



ETX SITE LIVE FORUM

August 2012



I have been asked many times over the years to start an online user forum. I have been using the [Livefyre](#) "comments system" since mid-March 2012 as a "reader comments" section on my [Cassiopeia Observatory](#) reports. In April 2012, a new "Live Forum" was added to the ETX Site. Livefyre has many nice capabilities and it is currently free (for the features I use). If you have any problems with the comments system please [Email Me](#).

The Live Forum is unmoderated and all comments will appear immediately when a user posts them. I will change that only if it becomes necessary. You can reply to existing comments or start a new comment. Please limit entries to the same topics as you would for email to me. This first "Live Forum" will be for any discussions on those topics. I have no intention to replace existing forums ([ETXAstro Yahoo Group](#), [Cloudy Nights](#), etc.), so feel free to use those as alternatives.

The Forum page will be archived at the end of each month and will be available on the [Forum Archive](#).

62 comments 8 people listening



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Spacecommander 5 pts

Viewfinder help here. I've got a mysterious viewfinder that attaches to the ETX itself via 3 wires (I know because it was dangling from the three wires when I bought it). There is NO on/off switch on the viewfinder yet it has an onboard battery and complicated surface mounted circuit. There is no name on the viewfinder anywhere - not even inside. Here's a link to the photos: http://www.pbase.com/spacecommander/what_is_this

As I say at the photo site - my guess is the autostar somehow controls it. Any help would be . . . well . . . helpful!

Thanks!

5 DAYS AGO

Like Reply

Spacecommander 5 pts



oh - and the 1/8 in socket on the side - my guess was just external power but maybe more?

5 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Spacecommander 5 pts

more still - it does NOT illuminate when the ETX is powered up

5 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Spacecommander The ETX is an ETX "Premier Edition" (PE) model. The finderscope is the LNT/Smartfinder module. LNT = Level North Technology. There is no ON/OFF switch. Usage is discussed in the ETX PE manual. If you didn't get one, you can get it from Meade's web site. If the AutoStar does not see the module by holding down the MODE key for 3 seconds, then it could be disconnected OR the internal battery is dead (or both). For more LNT/Smartfinder troubleshooting tips, see the Helpful Information: Telescope Tech Tips page on the ETX Site.

5 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Spacecommander 5 pts

mweasner Awesome! Thanks! Got it off the bay of ease (eBay) - guess neither the seller nor I knew what that was. The finder was broken from the scope but still attached by the three wires (as shown in seller's pictures). Won't be a few weeks till I have time to try out the scope LNT features or the finder itself but I did check it with a hand unit when it arrived and it did slew properly when commanded by the autostar. Looks like I got a great deal! Thanks for all the info.

4 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zzipy 5 pts

do you think i should pull out some of the batteries so it reads 12v and try that to be safe ?and if it works should i reset the autostar and retrain the drives ?

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

@zzipy Yes use 12VDC. A RESET will clear out any bad info, then you can enter your info. Do a CALIBRATE MOTOR (which measures the power level), then TRAIN DRIVES.

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zzipy 5 pts

hi,all

i just got my telestar ds-114at in the mail today that i won on ebay . packing was poor but all looks ok the only thing is that it did not come with the battery pack ,so i went to radoshak and made one to hold 10 aa battery's and found a plug to fit in to the computer control panel on the scope .(with the center +)

my ? is will this be ok to run the drives and autostare #495 or is there some kind of resistor in the line of the battery pack that comes from Meade with the scope ? with the 10 new battery the my meter reads 18v i would hate to fry it on the first try. the autostar looks like it was never used , i also check the reduction gear look like they have never been used .

16 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

@zzippy Typically you want 12VDC and 1.5A for many low-end telescopes. I don't have a DS model but I doubt there is a resistor in the battery pack.

