

(about the same size as the St. Louis region from O’Fallon, Illinois to O’Fallon, Missouri). Most craters on the moon resulted from an impact with a small meteor or comet. Under the telescope’s magnification, we were easily able to see objects on the moon as small as 5 miles in diameter. If one watched carefully, the moon would appear to slowly move to one side of the lens and adjustments needed to be made to keep it centered. In reality, it wasn’t the moon that was moving so fast, but rather an effect of the rotation of the Earth. People had the chance to look at a variety of celestial objects through several telescopes, including Saturn, one of the most popular objects to see in the night sky. Its rings were clearly visible. Mars was also visible low on the horizon, visible only as a sparkle image because its light had to travel through more of the Earth’s atmosphere before it reached the telescope. We were told that Mars would be much clearer if it were higher in the sky. Late in the evening, the telescopes were pointed almost straight up to Alberio in the constellation Cygnus. To the naked eye, Alberio appears to be a single star. When looked at through a telescope, however, Alberio is in reality a double star system, one of which is blue and the other yellow.

More information about SLAS can be found at their website, [www.slasonline.org](http://www.slasonline.org). For those interested in learning more about astronomy, Jim recommended two books, *Pocket Sky Atlas*, by Roger W. Sinnott, and *Nightwatch: A Practical Guide to Viewing the Universe*, by Terence Dickenson. He also suggested SkySafari, an iPhone app that can easily be used as a reference in the field. Both Jim and Bill used SkySafari to get the name of the moon’s craters and of the stars that we observed this night.

Many thanks to **Lisa Nansteel** and **Gwyn Wahlmann** for getting Amighetti sandwiches and drinks and for taking care of the picnic setup. Thanks are also in order for those that brought a dish and/or desert for all to enjoy—the food was fantastic! Thanks also to **James Trager** for arranging for WGNSS to have the Star Party at Shaw Nature Reserve—an excellent place to have a Star Party because it is far enough from St. Louis to provide a truly dark view of the sky. A great time was had by all.



Astronomers Jim Small (left) and Bill Winingham (right) from SLAS and Wayne Clark (WGNSS and SLAS) stand by one of the telescopes at the WGNSS Star Party.



## When is a stag beetle not a stag beetle?

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*Parandra (Tavandra) polita*, Fort Defiance Park, Alexander Co., Illinois.

Last week I traveled to northwestern Tennessee to visit research plots, and on the way back I took the opportunity to stop by Fort Defiance Park near Cairo, Illinois. Fort Defiance represents the southernmost tip of Illinois, lying at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and on previous visits I had thought that the wet bottomland forest remnants present there looked like promising habitat for the ant-like tiger beetle (*Cylindera cursitans*). The type locality of a synonym

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<sup>1</sup> Originally posted 14 July 2014 at the author’s website, *Beetles in the Bush*, <http://beetlesinthebush.wordpress.com>. All photos by the author.



The color and shape of the body and prominent jaws give the appearance of a small stag beetle.



The entire rather than emarginate eyes distinguish this species from *Neandra brunnea*,

(*Cicindela alata*) is in northern Illinois, but the type specimens are considered to have been introduced and, to my knowledge, no bona fide records of the species are known from the southern part of the state. I have taken the species nearby on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River (MacRae et al. 2011), so I thought the chances were good of finding it here as well. And find it I did—in good numbers! Success already in hand, I decided to stick around for nightfall and set up some blacklights to see what other beetles might be attracted from the surrounding forests.

Sadly, not much of interest was coming to the lights. Temperatures and humidity were good, but a waxing moon with clear skies didn't help. Worse, the sheets were inundated with caddisflies—always a predictable consequence when blacklighting near large rivers but especially annoying because of their habit of flying into your face (and up nostrils, down shirts, in ears...) when checking the sheet for other insects. A few longhorned beetles did show up, as did some male and female reddish-



*Parandra polita* also has the mandibles contiguous at the base and a narrower, more flattened body.

brown stag beetles (*Lucanus capreolus*), and later a single coppery tiger beetle (*Ellipsoptera cuprascens*) also made an appearance. By 10 pm, however, I had decided enough was enough and went to one of the sheets to begin taking it down. As I did, I noticed a reddish-brown, large-mandibled beetle sitting on the sheet that, for all intents and purposes, looked like a small stag beetle. I wasn't fooled, however, as I knew exactly what this beetle was—I had previously seen this species in the form of two individuals at a blacklight in southern Missouri very near to my current location (although it was 28 years ago!). It was *Parandra polita*, an usual longhorned beetle belonging to the archaic subfamily Parandrinae, and those specimens (MacRae 1994) plus another collected more recently a few miles north—also at a blacklight in wet bottomland forest along the Mississippi River (McDowell & MacRae 2009)—to date represent the only known occurrences of this uncommon species in Missouri.

Linsley (1962) noted the tenebrionid (darkling beetle)-like appearance of beetles in this genus. Perhaps the glabrous, parallel-sided body recalls the appearance of some darkling beetles, but I have always thought these beetles looked more like stag beetles because of the reddish-brown coloration and, notably, fairly large, forward-projecting mandibles that even show the same type of size dimorphism as stag beetles—larger in “major” males, smaller in females and “minor” males. Parandrines differ from most other subfamilies of longhorned beetles by having the antennae short and equal-segmented and the tarsi distinctly pentamerous with slender, padless segments. Another small subfamily of longhorned

beetles, the Spondylidinae, shares these characters, but parandrines are easily distinguished from them by several characters including the margined pronotum—also a most lucanid-like character.

Although Parandrines are reasonably diverse in South America and Africa, North America boasts only four taxa, with *P. polita* and *Neandra brunnea* being the only two occurring in the eastern part of the continent. Annoyingly, I have collected just as few specimens of the latter as the former, despite the fact that *N. brunnea* is considered to be the most commonly encountered of all four North American taxa. The specimens were all taken in Japanese beetle traps that I ran while working for the Missouri Department of Agriculture in the 1980s, so I have never actually seen a live individual of that species. *Parandra polita* and *N. brunnea* are, however, fairly easy to distinguish, as the former has the mandibles triangular and contiguous at the base while in the latter they are sickle-shaped and well separated at the base. The former also has the eyes entire on the inner margin while the latter has them distinctly emarginate, and in basic gestalt *P. polita* has a narrower, more flattened body than *N. brunnea*.

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## 1<sup>st</sup> Bo Koster Grant Lecture

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*Richard Thoma*

### The Webster Groves Nature Study Society Presents

### The 1<sup>st</sup> Bo Koster Grant Lecture

“St. Louis Zoo’s Wildcare Institute:  
10 Years and Counting”

by Eric Miller, Senior Vice President  
and Director, Zoological Operations



Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:30 p.m.

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