THE Prairie Astronomer

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Dave Knisely

WOW, WHAT A MEETING! We had a packed house at the December meeting to hear Larry Stepp from the National Optical Astronomical Observatory in Tuscon give us the latest on the 8 meter Gemini telescope project. We also had the door prize giveaway, which probably brought out a few members who might ordinarily miss a meeting. A big thank you goes out to Tom Miller for his contribution.

Mark your calendars for June 11-13th for MIDCON 93, the Mid-States Regional Convention of the Astronomical League, to be held here in Lincoln at Nebraska Wesleyan University. The convention commitee has formed its various sub-commitees to complete the preliminary work on our preparations. If you would like to help, PLEASE contact Ron Veys as soon as possible. There is a lot to do, and not a lot of time to do it in, so please think about helping.

FOR SALE:

8" Celstron Ultra Schmidt Cassegran telescope. This scope is loaded with lots of accessories! Will sacrifice for $1,500. Call Tom Miller for information.

Day phone 438-1232,
Evening phone 466-4145.

Editors Note:

There were lots of inserts for this months newsletter, so you'll notice a lack of actual newsletter pages. Thanks to everyone who contributed information. Keep those letters and articles coming!

MODEL TELESCOPE CENTERPIECES AND RULES FOR THE CONTEST

by Erik Hubl

[Editor's Note: This article just missed last month's deadline so I'm printing it this month. I'm not sure what was said at the December meeting, so I hope the information is still appropriate.]

For the banquet we will need to come up with an assortment of decorationsto help carry along the astronomy theme. Past convention hosts have createdcenterpieces for each table at the banquet.

Michaela and Bev came up with a real good idea to get some centerpieces createdand have some fun doing it. It was suggested that we have a contest in ourclub to create small scale models of famous telescopes and at the banquetthe 3 best will be selected and awards given.

Many different types of telescopes could be made. Suggestions include; Palomar, Keck, Wilson, Herschel, Kitt Peak Solar scope, Hyde, or amateur scope.even space based observatories like Hubble, COBE, IRAS, Compton and many morecould be made.

RULES:

Each centerpiece can be no larger than 15" by 10" and 10" high.

The Models must be made out of inexpensive preferably household materials.If any materials need to be purchased, total cost will not exceed $10.00.Keep your receipts for verification.

The Models can have working parts but are not required.

The Telescopes must not have any spherical aberration.

The use of stickers and decals are permitted but please no stick people.

At the banquet we will draw a name from each table to win the centerpieceso don't become too fond of your work of art or else make 2 of them.

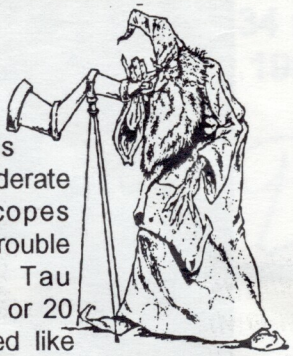
We will at least need 10 centerpieces for sure but the more we have, themore fun we will have with this. Some revisions may need to be made on these instructions but this is generally how it will be.

This photo and the one on the last page are Courtesy of Dave Knisely (I wish you could see them in color!)

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: Regular Members...$10/yr; Family Memberships...$12/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: Dave Knisely (Beatrice)223-3968, Ron Veys (Lincoln)486-1449, Lee Thomas(Lincoln)483-5639, John Lortz (Omaha)496-1122. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to Newsletter Editor JOHN LORTZ, 12023 PARKER PLZ #105, OMAHA, NE 68154 no later than 10 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 PARTY WILL BE HELD FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19th AT THE ATLAS SITE. Start you mid-winter observing with the large galaxy, NGC 2403, located a degree west of the faint star 51 Camelopardalis. Visible in binoculars, the galaxy appears as a moderate to large very faint fuzzy patch when viewed in a 2.4 inch refractor at low power. An eight inch may reveal hints of light and dark detail, while a ten will show a little mottling and hints of one of the spiral arms.

In Gemini is one of the most interesting planetary nebulae in the sky, the Eskimo nebula, NGC 2392. Located 1.5 degrees east and a half north of 56 Geminorum, this object is visible in small telescopes as a faint fuzzy star. A six will show the faint central star surrounded by small diffuse ball of haze and a very faint outer ring. Use of large apertures and the UHC filter reveal detail in the inner shell and patchyness in the outer ring.

In Monoceros is the combination nebula and cluster known as the Rosette, NGC 2244. The cluster can be easily seen in binoculars if you look about two degrees east and slightly north of Epsilon, but the nebulosity is faint, being just barely visible in 11x80 binoculars. The use of nebular filters help enormously, with even small RFTs showing the nebula around the cluster. Telescopes usually show the cluster in a hole in the nebula, which extends over two degrees of sky. Again, filters will bring out much faint light and dark detail. Another nice object in Monoceros is the open star cluster NGC 2301, located two degrees south and one east of 18 Monocerotis. It is a pretty elongated group of 15 to 20 stars arranged in a "Y" shaped formation.

Down south in Canis Major is the beautiful tight open cluster NGC 2363, also known as the Tau Canis Majoris cluster. Even moderate to small telescopes should have no trouble showing bright Tau surrounded by 15 or 20 faint stars grouped like fireflies around a yard light. Larger instruments will increase the number of stars seen to around 30 or 40, with Tau itself having several companions.

In Puppis are a pretty pair of open star clusters, M46 and M47. M47 is the brighter of the two, being seen with the unaided eye about four degrees south and one west of Alpha Moncerotis. It contains about 25 rather pretty bright stars in a moderate sized grouping, and is a real winner in a small telescope. Larger instruments wiii show a little color in the brightest component stars.

M46 is just over a degree to the east and a bit south of M47, and is easily visible in binoculars. Its stars are fainter than those of M47, but there are a lot more of them. The cluster is spectacular in apertures six inches and larger, with over 50 component stars being seen. On the north edge of this open cluster is the faint planetary nebula, NGC 2438. Visible in a six inch, this object appears as a small faint oval of light with a darker center. Larger apertures and filters make it look like a smaller twin of the Ring Nebula. About 3.5 degrees south of M46 is another planetary nebula, NGC 2440. It is fairly small, showing a faint bluish disk in a six inch. An eight will show it having a two shell structure with an inner elliptical and circular outer shell. The faint central star can also be seen.

PLEASE NOTICE

If there is an asterisk on your mailing label it is time for you to renew your PAC membership!

The Prairie Astronomer

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