

Club News:

Equipment evaluation polls

We're evaluation the existing club equipment and exploring possible changes and upgrades over the next year or so. There are two polls in the newsgroup area. One is to determine how much club members want to allocate towards equipment and the second poll to find out where their interest is. These polls will be open until the April meeting when a summary will be presented. If you change your mind on something you can recast your vote.

Currently the club has all large bills paid and as of the board meeting has \$1,927 in savings, \$981 in checking and Tom projects another \$600-\$700 from WOW registrations. The club fork mounted 8" Edmund is in the process of being sold and should bring in another \$500. This gives us a working budget up to about \$3,500, but the actual amount (if any) will be determined by the polls.

Preliminary ideas have been submitted and these include equipping the Mosquito Hill G11 mount with an accurate 'goto' system, picking up a PST type solar telescope, and replacing the Meade 10" with an equivalent 8" clock drive SCT for portability.

Some other thoughts are to pick up a 10 or 12 inch dob for DSOs, a 4-5" refractor or Mak-Cass for lunar/planetary, giant binoculars, eyepieces, filters. Anything is possible once the members determine a direction and budget. Please case your vote in the polls.

-Jim W-

Club Fundraisers

At the monthly meeting we discussed ways to add to the club's treasury and will try a voluntary 50/50 program. This is where anyone that is interested can donate a buck or two and depending on how much is collected, win half of the pot, the other half going to the club. We'll put this in after the monthly presentation rather than in the beginning (so that if we have new or perspective members they don't feel pressured to cough up in the first 5 minutes).

Additionally Tom Jorgensen was interested in starting some fund raising activities for specialized solar equipment. If anyone else is interested, please contact him.

-Jim W-

Club Membership

As of the board meeting we currently have 31 paid members for 2007. If you're not sure if you are paid up or not, Tom R is going to put together a list and probably have it at the next meeting.

A thanks to those that help out the club

While taking stock of the existing equipment, everything from the C11 at Mosquito Hill to the library cart in Ty's basement it becomes apparent that many club members volunteer to hold club equipment for the rest of us. We should recognize and thank these people, (as well as keep track of where everything is). So a thanks to Bob Peterson for the library and 6" scope, Don Wyman for the two 4" refractors, Dave Juckem for the 8" Edmund and some other equipment, Jon McKenzie for the 10" and Bill Hewitt for the club tent. If there is anyone or anything I have forgotten or didn't know about, please tell me and I'll get it in the next news letter.

At the monthly meeting the board also explored some possibilities for storing all the club's gear at a central location. More to come as this developes.

-Jim W-

Door Prizes for WOW

To date Russ at Denkmeier has come through in a big way to help us out with door prizes for WOW. Denkmeier is donating a brand new "Big Easy" binoviewer package (worth \$399) and three \$150

gift certificates. In addition Terry Becker came up with two subscriptions to Astronomy magazine. Please help the club acquire more door prizes for WOW. If everyone contacts one or two vendors then it's not an overwhelming task for any one person.

-Jim W-

POD

There is a company in Canada that is working on a Portable Observatory Dome made out of plastic. They are offering discounts to registered astronomy clubs. It costs nothing so I registered us. Currently there is no firm information on the discount, pricing etc. The product may start shipping this summer. If anyone is interested in obtaining one of these and we can coordinate enough people we can probably get a break on the shipping as well.

-Jim W-

Signs and Business Cards

Two signs and business cards should be printed and available for Astronomy Day in April. The signs should be a welcome addition to identifying the group (as a group that can be joined) at public events and the business cards a cheap and easy contact "take away" for prospective members.

-Jim W-

Upcoming Club Events:

Newstar Monthly Meeting on March 21st

Ty Westbrook will be hosting us with a sky show at the Planetarium. The show will begin at 7:15. We will meet in room 1329 and move to the planetarium for the remainder of the meeting.

-Jim W-

NPMAS Messier Marathon

The Green Bay astronomy club (NMPAS) is planning a Messier Marathon night at Neshota Park March 17th.

-Jim W-

Newstar Club observing night March 23rd

The next planned club observing session is at the Ertl Road site.

-Jim W-

Driftless Zone Star Party rescheduled

Due to wait deep snow the Driftless Zone Star Party has been rescheduled to April 20th.

-Jim W-

Mirror Grinding

Although we didn't get a firm date, Dave Juckem thought he will be able to resume the mirror grinding class this spring. So if you're involved (or want to be) stay tuned at the club meeting.

-Jim W-

Astronomical News:

March 19 – New Moon and partial solar eclipse.

-Jim W-

Observing Contributions:

Saturn with the 5" Mak-Cass and Canon Binos

We finally had a somewhat clear night on 3/7 and I got out with the binos and the Mak. The night has a lot of sky glow and the stars were somewhat muted. It was only about 10 degrees and a light breeze so I only viewed Saturn, Orion and searched for M51 before I got cold. The Cassini Division was visible in the 5". On an earlier evening I thought I was able to make out Titan with the binoculars and wanted to confirm it with the Mak but the evening wasn't clear enough. Still, Saturn was a beautiful site.

