

## While You Were Gone...

### Secretary's Report

by Jason Stahl

#### ATTENTION ALL CLUB MEMBERS!!!

*The club faces losing our Atlas observing site.* According to HOME real estate, they have a buyer for the surrounding land on the site. That remaining 15 acres is tentatively being bought for \$10,000 by a Contractor who moved here from Florida not to long ago. This person has stated that he would like to build a house on this property. If he is allowed to purchase this land, and does place a house on the land, this means that he will more than likely have outdoor lighting. Making any observing useless on our site. The club will discuss this issue in great detail at the February meeting. Your attendance is **STRONGLY** recommended!

The Prairie Astronomy Club will have a **Messier Marathon** for those interested. It will be held at the Atlas site on March 12th, beginning at sundown, and ending at sunrise. This is your chance to observe all 110 Messier objects in one night. Good luck to those who participate. You may need a partner during this race against the sun to verify each object for you. If you are not already familiar with the location of each object, read the article in the March issue of Astronomy magazine.

On May 10th, Hyde Observatory will be open to the public for the **Solar Eclipse**. Volunteers will be needed to help with the programs, telescopes, and crowd control. If you have equipment that can **SAFELY** view the eclipse, you are encouraged to bring it to Hyde for public use.

In the month of July, the 1st Nebraska Star Party at **Merritt Resort** will be held on the 7-10. So far there appears to be a large turnout from several different clubs from around the country. Merritt Resort is located 25 miles south west of Valentine, NE. The amount of time needed to make the trip, by car, from Lincoln is about **6-6 1/2 hours**. Once at Merritt Resort you will find several cabins and many camper hookups available.

As of this month, four cabins are left, and going quickly. Here is the breakdown of the remaining cabins:

Quantity	#Beds	Cost/night
3	4 Double	\$88

Each cabin has a small kitchen, a bathroom and small living area. A basic Maid service is also available each day. All linens are also supplied at no extra cost.

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## President's Message...

by John Bruce

**T**he big order of business for this month will be to vote (YES I said VOTE) on the revisions that have been proposed for the bylaws over the last 5 months. I do not think the bylaws will be printed again this month so if you are interested you will have to read last months newsletter for the "final" format. Be sure to come to this meeting so we can vote, as last month we did not have enough members present for a quorum as required in the bylaws to have a binding vote on bylaw changes.

I am sure quite a few of you know that the Firth CO-OP (Ron Preston) has listed the 15.57 acres that surrounds our observing site for sale with HOME Realty. But what I am sure most of you do not know is that as of Feb 8 they have an offer of \$10,000 for that land. When the club purchased the land we have, the group involved knew that this would happen at some point, so they included a Right of First Refusal clause in our purchase agreement with the CO-OP. This allows the club to purchase the land surrounding ours at the same price as any bona fide offer the CO-OP accepts from a would be buyer. We had this chance

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# The Prairie Astronomer

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(to spend \$10,000) the week of Feb. 7. I talked to all of the board members and some members that are not now on the board, but were involved in the original purchase, to see if there was interest in exercising our right of refusal. There was complete agreement that we DID NOT want to spend twice as much money as we have in the bank to buy the 15.57 acres.

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The cost for an additional person older than the age of six is six dollars/night. Rollaways are available at six dollars/night. Camper hookups are twelve dollars/night. This includes full electric, water and sewage removal.

If you are interested in going to the Nebraska Star Party, please contact any one of these people: Tom Miller 466-4145, or David Scherping 477-2596. If you want and know of someone who would like to share a cabin, please contact one of the above persons so a number count can be established for record keeping purposes.

Things to do during the day at Merritt Resort are, swimming, fishing, hiking, and just plain relaxing. A call for program papers will begin as of February one. If you are interested in giving a twenty to thirty minute paper during the day, please contact David Scherping, or Tom Miller to set a day and time for your paper to be given.

If you have missed a meeting as of November 1993, you can still watch that months meeting via video tape anytime one week after that months meeting. Each tape covers the entire business meeting as well as the programs. To obtain the tape call Tom Miller at 466-4145 during the evenings.

## Sky and Telescope News

from the Compuserve Information Service

JANUARY 29, 1994

### "SECRET" IMPACTS

Recently declassified data, published for the first time in the February issue of SKY & TELESCOPE, reveals that large meteoroids are exploding high above the Earth more frequently than had been thought. The data, 17 years worth of it, has been collected by visible-light and infrared sensors on early-warning satellites operated by the U. S. Department of Defense. Some of the largest of the 136 recorded blasts are equivalent to 5 kilotons of TNT, oughly a third of the yield of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima during World War II. Because the flashes from these meteoric bursts only about a second, the scanning sensors onboard the satellites miss about four blasts for every one they see.

