



# DC-3 Dreams

## Before You Buy ACP Scheduler Read This First!

*by Dr Peter Prendergast on April 4, 2012*

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So, I think it's important that a few misconceptions be cleared up before you buy ACP Scheduler (ACPS). I've used ACPS for about a year more or less. First, what is it? ACPS and ACP work together in the following way:

ACP takes care of all the housekeeping inside your observatory and makes the observatory visible on the internet. These two activities are comprehensive in nature. ACP *really* controls the observatory for you in every way you can imagine. ACP takes care of the dome, cameras, scope mount and focuser, Internet access and so on via your software packages vis-à-vis Maxim DL and FocusMax for example. So ACP gets the observatory primed and ready to take pictures. That observatory startup is a huge help, but in isolation it's of limited impact on your productivity.

**ACPS... now *this* is the secret sauce.** ACPS should be thought of like a very eager graduate student, ready to work at night, long hours, eager, smart and dedicated. ACPS is the brains of the operation. ACPS takes your observatory and now makes it autonomous. That's right, it makes *you* obsolete.

You hand ACPS a *long* list of objects to photograph or study in some other way, give it some general guidance on types of pictures to be taken, some

guidance of what to avoid... you know, the Moon, don't take pictures too low in the sky, only take pictures near the meridian and so on. You can give ACPS as many objects as you like all at the same time. Heck I typically have a dozen going at once. I'm just now finishing up an *82 hour session*, for example, on *one* object.

So once you've handed off these zillion objects to ACPS what happens? Well, ACPS sorts them for you and decides in what logical order will make the best use of your observatory. Think about that for a moment. If you had to sort out when the best time to capture each object was one at a time, man that would be all you would have time to do. ACPS does it in a snap. The organization of the objects means your observatory is used in the most efficient way each night!

**My system runs hard all night long and doesn't waste time ... I paid good money for it, I expect it to produce results and not sit around like a statue.** Once ACPS sorts the list, it organizes routine activity to support all that, like autofocus, grabbing flats, darks whatever. You will *never* be able to match the organizational skill of ACPS and maximize your observatory's work load to its optimum potential on your own.

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OK so you say to yourself...."*I can submit a long plan for the night. Who needs ACPS?*" Yeah you can, and you won't be happy. The computer will grind through the list even though the moon was in the way, it took longer to get object no 2 than was expected and so everything else is later than expected and yeah too low, too late, too bad! ACPS will reorganize on the fly and that means again, the observatory is working at its peak performance potential.

Suppose the weather turns unsafe for fifteen minutes? You are *done* right? Nope, not if you have ACPS you're not. My observations last night looked like this ...went to bed, it was raining, two hours later things cleared out, ACPS turned on the gear, focused, took two hours of pictures and then the clouds moved back in. That cycle happened *several times* during the night. ACPS stood eagerly by like that grad student, and when the opportunity presented itself, the dome opened and good things happened! You would *never* have been able to do that without ACPS, *never*. Well, unless you're old school, hard core, and stayed up staring at the sky. Ummmmm, I work so that ain't gonna happen!

ACPS provides gigabytes of data routinely during a full night of observing. Try and match those results *night after night after night!* How many partial nights are you missing and you don't even know it? Last Sunday night, I went to bed with it *raining*, got up in the AM, it was *raining*, and found that for three hours during the night the rain and clouds had cleared... oh and yeah the observatory had grabbed a bunch of *super* pictures during that time...get the idea???

SOOOO What's the misconception then? Well, when you buy ACP and ACPS you think you're going to get more sleep right? Well initially NOPE cause you don't believe it's really going to work. The next era is you still don't get any sleep because now you KNOW IT WORKS and it is addictive to watch. YEP

you heard me it's so cool to see all the whirrrring of gear, pictures, software oooooohhhh so cool so now you still can't sleep.

Ultimately, you just plain get used to the idea that, and fully demand of your observatory that it, produce HUGE quantities of data that you sleeeeeppppppp realllllllyyyyy weeeelllll. I leisurely check my run logs each AM to see what awaits. You know it's like Christmas, lots of cool presents from the sky in my computer... man it never gets old. Well, I hope that helps clear all that up.

Bob didn't ask that I make this post, I didn't discuss it with him in advance, but felt it my duty to let folks know about how cool ACPS is and what it's meant to my ability to haul in tons of pictures. I hope you are as successful as I have been with it, and am here to tell you, YOU will be.

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