

The Prairie Astronomer

President's Message

by Ron Debus

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The other book I want to tell you about is Jake Winemiller's, and I'll let him tell you about it himself:

"A book that I've found both useful and enjoyable is 'The Universe From Your Own Back Yard'. As a rookie in the Astronomizing game, I use this book to do two things; First, it teaches me the constellations and secondly, it has maps of individual constellations in the night sky showing interesting objects for which I can look. In addition to this it has a chart listing these objects. The constellations are listed in alphabetical order and are therefore easy to look up. This book gives me constant injections of space wonderment that Slug and I crave during the long periods of cloud cover with which we are occasionally forced to deal."

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At the last meeting...

by Ellen Owen

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 by President Ron Debus. A visitor and friend of Bev Hetzels', Judy Ireland, was introduced.

The Secretary's report was read and approved.

The Treasurer, Lee Thomas, reported that he has not balanced the books lately, but it appears that we have about \$650.00 in the checking account, and have not touched the savings account.

During the discussion of Old Business Ron Veys asked for a report on the progress of the club telescope. Dave Knisely responded that he had ordered a 1.83" secondary from Novak.

Ron has 3 keys to the Atlas Site to sell.

Dave Knisely asked for an account of Rick Johnson and Steve Bornemeier's recent experience at the Atlas Site. Rick said that he and Steve were almost arrested by 6 Gage County Sheriffs. Apparently they expected a group of the Posse Comitatus. The Gage County Sheriff has no record of the PAC owning the Site, and demanded proof of membership from Rick and Steve, declining to accept a Prairie Astronomy Club jacket or a site key as evidence of membership. (They said that anyone could obtain these.) The Sheriff took their names, addresses, and phone numbers, and will be coming in the near future to haul Rick and Steve away unless Ron and the COOP board will cooperate and send letters explaining the situation. Stay tuned for further information...or incarceration?

The club still needs someone to help house a box of club library books. See Rick Johnson for more details.

Astronomy Day will be held on April 29, in the lobby of the expanded Mueller Planetarium. Dave Knisely passed a sign-up list, needing volunteers to provide different types of telescopes, binoculars, T-scanners, 2.4" spotting scopes, tables, chairs, computers, laser disks, and anything else you can think of BY NEXT MONTH. The show will be set up about 8:30, and will be over about 5:00.

Under New Business, Earl Moser told that the PAT house has a new coat of paint. He asked for an explanation of the recent article in "Sky and Telescope" called "Hex on Saturn".

Continued on last page...

The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., and is free to all club members. Membership status and expiration date are listed on the mailing label. Membership dues are: Junior Members and Newsletter Only Subscribers...\$10/yr; Regular Members...\$24/yr; Family Memberships...\$27/yr; Address all new memberships, renewals, or questions to THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC., P.O. BOX 80553, LINCOLN, NE 68501. For other club information contact one of the following officers: Ron Debus (Pres)435-5688, Dave Knisely (V.Pres)223-3968, Kim Ellen Owen (Sec)423-7440, Lee Thomas(Tres)483-5639, Jack Dunn (2nd V. Pres)475-3013. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to Newsletter Editor JOHN LORTZ, 9255 CADY AVE. #14, OMAHA, NE 68134 no later than 7 days before monthly club meetings. Club meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month at Hyde Observatory in Lincoln, NE.

