

From the President

By President Rick Morales

The warm season is upon us but last night, Saturday, May 23rd, it was cold and wet. I left the observatory about 6 PM hoping to beat the rain because the windshield wipers on my old sports car had recently failed. Again. The on-off switch broke in the off position. I made it to San Juan before I had to stop driving for lack of visibility. I left Ron Dammann, Pat Donnelly and Rob Hawley to handle the crowd of anxious viewers who might arrive despite the weather. When we say we will be open, we're open, regardless of the conditions. We may not stay too long but we're open. We're a dedicated group. Kudos to Ron, Pat and Rob and the FPOA / Hartnell Interns. And there are others who through the years have been there. Thank you to all ...you know who you are.

The Star-B-Que is one month away: June 25. Tell your friends and neighbors to come on up to the Peak for this special event. As always, it is a pot luck dinner with attendees providing interesting salads, side dishes and desserts. The Astro-Gastro contest will be conducted with a prize for the winning dish, a food made to mimic an astronomical event or object or ... sometimes I'm not sure what it is. The FPOA will provide soft drinks, burgers and hot dogs, paper plates and plastic utensils, a place to sit and lots of great people to share the evening with and share memories. The evening will be topped off at the amphitheater outside the observatory with a talk by a gifted member of the astronomical community, followed by viewing through the Challenger and an assortment of other telescopes, more visiting with old and new friends. If that isn't enough to do, we can use your help cleaning up the site. I'm looking forward to seeing all our old and new friends.

On July 23rd, we will celebrate Member Appreciation Night with a toned down barbeque and a lot of viewing. The FPOA is an organization that is supported by membership dues and donations and offers astronomical viewing through a variety of telescopes to our members, , the general public,

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FPOA Programs 2011

Saturday Evening Programs

Apr 2, 9, 23, 30, May 7, 28, Jun 4, 25,
Jul 2, 9, 23, 30, Aug 6, 20, 27, Sept 3, 24,
Oct 1, 22, 29

Solar Programs

Mar 26, Apr 23, May 28, Jun 25, Jul 23,
Aug 20, Sept 24, Oct 22

Board Meetings

Jan 29, Feb 26, Mar 26, Apr 23, May 28,
June 25, Jul 23, Aug 20, Sept 24, Oct 22,
Nov 19

Star - B - Que	June 25th
Members Appreciation Night	July 23rd

Please check <http://www.fpoa.net/schedule.html> for changes or updates to this schedule.

Star-B-Que 2011

June 25 is the date of the FPOA's annual barbeque and star party starting at 5 pm. FPOA will supply hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks, paper plates and utensils and visitors can bring something to share such as desserts, salads, snacks, etc. Please RSVP for this event by emailing <info at fpoa.net > or calling the Observatory phone at (831)623-2465.

FPOA members have the duty of voting for 3 Board members at Star-B-Que, participating in Pat Donnelly's Trivia Contest, the Astro-Gastro Contest and enjoying a presentation by a Guest Speaker along with the dark skies of San Bentio County for observing. Please Join us!

Spring/Early Summer Observing

By Rob Hawley

Every spring the Milky Way sets at sunset and does not rise until early morning. The section of the Milky Way from Canis Major in the West to Scorpio in the east is hidden below our horizon. This allows one to look out from the plane of the galaxy with few stars in the way clearly seeing what lies beyond. There is a lot beyond.

While the other galaxies that form our immediate neighborhood ("The Local Group" - M31, M33, and a number of small galaxies) are visible in our fall sky, in the spring we can look at more distant, but still related galaxies. Most of the galaxies that will be discussed in this article are between 12 and 60 million of light years away. All are visible with an 8" telescope and present stunningly in the Challenger.

M81 /82 (Uma) This pair of galaxies are about 12 Million Light Years (mlyr) away in Ursa Major. By the time you read this they will be too far to the north to be easily viewed with the Challenger, but they can be easily seen by one of the supplemental scopes. M81 is the larger spiral galaxy. It is located a mere 300,000 light years from the smaller cigar shaped M82. During the last 100 million years the two were closer. The resulting tidal forces twisted M82 and triggered star formation. It is easy to see the result of that interaction in the dark band that is clearly visible in M82.

M101 (Uma) this large spiral is located about 25 mlyr away. It is one of the best spiral galaxies; however, its apparent magnitude of 7.8 is a misnomer. Because of its large size the surface brightness is small. Thus in a small scope it is difficult to see any detail in the arms. Challenger can collect enough light to make this a showpiece object.

M51/NGC 5195 Located on the other side of the bright star Alkaid (Uma) from M101 about 31 mlyr distant are the pair of galaxies that are currently interacting. Galaxy to Galaxy interactions happen frequently and can be seen in many places in the spring sky. We already discussed the interaction of M81 and M82. In this case the interaction is happening now (or more properly 31 million years ago) and not in the distant past. The larger M51 is sucking stars from the smaller NGC 5195! This is one of my favorite galaxies and should be the highlight of any spring public program. Don't wait too long though. As this gets higher in the sky it will be more difficult to see with the Challenger.

Leo Triplet (3627, M65, M66) About the same distance as the M51 group at 35 mlyr these are a spectacular trio of galaxies. M65 is a spiral. Its shape may be too subtle for a small scope. M66 is more irregular. NGC 3626 is an edge on. These are another typical part of a spring public program.

Markarian's Chain and Central Virgo About 52 mlyr away are the galaxies of "Downtown Virgo". The gap between the end of Leo and the curve of Virgo may appear to be empty to the naked eye, but even a pair of binoculars will show that this area is crowded with relatively bright galaxies. This is the home of the "Virgo Supercluster". Our Local Group as well as the other galaxy groups above are in the suburbs of this dense concentration of galaxies. We all orbit a common center.