Ertl Road on March 10th

We had 4 people show up and got in some nice views of Saturn, Orion and clusters. I stayed until 1:00 (or would it be 2:00 with the time change?), anyway, I poked around in the Leo and Virgo galaxies for a while. I finished up going back to Saturn. After midnight the wind really settled down and the skies cleared. Saturn looked like a snapshot. I even poked in M13 which was just rising. Summer is coming.

-Jim W-

The great lunar eclipse of 2007!!

Ya right!, I was totally wiped out on observing it, clouds stuck around until 9:30pm when it was over! I was at work that night but planned on going on to the roof and watching on breaks. I also had quite a few people come ask me about it. the eclipse got alot of press. I'am sure Don Wyman was upset too! (NOT!)

-Jon McKenzie-

Observing Challenge

Ok, the lunar eclipse was a bust here, but elsewhere it was spectacular. My son, Mike, in Grand Marais MN was in the middle of a play reading on the shore of Gitchie-Goomie when the moon rose just past totality. Reflections in the lake's ripples made an awesome sight for the large crowd gathered there!

At 7:29 PM, CDT Monday, March 19th, - will we all be on "summer time" by then? - 30 minutes after sunset, look just 7° above the sunset point (2° north of due west) to find that very slim young moon. It will be just under 22 hours young. Sharp young bare eyes might see it.

I have not decided yet as to where I will go to look for it. Maybe Ertl Road! Anyone with a camera ready to capture it?

Note. The timing of this event is taken from my rather ancient but so easy to use SKYGLOBE planetarium program. It seems to be a couple minutes off from the Appleton Post's sunset times!

-Bob Peterson-

Equipment for Sale:

8" Edmund Scientific

The Club's 8" Edmund Scientific fork mounted scope will most likely be sold by the time the newsletter is published but volunteers may still be needed to help get it packed. Please help if you can.

-Jim W-

Meade 8X50 finder scope

I upgraded my finder to an Orion right angle version. If anyone is interested in it contact me.

-Jim W-

Whats Up with Astro League

NYAA Deadline Extended to March 15, 2007

http://www.astroleague.org/all/news/Whats_Up_with_Astro_League_February_2007.pdf

Charles Messier Biography

<http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/history/biograph.html>

NPMAS newsletter, page 5 has the Messier marathon info for March 17th.

<http://www.npmas.com/newsletter/currentissue.pdf>

Messier Marathon observing checklists:

<http://mysite.verizon.net/albireo/mm/index.html>

-Terry Becker-

NOTES FROM THE WINTER STAR PARTY

My wife and I had the opportunity to visit the Winter Star Party this year for the first time. I say "visit" because, although we registered, we did not stay on-site. More on this later.

The Winter Star Party is sponsored by the Southern Cross Astronomical Society and is held at a girl scout camp on Big Pine Key in the Florida Keys. Big Pine is about 60 mi. from Key Largo and 40 mi from Key West, at approx. latitude 24 deg. north. There is a good aerial photo of the site at <http://www.scas.org> - go to the winter star party page. Frankly, I thought that the place was a dump. The place is right next to the main highway, buildings are dilapidated (one is condemned); there are few facilities on site, and they squeeze 600 people into an area that is barely adequate for 200. Think of Vanna's Farm with palm trees. One neat thing is the "chickees". These are thatched-roof huts with screened sides that are rentable as bunkhouses.

Due to us staying elsewhere and having other items on our agenda, we only spent one night and part of another on-site after registering. I owe Renee big time for staying overnight with me in our van without any sleeping gear. Interesting note here: Coming in as a stranger, the first two people I ran into were Don DeWitt from Green Bay and Max Mirot from our own area. Don was actually working at the event and told me a great story about how that came about. Small world.

One thing I was not ready for was the changeability of the weather for a place renowned for steady skies. It would be perfectly clear one moment and totally obscured 10 minutes later, then clear again in another half hour. People I talked to said that this year's viewing was crummy, but "you shoulda been here last year!" Yeah, right. Average February temperatures are highs in the mid-70's and lows in the mid 60's.

Long story short, I had all of about 10 minutes of eyepiece time and did not get to see any of the premier southern sky sights like the Centauri cluster or the Eta Carina nebula. Still, it was neat having to crane my neck to see Orion, looking at Canopus about 15 deg. up in the sky, and seeing all of Puppis. I also had some really nice conversations with other attendees. The comfortable way to attend would be to get lodging in nearby Marathon, take a small tent for a place to crash or get in from the rain, spend all night every night there, and get out at the crack of dawn for a good day's sleep. Register early!

-Tom Riederer-