



Background

Beginning back in 1973, the Park Service started hosting star parties for the general public at Glacier Point. By 1983 the star parties became so popular that they regularly attracted more than 400 people. That's when Ranger Dave Balogh thought about inviting Astronomy Clubs from all around California to participate in the fun. This would take an enormous load off of the Park Service and hopefully continue to attract large numbers of visitors. So far the summer program has continued to be a huge success. One California Astronomy Club holds a star party at Glacier Point every weekend of the summer season.

Some of the benefits and objectives of this program are:

- * To provide a more stimulating observing session for the park visitors by increasing the number of telescopes and the number of personal contacts with knowledgeable persons.
- * To give the clubs a chance to share the wonders of the night sky with park visitors from all over the world under the most favorable of observing conditions.
- * To allow amateur astronomers to enjoy the unparalleled sky at Glacier Point for the remainder of the night.



How the Club Dates Are Assigned

Every year in late January, Ranger Balogh sends out the invitations to the California Astronomy Clubs that participate in the Glacier Point Star Parties. The various clubs will then dig into their planetarium programs to see which weekends will be the best for observing (New Moon, Moon rise and set times). The star parties are held on Friday and Saturday nights at Glacier Point beginning on the third weekend of June through Labor Day in September. Labor Day weekend includes a Sunday night star party. The clubs will then rate the possible weekends and list them in the order in which they would like to attend them (most desirable weekend first and least desirable weekend last). The deadline for turning in the bids is usually somewhere between the 1st and 15th of March. Once Ranger Balogh receives all of the bids he does his magic (he draws lots) and assigns to each club the dates they will be responsible for attending the star party at Glacier point. Important to note: Clubs that are willing to provide a 30 minute presentation as it gets dark are given a bit higher preference in the assignment of their dates. The rangers report that the visitors really appreciate a talk that covers what they'll be seeing that night in the telescopes, as well as some general astronomy concepts.



Getting Into the Park

Go back to the Glacier Point Page on our Website and printout the document “Yosemite Fee Waiver” This waiver has our club name and our Glacier Point dates printed at the bottom. This form waives the entrance and camping fees. Just show the form to the ranger at the entrance gate and that should be it. You may also need to show it to the host at the campground. You may also need to show your telescope to the ranger at the entrance gate. If there is *any* confusion (sometimes the rangers don’t get the word) just ask for a “Guest Pass Application” to visit Ranger Dave Balogh at Glacier Point.

Important Notes:

1. **The Fee Waiver Form itself will only be available on the club website for a month or so before our assigned dates.**
2. **Each member (car) must have a copy of the Fee Waiver Form to enter and exit the park. Be sure to keep it with you as you exit so the rangers don’t charge you.**
3. **We will also have the Waiver available at our general club meetings soon after the dates are awarded.**



Bridalveil Creek Campground

Bridalveil Campground is 8 miles from Glacier Point.

The group campsite should be reserved for us. A maximum of 30 persons will be able to stay there without charge on Friday and Saturday night. Each club will be asked to mail in a list of those who will be staying without charge. That's why we need to know as soon as possible if you'll be attending. This list will be given to the campground host (if there is one this year) and referred to as people check in upon arrival. If there is no host - just check the board at the campground to find our assigned sites. As a rule of thumb, the Park Service would like to have between 10 and 20 telescopes present at the Star Party.

Persons in excess of 30 will need to purchase campsites on a space available basis (first come first served, sorry no reservations). It may be advisable for a member of your group to come a day early to hold extra campsites at Bridalveil Campground. These sites must be paid for at prevailing rates. Individual campsites have a 6 person / 2 car limit per site.

It is possible that the Bridalveil Creek Campsite may not be available early in the season. If that is the case, the rangers will let us know where the alternate site will be once we get there.

If our assigned dates are on the 3-day Labor Day weekend the Fee Waiver will allow you to stay Sunday as well.





The Star Party

NOTE: Both Friday and Saturday are both scheduled Star Parties (Labor Day Weekend Sunday also)

One or two telescopes may be set up to do some solar observing for the public on Saturday or Sunday. See the ranger on duty at Glacier Point for help in locating your observing site. **The rest of the observers should set up their telescopes for evening viewing no earlier than 7:00 P.M. and no later than 8:30 P.M.** Upon arrival at the Glacier Point Parking Lot, look for a ranger for assistance in finding a suitable pad for your telescope. *Please do not come early.*

All vehicles must be removed to the parking lot immediately after off loading equipment at the observing site. This is a safety measure, and a way to keep the public from trying to park in the observing area.

The purpose of the Star Party is to provide an interpretive program on astronomy to the park visitors, please be prepared to answer questions, give explanations, and otherwise provide to the park visitors an introduction to astronomy. There will be problems of light pollution from flashlights as these visitors are not used to moving around in near total darkness. The club members are asked to be tolerant of persons who feel the need to use their flashlights. The clubs may wish to provide red plastic covers and rubber bands for the visitor's flashlights. After midnight when the program is over, the astronomers may request all flashlights off and they may then feel free to take photographs and observe for the rest of the night.

There is no camping (includes sleeping in your vehicle) at the Glacier Point parking lot. All persons must sleep at the campground. Open fires are not permitted in the star party area, but Coleman type gas stoves are acceptable for hot drinks etc. Restroom facilities are available in the parking lot. Do not bring food to the amphitheater area as bears are a real and constant danger. They WILL take your food from you or wherever you try to hide it. There are food lockers in the Glacier Point parking lot. Please use them - keep yourself and your friends safe.

One of your officers may be assigned by the ranger to monitor the program at Glacier Point, the set up and removal of equipment at the observing site, and the conduct of the star party hosts. In the absence of regular N.P.S. personnel this person will have the authority to make decisions.

Questions

I hope this answers most of the questions that usually come up for our members as we get ready for our annual Yosemite adventure. If you have any other questions please contact one of the club officers or you can e-mail your question to the Members E-mail List at scac-members@googlegroups.com or e-mail our Webmaster. The Webmaster e-mail address is at the bottom of every website page.



Permission to use pictures by Bill Seiler, Ron Yelton, Chris Angelos

Permission to use images of persons:

Craig Wandke 3-3-12	Richard Adams 3-2-12
Jerry Miller 3-2-12	Walter Nilsson 3-2-12
Bill Seiler 3-2-12	
Chris Angelos 3-2-12	