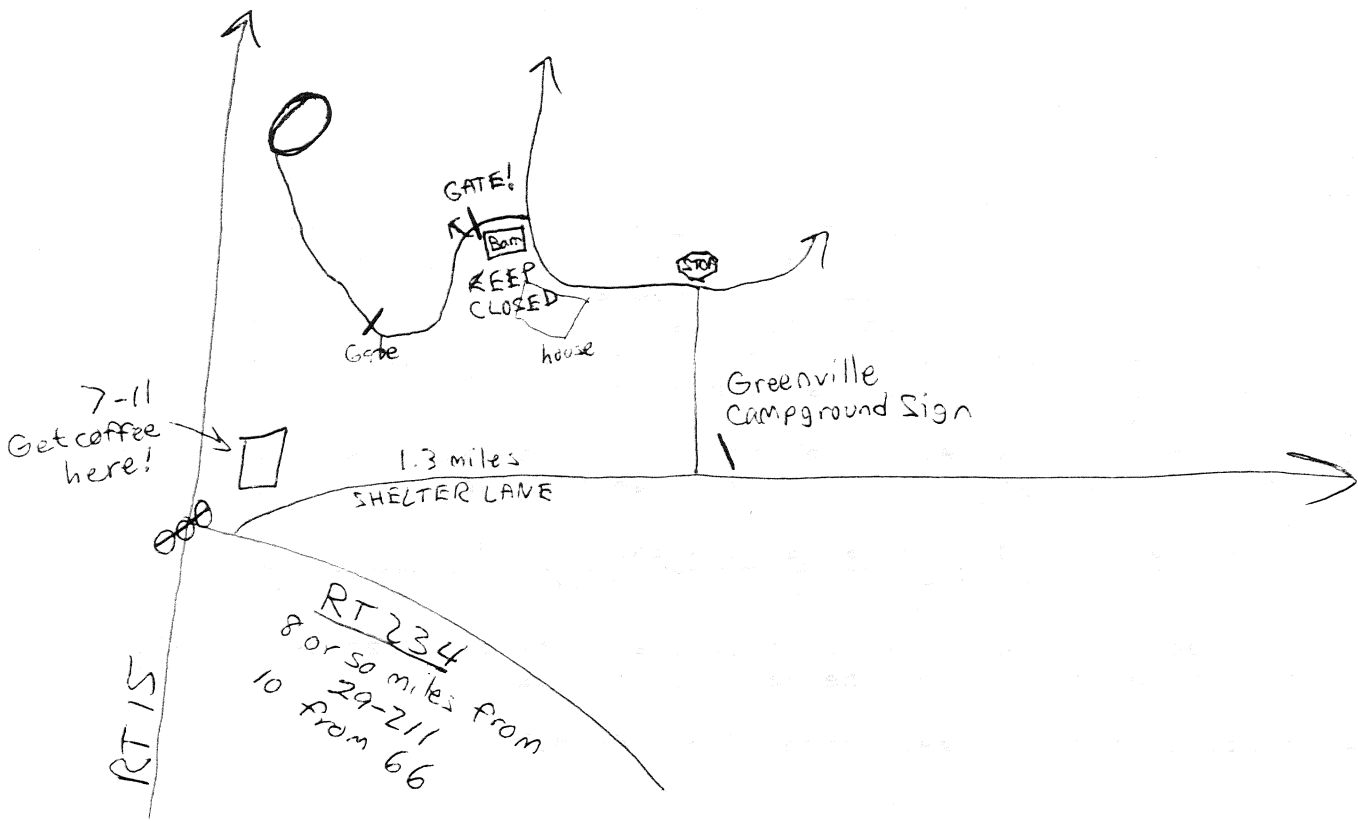
Take I66 West to the Manassas exit, Route 234 North.
Continue on Route 234 until you get to Route 15 (about 10 miles).
100 yards before Route 15, make a sharp right turn onto Shelter Lane.
Go about 1.3 miles and you will see a sign on the left announcing the
Greenville Farm Family Campground.
Turn left.
Continue until you come to a stop sign, then veer left.
You will go by a big house and an old wooden barn on the left.
Just past the barn turn left.
You will see a wooden gate. Open it, drive through, then close it behind
you.
Follow the tire tracks down the hill to the left.
Continue into the field across a small easily traversable stream.
Following the tire tracks in the grass, you will come to a couple of gates.
These are usually left open, however, go through the right most gate and
close
it if it was closed when you got there.
We set up approximately 100 yards from the far tree line over several small
hills on a flat area. Look for the cars.

