

# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC.

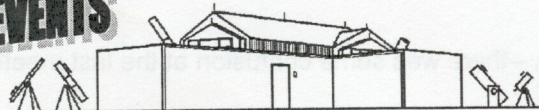
JANUARY 2001

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## INTERNET ADDRESSES:

PAC Web Page: [www.4w.com/pac/](http://www.4w.com/pac/)  
PAC E-Mail: [pac@4w.com](mailto:pac@4w.com)  
NSP Web Page: [www.4w.com/nsp/](http://www.4w.com/nsp/)  
NSP E-Mail: [nsp@4w.com](mailto:nsp@4w.com)  
OAS Web Page: [www.OmahaAstro.com](http://www.OmahaAstro.com)  
Astronomy in NE: [www.blackstarpress.com/arin/](http://www.blackstarpress.com/arin/)  
Hyde Observatory: [www.blackstarpress.com/arin/hyde/](http://www.blackstarpress.com/arin/hyde/)

## CLUB EVENTS



**CLUB STAR PARTY**  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2001  
Wagon Train Lake  
(see map on back page)

**PAC MEETING**  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2001, 7:30 PM  
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

**HYDE VOLUNTEER MEETING**  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2001, 7:00 PM  
Hyde Memorial Observatory

**NSP PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2001, 7:00 PM  
Mahoney State Park

**CLUB STAR PARTY**  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2001  
Wagon Train Lake  
(see map on back page)

**PAC MEETING**  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2001 7:30 PM  
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

## JANUARY'S PROGRAM:

### Learn to Use Your Telescope

Jack Horkheimer has declared January as "Learn to use Your Telescope" month. This fact, and a persuasive motivational speech from the PAC's president has guided me to have a "Learn to Use Your Telescope" program for the January PAC program. NOW, I need help from all the club members. Please come to this month's meeting on January 30th. Your attendance is important and we need everyone's expertise, no matter how experienced or inexperienced. I welcome any ideas or recommendations for instructional materials. Please come to the meeting prepared to help people!! Also, having a list of your favorite Books, Software, and Websites is always helpful for beginners. A few small telescopes from club members would be welcome.  
Brian Sivill

**HANDBOOKS AND CALENDARS:** The 2001 Ollwells and RASC handbooks and calendars that were ordered will be delivered at the January meeting. Liz said they didn't arrive until two days after the December meeting.

**PAC-LIST:** Mark Dahmke maintains an e-mail list server for PAC. If you have an e-mail address and are not on the PAC List, you may subscribe by submitting an e-mail to [list@4w.com](mailto:list@4w.com). Write "Subscribe PAC-List" in the body of the e-mail.

**2001 MAHONEY STAR PARTY DATES:** The 2001 Mahoney Star Party dates are:

May 25  
June 15  
August 17  
September 21

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# SECRETARY'S REPORT

By: Pamela L. Fiedler

President Dave Knisely called the meeting to order.

Discussion was held in regard to the Eclipse on Christmas morning. This type of eclipse will not be viewed on Christmas Day for another 300 years. (So if you missed the moment, that chance in your lifetime is over!)

Some meteor showers were seen in downtown Lincoln during the month of December.

NSP Planning Meeting will be held on at Mahoney State Park on January 11th, 2001. (around 7:00-7:30--depending on sunset)

The Schedule for Mahoney Star Parties is listed once again below, --there was some confusion at the last meeting:

Fridays @ 7:00 p.m.--May 25, June 15, August 17, and September 21, 2001.

Another short discussion was held in regard to Meade Telescopes and their vendors.

Please contact Dave Churilla if you would like to be on the Volunteer List.

Our Secretary has been invited to the Harvard Campus during her UNL Spring break. The Annals of Improbable Research/ Development (AIR)--in the Physics & Scientific Department will be reviewing her portfolio, and term paper in regard to theoretical physics, & the Unifying Field of Energy. The meeting is scheduled at 4:00 p.m., on March 15th, 2001 (Directly across from the Harvard Square)

The next PAC meeting will be held on January 30th, 2001.

