

EVERGLADES ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

FAK VIEWING ETIQUETTE

When possible you should plan to arrive by sunset to set up your equipment. While this is not always possible, if you come after dark, you should be sensitive to your light.

LIGHTS

Amateur astronomers know that almost any light except dim red light will hurt nighttime vision. For this reason they are careful to bring a dim red flashlight for their nighttime use. Flashing red lights can also be very distracting. In general, it is best to keep all lights off unless they are absolutely necessary and dim. Automobile lights can be hard to control. The time to learn how to control your car's lights is before you come to the star party. It is hard learn how to control the lights in the middle of a dark night in the FAK. Look in the manual or talk to the dealer. Most cars have a dial or switch (usually connected to the panel light dimmer) that can shut off the interior lights even with the door open. Some cars have daytime headlights or automatic headlights that are always on. Sometimes these can be shut off by pulling up one or two notches on the parking brake. If they cannot be controlled this way, there may be a convenient override switch or easy-to-use fuse. If not, the driver has a few choices. **DO NOT DRIVE INTO THE FAK VIEWING SITE WITH YOUR LIGHTS OFF. THE LAKES BESIDE THE ROADS ARE VERY DEEP, WE DO NOT WANT ANYONE TO GET HURT.** If you know you will be leaving early, leave your car closer to the exit. Also point your car toward the exit so your car lights will be less glaring to the rest of the astronomers.

BEHAVIOR

Every club has its way of doing things. These guidelines will tell you a little about the way our star parties work. No one ever made rules about what you can and cannot do at a EAS Star Party, yet somehow we get along quite well together. We do not usually have music. The few times we have, it could not be heard more than the few feet from the player, and the person who was playing it checked with those around first. We do not smoke near the telescope field. Do not bring children under the age of 10, a small child could fall into the lakes and trip over the telescope equipments in the dark. There is no running around. Don't litter the area, we are guests of the Fakahatchee State Parks system and have special permission to be at the FAK after sundown. Come out and spend nights viewing, it's the reason we have this great hobby.

EQUIPMENT--YOURS AND OTHERS

The reason to have a star party is to do observing and so that we can do it together. If you wish to bring your own equipment feel free. If you want help setting up, just ask--you will find some volunteers. If you do not have your own equipment, feel free to visit with any person on the field and ask what they are doing or "What are you looking at?" In very rare instances you may run into somebody who simply is working too hard at something to take time to visit with you and have you look through the telescope. This is true for some astrophotography or other specialized observing. These things take a lot of concentration. However, most people on the field would love to have you look through their scope; just be friendly. You never need equipment of your own to attend a Star Party. If you are new to this, be aware that equipment should be handled with the same care you would give any fine camera. Generally, telescope equipment is not fragile and won't break when touched. However, since the optics magnify so much, a simple touch can

disturb the view, and may even move the scope so that you cannot see the object.

FIRST TIMERS' QUESTIONS

If you have never been to a Star Party before, are visiting for extra credit in your astronomy class, want to know what kind of telescope to buy, are having trouble with your equipment, or whatever--just ask. Just as with any other group, we have some quiet and stick-to-themselves people. However, the vast majority of members are more than willing to share with you whatever they know. They will probably go on more than you asked for. The mission of the Everglades Astronomical Society is to "educate the public about the wonders of the night sky" We can't do that if you don't ask. First timers especially should attach themselves to somebody and simply spend the evening around them. If you would like such a mentor, just look around. The best candidates will already have a few people standing around looking through their scopes. Just join in.