The land owner's name is Mr. Latham. Let either Mr. or Mrs. Latham
know you are coming out to observe. Their numbers are:

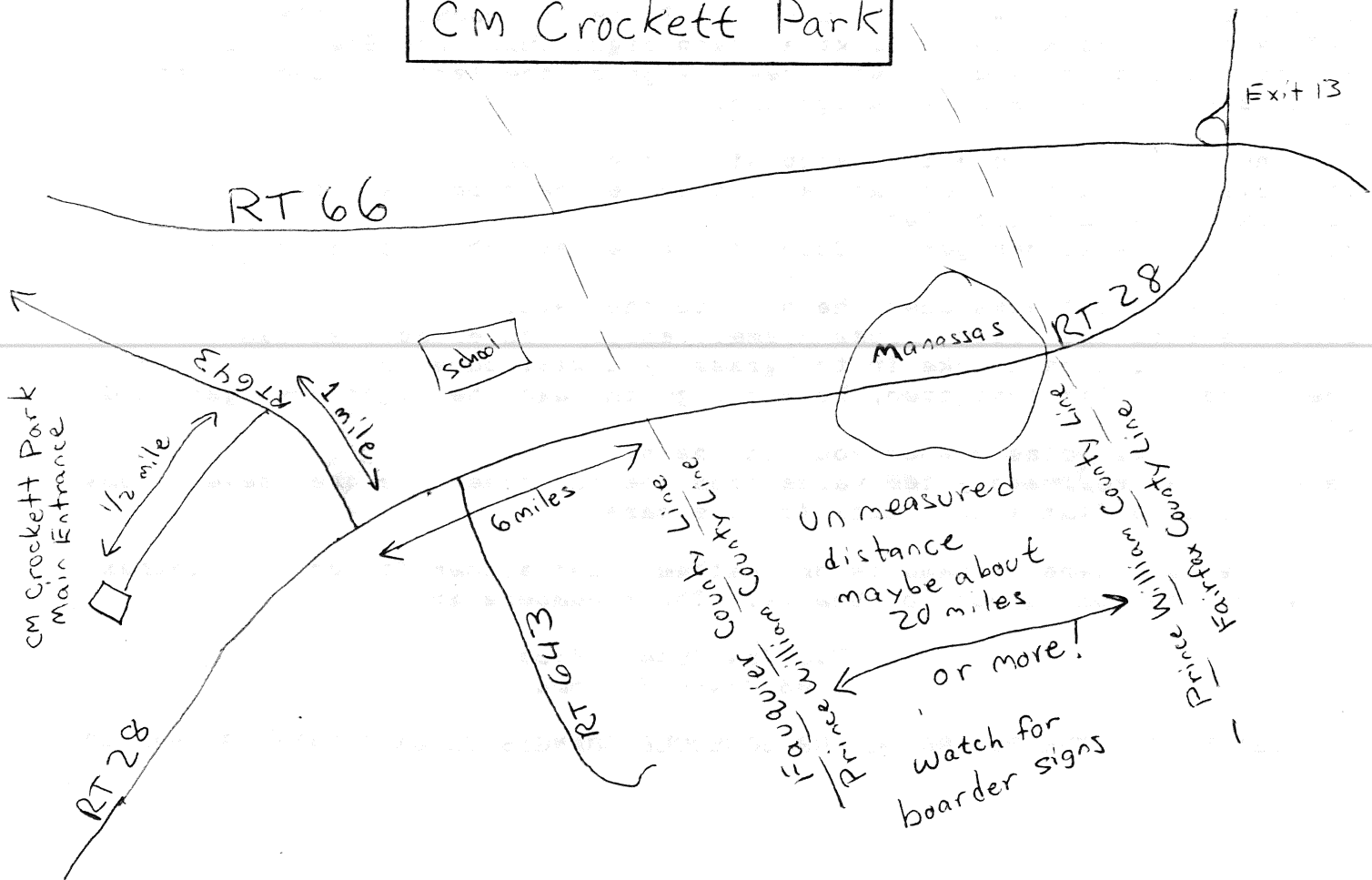
703-754-7944 office
703-754-8877 home

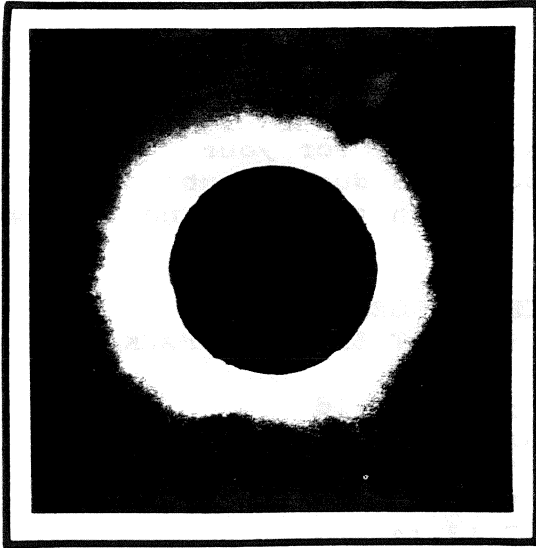
PLEASE CALL THE RECORDING FOR SCHEDULE CHANGES OR CANCELATIONS; 644-4331

Greenville Farms Family Campground



CM Crockett Park





THE NOVAC CORONA

to observe and to
help others observe

NEW 1988 OBSERVING SCHEDULE
CHRISTMAS PLANETARIUM PROGRAM
CLARIFIED DIRECTIONS TO NEW SITES

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

Issue No. 16

Volume 7

November 1987

President, Blaine Korcel 703-256-4430

Secretary/Treasurer, John Huggins 703-644-4331/703-569-4990

NOVAC Computer Bulletin Board: 703-256-4777 - NOVAC BBS

CALENDAR

For more information about activities call 703-644-4331

December 11	- Sunset.....	Observation at Greenville
December 12	- Sunset.....	Observation at Fauquier
December 18	- Sunset.....	Observation at Fauquier
December 19	- Sunset.....	Observation at Greenville
January 8	- Sunset.....	Greenville
January 9	- Sunset.....	Fauquier
January 15	- Sunset.....	Greenville
January 16	- Sunset.....	Fauquier

For the entire 1988 schedule, see page 2.

1988 CALENDAR YEAR OBSERVING SCHEDULE

These dates are merely tentative, scheduled for your convenience. Changes in the observing schedule due to public programs and BLTM will be made as we go through the year and will be posted in upcoming newsletters.

NOTE: ALL FRIDAY OBSERVATIONS WILL BE HELD AT GREENVILLE
ALL SATURDAY OBSERVATIONS WILL BE HELD AT CROCKETT PARK

January 8,9,15,16
February 12,13,19,20
March 11,12,18,19
April 8,9,15,16
May 6,7,13,14
June 3,4,10,11
July 8,9,15,16
August 5,6,12,13
September 2,3,9,10,30
October 1,7,8
November 4,5,11,12
December 2,3,9,10

That's forty eight observations in 1988!

PRESIDENTIAL EDITORIAL Blaine Korcel