Peace,

PAMELA L. FIEDLER, SECRETARY

## HYDE FEBRUARY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

Date	Team Leader	Operators
February 3	Bill Wells	Dave Hamilton, Lee Taylor
February 10	Jeff King	AJ Benker, Joey Churilla
February 17	Lee Taylor	Bob Leavitt, Pam Fiedler
February 24	Dave Churilla	Dave Hamilton, Joey Churilla

# The Romantic Astronomer

by Dave Churilla

Well, for those of you not amused by cute anecdotes, you're in luck this month. Other than to completely bore you with "cute" puppy stories (I do have a million of them.....well, ok....I'll resist...), the well seems to have run dry this month. Oh, I could blame it on a rigorous Christmas season. Perhaps blame it on observing blahs due to the seemingly constant clouds when we've planned to go out. Having an 11 year old son is certainly a legitimate reason for one's brain to go to mush. But the truth is mine was already there before Joey came along, so that reasoning just doesn't work. No, the plain truth is the brain just isn't working this month.

So, instead I decided to give a little helping hand to those of you who enjoy observing Jupiter. I spent an hour and a half calculating the times that the Red Spot will be transiting the central meridian of Jupiter (OK, so it wouldn't have taken so long had I not been watching the Sugar Bowl at the same time). I enjoy trying to locate this fascinating phenomenon myself, and thought some of you might as well. Enjoy.

Following are the converted times for the transit of the Red Spot across Jupiter. The times are CST and are indicative of when the Red Spot will be transiting the central meridian of Jupiter (imaginary line down the center of Jupiter - pole to pole).

Date	Time	Date	Time
1/31/01	2113 hrs	2/17/01	0028 hrs
2/2/01	2251 hrs	2/17/01	2019 hrs
2/3/01	1843 hrs	2/19/01	2158 hrs
2/5/01	0030 hrs	2/20/01	1750 hrs
2/5/01	2022 hrs	2/21/01	2337 hrs
2/7/01	2201 hrs	2/22/01	1929 hrs
2/9/01	2339 hrs	2/24/01	0116 hrs
2/10/01	1931 hrs	2/24/01	2108 hrs
2/12/01	2110 hrs	2/26/01	2247 hrs
2/14/01	2249 hrs	2/27/01	1838 hrs
2/15/01	1840 hrs		

## Hyde Volunteer Meeting

Over the past few months we've discussed many things we'd like to work on at Hyde, including updating the bulletin board and fixing up the west wall, making nicer displays (approved by the Supervisors of course). Volunteering at Hyde doesn't have to mean only being a telescope operator. You could work on one of these teams as well, or come out to be a host, welcoming the public on Saturday nights and directing them to where they need to go (beats them having to see my ugly mug). Consider volunteering for one of these activities.

We've finally gotten around to scheduling a Volunteer Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review policy and procedure, train newer volunteers on the equipment, discuss problems and suggestions and if the skies are clear, practice moving the scopes on objects generally observed at Hyde on Saturdays. Jeff suggested one topic should be how to keep me off their backs, but I exercised my veto on that one.

Some of the topics to be discussed at the meeting are:

- 1) Policy and Procedures
- 2) Update the Bulletin Board (get committee of volunteers)
- 3) Training on Equipment (including the finicky roof)
- 4) New Volunteers
- 5) Hyde Projects (i.e..Working on pizzazzng up the west wall, making it more exciting and informative...Updating the bulletin board... Put together a team to assist Rick with maintaining the Telescopes...etc).
- 6) Practicing finding objects on the deck.
- 7) Practicing with Team Leaders or whoever else is interested on Constellation Walks.
- 8) Just getting to know each other a bit better.

The meeting will be held on February 2, 2001 at Hyde Memorial Observatory at 7:00 PM. These meetings will be held once each quarter. (Everyone keep it quiet, we don't want the meteorologists to find out when, or we might get clouds again).

This being the first meeting this year, the meeting itself will probably last about 30 - 45 minutes. Then some will train/practice on the deck, some with the constellation walks. Newer volunteers will be given more detailed instruction. Time permitting we'll enjoy some observing.

