

Re: Getting amateurs to visit DARK sites...

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Where are you, Bill? Where is this city where nobody wants to look up?

I'm sorry that you have these problems where you are, but here in California that's definitely not the case. I'm in the San Diego Astronomy Assoc., and we have dozens of folks who routinely drive 1+ hours east into the mountains to our sort-of-dark observing site, including many members of the general public for our twice-monthly public star parties. And I know there are similar groups in the Bay Area, in Los Angeles, and in Riverside, with equally good participation.

Robert Sheaffer

BlIFs6 wrote:

- > *Hi all,*
- >
- > *A previous post of mine got me thinking back to the good ole days...the 1980s..*
- >
- > *I was involved in a pretty active local club....lots of friendly people willing*
- > *to share equipment.....many members had 6 to 10 inch scopes....with the*
- > *standard being a 8 or 10 inch Celestron/Meade Cassegrain....and a handful with*
- > *the new craze, "big/cheap " Dobsonians, typically 10 to 13 inchers and few with*
- > *the big guns (16 to 22 inchers).....*
- >
- > *Now, when we had monthly meetings it wasnt uncommon for 2 or 3 dozen to show*
- > *up...and for astronomy day or other public star gazes "intown" plenty of people*
- > *would always show up....and I think we had well over a hundred members on the*
- > *roster...and we even had some 8 to 12 inch scopes you could rent for like a*
- > *buck a month.....*
- >
- > *Well, a few of us (the bigger dob owners mostly), with myself having a 2 ton 10*
- > *incher with so so grade commercial optics and three eyepieces of dubious*
- > *quality, eventually "scoped out" a very nice dark observing region/area,*
- > *probably one of the best half dozen or so areas east of the mississippi....i think*
- > *i recently calculated the light pollution at the zenith was on the order of*
- > *only 10 percent above the natural background level....we are talking nice and*
- > *dark here, where when clouds passed above you they only showed up as black*

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- > holes in the sky....there was just NO comparsion between viewing at this site
- > and the typical intown sites the club used....
- >
- > The observiing site(s) were on public land. The camping was either very cheap
- > (5 bucks a night give or take), or even free if you went to one the empty
- > fields in the woods.....and the for pay campsite was pretty nice, and nearly
- > empty most the time.....decent motels were only 30 miles away (max), and most
- > of the members probably lived only 1.5 hours driving distance away (it was more
- > for me because I lived on the "wrong side of town"). And for most people the
- > drive was hop on the interstate for a bit, then hit empty back country highways
- > for the rest.....so it wasnt like the drive was royal pain in the behind, with
- > bumper to bumper and stop and go traffic the whole way. And we were in the
- > southeast, so 9 months outa the year the nights were nice, calm and NOT cold,
- > so it wasnt like camping or observing was some kind of endurance test.....
- >
- > Us 3 or so active observers probably averaged a Friday and Saturday night "run"
- > of between once and twice a month for a 3 or 4 year stretch. We would write
- > club articles noting how fantastic the views were from such a dark site, even
- > with modest scopes or just naked eye.....we would encourage folks to come
- > along, the more the merrier....heck,you dont even have to bring your own,
- > we'll be more than happy to share the views with our "bigger" scopes....
- >
- > And I can understand how many folks werent gonna be showing up 4 times a month
- > every month for years on end....
- >
- > But, gawd...it was like pulling hen's teeth to get even a few members to show
- > up even ONCE! I'd be suprised if over that time period we got even a dozen
- > folks to check the skies out EVEN once....it was probably more like 6 of em
- > over a 3 year period.....
- >
- > Any other folks have this kinda of experience? Or were our club members just
- > more homebound than usual?
- >
- > take care
- >
- > Blll

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