

# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC.

JUNE 2001

VOLUME 42 ISSUE #6

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 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/)  
 NEB-STAR: [www.neb-star.org/](http://www.neb-star.org/)

## JUNE'S PROGRAM:

For many decades there have been occasional reports of bright flashes on Mars. These have been seriously considered to be, among other things, Martians trying to communicate with the earth, nuclear explosions on Mars, and more mundane natural phenomena on Mars. Mars is now near the closest it has been to the earth in over a dozen years and is going to remain a bright object in the sky all summer. This year has seen the first attempt to predict when flashes on Mars have been seen, and this prediction led to successful naked-eye and video-tape observations of many flashes on two nights early this month. In this month's club program, Martin Gaskell will describe his role in making revised predictions that more flashes could be seen all summer with telescopes as small as 6-inches aperture. He will also share with the club a lot of the lively recent discussion among professional and amateur astronomers about the flashing phenomenon and follow-up observations.

## CLUB EVENTS



### PAC MEETING

**TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 2001, 7:30 PM**  
 at Hyde Memorial Observatory

### 8<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NEBRASKA STAR PARTY

**JULY 15 THROUGH JULY 20, 2001**  
 Merritt Reservoir, Valentine, Nebraska

### THE 3<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL SOUTHERN NEBRASKA STAR PARTY FOR THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE BIG ONE

**FRIDAY, JULY 20, 2001, STARTING AT SUNSET**  
 Wagon Train Lake  
 (See map on back page)

### PAC MEETING

**TUESDAY, JULY 31, 2001, 7:30 PM**  
 at Hyde Memorial Observatory

### MAHONEY STAR PARTY FRIDAY, AUGUST 17, 2001

Mahoney State Park

**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.



Valentine, Nebraska.

**NSP 8:** The 8th Annual Nebraska Star Party will be held from July 15th through Friday night the 20th at Merritt Reservoir, 27 miles south of

**NEWSLETTER CHANGES:** Be sure to read the note concerning the proposed changes to the newsletter on page 2. If you wish to have your say, be sure to attend the next club meeting.

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The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc. Membership expiration date is listed on the mailing label. Membership dues are: **Regular \$20/yr, Family \$22/yr.** Address all new memberships and renewals to: **The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., PO Box 5585, Lincoln, NE 68505-0585.** For other club information, please contact one of the club officers listed on the last page of this newsletter. Newsletter comments and articles should be submitted to: **Jeff King, 4018 South 83rd Street, Lincoln, NE 68506-5973 or [jeffrey892@aol.com](mailto:jeffrey892@aol.com),** no less than ten days prior to the club meeting. The Prairie Astronomy Club meets the last Tuesday of each month at Hyde Memorial Observatory in Lincoln, NE.

# SECRETARY'S REPORT

By: Pamela L. Fiedler

Secretary's Report for the Prairie Astronomy Club  
May 29, 2001

President Dave Knisely called the meeting to order.

Two guests introduced themselves.

Jeff Campbell passed around pictures of the Hyde Public Star Party.

Discussion was held in regard to the good turnout at recent star parties. Mahoney, UNL Student Observatory, and our own club parties were well attended.

NSP news: Over 100 registrations so far.

Next club star party is at Wagon Train Lake on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Dave Churilla is looking for additional volunteers for Hyde on Saturday nights. Please see him if you would like to help out.

Hyde Observatory's roof leaks and options are being sought to repair or replace it.

Discussion was held concerning the rising costs of printing the newsletter. One idea was to have it available online. One option was to have it emailed to members. A decision will be made in the next couple of months with membership input.

Adjourned to program. Doug Bell put on a wonderful program concerning binoculars. Those of you who couldn't make the program missed a good one.

## NEWSLETTER CHANGES

In effort to save money in publishing and mailing costs, we would like to begin publishing the monthly newsletter on-line.