16 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



Knite 5 pts

Hi I have ETX 80 and my handset is dead i have used my scope only one but this when i turn it on it doesnt do anything the led near the switch is on but no lights or display on the handset and the motor does not test or anything please help

16 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Knite Check the HBX cable connector and jack. If clean and not damaged, then check the batteries in the ETX; replace if needed. But if you don't have slew control then the AutoStar could be dead (it does happen occasionally). If you do need to replace the AutoStar, I suggest getting a #497 AutoStar instead of a replacement #494.

16 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



Knite 5 pts

mweasner Thanks for your reply, I have checked the connections and all seems fine tried 2 new sets of batteries i don't have any control of anything. i have only had the telescope around 2 weeks and used it just once brand new out of the box (very frustrated) especially as i do not have any dealers in the country i live i had to get this shipped to me (which wasn't so cheap). surely this must be a manufacturing issue or something right? warranty? whats the main reason for your suggestion to get #497?

16 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Knite Since the telescope is new, warranty would be applicable. I suggest contacting the dealer where you purchased it. The #497 is user update-able via software and has number keys on the keypad, making for easier data entry. The #494 software can not be user updated and if it becomes corrupted, then the #494 AutoStar is essentially dead.

16 DAYS AGO

Like Reply

Knite 5 pts



mweasner

Ok i will contact the dealer where i purchased it thanks for the assist any ideas what would cause the corruption tips on avoiding this happening again? forgive my ignorance and my newbie questions but is it just the handset that is dead? Or motor also? would the item in the link below be all i need to solve my problem?

http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Meade-AutoStar-497-GoTo-Hand-Controller-for-ETX-models-/120963473093?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_3&hash=item1c29fc1ec5#ht_500wt_1156

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Knite

The #497 will control the ETX-80. You will want version 4.3Eg in its software. Since your current handset is not even showing anything on the display, it is probably the handset that has failed. HOWEVER, there could be a problem in the ETX-80 base that is preventing proper power or communications with the handset. The only way to test that is with another controller or another telescope. As to why it could have failed, any number of culprits could have done it. Cosmic rays (seriously), shipping damage, random component failure, bad batteries, manufacturing defect.

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Knite 5 pts

mweasner

I assume that connecting it to my pc is of no help here then? i have the serial to usb connectors and all

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Knite 5 pts

mweasner

cosmic rays (seriously??) for some reason i hope this is what caused my problem haha

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Knite

If you have the #506 serial cable and a connector known to work reliably with the AutoStar (see the article "AutoStar and USB" on the Helpful Information: AutoStar Info page), you can determine if the Meade AutoStar Update Application (or AutoStar Suite) can see the AutoStar. However, there is no user-installable update to fix corrupted software in the #494.

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



DaliborGrubacevic 5 pts

Hi. I have a ETX 70 telescope and for two days trying to make my scope to find objects in the sky. Whenever i set him up to find somethingt it has to much of deviations! What should I do? Is the problem in the "Align"? Do I have to manually adjust the star in every "Aligning"? Please help! thanks. BTW my assistant is Google sky for android! so that's how I



mweasner 6 pts

DaliborGrubacevic There are many alignment tip articles on the Helpful Information: AutoStar Info page. What type of AutoStar alignment are you doing: Easy, One Star, Two Star? How far off is the first alignment star? Do you get "Alignment Successful" on the screen at the end? How far off (in degrees) is the object you are GOTOing? Yes, lots of questions but if the articles don't help you, knowing the answers can help pinpoint what the problem could be.

16 DAYS AGO



DaliborGrubacevic 5 pts

mweasner **DaliborGrubacevic** Hi and tnx for you quick answer! I'm doing Easy alignment. And at the end Autostar says "Alignment Successful". Pointing of course scope to true north. How far? well pretty far. at this moment I was trying to find moon (looking at the Google sky on my android phone-because of the daylight). My android phone (HTC One X) shows little more to the left then scope. Scope turned more to north and the moon is more to the west. Let say around 10 degrees more left! Everything is accually more left the than scope!

