

the December meeting. If you do not wish to retain your key, please return it to Lee at the December meeting or make arrangements to return it to him.

Key No.	Name	Fee Due Date
05	Russ Alberts	07/89
19	Erik Horn	11/89
14	Dave & Jean Kiple	06/89
04	David Knisely	12/89
08	Earl Moser	07/89
13	Ellen Owen	11/89
10	Joseph Turek	07/89
20	Adam Wessel	11/89
15	Johnson Winemiller	09/89
16	Adam Youngberg	09/89

A Note From The Editor...

First, my apology to Erik Hubl for not including the minutes from the last meeting in this newsletter, after he went to all the trouble of getting them to me. I had only planned on a four page newsletter this month, and after receiving Brian's letter, I decided to include it instead of the meeting notes. For what it's worth, I'll include highlights of the November notes in next month's 'longer' newsletter.

Second, I have been approached about creating membership ID cards for use at the Atlas Site. I would be happy to do so, and will include a sample card in next month's letter for the club's approval. My suggestion is to hold the cost down on the cards by simply using paper and laminating the paper with lamination film from an office supply company.

Finally, you'll notice there are no graphics in this month's newsletter. Well, for some reason my laser printer only wanted to print text this month (gee, and I had this neat Christmas stuff to print...). I'm looking into the problem and promise to have it solved by next month... John Lortz

The Prairie Astronomer

c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.

P.O. Box 80553

Lincoln, NE 68501

25 USA

First Class Mail

90/09 F
EARL MOSER
HICKMAN NE 68372

Next Meeting December 26, 1989

The Prairie Astronomer

Happy Holidays!

A Letter From Brian Schaaf...

[ED. NOTE: Long-time member Brian Schaaf sent me a letter describing some of his experiences with his Odyssey 1 telescope. Here's what Brian had to say...]

Last August I ordered an Odyssey 1 (13.1 inch) dobsonian from Coulter Optical. Roger Heaton (a member of the N.E. Kansas Amateur Astronomer's League) had allowed me to use his at star parties, and I was so impressed that I had to have one for myself.

I found out that the back log of orders for the Odyssey 1 meant that I would have to wait 12 months for delivery. I decided it would be worth the extra cost to order an Odyssey 8 (which would only take 3 months to arrive) in addition to the Odyssey 12. This way my astronomical appetite would be fed sooner.

Finally, on November 20, I received my 8" just before work that day. All evening at work I was yearning to unpack the scope and introduce it (and myself again) to the night sky. That workday was a long one! I carried the 39 pound scope and rocker box across the street and glimpsed M42, the great Orion nebula. It looked great! That same week I began to write down all of my observations. Here are some excerpts from my notebook:

Nov. 23, 1989-Obs 2315 - 0245 EST. Observed Jupiter and Galilean moons. The great red spot hollow was not visible... Because Auriga was at the zenith, the telescope was pointed straight up in its rocker box and tilted slightly eastward gradually, until an open star cluster entered the field of view. After centering M37

in the field, the scope was turned clockwise to trace a small arc across Auriga. M36 was found. After centering, and turning farther, M38 came into view. Just south of M38, a small elliptical appearing galaxy was present...

Observed Jupiter again. Great red spot was not visible and also nothing of the northern equatorial belt was seen! IO and Europa were positioned slightly differently than earlier. Details in the southern equatorial belt were clearly visible...

Nov. 24, 1989-Obs 0500 - 0635 EST. Saw moon with 34 power eyepiece; crescent and earthshine. As expected comet Okazaki-Levy-Rudenko was just about 3 degrees from the moon and easy to see. The nucleus was bright, appearing a little greenish-yellow in contrast to the moonshine all around. There was a coma...

Nov. 27, 1989-Obs 0130 - 0300 EST. Most successful odyssey observing yet! First, repeated the same zenith technique as on Nov. 23, to locate the three open star clusters of Auriga. M37 is the tighter cluster of the three. It's packed with many fine stars of roughly equal brightness. Most of the M37 stars are resolvable even near the center. M36 is much like M38; Large and generally round but with some strings of stars pointing out at irregular "points". M38 is especially interesting in that it appears evenly spaced with stars, but the general outline shape is a circle with a cross through it.

The previously perceived elliptical galaxy was resolvable tonight with a smattering of stars. The small open cluster is NGC 1907, half a degree south of M38... I quickly located Zeta Tauri, one of the "horn stars" of the great bull. I slowly slued the telescope in a circular motion with Zeta at the image plane's origin and Zeta was kept out of the field. M1, the Crab Nebula, was obvious, appearing like a ghostly comet with even surface brightness all over; rather featureless. M1 is a planetary nebula located 1 degree north, and 1/2 degree west of Zeta.