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On Feb. 15 I received a call from the person who IS buying the land from the CO-OP. (The deal is set to close on Feb 17) He wanted to set up a meeting with me to discuss his plans (wants to build two houses) for the land with me. I have as of now only talked with him for a few minutes on the phone, but he does seem to be interested in how we use our site and what he can do to minimize his impact on us. I am meeting him for supper on Feb. 17 (no the club will not pay for my meal) to get to know each other and hopefully set the foundations of a good long term relationship between the club and him. I am hoping for the best in this meeting. This thing could hold some good (?) things for us as he will need to bring in power for the houses (we might be able to afford to have power for the site if he is real kind) and he has said that he IS GOING TO REMOVE THE TIRE PILE!!!!!! I do not know how he will get rid of it but if he can I will give him a standing ovation for doing so.

We also need to keep every one thinking about coming to help with astronomy day at the planetarium on May 7. If you would like to help see Ron Veys or Michaela Brown at the meeting. Only three days after astronomy day we have a partial solar eclipse (May 10). This could draw quite a crowd to Hyde even though it all happens around noon. I passed a sign up sheet around at the Jan. meeting and will be sending it around at the Feb., Mar., and April meetings so that we can have an idea of how many people we can expect to have at Hyde to help. If you want to bring equipment MAKE SURE IT IS S-A-F-E to use around a group of people who have no technical background in solar observing, be sure to REMOVE the finder scope, as no matter how well you think you covered it someone will manage to remove the cover and try to look through it.

One last thing for this book of a report. The First (annual?) WESTERN STAR PARTY has been scheduled for July 7-10 at Merritt Reservoir. This is the result of quite a bit of work put in by Tom Miller. The last time I talked to Tom there were still some rooms at the lake that had not been spoken for. If you want more information about this event see Tom Miller at the meeting or give him a call.

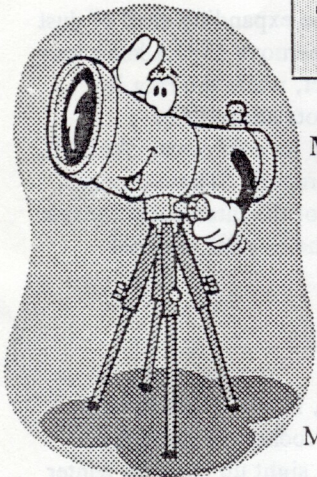
If you can, come to the VILLAGE INN at 66th and "O" street after the meeting for coffee and some time to chat. Our group of "regulars" is growing for this little get together, I hope to see more of you there in the coming months.

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: John Bruce (Lincoln) 483-0389, Lee Thomas (Lincoln) 483-5639, John Lortz (Omaha) 496-1122. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to Newsletter Editor JOHN LORTZ, 11684 MEREDITH AVE., OMAHA, NE 68164 no later than 10 days before monthly club meetings. Club meetings are held



# Observing Chairman's Report

by Jason Stahl



**T**he next scheduled star parties will be held on **March 4th and the 11th** at the Atlas Site. The cloud/rain dates are the 5th of March, and the 12th.

## Moon Phases:

Last Quarter is on the 4th New Moon is on the 12th  
 First Quarter is on the 20th Full Moon is on the 27th

The month of March offers many chances to observe the Moon with four different planets by its side. First, on the fourth hour (UT) on the 10th, Mercury will be 5 degrees South of the crescent Moon in the morning. Second, Mars will be 7 degrees South of the crescent Moon at the 23rd hour (UT) in the morning, also on the 10th of March. Next, on the 11th on the fourth hour (UT), Saturn will be 7 degrees South of the crescent Moon in the morning. Finally, on the 17th hour (UT), on the 13th of March, Venus will be 5 degrees South of the crescent Moon in the evening.

This month is devoted to observing those objects that people have thought to be the most difficult to look at. Galaxies have made people lose hope in seeing objects clearly and easily. But don't let these several Galaxies let you lose hope. All but two of these galaxies have been discovered by Charles Messier. Any size telescope six inches or larger will give you pleasing views of some terrific galaxies. Remember that you will need to use low-moderate power to find each of these galaxies, don't use high power unless you really want to. Using to high of power will lessen the brightness and make some of these galaxies seem faint and unclear. Stick to low power to find them and then use moderate power to achieve a "closer" feeling for the galaxy.

