



Astronomy Club of Akron

2012 Observatory Schedule

Portage Lakes State Park, 5031 Manchester Road, Akron, OH 44319

www.acao.org

- Our star parties are free and open to the public. Please join us for stargazing and educational activities. Star parties will begin promptly.
- Events may be cancelled if the skies are cloudy. If the skies are questionable, please call for the latest information: 330-837-5848
- This is an outdoor activity in an unheated environment. Nighttime temperatures drop rapidly, even in the summer. A general rule of thumb is dress for 20 degrees colder than the predicted nighttime low temperature.
- Please be considerate of those who bring their own telescopes. Children should be supervised at all times. Pets should be left at home.
- Smoke and expensive optics don't mix. Please, **no smoking** in or near the observatory, on the surrounding grounds where club members have set up their telescopes, and during star party presentations. Be considerate of your fellow observers.
- We also schedule impromptu star parties. Sign up for e-mail notification at our "Star Party Notice" link at acao.org.

February 18 – 6:30pm

Binoculars Night: Bring your binoculars to observe Kemble's Cascade, Hyades, Pleiades, & Beehive Cluster. Winter Sky Tour and the best free coffee in Akron.

March 17 – 7:30pm

Planet Parade: Mars is less than ½ degree from M95 & M96, shining at mag -1.2 covering 14" of arc. Jupiter and Venus continue their spectacular display just 2 days past conjunction.

March 24 – 7:30pm

Venus reaches greatest elongation on 3/27 allowing observers to view the planet 40 degrees above the horizon at sunset.

April 14 – 8:30pm

Special Event: Messier Marathon – stay all night to observe 110 Messier objects with ACA club members. We'll have the best free coffee in Akron brewing all night.

April 21 – 8:30pm

Going Long: We'll observe the most distant object in our galaxy (NGC 2419 at 304,000ly) and the most distant object within reach of the observatory telescope (Quasar 3C273 at 2.2 billion ly). Lyrid Meteor Shower peaks.

May 12 – 9:00pm

Galaxies Galore: Observe galaxies of the Virgo Cluster, including M87 hosting a 6 billion solar mass black hole.

May 19 – 8:00pm

ACA Telescope Seminar Our members will describe the advantages and disadvantages of each type of telescope. If you plan on purchasing a telescope, don't miss this program.

May 26 – 9:00pm

Saturn's rings have been increasing inclination angle since they disappeared from sight on September 4, 2009. Come out tonight to see the rings beautifully tilted at 14 degrees.

June 9 – 9:00pm

Program: Star Maps*

We'll show you how to follow a map to the stars.

June 16 – 9:00pm

An ACA member will take you on a sky tour of the Summer Constellations

June 30 – 1:00pm

Daytime Observing Event: Solar Party & Hotdog Roast View sunspots, solar flares, and prominences. Our amateur radio astronomers will be searching for celestial radio signals. Mercury is at greatest eastern elongation and will be a target of the observatory telescope. Enjoy a hotdog for a small fee.

July 7 – 9:00pm

Program: SETI*

Learn about the latest search for extraterrestrials.

July 14 – 9:00pm

Classical Music Night: Listen to the best musical selections of Mozart, Vivaldi, & Bach by which to gaze at the stars!

July 21 – 9:00pm

Program: Historic Astronomers

Learn about the astronomers who set the foundation for our understanding of the Universe today.

August 11 – 8:30pm

Program: Sunspots

Sunspot activity & behavior explained. Our observing session includes the Perseid Meteor Shower peak.

September 8 – 8:00pm

It's a great time of year to observe globular clusters.

September 15 – 8:00pm

Best Free Coffee in Akron Night: An ACA member will take you on a sky tour of the Autumn Constellations.

October 6 – 7:30pm

View a sampling of October's planetary nebulae.

October 13 – 7:00pm

Galaxy Night: Come out to view Andromeda Galaxy, M32, & NGC 7331.

November 10 – 6:30pm

Relive Herschel's discovery of Uranus & the Saturn Nebula.

November 17 – 6:30pm

Star Gazing while the Leonid Meteor Shower peaks

* listed program or make-up program

Getting Started in Astronomy

Getting started in astronomy as a hobby isn't necessarily as expensive as most people think. While it's easy to spend several thousand dollars on high-end equipment, most skywatchers begin their odyssey with little more than an inexpensive skychart and their own eyes. Taking it one step farther, a modest pair of 10x50 binoculars can be had for less than \$50. While binoculars are seemingly less glamorous than a telescope, the views offered are nothing short of incredible. Many deep-space objects are visible and the sheer number of stars that are revealed will delight and amaze.

While the temptation to purchase an inexpensive, department store telescope can be overwhelming, you should think twice before taking the plunge. The optical quality is often enough to discourage rather than encourage. Claims of super-high magnification are nothing but smoke and mirrors in the world of amateur astronomy. How much light your instrument can collect and effectively bring to your eye is what really matters. It's not at all unreasonable to expect pricing in the \$300 dollar range for a reliable and more importantly, useful telescope. It's really worth waiting and saving for such an instrument if need be.

The Astronomy Club of Akron (ACA) hosts public viewing events, also known as "star parties," throughout the year (see reverse side for dates and times). As a non-profit entity with public education as our goal, the ACA's mission is to bring astronomy to you! Our public events are designed to teach and to foster interest in amateur astronomy. This being the case, our permanent observatory facility at the Portage Lakes State Park houses a 14 inch, computerized, Schmidt Cassegrain telescope. This instrument is the centerpiece of our public star parties and everybody is welcome to have a look through the eyepiece at whatever happens to be targeted. We enjoy answering questions and requests to see astronomical objects are gladly accepted. In addition to our observatory, you will find members scattered around the property, expertly manning their own private telescopes and binoculars. Again, questions are welcome as is the opportunity to show you

astronomical wonders through a variety of brands and optical designs. If you don't currently own a telescope but are considering purchasing one, our public star parties are fantastic sources of information. Come and see the many choices and options available and see how much more informed a purchasing decision you can make afterward!

As a non-profit organization, the ACA exists and operates through a combination of charitable donations and membership dues. If you'd like to be a member, you will know that your dues help to support our recurring expenses and purchase of new and replacement equipment. You will also receive discounts on annual subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines and will be able to borrow ACA loaner telescopes. You will be invited to our members-only events and will be eligible to vote on club issues. Even more important, you will know that you are part of our effort to teach and enlighten those who may never have been exposed to astronomy in any other way.