If you are even considering volunteering in any capacity, please come out. If you'd just like to stop out and join us, you are certainly welcome to. We could use experienced people to help show us other interesting objects to show the public.

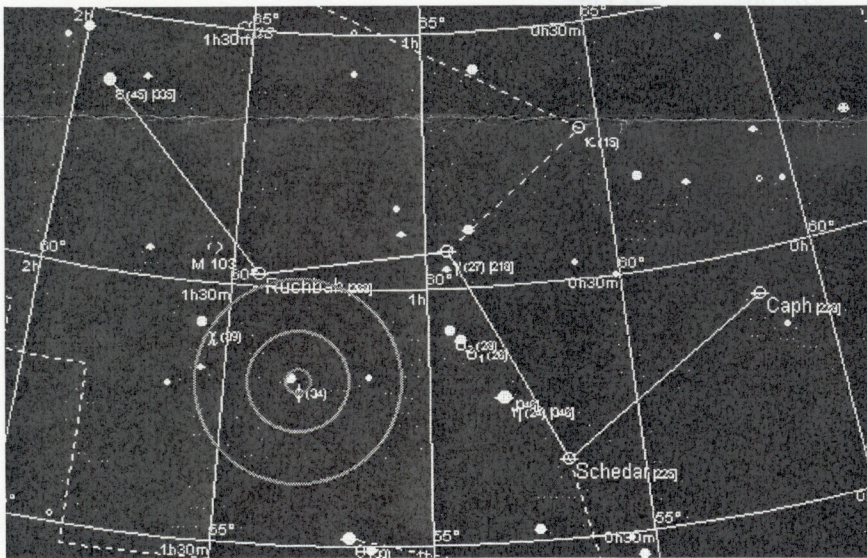
As I'd like to bring some refreshments, I'd ask that you please email me if you are coming (although if you forget to do so, please DO NOT feel like you can't come out, you are certainly encouraged to) at [weber2@inebraska.com](mailto:weber2@inebraska.com) (you can have my cookies...I certainly don't need them!)

Thanks, and hope to see you there.

### **My Object of the Month**

#### **NGC 457**

This open cluster in Cassiopeia is more commonly known as the ET, Dragonfly or Stickman Cluster. It contains about 80 stars averaging magnitude 6.4 and roughly forms the shape of a Dragonfly or Stickman. It's one of my favorites, especially to show kids.



# M44

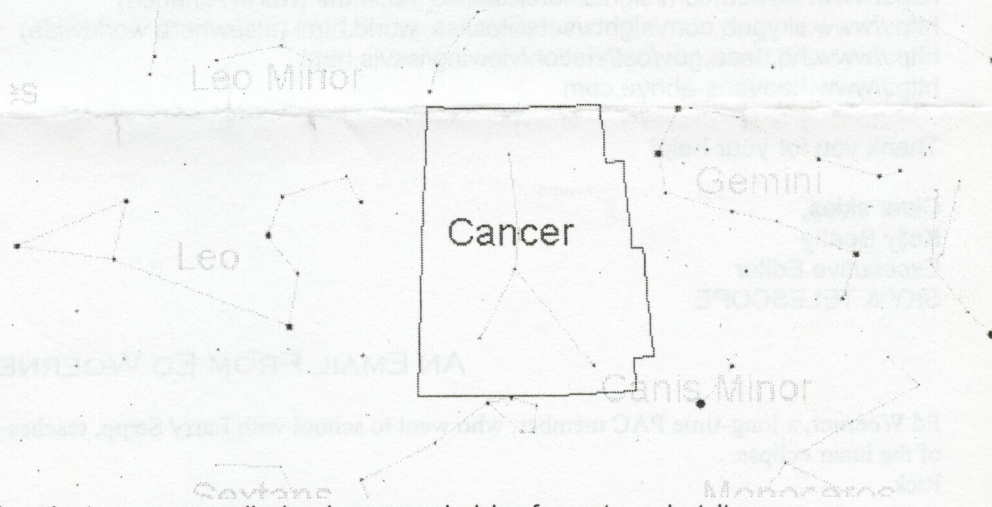
## *Praesepe (The Manger)*

Names:	Praesepe The Beehive The Manger
Messier:	M44
NGC No.:	NGC 2632
Type:	Open Cluster
Magnitude:	3.1
Distance:	520 - 577? Light Years
Diameter:	40 Light Years
Angular Diam:	01d 36' 00"
Constellation:	Cancer
Location:	Zodiac
Visibility:	1st February - unaided eye.
R.A.:	08 40 03
Declination:	+19 59 08



