

# ❖Prairie Astronomer Extra❖

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## No, It Wasn't the Postal Service This Time...

As much as I'd like to blame the post office for all 110 newsletter's not being delivered on time, I'm afraid I can't. Just before publication time, the Lortz computer system decided it had lived long enough and I had a drive failure. I was unable to get up and running again in time to publish the letter for the meeting, so I delayed sending out this "abbreviated version" until now.



My sincere apologies for whatever trouble this caused, especially since the October meeting was the election meeting. The good news is that because of the failure I was forced to upgrade my system a bit earlier than I'd planned, so I now have plenty of speed, lots of memory and gigabytes of storage space (and no good excuses for this to happen again).

The two articles I received for publication in the October newsletter are printed here, minus the article about club elections that Jason Stahl so kindly submitted. Our friend Astro Man will reappear in the November newsletter, which WILL be out on time.

## October at the Atlas Site

*by Dave Scherping*

Those who were ambitious enough to venture out to the Atlas Site on Saturday October 10th were treated to what was probably the best night for observing since July. The temperature dropped to a brisk 44 degrees, there were no bugs, seeing and transparency were near perfect, and the thin crescent moon set around 10:00 pm.

For me, it was great because it was the first night of real observing with my 10" scope since it got new enhanced coatings on the primary. It

made a huge difference with nearly every object I observed. It was also great to view through the new & improved Hubl Telescope. It was Eric's first night at the site since he got a new primary mirror for HST. Another new experience was Tom Miller's new portable computer, allowing us to use Megastar and B&T CCD Atlas while observing.

A night of observing is not complete until you have found at least one new object, especially if it's a good one. This time it was NGC255 and NGC246 in Cetus. NGC255 is a 12th magnitude galaxy, 3 arc-minutes across and NGC246 is an 11th magnitude planetary nebula, 5 arc-minutes across. In front of NGC246 is a cluster of 5 or 6 stars. NGC246 & 255 are about 1/2 degree apart and fit nicely in the same field of view in my scope at 100 power. As expected, an O-III filter brings out the planetary nebula giving it more well defined edges.

Referring to Megastar, we found that the stars in front of NGC246 were not listed as an open cluster and we noticed that there was a 14th magnitude galaxy 1/2 degree to the west of NGC255/246. As I was trying to find the galaxy, I noticed there were two 13.5 magnitude stars where there was previously only one. Then I realized one of them was a satellite, moving slowly across the field. I knew it must be in a high orbit to be moving so slowly and decided to time it. Then I realized it stayed put while the stars drifted past. It was a geostationary satellite! Another first!

My six year-old daughter, Lauren, had a good time observing too. After looking at Saturn, the moon, and the swan nebula, she asked me to show her the "Doughnut" (also known as M57), which she described as being "cream filled" that night. Shortly afterwards, she went to sleep on the lawn chair under a pile of blankets, while the rest of us stayed up observing until well past 2am. That's when I left.... The hardcore observers stayed past 4.

### Scope For Sale

CELESTRON C4.5

4-1/4" Newtonian

w/ polaris equatorial mount,  
motor drive, solar filter,  
25mm Ortho eyepiece

\$400

Contact Dave Scherping  
477-2596



**While You Were Gone... by Jason Stahl**

As a reminder, the 13.1 inch club telescope building takes place every Tuesday starting at 7:00p.m. at Dave Scherping's home. His address is 640 South 30th St. Phone #477-2596. If you would like to help finish this project, be at Dave's or call and let him know.

"I would rather freeze and fight off mosquitoes than play astronomy on a computer." Ben Funk Jr. North Brunswick, NJ, Astronomy November 1994, page 14.

The first NSP committee meeting was on the 13th of this month. So far the eleven member committee has gotten the rough work done. The committee will meet on the tenth of Nov. to discuss in more detail on how to get NSP together. If you would like to be on the committee or would just like to come and see what is going on, contact Tom Miller at 466-4145 in the evenings. The NSP committee is broken into ten sub groups: Star Party Coordinator, Site Committee, Registration Coordinator, Reservation Coordinator, Program Coordinator, T-Shirt Coordinator, Publicity Coordinator, Door Prize Coordinator, Entertainment Coordinator, and Clear Skies Coordinator which is a life position held by Jason Stahl. If you would like to participate in the making of a national NSP, call Tom Miller.

**Reminders for November**

Nov. 10th First Quarter Moon 1h 15m  
 Nov. 13th Northern Taurid meteor shower peaks, 12:00a.m.CST  
 Nov. 17th Leonid meteor shower peaks, 3:00p.m.CST  
 Nov. 18th Full Moon 1h 58m  
 Nov. 26th Last Quarter Moon 2h 05m  
 Nov. 29th PAC CLUB MEETING AT HYDE OBSERVATORY 7:30p.m.

**Observing Chairman's Report**

On November 17/18th, the Moon is in Penumbral Eclipse. This means that the moon will be in the edges of the Earth's shadow. It will be widely seen across North America. The shadow show begins at 10:26p.m. Mideclipse is at 12:44a.m. The moon will have left Earth's shadow at 3:02a.m. By then most will have retreated into their warm beds.

Follow Comet Borrelly as it glides into northern Leo. Comet Borrelly will brighten to magnitude 8.0, and is expected to outperform Comet Encke. Be careful not to mistake Borrelly for a galaxy. This area contains few stars but a large number of galaxies. If you think you have found Comet Borrelly, observe what you believe it to be, and you should notice some movement within one half hour. For sure you will see movement in about one hour. For complete details on Comet Borrelly, see page 60 of the November issue of Astronomy.

The moon. Most astronomers hate the moon, and for good reason. That large, blinding, shadow casting hunk of rock hampers deep sky observing. On the night of the 17th, before the eclipse occurs, why not go out and observe the moon. Better yet, go out on the 10th and observe the "Terminator" with you scope or binoculars. If you have a scope, crank the power up and strap on your telescope belt, for you are going to land on the moon. Put the most power your scope can deliver and still have good images on the moon. If you have a moon atlas, by all means use it. If you don't have one, go out and buy one. Some times some of use get wrapped up in looking at things so far away, we forget how to appreciate the closer objects.

We don't need clear night skies to observe stars, just a hazy day. No, DO NOT look at the sun through a telescope or binoculars, but simply project the sun through a telescope or a pair of binoculars. If you have an old scope or pair of binoculars, these will work fine. You align the image of the sun by using the shadow of your instrument, and place an unlined scrap of paper about a foot from the eyepiece, and wa la. Then focus the sun on the paper, with your back to the sun. You might see a sunspot or two, but we are approaching a sunspot minimum shortly, so the large numbers of sunspots won't be seen. Again, DO NOT look directly at the sun with ANY kind of instrument, even your naked eye.

As a long term project, observe Saturn over the next seven months. In May of 1995, Saturn's rings will have disappeared. Right now the rings are moving upwards, for some time we have been looking at the northern hemisphere. In June of next year, we will begin to see the southern hemisphere. Be on the look out for the ringless Saturn in May of '95.

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