Edge- Ons

Outside of the Messier catalog and mixed in with the thousand or so catalogued galaxies this time of year are a group that I personally find the most visually interesting – the edge on galaxies. The list I use has about 50 on it of which I have personally observed about 40. Here are four that are the brightest and also most visually interesting. All of these can be observed with an 8" telescope using a simple star hop.

NGC 4565 (mag 9.5) about 30-50 mlyr. Located near Mel 111 (the large visual Open Cluster) in Coma Berenices is the first of these objects. This bright galaxy has a distinct central bulge and narrow arms.

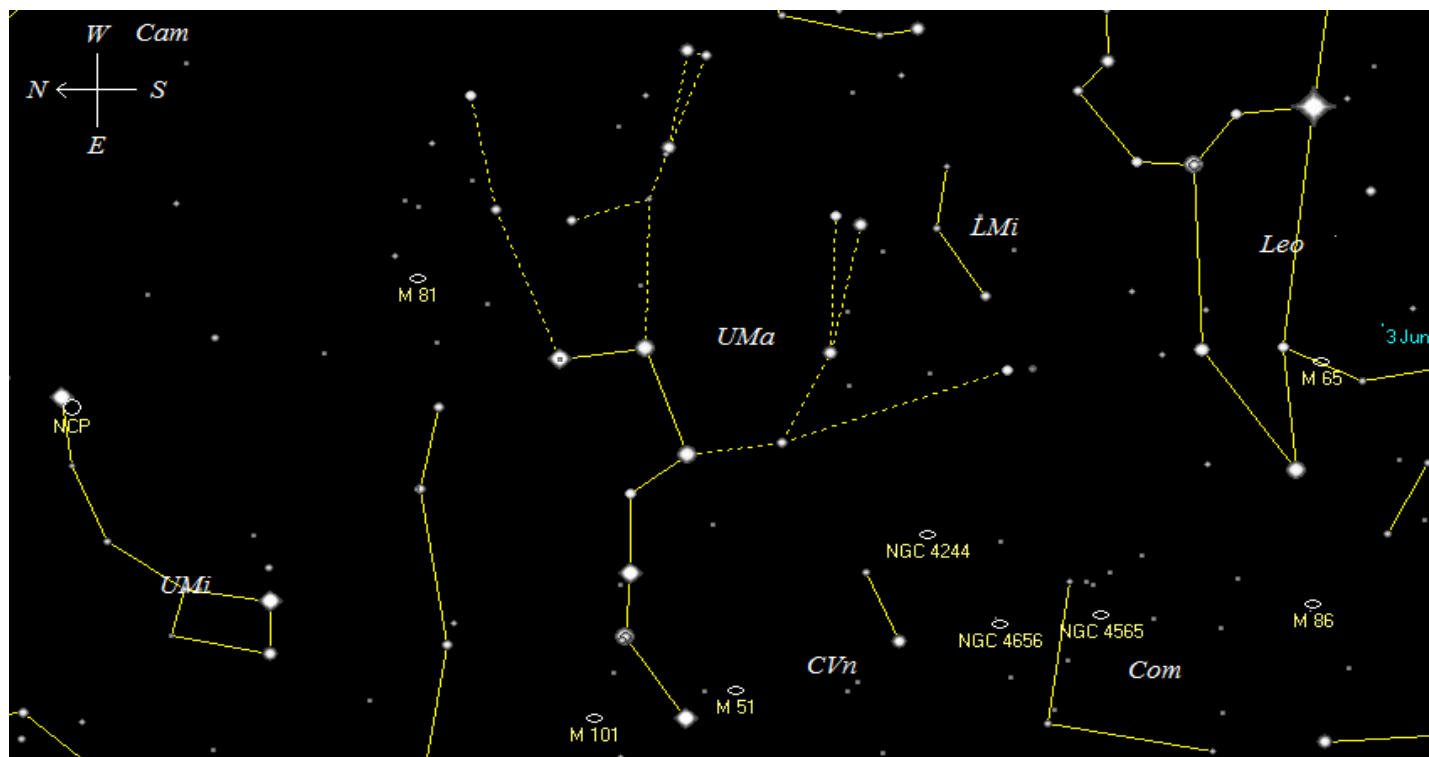
NGC 4244 (mag 10) about 6.5 mlyr. This galaxy is close to the Local Group, but is a member of a different, smaller group. It is pencil thin but still bright enough to be easily seen

NGC 4656 /NGC 4631 (mag 10 and 9) about 25 mlyr These two are members of yet another small galaxy group. 4656 is the most visually interesting as it looks like a hockey puck. 4631 is another slightly brighter edge on that is an irregular galaxy and not a spiral.

For a more complete list of spring edge ons see:
<http://www.star-watcher.org/AstroInfo/SpringEdgeGalaxies.htm>

Spring/Early Summer Observing

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Skymap Pro 11

The most striking part of Central Virgo is the series of Galaxies called Markarian's Chain



[Hewholooks](#) (Wikipedia)

President's Column *from Page 1*

youth groups and educational institutions. This is one way to thank our members for their support and dedication to our mission which is to provide education in astronomy to the public.

Respectfully yours,
Rick Morales

FPOA History Quiz

FPOA members attending Star-B-Que who can identify the person in the picture and the year the picture was taken will be entered in the drawing for the Special Grand Prize at Star-B-Que.



EMAIL DELIVERY OF THE OBSERVER

Dear FPOA Members,

We have been delivering the Observer via email for the past several issues. This obviously saves the Association postal expenses, and assures the quickest delivery to you. However, several of you no longer have valid email addresses, due to ISP changes, moves, etc. If you would like to continue to receive, or begin to receive, notification of the Observer via email, please send your current email address to schedule@fpoa.net

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