



The Prairie Astronomer

The Official Newsletter Of The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.

July 2001

Volume 42 Issue #7

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 Astronomy in NE: www.blackstarpress.com/arin/
 Hyde Observatory: www.blackstarpress.com/arin/hyde/
 NEB-STAR: www.neb-star.org/

JULY'S PROGRAM:

Be sure to check the PAC website calendar for last minute updates on this month's program.

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. Write "Subscribe PAC-List" in the body of the e-mail.

NEWSLETTER CHANGES: If things progress as planned, this will be the last newsletter mailed out to all of our membership. The online version is available at: <http://www.prairieastronomyclub.org/members/>

You will need a sign-on and password which should be made available to you by the end of July.

Members who still wish to receive a printed version should contact one of the officers or send an email to the editor at: jeffrey892@aol.com or call my home number listed in the fine print at the bottom of this page.

PERSEIDS METEOR SHOWER: This shower peaks on August 12-13 with an estimated 80 meteors per hour.

CLUB EVENTS



PAC MEETING
TUESDAY, July 31, 2001, 7:30 PM
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

Club Star Party
FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 2001
Wagon Train Lake
(See map on back page)

MAHONEY STAR PARTY
FRIDAY, AUGUST 17, 2001
Mahoney State Park

PAC MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2001, 7:30 PM
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

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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,** 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

Prairie Astronomy Meeting Minutes for June

President Dave Knisley called the meeting to order. Guests were introduced.

Dave Churilla reported that the Star Party at Mahoney State Park went well. The weather was good, and 20+ telescopes were brought to the site by the public.

People wishing to view the sun should be cautious this month & use solar filters due to major flairs. Mars has been showing a lot of detail. The Comet Linear was reported in Pre-Dawn Skies.

Those wishing to attend the July Star Party at Valentine need to be aware that reservation prices have increased.

The next Prairie Astronomy Meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 31st.

Dave Churilla reported that 4-500 people showed up at the Hyde to view the eclipse.

The April Star Party at the Hyde had around 13 telescopes from the public present. More volunteers are needed on Saturday Nights due to public attendance. The Hyde has also been opening for Solar Observings.

The club members discussed Hyde Observatory repairs. Possibilities included:

--Replacing the solar panels through Grant-funded money. This would also commemorate the Hyde's 25th Anniversary in November of 2003.

--Repairing and purchasing of telescopes

Dave Churilla proposed a Binocular Observation for Fall of 2001.

The Fall Banquet is scheduled at Mahoney State Park on October 12th.

The PAC Newsletter will soon be online.

Adjourn to program.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela L. Fiedler, Secretary

