

THE  
FREMONT  
PEAK

OBSERVER

Volume Ten

Number Two

July 1994

SUMMERTIME AT THE PEAK AND THE  
OBSERVING IS EASY

Even though the observatory at Fremont Peak is open to the public from late April through the end of October it is those summer months - June, July, August - that the park and observatory see the highest usage and generally the best weather.

Back in April, the weekend after Astronomy Day, we saw temperatures in the low thirties overnight and had to play "cat and mouse" with the fog to get any observing done. Not the best introduction to astronomy for a group of third graders from Thornhill Elementary School in Oakland but they seemed to love it just the same.

In contrast, over the July 4th weekend the weather was *gorgeous*. Temperatures were in the seventies all evening, skies dark and stable, and, as one veteran observer stated, "It was some of the best observing I have seen at the Peak in over twenty years."

The following weekend the pattern repeated itself - great weather, great observing and over a hundred people came to the public program. John Bally, a professional astronomer originally from the Bay Area but now visiting from the University of Colorado, Boulder, joined us in observing through the 30", marvelling all the while about how the facility at Fremont Peak had become quite an attraction, far surpassing any public observatory Colorado had to offer even with its notoriously dark skies.

- Denni Medlock, editor

SUMMER PROGRAM SCHEDULE

JUPITER PROGRAM JULY 23rd  
8:00 PM

There will be a special Jupiter program given on July 23rd in honor of Comet Shoemaker-Levy's collision with this giant gas planet.

Other programs scheduled:

JULY 30 Public Program

AUG 6 Public Program  
- Peter Jenniskans, speaker

13 Annual Star-B-Q  
& Perseid Shower

27 Public Program  
- Jack Murphy, speaker

SEPT 3 Public Program  
- Andy Newton, Carter  
Roberts & John Lumin

10 Public Program  
- Peter Lord & Morris  
Jones

SEPT 24 Public Program  
-Donn Mukensnoble &  
Duncan McNeil

OCT 1 Public Program  
- Jack Murphy & Doug Padrick

8 Public Program  
- Rob Toebe & Carter Roberts

## CERTIFICATION CLASSES

If you are interested in becoming certified to use the 30" telescope please call Rick Morales at (408) 623-2465 and leave a message.

Just a reminder: if you are certified you must volunteer to host at least one show a year. If you have not already, pick a date from those listed above and call Rick to sign-up. Ideally, all shows should have at least three people as hosts, (one to give the slide show and two to operate the 30").

## METEOR OBSERVING PROGRAM

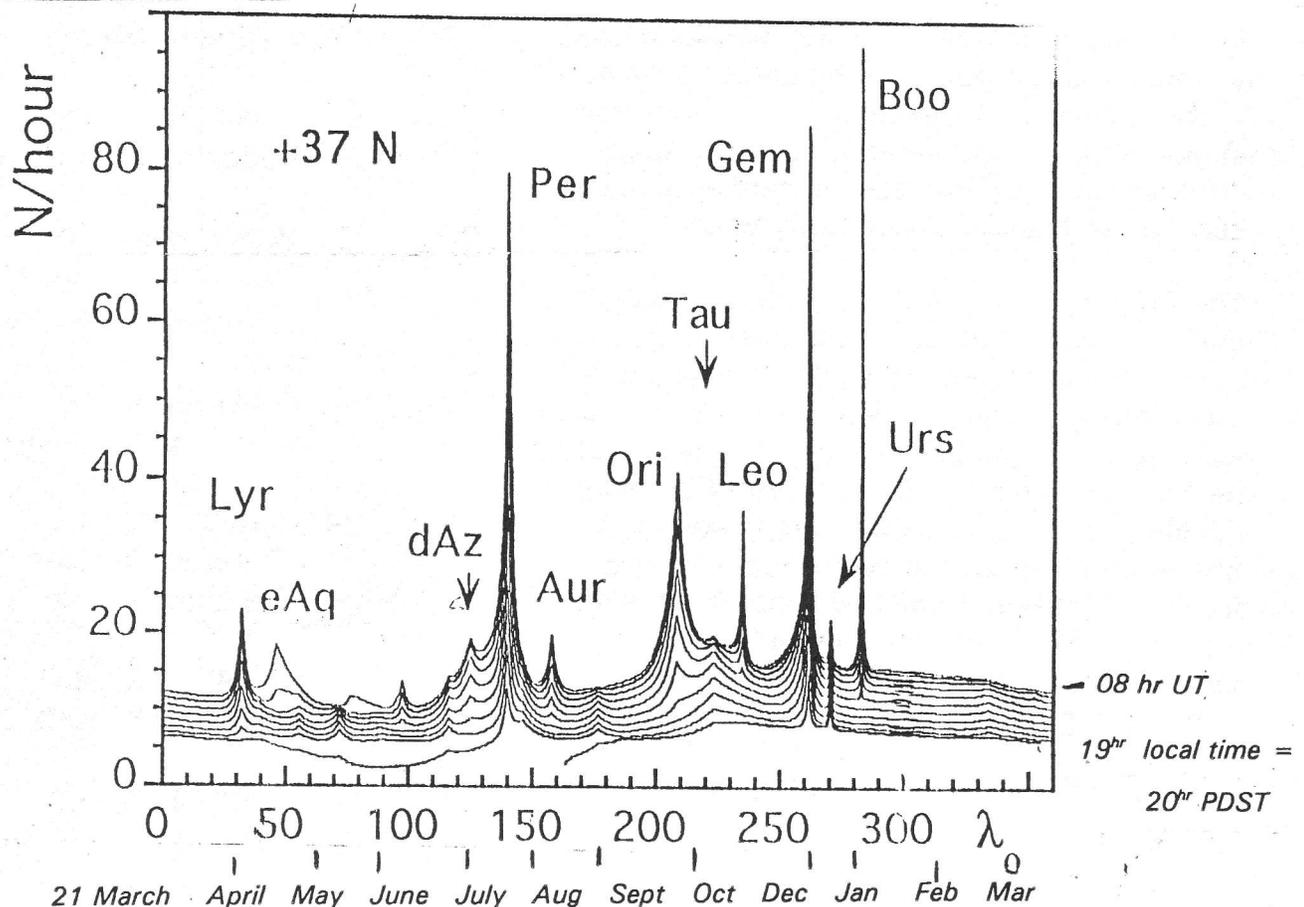
As reported previously in the *FPOA OBSERVER* Frank Dibbell and Peter Jenniskans have developed a meteor observing program at the FPO. This program, based on the