... only three moons were visible around Jupiter, very 'close' (by line of sight), no farther than one Jupiter diameter from the planet... observation of Jupiter was at 0200. Wishing to obscure the more than adequate light from the primary mirror, I placed my shirt on top of the aperture to form a small 'masking hole'. The mask combined with good seeing allowed me to observe a very steady image for several minutes...

... with a hand drawn map of stars copied out of a sky and telescope magazine (April 1989, pg. 144) I directed the scope to Ursa Major... starhopped to M108 (at least what I think is M108 because the obs location was right on). Gradually, with more concentration and careful use of averted vision, M108 revealed itself for moments during good seeing. It was a line of light backdropped by skyglow from local artificial lights...

... starhopped 1 degree farther past M108, and M97, the Owl Nebula, appeared as a larger circle shape of dim glow and a hint of a hole in it, out of center. Overall, a productive observing session. I was especially pleased by the seeing of M1 and M97; great seeing despite the lights of buildings and streets nearby.

Finally having my own dobsonian telescope permits me the convenience to scope the clear skies whenever nature allows. I'm like a kid let loose in a candy store; too much to see and consume all at one time!

Brian Schaaf

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 Chairman's Report

by Dave Knisely

THE NEXT SCHEDULED STAR PARTIES ARE DECEMBER 29TH, JANUARY 19TH, AND JANUARY 26TH AT THE ATLAS SITE (we ought to get at least one of these nights that is clear!). Early winter skies abound with open star clusters and nebulae. Leading off our observing is the rich group M37, located five degrees south and 1.5 degrees west of Theta Aurigae. Although difficult to completely resolve in very small instruments, this object is spectacular in apertures six inches and larger. It is a very rich and roughly circular group containing over a hundred member stars. Also in Auriga is M38, a nice bright cluster located 1.5 degrees south and a half east of Sigma. It is easy to resolve in small telescopes and is fairly large. A six inch will show over a hundred stars as well as a noticeable wedge shaped gap on the north side. Larger instruments show a little color in the brightest stars as well as the rich Milky-Way background. About a half a degree to the south is a much fainter but still interesting open cluster, NGC 1907. A four inch may show it as a small fuzzy granular patch of light with a six inch showing many stars in it. An eight inch Newtonian shows it as a tiny rich ball of moderately faint stars in a rich background field.

The Crab Nebula, M1, is one of the first targets as well as the first failures for many beginning amateurs. Located about a degree north and a half degree west of Zeta Tauri, this object can be seen in instruments as small as 2.4 inches, but only at low power. It appears as an elliptical irregular faint fuzzy patch with no real detail in most small to moderate apertures, and shows little easy detail even in large telescopes. An eight inch will make the object appear like a fuzzy "W", while a ten inch may occasionally show scalloping on the edges and some vague dark detail in the interior.

If you were disappointed in the Crab, you should try the Great Orion Nebula M42, surrounding Theta 1 and 2 Orionis in the Sword of Orion. Many beginners try to view it from in town and at moderate power, thus all but wiping out the faint outer detail. When viewed at less than 30x and with full dark adaptation, the nebula will look like an enormous broad fan of faint light running south from the four stars of the Trapezium. Larger instruments will show considerable detail in the core of the nebula, as well as the two "arms" of light that define the east and west sides. The use of Lumicon's UHC or OIII filters is highly recommended, since it will more than double the amount of detail visible.

A more difficult diffuse nebula is M78, located two degrees north and 2.5 degrees east of Zeta Orionis. At low power in a 2.4" refractor, this object appears as a small very dim patch of light. A six or eight inch will show it as a broad dim fan of light with a star near the center. A diffuse dark area can be occasionally seen in a ten inch but otherwise the nebula is nearly featureless.

There is one rather lonely looking globular star cluster in the winter sky, M79, located 3.75 degrees south and one west of Beta Leporis. Small instruments will reveal it as a small fuzzy ball of light in a rather blank area of sky. A six inch will reveal some stars on the edges and an eight will resolve it except for the very center. It is rather pretty in a ten inch at high power and is well worth the look.

Notes from Lee:

Our outgoing Site Manager, Del Motycka, reports that the padlock has not been returned to the gate, and there is reason to believe that it has fallen into Unfriendly Hands.

It appears that we will need to buy a new padlock for the site, secure same with a new chain, and issue all new keys. While this is not connected to the issue of key holders whose annual fees have not been paid, it should be apparent that new keys will be issued only to those whose fee accounts are in good standing. Others will find themselves, like those Unfriendly Hands with the old padlock, confronted by a locked gate.

We will discuss all this at the December meeting. By then, perhaps Santa Claus will have delivered the old padlock (or the tooth fairy, or the Easter bunny...).

THE FOLLOWING CLUB MEMBERS HAVE KEYS TO THE ATLAS SITE FOR WHICH FEES ARE DUE OR OVERDUE. If you wish to retain your key, please send the \$5.00 annual fee to the club post office box (P.O. Box #80553, Lincoln, NE 68501) or pay Lee Thomas at