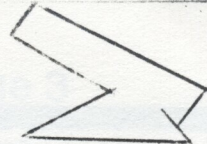


The

Prairie Astronomer



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Behlen observatory at Mead Ne. was the site of a star party gathering last month. The get together was hosted by the Omaha Astronomical Society.

It was a well organized event. Despite the cloudy conditions there were talks on comets and specifically Comet Halley. Taped programs were also shown. Well over a dozen telescopes were on display. These were set up for both celestial observing and several contests that were held later.

Of the over 120 registered, close to 110 showed up. Congratulations goes out to our own club members Ron Veys and Andy Corkill for winning the two observing contests.

Members from as far away as the Des Moines Astronomical Society were in attendance. The Omaha Club should be commended for a well run first time event. Let's hope it can become an annual affair.

The Ames Amateur Astronomers located in Ames Ia. and thereabouts held a grand opening this past May. It was in recognition of the completion of the McFarland Park Observatory.

Congratulations to them and all the workers who donated time, effort, and money to this project.

No news of the past solar eclipse has been given to this reporter. So the following blank space is left so accordingly.

The Comet Newsletter, produced by the Comet News Service might be a handy newsletter to pick up. It covers a number of aspects of comets. Of late more specifically on Comet Halley.

Subscription is \$5 for one year and \$10 for two years. (No new math needed there). If you are interested the address is CNS box TDR No. 92 Truckee Ca. 95734 phone number-(916)587-8785.

It is rapidly approaching the time for the Prairie Astronomy Clubs annual Star Party and Picnic and thunderstorm. Because of the latter we have started something different this year. This year we will have a primary date and a secondary date. If the primary date is overcast or rain we will then meet on the secondary date. If the primary date looks "iffy" then our call tree will be implemented. This way our members will know of the status of the get together.

As in the past, you bring your own pot luck food. Furnish your drink. Be there at 6:00 PM, we eat at 6:30. Talk until dusk and observe the rest of the night. The location is Wagon Train Lake, east of Hickman Ne. Contact a club officer for directions. You will need a state park sticker that can be picked up at a number of sporting goods stores.

Our primary date is July 28th and our secondary date is August 25th. Lets have a good turnout and stay tune to Tom Dunkley weather reports.

The Prairie Astronomy Computer Users group is slowly forming. We have 15 members signed up as having computers. Our members have computers that range from the Timex/Sinclair 1000 and VIC 20 to the Apple and IBM PC.

We hope this club within a club will help the entire club ease into high tech amateur astronomy.

As you gaze up into the night sky, providing you can

Keep from squinting from all the rain drops falling in them, you might see something strange.

No that bright object in the southern sky is not the usual planet Jupiter. Nor is it Saturn. It is that poor planet that has been catching all the flak for the past several years. Up until now Mars was not the most intriguing object for viewing.

But now it is almost 17 seconds of arc in diameter. If you are patient and can wait for those brief periods when the humidity clears up it is quite a site. While observing during my sessions I was disappointed in not clearly seeing the land markings nor the polar hood. I have a 10" and knew I should be able to. I checked my optics, the alignment, even took out my mirror and cleaned it before the next night. But only after I read information supplied by the Kansas City Astronomical Society did I realize why. I was possibly seeing dust storms on Mars. Now don't race out and look. Most of my observations were done in late Feb. My most recent ones of early May and again Early June show a more clear aspect of the planet. But that is not to say the storms will not pick up again this summer. So keep an eye to Mars this summer and lets hear from you at the meetings on it.

Russ Genzmer



This months meeting will be presented by Joe Marcus. Joe is a member of the Omaha Club. He is also the editor of the Comet News Service. His program will be Comets in general with a more in depth study of Halley's Comet. He'll include some of his own predictions, so don't miss it.