The Praesepe, or Beehive Cluster, is one of the best known star clusters and has an observational history that spans several thousand years and many different cultures. It's alternate name, the Manger, is linked to the two stars to it's left, above and below it - Asellus Borealis and Asellus Australis, respectively. These represent the two donkeys that were often depicted as feeding from the manger in the first atlases. The 10th century Persian astronomer Al-Sufi described the cluster as a small cloud surrounded by four stars, but it was Galileo who first noted that the cluster contained more than 40 individual stars, when he turned one of the first telescopes toward it in 1609.

Actually containing over 200 stars, from magnitude 6 to 14, it's thought to be about 400 million years old and covers an area of the sky three times the apparent diameter of the full moon. Consequently, it's best observed with binoculars and/or lower magnification as it's too large to be properly observed at higher power. Lastly, if you want a test of seeing conditions, try to find the Beehive with your unaided eye...



## SPACE-STATION MAGNITUDE ESTIMATES NEEDED

In an attempt to quantify how bright the International Space Station "Alpha" appears to ground-based observers, SKY & TELESCOPE is asking selected AstroAlert subscribers to make visual sightings of the spacecraft and to report the stations's apparent magnitude to the magazine. Note that the space station will be especially well placed for evening viewing during the coming week.

Please keep your report(s) brief, as the results may be tabulated, and send a separate report for each sighting. Include the following information:

- your name and location (city/town, state/province, country)
- date and \*local\* time of the observation
- time after sundown (or before sunrise) of the observation (in minutes)
- direction of ISS track across your sky (beginning to end, e.g. NW to SE)
- maximum altitude attained by ISS above the horizon (in degrees)
- apparent brightness at pass's \*midpoint\* (estimate to nearest half magnitude)
- apparent \*maximum\* brightness (to half magnitude and where along track)
- describe any unusual phenomena (flashes, etc)

Please send your report to: [iss@skypub.com](mailto:iss@skypub.com)

(Note that, by submitting a report, you are authorizing Sky Publishing to utilize your observation in its print and electronic publications.)

For sighting predictions, please refer to one of these sources:

[http://www.skypub.com/sights/satellites/iss\\_na.shtml](http://www.skypub.com/sights/satellites/iss_na.shtml) (North America)

[http://www.skypub.com/sights/satellites/iss\\_world.html](http://www.skypub.com/sights/satellites/iss_world.html) (elsewhere worldwide)

<http://www.hq.nasa.gov/osf/station/viewing/issvis.html>

<http://www.heavens-above.com>

Thank you for your help!

Clear skies,  
Kelly Beatty  
Executive Editor  
SKY & TELESCOPE

### AN EMAIL FROM ED WOERNER

Ed Woerner, a long-time PAC member, who went to school with Larry Stepp, teaches math at a college in Cairo. Here is his report of the lunar eclipse.

Rick

-----  
Hi Rick,

Hope the holidays went well for everyone and the PAC continues to thrive.

We had an excellent night for the January 9th lunar eclipse here in Cairo. The school where I teach is out in the suburbs. There's still lots of light pollution, as well as other

sorts of sky pollution, but our Math/Science club organized "A Night Under the Stars" and we watched the event from the roof. I brought my 6-inch Newtonian and some 7x50 binoculars. The eclipse was probably the most beautiful I've seen. The moon was a dark, wine-colored red. Very impressive. The star Delta Gem. was less than a half-degree away. Not visible to the naked eye but striking in binoculars. I heard that in Taiwan there was an eclipse of this star during the eclipse.

We also saw the evening planets and reviewed the winter constellations. There is no deep sky observing from Cairo!