16 DAYS AGO



DaliborGrubacevic 5 pts

mweasner and just to say. I was reseting scope. Calibrating motors, Training drive. Everything went fine. And then again after all that same story! :(

16 DAYS AGO



mweasner 6 pts

DaliborGrubacevic It sounds like you are trying to view the moon in the daytime (since it is a waning crescent and in the western sky during the daytime. How you you centering the alignment stars in the daytime? Is it just the moon that is off? The AutoStar #494 on the ETX-70 has really old software and the moon calculations can be off. When GOTOing stars or DSOs, are they off by the same amount as the moon?

16 DAYS AGO



DaliborGrubacevic 5 pts

mweasner Yep, maybe it's stupid of me to trying to view the moon in the daytime. I'll wait for a couple of days and then see how much of deviation my scope has. And yes DSO are also more to left that ETX find!

16 DAYS AGO

DaliborGrubacevic 5 pts



mweasner

Oh, sorry to ask. Can you tell me does compas shows magnetic or true north?? Maybe this is the problem with me? Tnx

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

DaliborGrubacevic

Nothing wrong with using the telescope in the daytime, or even GOTOing in the daytime. "Faking" the alignment is acceptable; the better the location and date/time values the better the first alignment star GOTO will be. And of course, the more accurate the initial HOME position (base and tube level, and the OTA pointed to True North), the better the initial star will be centered. You can then just press ENTER to accept the (invisible) star as centered. Same for the second alignment star. Of course, the same applies at night but at least you can correct for any alignment star pointing errors.

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

DaliborGrubacevic

Since a Magnetic Compass points to Magnetic North, you need to correct for your local "Magnetic Variation", which can vary from 0 degrees to about 20 degrees depending on your location. Once you know where True North is on your horizon (can you see Polaris at night?), you can then just point the telescope to that location on the northern horizon.

16 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Robert

Hello,

I currently own an etx 125 and Im wondering if anyone knows where I could get a replacement thumb screw. Im referring to the thumb screw that holds the eye piece in place. I've been trying to figure out what thread it is but have been unsuccessful. Any help would be greatly appreciated. Thanks

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

ScopeStuff.com has replacement screws for almost everything telescope related. Or, if you have an old computer cable with screws on the connector, one of those screws should work.

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Robert

mweasner

Thank you, I'll check it out.

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply

Robert



mweasner

Just found a old computer cable, and you were right the thumb screw fits. Thanks again

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zzipy 5 pts

meade telestar ds 114at with 494

can i use power supply that i have laying around ?

the input is 100-240v- 50/60hz 0.6a

the output is 12v -1.5a

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zzipy That should be adequate, IF it is a regulated power supply. Some cheap ones are not. I suggest using the telescope on its batteries for awhile to ensure that it operates correctly.

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zzipy 5 pts

hi, i won the bid for a Meade telestar SD-114AT telescope ,it comes with #494 autostar .my ? is should i try to use it with my pc using #506 conector cable or

should i just use it the way it is ? also it said on ebay listing that i would have to get a power supply ,I have a power supply input :100-240v - 50/60Hz 0.6a

output: 12v-1.5a center is pos.

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zzipy Before connecting a computer, learn to use the telescope and AutoStar #494. Once you are comfortable using it, then you can connect a computer IF you need/want to. If your computer has only USB, you will need a USB-serial adapter. However, not all work reliably with the AutoStar. I recommend Keyspan adapters. As to a power supply, you will need something closer to 1.5A.

20 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zzipy 5 pts

thank you , i will

19 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Spacecommander 5 pts

Hello, got a ETX-90 in today and discovered the tube itself is a bit loose on one of the adapters that attaches to the fork and there is something rattling around inside (like a bolt used to attach the tube to the pivot ;~) Does the ETX-90 disassemble similar to the instructions given for the EXT-70?

Thanks!

Tom

20 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Spacecommander There are four screws (2 each side) holding the tube adapters to the telescope tube. If the adapter is loose on the tube, perhaps the screw holes have been stripped. Check that. You might need to use a slightly larger screw if that's the problem. Or the screws could just be loose.

20 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



Spacecommander 5 pts

mweasner

So the fork arms come off just like the ext-70? Looks like the fork has to come off to access the screws.