method developed by the Dutch Meteor Society, involves placing two observers approximately twenty miles apart (FPSP and Henry Coe SP), both using a camera platform which holds three cameras and a rotating shutter. By taking photographs of meteors during a shower, elevations and trajectories can be determined when a trail is captured by both observers over this long baseline.

In the February, 1994 issue of *RADIANT (Journal of the Dutch Meteor Society)* the upcoming Perseid Meteor shower is discussed. "Most favorably suited [Perseid shower] will be the our observers at Fremont Peak California, observing conditions with dark skies and the real altitude."

Give Frank Dibbell a call (at 408) if you are interested in joining the

## METEORS VISIBLE/HOUR FOR SHOWERS THROUGH MARCH,



## ELECTIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS AUG. 13th

The annual elections of board members will take place during the Star-B-Q on August 13th beginning at 3 PM. Each board position is for three years and is open to any person who has been a member for at least a year and has attended at least three consecutive board meetings in the past six months. Though there will be a set ballot, write-ins are encouraged. If you have someone you wish to nominate (even yourself!), please call John Stewart at (510) 527-7036.

There are two board positions open. Nominated for those positions so far are Doug Padrick and Denni Medlock.

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## REPAIRS DONE TO BUILDING & TELESCOPE

Director of Instruments Rob Toebe and Kevin Medlock spent Saturday, July 9th doing some much-needed repair to the building and the 30". A Lumicon DX200 (Focal) drive was installed on the telescope as a drive corrector, replacing the one which had failed months ago.

Also replaced was a frayed roof cable spotted by Rob Toebe earlier in the month.

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"The scope is in dismal shape!"

Rob has asked me to print the following request:

Dear 30" users: Comments such as the one above found in the observatory log tell the poor Director of Instruments absolutely nothing. Have a heart. Next time you encounter a problem with the scope or building describe it in detail. Chances are it's fixable if the maintenance team has half a chance to find it.

## CALPAW BOND INITIATIVE LOSES

CALPAW, better known as Proposition 180 on June's ballot, lost by a margin of 2 to 1. This was unfortunate for State Parks in San Benito County of which Fremont Peak State Park is one. Of the 300 million dollars slated for the State Parks System 2.6 million were marked to go to Fremont Peak and the area around Pinnacles National Monument. At this writing the editor has not heard how this loss will affect operations at Fremont Peak.

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## 1994 LEAGUE CONFERENCE TO BE HELD AT ALLENSWORTH SP

The 1994 League of California State Park Non-Profit Organizations (LCSPNO), of which FPOA is a member, will be holding its 1994 conference at Allensworth SP near Bakersfield. The FPOA is looking for an interested member to attend as our representative. We will fund all traveling expenses. The conference is being held Sept 30 - Oct 2, Friday through Sunday, and is full of speakers, sessions, informal exchange of information between the other state parks associations and field trips.

If you are interested in attending this conference, which is not only very informative but a lot of fun besides, contact Denni Medlock at (510) 278-6563.