Well why not, I think it's a catchy title! The fact is it's time for another newsletter. Since I had an "overwhelming" response for the editorial position, I am back at it, a little late but never the less back. A number of interesting things have occurred in the past two or three months that I had to hold out on to tell about. I hope these articles prove both entertaining as well as informative.

I am sending out with this issue, to members only, a reprint of both the maps and directions leading to the new observing sites. Since there was some confusion as to which map applied to which site. Anyway, club members will also receive the combination to the lock which will be placed on the gate at the Fauquier site, Crockett Park. When you go through any closed gate from here out, close it behind you. Also remember to patrol your observing site for trash and cigarette butts when you leave. After all, it is a bad habit to get cows hooked on smoking and junk food!

We have decided, due to popular demand, that the Fauquier observing sessions should be held on Saturday nights. This allows us to get out there early enough to set up at a reasonable hour. Previously we had to wait for rush hour to diminish not to mention having to get off from work so you can skip dinner. We hope this will provide a better means of getting an early start on things.

Another note on our computer bulletin board. We now have had over 2000 calls since the board was put on line on July 1. I would like to thank Geoff Chester for providing the most up to date information on the current comet situation I have ever seen. You can find the latest IAU circulars and ephemerides posted on the computer BBS as well as current discussions on all astronomy related topics.

Soon we will be going national as the software arrives to allow us to transfer mail across the country if not around the world through nearly all local calls. If you're interested in calling it up, it is a free service. Simply dial in (703-256-4777) at 1200 baud, no parity, eight data bits, and one stop bit. 300 baud callers are also supported. If you have any questions, call me at 703-256-4430.