19 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Spacecommander The screws holding the tube adapters to the OTA are accessible without removing the fork arms. See the small photo near the bottom of my "My ETX-90EC Experiences" on the Helpful Information: Buyer/New User Tips page. It shows where these screws are with the ETX-90 still mounted.

19 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



George

Hello All,

Stupid Newbie question: I bought a telescope on E-Bay listed as a ETX-125AT. It arrived today in seemingly in good shape despite awful packing, but it does not include an Astrostar #497 controller. It only includes the little "Electronic Controller" with slew speed settings and arrow keys--no GoTo functions. I was under the impression that all of the "AT" ETXs included the Autostar computer. Was my nice, new telescope misrepresented, or did I just get the AT thing wrong?

Thanks,

George

22 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

Initially, the ETX-125EC model was what was offered, with the AutoStar #497 optional. Later, the AutoStar was included as standard and the model renamed to ETX-125AT. The telescope itself is essentially the same (except for slight design changes in the mount over the years). If the model was "advertised" as being an AT model, it should have included the AutoStar, unless it said it was not included.

22 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



George

mweasner Thanks!

22 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



coastiesj06 5 pts

hi guys one quick question hope some body can help i have a meade etx 80 the unit has fesh battries inside the power light turns on but not the handset controller is there possibly a onboard fuse that has blown ???...many thanks chaps...please mail me @ coastiesj06@hotmail.com

25 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

coastiesj06 There is no onboard fuse in the ETX models. Do the slew arrow keys still work? If not, check for a bad connection in the HBX port; look for bent or dirty pins or pins that are too depressed in the jack and on the connector. If the slew keys work, perhaps the display brightness/contrast is set too low.

25 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



Doctor Tommaso

I have an ETX that is about 10 years old, and the focusing knob fell off when the allen nut loosened. When I tried to put the knob back on the focusing shaft I accidentally pushed the knob up into the housing and can't figure out how to retrieve it. Do you have any suggestions? You can either post me here or e-mail me at thomas_michel@harvard.edu. Thanks!

27 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

See the article "Focus Shaft Fix" on the Helpful Information: Telescope Tech Tips page.

27 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zapzap 5 pts

Hello guys,

I have found the following problems on a LXD75 mount and Autostar497.

First of all I've approximately pointed the Polaris through the polar scope, then set the mount in the home position and initialized the AS (Date, hour, DS, Lat. Long and TZ), then I have requested a 3 stars alignment, centering each of them

by the AS arrows. After the second star the AS has displayed the Az and the Alt error of the true Pole (about 30'), then has completed successfully the alignment procedure. After I have continued to search objects with a certain precision, then I have parked the scope.

After a minutes or so I have re-powered the mount, updated the hour and asked to the AS to slew to Arcturus that was the first of the three alignment stars, simply to see if all was ok. I was much surprised to see the scope to go to a completely wrong direction.

So I have turned off and on the mount, re-done the 3 stars alignment procedure, searched for some objects successfully, but failed with Vega.

I have the 42xx version of the AS497 installed currently, so I am ready to upgrade to the 43Eg.

Could you give me some tips of proofs to do?

Emiliano

27 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap After you do the upgrade, be certain to CALIBRATE MOTOR and TRAIN DRIVES (on both axes). As to the 3-star alignment, what happens if you do an EASY ALIGN?

27 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner

Mweasner,

I will try soon. Thanks

27 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner Mike,

Some days ago, I've upgraded to the AS to the 43Eg version, successfully completed, but in daytime so without trying a real alignment. This morning I have decided to calibrate and to train the motor drives. No problem with these procedures. Then I have thought to test an indoor two star alignment setting the date, hour, DST, ZT parameters and I have got a strange behaviour: Autostar has proposed a star below the horizon, not accepted, letting to me to select a star from the common name list. I remember that the 3 stars alignment I did some evenings ago, proposed only stars above the horizon. So I have decided to turn off the scope and to repower it, but now

the AS, after the welcome message (that confirms the 43Eg version) beeps and displays "Press Press" and every key I press writes "Bad key" on the second row of the display.