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## FPOA OBSERVER GETS NEW LOOK

I'm certain by now you've noticed the new appearance of THE OBSERVER. Past editor Frank Dibbell has passed on the banner to me after publishing a great newsletter for the last three (? , I think) years. I want to thank Frank for all the work he has put into this journal. I just hope I can go on *reflecting* what the FPOA is really about.

- Denni Medlock

FROM THE LOG

We're going to play catch-up with the popular *OBSERVER* column, going back over a year ago to look in on some of the more interesting entries in the observatory's log book. (By-the-way, a new log book was donated by Rob Toebe).

2-20-93

Arrived at 3 PM. Snow, sleet, rain. Lovely weather!

D. B.

2-28-93

Arrived 8 PM. Sky's clearing. No dew, gentle breeze N/W. 36° F but feels warm.

Great seeing. Cold, dry air. From 12:00 to 2:30 located 75 galaxies. Seeing about an 8. Abell Cluster #1367 was spectacular! Edge ons, ellipticals. On a clear night you can see forever. Clouds moved in at 2:20 AM. Switched to Jupiter. What I saw was the best view of Jupiter I've ever seen.

The great pink spot was so clear it seemed I could reach out and grab it. Plus there was a transit going on. Everything was so clear, still, and 3 dimensional it felt I was parked in an orbit around the planet. After the Moon transited it was like a small pearl in front of the planet following a small round black shadow of itself. Visited the following objects:

- 2599 3933 3799 3803 3919
- 2628 3833 3764 3790 V6670
- 3946 3828 3768 3886 3827
- 4014 V6655 5803 3884 3834
- 3934 3800 3806 3883 3816
- 3807 3864 3873 3860A 3840
- 3868 3862 3875 3837 3845
- 3867 3840 3860B 3842 3851
- 3857 3845 3861A 3841 3943
- 3859 3851 3861B 3844 3937
- 3947 3910 4003 3954 3925
- 3951 3929 3926B 3983 3940
- 3926B 3946 4002

There's nothing like a big telescope on a clear night!!

David C. Barosso

5-13-93 MPC Astro Class

Opened at 8:00 PM. Jupiter good with 4 moons, one very close to planet. Perhaps 5th moon.

M37 (good! red star at center), M108 Good! Omega Nebula (Checkmark), M57 Smoke Ring, M9, M8. Saw blinking object that didn't move significantly over time. Dim blinks to bright blinks. Lower Leo? Virgo? Rotating geosynch satellite reflecting sunlight? Starting seeing it about 9:00 PM, no more after 10:30 PM.

- Ray Cyr

*You are invited to attend the*

# **FPOA/AANC STAR - B - Q**

Potluck Picnic and Super Star Party  
at Fremont Peak State Park  
Saturday, August 13, 1994

Hamburgers Hotdogs Raffle Speaker Awards Telescopes  
*Observing Through the 30" Challenger Telescope*  
*Perseid Meteor Shower*

The Fremont Peak Observatory Association (FPOA) and the Astronomical Association of Northern California (AANC) are co-hosting a potluck picnic/barbecue and super star party at Fremont Peak State Park. This is a **GREAT** way to meet other amateur astronomers and talk to members of other astronomy clubs.

The FPOA and AANC will provide the hotdogs, hamburgers, drinks, relish and utensils. Bring a dish to share. There will also be a contest for the best dish with an astronomical theme. In the past there have been such entries as IO pizza, cosmic strings (spaghetti), solar cheese cake, black hole pie, etc. BE CREATIVE!

**COST:** Fremont Peak State Park charges \$3 per car for daytime use. If you wish to camp overnight the charge is \$7. Self-serve pay envelopes are provided. Raffle tickets (optional) are \$1 each. Proceeds go to the FPOA observatory and their public astronomy program.

**ARRIVAL TIME:** If you have a telescope plan to arrive early (1 - 2 PM). There is limited space for telescopes behind the ranger's house where the potluck is held. **ALL VEHICLES MUST LEAVE THIS AREA AFTER UNLOADING.** Most people will be setting up at the Coulter-Madrone group sites. The gate to the ranger's driveway will be closed after 5 PM.