Observing Chairmans Report

by Dave Krisely

THE NEXT SCHEDULED START PARTY IS FRIDAY, MAY 5TH AT THE ATLAS SITE. Spring skies offer a number of interesting and challenging objects for the patient observer. In Canes Venatici are several interesting galaxies. The best one is probably M51, located 1.75 degrees south and a degree west of 24 Canum Venaticorum. Visible in 7x35 binoculars, this galaxy is easy in a 2.4" refractor, appearing as a fuzzy round patch with a brighter center and a second smaller galaxy, NGC 5195, to one side. A six inch makes M51 look a bit mottled while an eight inch aperture will show the spiral structure vaguely. In a ten inch at 140x, some knotty structure appears, and a 12 inch makes the galaxy look like its photograph. Also in Canes Venatici is the bright spiral M63. It can be found one and one-quarter degrees north of 19 Canum, and appears as a faint fuzzy oval with a brighter center when viewed in small apertures. A ten inch will show some vague mottling in the middle of the galaxy, but otherwise there is little structure. In a sparse region of Canes are an interesting pair of galaxies, NGC 4631 and NGC 4656. Look 5.75 degrees south and 2.5 degrees west of Alpha for the nearly edge-on spiral NGC 4631. It is fairly large and shows some vague mottling in it when viewed in moderate to large instruments. An eight inch will also show a tiny elliptical galaxy, NGC 4627, along one side. 6.2 degrees south and 2.2 west of Alpha lies the peculiar galaxy NGC 4656. Visible in a six inch, this galaxy has a peculiar "hook" on the north-east end. A ten inch will show some brightness variations in the galaxy and the hook.

In Virgo is a nearly edge-on spiral that is a near twin to M104. Look about 2.2 degrees west and 1/4 degree north of Epsilon Virginis for NGC 4762. An eight inch shows it as a long streak of light with a brighter egg-shaped nucleus and vague dark lane down the middle. A smaller elliptical galaxy, NGC 4754 lies only 11 minutes to the west.

In Ursa Major are several faint but interesting galaxies. M108 can be found about 3/4 degree south and 1.5 degrees east of Beta Ursa Majoris and should be visible in a four inch as a dim fuzzy cigar-shaped patch. An eight inch will hint at some dark detail in the galaxy, as well as showing a star near the center. A ten inch under good conditions shows an extensive irregular dark lane running nearly the length of the galaxy. While in the area, look about 3/4 degree to the south-east to find the Owl Nebula, M97. It appears as a faint circular fuzzy patch with a dark area off center when viewed in a six inch. If you look 1/2 degree south and 1/2 east of Gamma, you will see M109, a bright barred spiral galaxy. Although visible in fairly small instruments, this object shows little detail even in moderate apertures. A ten inch will show the central bar faintly and some faint patchiness in the outer haze.

One of the largest but most difficult Messier objects to observe is the nearly face-on spiral galaxy M101. Located about five degrees east and a half south of Alcor (80 Ursa Majoris), this galaxy can be glimpsed in a pair of 10x50 binoculars as a tiny faint fuzzy spot. A six inch will make the center a bit brighter, but otherwise M101 will appear very large and very faint. Under good conditions, a ten inch will show indications of spiral structure, but the details are vague at best.

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A telescope and volunteer are needed for May 17 by Ann Kelley for a sky show at Camp Kfirake. Some volunteer certificates were left at the Observatory for Ron to pass out. Did anyone get a copy of Ced Gibb's library list and Ron Vey's list of labeling errors in Uranomtria I?

Requests to order Club T-shirts and jackets have been received. Twelve or more are needed to get a price break, and with 12 or more there will be no set-up fee. You must call Ron Debus or turn in an order with money by the next meeting if interested. Approximate prices are: T-shirts \$4.65, Sweatshirts \$12.00, Coach's shirt \$13.50, Unlined windbreaker \$14.00, Nylon flannel windbreaker \$18.50, Satin Flannel windbreaker \$26.25, Satin quilted windbreaker \$31.00.

Does anyone know the whereabouts of Brian Schaa? Lee Thomas reported that the Navy is sending his mail here.

Ron Vey's presented the club with a \$100 grant from the Brunswick Foundation. Ron works for Brunswick, and the club falls under the category of an educational program, for which employees can petition the company for money. Lee Thomas and Rick Johnson read a letter from Norma Coufal (if you could call THAT reading... deciphering, more likely!) A whole bunch of people moved simultaneously to adjourn and the meeting ended at 8:25. The program following was a presentation of slides by Rick Johnson.

The Prairie Astronomer
c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.
P.O. Box 80553
Lincoln, NE 68501



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Next Meeting April 25, 1989