Emiliano

20 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap Reload 4.3Eg. If using a USB-serial adapter, not all work reliably with the AutoStar. I recommend Keyspan models. If you used Meade's AutoStar Update Application (Windows only), try using StarPatch (from www.stargps.ca). It works better with many USB adapters.

20 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner thanks, are you saying I can reload the 43Eg despite the AS is not responsive?

20 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap Yes. You may need to put the AutoStar into SAFE LOAD mode if updating normally does not work. Hold down the ENTER and SCROLLDOWN arrow keys while turning on the telescope. You will see something like FLASH LOAD READY on the screen.

20 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner I have safe loaded my AS497, turned off and repowered the telescope and all seemed performing well.

So I have installed StarPatch, that has upgraded successfully, but to the 43Gf version (not 43Eg) and I have the same problem with the "Press press" error. The worst thing that happens now is that the Safe Load shows the Flash Load Ready message, but the AS does not reset and continues to display the "Press press" error. I have a Prolific USB to Serial interface: the same I use with my LX200GPS scope.

19 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap Andrew Johansen discussed the "press press" issue on this page on the ETX Site: <http://www.weasner.com/etx/archive/nov11/autostar.html>. There are some further "press press" discussions that you can find by doing a search on the ETX Site for "press press".

19 DAYS AGO

Like Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner

Thanks for your link. I have carefully read all the discussions and learned that the "Press press" script runs when the Rx and Tx lines of the RS232 port are shorted. However why it runs also if the RS232 cable is not present?

In this case the Tx/Rx shortening would'nt trigger the script, is it right?

17 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap

Connector pins in the jack shorting out (dirt, debris, bent) or some internal short inside the AutoStar itself. Or perhaps a component failure.

17 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner

the press press problem continues to appear randomly so I have decided to open the handbox to check the circuit board under the RS232 connector. My multimeter continuity buzzer has revealed a short between the pins 1 and 2 (Rx and Tx wires) either on the soldering side of the cb and in the RJ connector. Before to proceed to desolder the RS232 connector I'd like to know how is possible that sometimes the Autostar starts correctly and sometimes not if the short circuit is always present. I have noted that the Autostar stops to go in error if I chill the hbx by an air compressor. Maybe there is a component on the cb that warms up and shortens Rx and Tx? Could me help the AS circuitry schematics if available somewhere?

15 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap

There are two articles on schematics on the Helpful Information: AutoStar Info page. Random component failures can be heat related or just random. If a solder joint is loose or bad, even moving the handset could affect it.

15 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



zapzap 5 pts

mweasner

Unfortunately the articles have'nt been usefull for me but I have finally got a repeatable (not random) behaviour, but you need to know what's happened in the meantime. To be sure the press press script triggers only when the Rx and Tx lines are shortened, I have wired a flying RS232 connector with the 1 and 2 wires soldered to a 4 pin peripheral power cable where I insert the probes of the multimeter. With the scope turned off, I have plugged the connector in the RJ socket of the handbox and heard to play the buzzer of my multimeter. So I have detached the multimeter and its probes, but left the connector inserted in the RJ socket, powered the scope and, with my surprise, the Autostar has performed correctly, then I have simulated alignments, scope parkings, turned off and on and repeated many tasks without the press press error. Lastly I have parked and turned off the scope and unplugged the connector from the RJ socket. In this case the press press error appears randomly. It seems that the RJ inserted in the RS232 socket prevents the

press press error despite the buzzer sound.

During the scope use I have also found that the LXD75 searches the targets correctly only if I do the scope alignment every time I start to use it. If I leave it parked and power it off then I re-power it and try to search some target without any alignment, the slew fails completely. The scope, however, parks correctly.

Sorry to have abused of your patience.

13 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply



mweasner 6 pts

zapzap

Definitely odd behavior on the RS-232 port and odd behavior on the parking. But I'm glad you have workarounds for both. Wish we had better solutions.

13 DAYS AGO

Like

Reply

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