We start with one of the two that where not discovered by Messier. NGC 4565 is located in the Constellation Coma Berenices at 12h 36.3m, and 25.59 degrees. NGC 4565 is a Sb Galaxy that glows at a magnitude of 10.4. This is a long narrow galaxy that displays a dark lane cutting through the center of its core. This dark lane is its spiral arms shown edge on, giving a very pleasing view. In the same constellation, NGC 4321(M100), is located at 12h 22.9m, and 15.49 degrees with a mag. of 10.1. Images taken of M100 show great broad spiral arms with several stars seen in the arms. Under good dark skies you may be able to see one of the three arms and one or two stars on the edge of the arms. In a ten inch or larger you will see two arms with a couple more stars to be seen. Also in Coma Berenices, you can find NGC 4826(M64) the Black-eye. Located at 12h 56.7m, 21.41 degrees, with a mag. of 9.4, the name of Black-eye will become clear to you when you observe is fantastic galaxy. Its very bright core and bright tight arms will be a great galaxy to close out your observing in Coma Berenices, but what is this, a Globular Cluster in Coma Berenices? Can it be? Yes, NGC 5024(M53) is located at 13h 12.9, 18.10 degrees, and a magnitude of 7.7, this is a small but packed Globular Cluster that will refresh your memory on looking at Globular Clusters. In Ursa Major, NGC 3556(M108) is located at 11h 11.5m, and 55.40 degrees with a mag. of 10.7. M108 will look like a long cigar with a thin semi-bright core and fuzzy edges surrounding it. M108 is not a very impressive galaxy, but when you find it you can log it into your Messier book. Also in Ursa Major, NGC 3992(M109) is located at 11h 57.6m, 53.23 degrees with a mag. of 10.6. With your scope you can see at least two arms face on and the bright core and under dark skies, a couple of fairly bright stars around M109. Since you are in Ursa Major, why not find NGC 3587(M97), the Owl Nebula. Most of use have seen this, but if you have not logged it yet, now is the time to do so. Located at 11h 14.8m, 55.01 degrees, and a mag. of 11.1. When you find it, and that Owl is staring back at you, say: "Whoooo's There?" If you hear a response, seek help immediately! In Leo just east of M66 is NGC 3628. Located at 11h 20.3, 13.36 degrees, and a mag. of 10.3, this is the second galaxy that Messier should have discovered and placed on his list. In fact, with low power you can get NGC 3628, M66, and M65 in the same field of view. Giving you a view you will never forget. NGC 3628 is a long thin galaxy with a moderate core with a couple of stars outside of its arms, but with the correct eyepiece you can fill the entire field with this galaxy.

Don't be discouraged about some of these galaxies, and most of all don't give up to the entire field of astronomy. Most of the objects in the Universe are way to faint and to far to be seen with 99 percent of all amateur telescopes. You will just have to accept that fact. Maybe one day the average amateur telescope will be around fifty inches, but until that day comes, make good of what you have. If you feel that your current scope is to small, please, take your time, ask people in the club for opinions. Don't ask one or two people, ask a lot of people on what they think is a good telescope for you and your budget. Also, go to

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your local library and get some magazines on how to purchase telescopes. Astronomy magazine, for as long as I can remember, has put out articles on this subject once a year. Pick them up and read them carefully, then ask some more questions. Telescope are meant to be long-term investments, so buy the correct one for your observing needs.

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Therefore, scientist Edward Tagliaferri estimates that at least 80 kiloton yield meteoroids strike the Earth every year.

As to how so many large, bright bursts could somehow escape detection from the ground, Tagliaferri points out that many occur over the ocean or uninhabited land areas, often during daylight. Also in many inhabited parts of the world reports of sightings often never reach scientists; for example, not a single fireball report of any kind has been received by the International Meteor Organization in the last five years from anywhere in South America.

**NOVA CASS 1993**

According to German amateur Patrick Schmeer, Nova Cassiopeia 1993 was magnitude 8.0 on January 26th. The nova's equinox 2000 coordinates are right

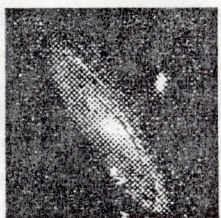
ascension 23 hours 41.8 minutes, declination +57 deg 31 minutes.

**PUZZLING SUPERNOVA 1987A**

Astronomers report that the expanding shell of dust and gas thrown out by Supernova 1987A has a very uneven appearance. In fact, while the ring is dimming overall, some spots are actually brightening -- especially in its northwest. As L.-F. Wang and E. J. Wampler report, "These changes may herald the beginning of the interaction between the supernova ejecta and the nebular material surrounding SN 1987A."

**NASA PROBES AURORAS**

Over the next two months, NASA plans to send aloft up to eight sounding rockets to study the auroras that are a common sight up there on winter nights. They'll be launched from the Poker Flat Research Range near Fairbanks. Each rocket will carry a main payloads and two ejectable payloads with a total of 28 sensors. Each flight will measure the interaction of the aurora with the atmosphere for a nine-minute period.



The Prairie Astronomer  
 c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.  
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First Class Mail

**Next Meeting  
 February 22, 1994**

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

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