Discussion was held during the last club meeting and two options were recommended. One was publishing the newsletter to a website while the other was to email it to all the members. After a discussion with Mark Dahmke, our website administrator, it was decided the web based

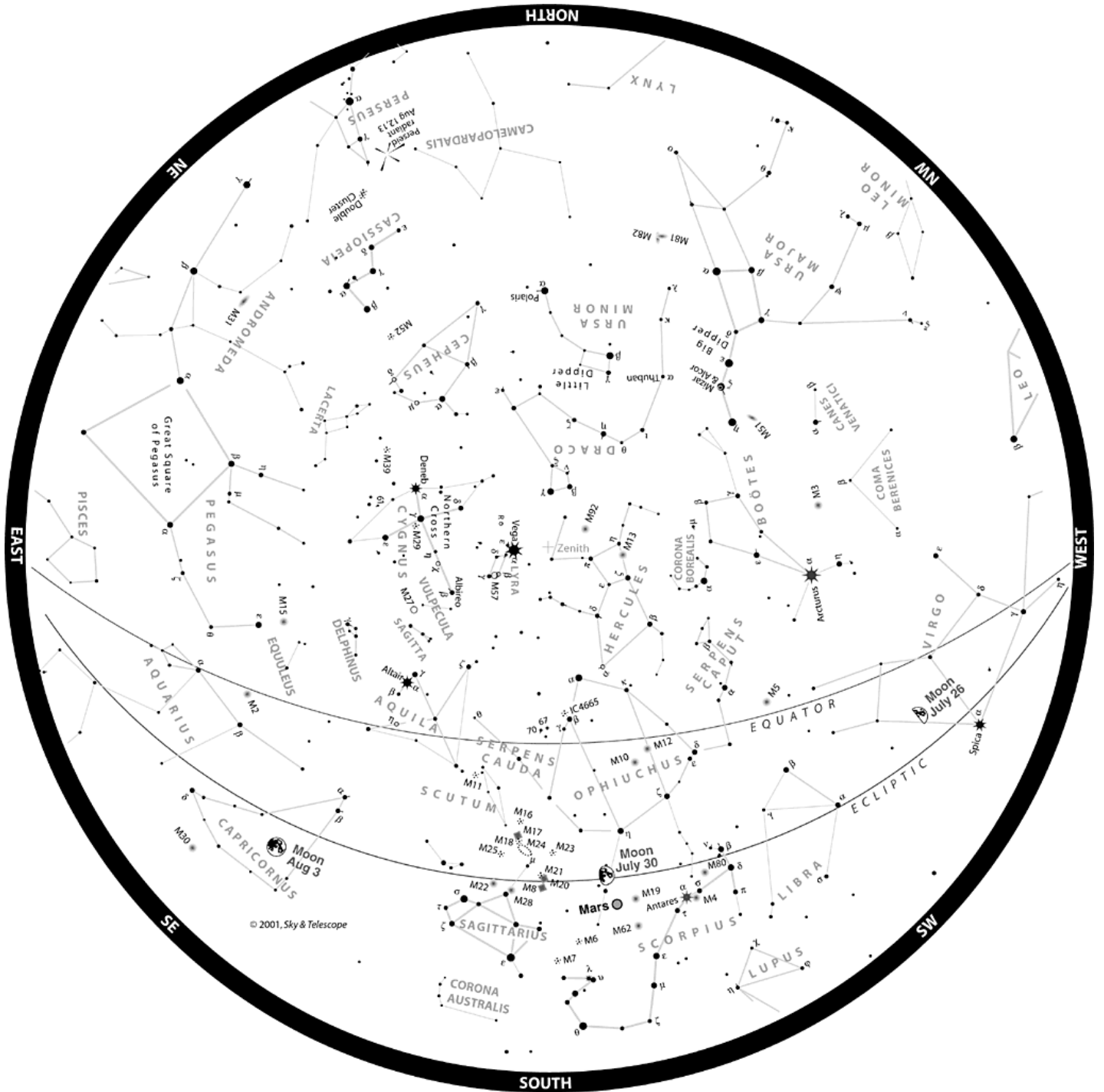
newsletter would be easier to manage and archive.

So if you would like to give your input on this subject, please be sure to attend the next club meeting as a decision will be made at that time.