Otherwise, hope all is well. Give my regards to anyone who might remember me.

Take care, best wishes, and clear skies.

Ed Woerner

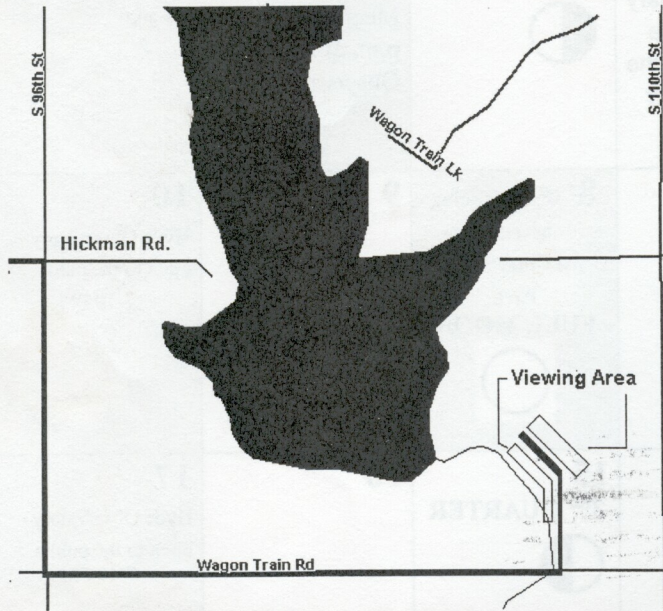
# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB CALENDAR

## For February 2001

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
<b>Aurigids Meteor Shower</b> This meteor shower is generally visible between January 31 and February 23, with a maximum of about 2 meteors per hour occurring during February 5-10. The radiant is normally located at RA=74 deg, DECL=+42 deg. The meteors are slow. Although the average magnitude is between 3 and 5, the shower is known for bright fireballs. The radiant seems to possess a daily motion of +0.7 deg in RA and +0.3 deg in DECL.				1 1 <sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 	2 Hyde Volunteer Meeting, 7:00 p.m. at Hyde Observatory	3 Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 PM
4	5	6	7	8 NSP Planning Meeting Mahoney State Park FULL MOON 	9	10 Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 PM
11	12	13	14	15 3 <sup>RD</sup> QUARTER 	16	17 Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 PM
18	19	20	21	22	23 Club Star Party NEW MOON 	24 Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 PM
25	26	27 PAC Meeting 7:30 PM Hyde Observatory	28	Mahoney Star Party Dates for 2001 May 25 June 15 August 17 September 21		

**Directions to Wagon Train Lake  
Observing Site**

From Hickman, NE, turn East on Hickman Road. Go until you reach 96th Street, then turn RIGHT. Drive until you reach Wagon Train Road, then turn LEFT. Area 6 is about 3/4 of a mile East. Turn LEFT into Area 6.

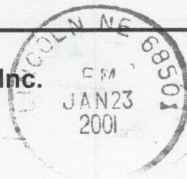


**OFFICERS  
OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB**

- PRESIDENT:** Dave Knisely  
(402) 223-3968  
KA0CZC@navix.net
- VICE PRESIDENT:** Dave Brokofsky  
(402) 486-3441  
dbrokof@msn.com
- 2nd VICE PRESIDENT  
(PROGRAM CHAIR):** Brian Sivill  
(402) 420-1227  
nanoamps@aol.com
- SECRETARY:** Pam Fiedler  
(402) 472-1705  
pfiedler@unlnotes.unl.edu
- TREASURER:** Liz Bergstrom  
(402) 464-2038
- Club Observing Chair:* Bill Wells  
topher@inetnebr.com
- Hyde Volunteer Coordinator:* Dave Churilla  
(402) 467-1514  
weber2@inebraksa.com



**The Prairie Astronomer**  
c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.  
P.O. Box 5585  
Lincoln, NE 68505-0585



First Class Mail

**Next PAC Meeting**  
January 30, 2001  
7:30 PM  
Hyde Observatory

EARL MOSER 9/2001  
P O BOX 162  
HICKMAN NE 68372-0162