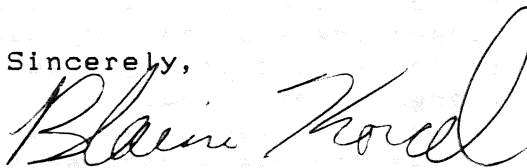
The new observing schedule has been created for 1988. Please make note of these dates on your new calendar. 48 observations have been scheduled. Any more and I think I'll go crazy.

I would like to appologize to anyone who may have showed up one night at the Fauquier site and found the gate locked. There was some confusion in the management here and in the notification of the park. We have taken the necessary procedures to prevent this from happening in the future.

I'm not sure what else to say at this point except to keep an eye and an ear out for a good site to hold BLTM88. We are still looking for the prime spot which will accommodate campers yet be local enough to attract locals.

On that note I will close. Enjoy the articles and watch out for those nifty new membership cards coming out in January along with another neat surprise!

Sincerely,



Blaine Korcel
President/Editor, NOVAC

TREASURER'S REPORT

John Huggins

We have about 600 dollars in the account as of this publication date. Come January, I will mail out a renewal notice to all members that will soon expire. This act will bring in a lot of money. The newsletter costs about 500 dollars a year to publish. This is our biggest expense. We do have the capability to do other things with funds. Give it some thought. We are doing great.

A PORTABLE PIER
Dr. Gerald Perman

Hello fellow NOVACians! It's been a while since I've shared any new pearls so I thought it was about time to do so.

I'm always looking for ways to minimize the time it takes me to set up and polar align my Schmidt Cassegrain. I had gotten tired of leveling my mount, pointing the scope in the direction of Polaris, etc., etc., each time I took it outside - that is, starting from scratch as nauseam. I thought and I thought. A permanent pier seemed like the only solution but it just wouldn't do in the middle of my lawn, using it as the base of a birdbath when I wasn't using it for my telescope, but it just wouldn't fit in with the rest of the landscape. And the work that would be involved in installing it gave me pause.

Necessity (or desire) became the mother of invention. The idea I came up with is extremely simple, so please don't laugh. What I did was to carefully polar align my telescope one night on my driveway at a spot which was generally convenient and provided an optimal view of the sky. I next used masking tape to mark off the position of each of the tripod legs on the driveway blacktop. I then moved the tripod and painted the spot where each leg had been with exterior house paint. Finally, I filed a line on each of the aluminum-extension part of the tripod legs where they met the black cast iron part of the leg.

Now, whenever I observe from my driveway I simply set my tripod on the three painted spots, make sure the aluminum legs are extended to the filed markings, and spend but a few short minutes fine-tuning my telescope into good polar alignment.

Turning to another subject, it's been a while since I've been to a NOVAC observing session. My usual excuse has been "it looks cloudy," "it looks like it might get cloudy," or "I have some conflicting engagement." Underlying everything, however, has been that I am often too tired to make it out. The last time I made an attempt, the session was scheduled for Greenville and I went to Fauquier by mistake. After my initial frustration and rage (I would have howled at the moon had there been one in the sky), I settled down to take advantage of my situation. The milky way glistened from one end of the sky to the other. I wished I had had a pitcher to catch the lactic fleuve as it meandered along so that when I got thirsty I could drink my fill. The little dipper was clearly outlined and Andromeda was a naked-eye object. It was fantastic, stupendous, magnifique. The sky is dark indeed in Fauquier County.

The bottom line is: get thee out to Fauquier County.

IN SEARCH OF I434 AND B33
Blaine Korcel

The target is I434 and B33 located in the constellation of Orion. Its position is RA 5 hrs. 38.6 min. DEC -2 deg. 26 min. and lies about 1/2 degree from Zeta Orionis. Its approximate size is 1 degree and spans 18 light years by 1 light year. The minimum recommended aperture is 16" and was first detected by E. Pickering in 1889 photographically. It is most commonly known as the Horsehead Nebula.

This target has been classified to be the most difficult object to observe visually. It requires the best seeing conditions and dark skies. Barnard attempted to view it with a 40" refractor in 1913 and could never see it. With the appearance of better glass and optical quality, many astronomers have succeeded in viewing it. Leslie Peltier was one. He managed to see it with a 6 inch refractor using low power.

The most predominant reason for one's inability to view this elusive object is the proximity of Zeta Orionis which shines at magnitude 2 and lies only 1/2 a degree away. It is necessary to occult this star or place it outside the field of view before any chance of seeing the Horsehead is possible.