# HYDE JULY SCHEDULE

July	Team Leader	Telescope Operators	Supervisor
7/7/2001	Brian Sivill	Dave Hamilton    Joey Churilla	Dave Churilla
7/14/2001	Bill Wells	Jeff Campbell    Jeff King	Lee Thomas
7/21/2001	Dave Churilla	Matt Reiling    Joey Churilla	Martin Gaskill
7/28/2001	Lee Taylor	Brian Sivill    Bob Leavitt	Martin Gaskill

# JULY SKY CHART



## ***Eighth Annual Nebraska Star Party to be Held Near Valentine, Nebraska, July 15-20, 2001.***

Lincoln, Nebraska—The eighth annual Nebraska Star Party will be held at Merritt Reservoir near Valentine, Nebraska the week of July 15th to July 20th, 2001. Sponsored by the Prairie Astronomy Club and the Omaha Astronomical Society, NSP is expected to draw over 400 registrants from as far away as California, Ohio, Florida and Texas.

The Nebraska Star Party has gained a reputation as being one of the premier star parties in the country due to the extremely dark skies of the Sandhills, and because of the many daytime recreational opportunities in the Valentine area. In addition to six nights of astronomical observing, scheduled events include an ice cream social, beach party, catered meals, many contests, a canoe and tubing trip down the Niobrara River, programs, a Beginner's Astronomy Field School, and educational activities for children. Photos and observing reports will be posted daily on the NSP web site during the star party.

The field school will be held Monday through Wednesday. Each day the classes will focus on a different skill. The NSP Field School is designed to help the person who has one foot in the door of the hobby of astronomy, or the spouse who wants to get better acquainted with what is going on. Participants will get hands-on learning while practicing the skills and techniques presented during the field school.

NSP is open to anyone interested in astronomy. During NSP, the registration desk will be open from Noon until 2pm daily (except Thursday). The cost is \$15/person (free for children 12 and under) for the entire week.

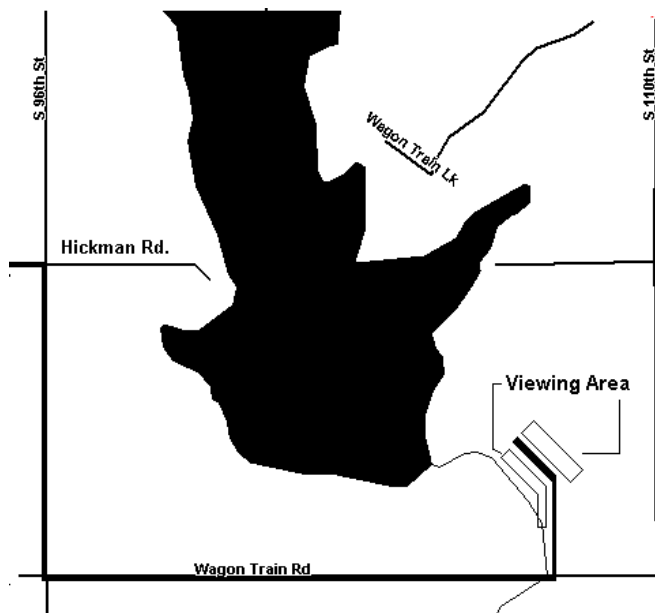
One of the primary reasons why NSP and other star parties are held at remote locations is to avoid the light pollution of urban areas. Even small towns generate skyglow that inhibits observing and enjoying the night sky. Materials from the International Dark Sky Association are enclosed with this news release that outline the problem and recommend practical and cost-effective solutions. Reducing light pollution will not only make it easier to enjoy the night sky, but will also save an estimated \$1 billion/year in energy costs.

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB CALENDAR  
For July 2001

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1	2	3	4 FULL MOON 	5	6	7 Hyde Observatory open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m.
8	9	10	11	12 3 <sup>RD</sup> QUARTER 	13	14 Hyde Observatory open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m.
15	16	17	18	19	20 NEW MOON 	21 Hyde Observatory open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m.
<b>THE 8TH ANNUAL NEBRASKA STAR PARTY</b>						
22	23	24	25	26	27 1 <sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 	28 open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m.
29	30	31 PAC Meeting 7:30 p.m. Hyde Observatory				

**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  
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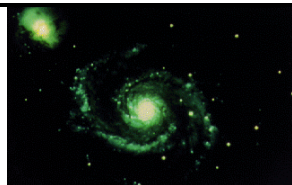
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**The Prairie Astronomer  
C/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.  
P.O. Box 5585  
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First Class Mail

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**Next PAC Meeting  
June 26, 2001  
7:30 PM  
Hyde Observatory**