Lyrids 1995 from Hawaii

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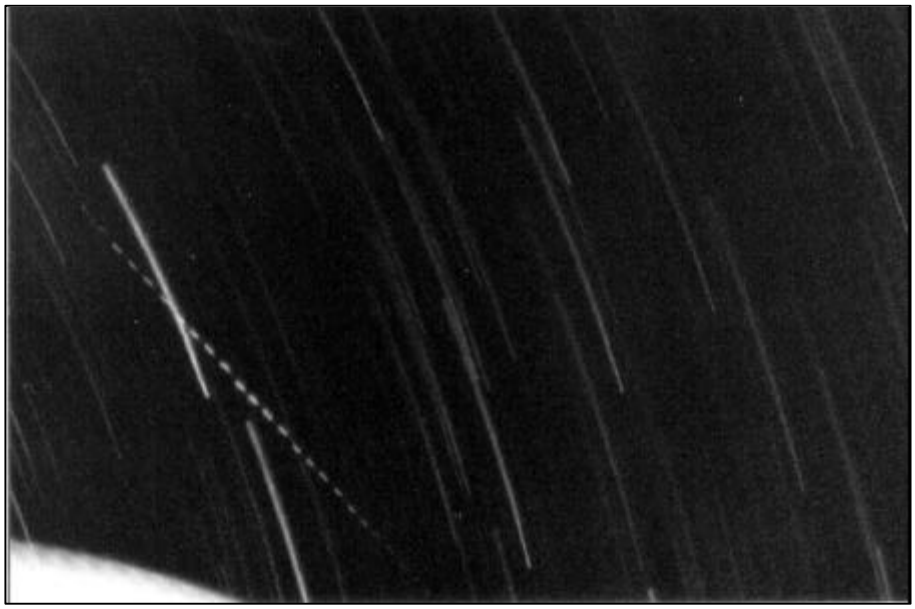

Figure 1 : *Lyrid meteor at about 11.00h UT. April 22, 1995.*
Photo by Paul Sears and Steve O'Meara, Hawaii, Big Island.

The 1995 Lyrids promised increased activity, albeit with a small chance only, based on the observation that in the past 12 yrs after the outburst of 1922 high rates of Lyrids were reported. No outburst was seen in 1993 and 1994. A week before the expected return, I decided to ask for the help of members of Meteor Group Hawaii, lead by Mike Morrow, to set up a multistation photography network on Big Island. This was made possible because Hans Betlem of the Dutch Meteor Society had just provided me with new rotating shutter motors and an electronic system that allowed to run the systems from car battery power.

It was clear that we would miss the event in San Francisco and had to go more westward. Financial constraints made only Hawaii an option.

On wensday April 19, Tom Rice brought one camera battery down from his observing site at Holler Observatory and in the evening I travelled to Rick Morales at Fremont Peak to pick up the two other camera setups.

On thursday, Mike Koop helped me with mounting the new motors and rewiring the heating ribbons for the setups. By friday morning, two systems with four platforms for 12 and 10 cameras respectively were packed and ready to go. Transport was no problem. I carried all cameras in one bag, while two other bags were checked in.

At Kona airport Mike Morrow was waiting. We went to his house, which is built on a lava bed on the southern tip of Big Island. The landscape was fairly depressing: black lava with here and there a tree trying to survive. It also was completely overcast and some rain fell in the late afternoon. Apart from that, the site was excellent for meteor observing. Clear view all around. I spend the afternoon fixing the platforms in the hope that it would clear up.

I sheared Mike's hospitality with John Swatek from Honolulu, an experienced visual observer. Three other observers came in around dinner time: Phyllis Edie, who would join the "blue team" at Mike's house, and Paul Sears and Steve O'Meara, who would form the "red team" and set up at a second site.

We ate together in a local restaurant and discussed the plans for the night.

Then two people went to a site 50 miles from Mike's house and set up there.

The system at Mike's place consisted of two platforms with two motors and 12 heating ribbons. They were driven by one car battery. The system worked well. No problems during the night. The battery did not get exhausted. And, indeed, it cleared up around 10 o'clock in the evening. We had clouds coming in and out in the middle of the night but it was clear again in the early morning. No Lyrid outburst was observed in the interval of solar longitude 31°.12-31°.40. Several bright meteors were part of a small flurry around 4 am. The Lyrids were clearly active, but pretty much the usual annual activity.

Mike operated a radio-MS setup aimed at Honolulu and recorded clear meteor signals at a rate similar to the visual meteors. None of the radio meteors coincided with visual meteors however. No attempt was made to record a possible outburst after ending the observations at 5 am when the system was shut down.

The next day we recovered the camera's from the second site. Conditions there were similar to ours. Paul and Steve had done a good job and did not meet serious problems with the equipment. They noted one relatively bright meteor that should have been captured.

That night it was clouded and no further Lyrid observations could be made. Sunday was a lazy day.

During monday we spend some time on recreational activities.

We made a 3 mile walk in the woods and spend the afternoon on a picture perfect, although overcast, beach.

I saw some of Hawaii's plant life and under water wildlife, among which a nice black and yellow collored eel. On monday evening, April 24th, I left for San Francisco with some good memories of a succesfull campaign, thanks to the enthousiastic support of Meteor Group Hawaii, albeit with no new data on meteor outbursts.