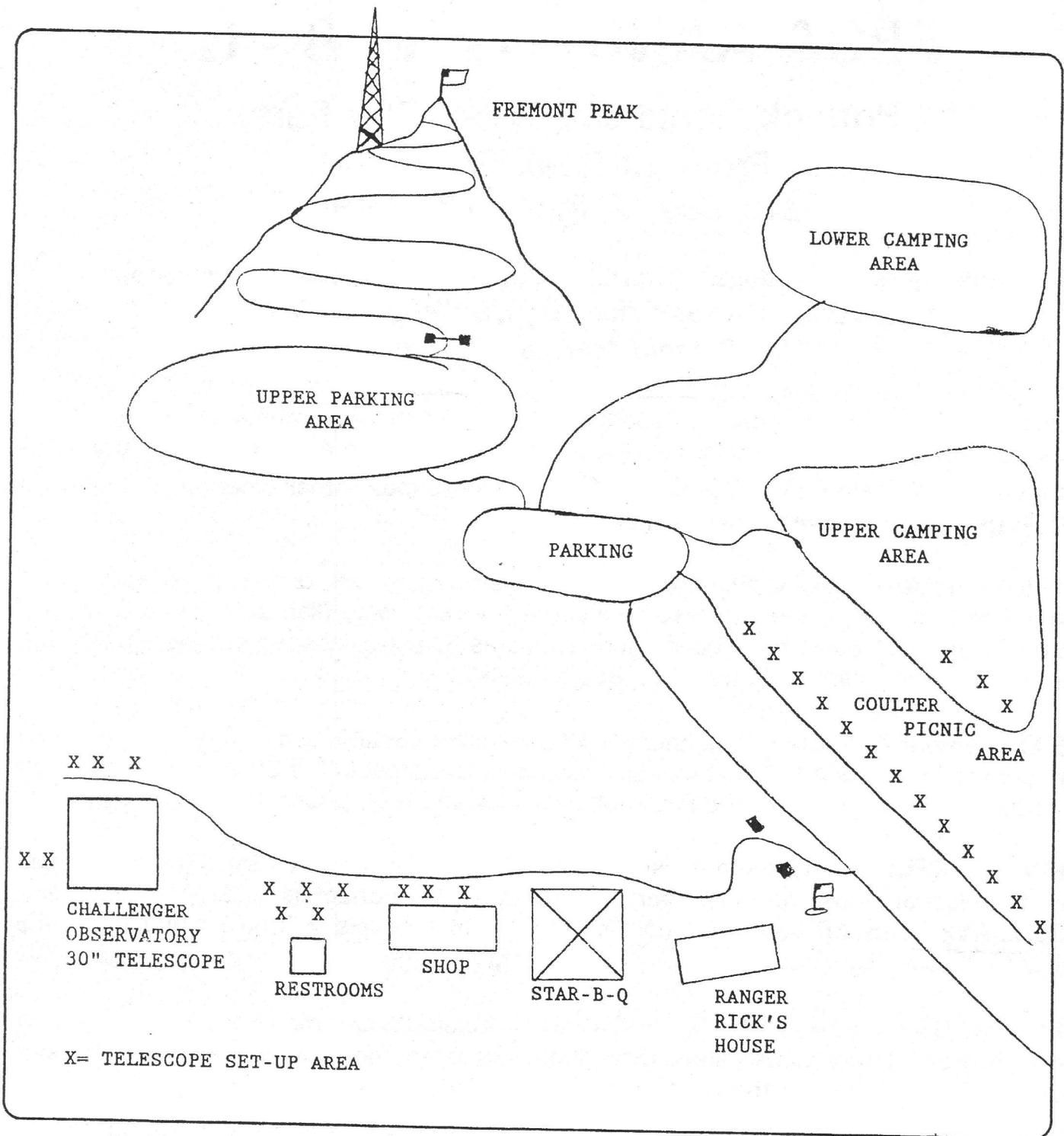
**POTLUCK:** Begins at about 5 PM. FPOA will be holding board member elections from 3 PM on. There will be various games throughout the afternoon. If you have a water pistol or supersoaker, bring it for the third annual Douse-Off!

**RSVP:** PLEASE RSVP by calling the FPOA hotline at (408) 623-2465 and leaving your name, number of guests, name of your astronomy club and whether or not you are a FPOA member. (non-astronomy club members welcome, too!)

**ETIQUETTE:** Please, red flashlights only! Most people are happy to show you objects in their telescopes but always ask first. Please leave pets at home. No loud music.

**DIRECTIONS:** Hwy 101 to Hwy 156 E. (So. of Gilroy). Go two miles on Hwy 156 E. Look for Fremont Peak SP sign. Turn right at yellow flashing light. Proceed 11 miles on Rt. G-1.

# Map of Fremont Peak State Park



**AANC Member Clubs:** Eastbay Astronomical Society, Sonoma County Astronomical Society, Group 70, San Mateo Astronomical Society, Stockton Astronomical Society, Northern California Historical Astronomical Luncheon and Discussion Association (NCHALDA), Mt. Diablo Astronomical Society, Tri-Valley Stargazers, Valley of the Moon Astronomical Society, Fremont Peak Observatory Association, Planetary Society Northern California Volunteer Network, Chabot Telescope Makers Workshop, Hercules Stargazers, Sacramento Valley Astronomical Association, San Francisco Amateur Astronomers, Mt. Tam Observers, Students Taking Astronomically Related Subjects (STARS)