Well with all this kept in mind, the hunt began. Al Boldt and myself decided to go out to Greenville one night and see how comet Bradfield was doing. The temperatures were down in the twenties and I had on my nice new ski pants to keep me warm. Well one thing led to another and before long we were knocking off the NGC objects.

Incidentally, that night there were club members scattered all over that field. An occasional flash of red along the horizon told us that we were not alone. It is interesting as well as fascinating to know that we have quite a few serious as well as dedicated astronomers in our club that would brave those chilly temperatures on a SUNDAY night. Let's try next time to do it together.

Anyway, Al and myself had just rapped up locating the streaks associated with the California nebula in his 9x63 binoculars. We then found a couple more NGC objects then decided to try for the I434 and B33, alias The Horsehead, much to Al's dismay!

We used a prime collection of optical equipment which consisted of a 10" Odyssey, a selection of eyepieces varying in focal length from 20 to 28mm, and a new addition to Al's repituior, a Hydrogen Beta (HII) filter from Lumicon.

I may note here that these new filters make observing these objects possible. Due to the increase in light pollution over the years, many objects have been classified as "INVISIBLE." Many of them described in the more popular references were observed many years ago when light pollution was minimal. Filters help us view in conditions close to what professionals experienced years ago.

Our first step was to select an eyepiece which provided low power but also kept Zeta out of the field of view. For this we selected a 26.8mm Plossle. As it turned out our choice was right on the money. Next we carefully installed the HII filter. Dark adaptation did cross my mind. Although I was unaware of Herschel's

"20 minutes in the dark before observing method" at the time, it took nearly 20 minutes and perhaps longer of continuous viewing to eventually detect it.

Glare would have been a serious problem. The current light pollution situation causes so much ambient glare at the eyepiece that it could greatly effect your chances. We installed on the eyepiece one of those neat little rubber eyeguards from Orion Telescopes which not only protect you from ambient sky glow, they protect your eyelid from sticking to the eyepiece in cold weather, and also keep dew from settling on the surface. The same effect could be obtained by merely draping a blanket over you and the eyepiece while observing, like Herschel did in his attempts.

We also found that eyepiece quality had a direct relation on the visibility of low contrast objects. Both the 20 and 28mm eyepieces rendered the Horsehead invisible. Internal reflections caused bright halos around even the faintest stars which washed out everything there was to see.

The next time we go out we will try the infamous 16mm Nagler and HII filter and see what we get. Give B33 a try and let us know of your results. Remember, if you don't see it at first, even after an hour of straight observing, don't give up. There are many factors which influence the visibility of this object. In fact, you may find that higher magnifications will actually help! Clear skies and Happy Hunting!

In the next issue we will take a look at the various filters offered by Lumicon and determine which ones are best suited for your observing needs. Ed.

THE LATEST FROM
ARLINGTON PLANETARIUM
John Huggins

For those of you who are looking for something different this Christmas, consider coming to the Christmas show at the Arlington Planetarium. Once again the show will be "The Star of Bethlehem." Every year this show sells out the seats of the planetarium. The show uses the planetarium instrument to go back in time to see just what was showing in the sky around the time of Christ's birth. It reviews several possibilities of what the "star" could have been and provides scientific evidence to single out just one. The show has been redone for this season, but remains pretty much the same as the past version.

If you would like to attend one of these shows they are on Friday and Saturday nights at 7:30 with two afternoon shows on Sunday at 1:30 and 3:00. The price is \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children under 12 and senior citizens. Call 558-2868 and make your reservations immediately as the spaces for this show fill very quickly.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE
John Huggins

Sooner or later I will have large file storing capacity for my bulletin board service (The FROG). I intend to support the Apple II+, //e, //c, IIGS and the entire Macintosh line of computers. This is an effort for the Astro-Net service to support most types of computers; the NOVAC BBS will support IBM and Amiga, while mine will support the Apple stuff. So what I need from you is public domain software for the Apples; anything will do as long as it is really public domain. This ultimate goal of Astro-Net is to provide the ultimate in support for your major brand of computer, whichever one you buy. Your help will make this a reality.

THE NOVAC CORONA may be reproduced with proper credit given to the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club.

(c) Copyright 1987 The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club. All Rights Reserved.

The NOVAC Corona is published six times a year. All material regarding the club including that for publication should be directed to John Huggins, Secretary/Treasurer, 5608 Flag Run Drive, Springfield, VA 22151-2725, 703-569-4990.