Hyde August Schedule

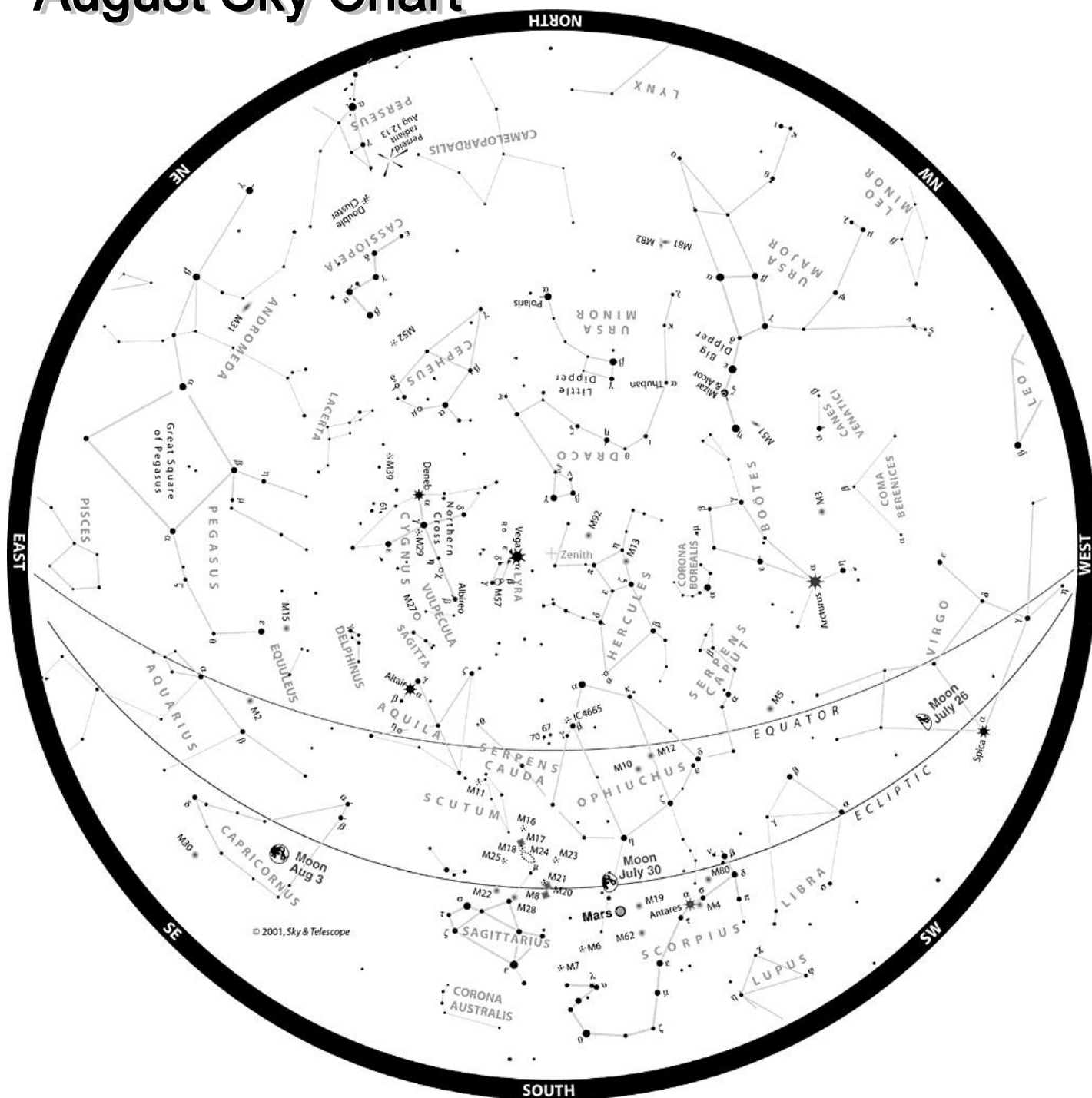
August
8/4/01
8/11/01
8/18/01
8/25/01

Team Leader
Jeff King
Brian Sivill
Lee Taylor
Dave Churilla

Operators
Jeff Campbell Bob Leavitt
Joey Churilla Matt Reiling
Bill Wells Dave Hamilton
Jeff King Joey Churilla

Supervisor
Jack D
Dave C
Doug B
Eric H

August Sky Chart



World's stargazers gather in ... Nebraska

Associated Press

July 18, 2001 07:31:00

VALENTINE, Neb. - Imagine a place so dark, so isolated, so removed from civilization that people from all over will travel there just to look up at stars.

Welcome to the Sandhills of northern Nebraska, a vast ranching area where cows outnumber people 10-to-1 and some trees are separated by miles.

A few hundred stargazers are taking over this remote area for a weeklong party to celebrate an unparalleled view of the heavens.

"Everybody's looking for a piece of Nirvana," said Robert Cuberly, who drove 620 miles from his home in Normal, Ill., for the party's opening Monday. "Tonight's the night everybody lives for."

Ricky Gonzalez came from the Philippines: "It's the first time for me to see the northern hemisphere."

On this clear Nebraska night, Mars is the first to appear, shining bright just above the horizon. Within an hour after sunset, the sky lights up with countless pinpoints of light, including the unmistakable swirl of the Milky Way.

Of the hundreds of star parties a year, Nebraska's is known in stargazing circles as one of the best because of its dark skies, unpolluted air and friendly atmosphere.

"I think it's a national treasure," said Dave Oesper, a computer programmer and part-time astronomy teacher at Iowa State University. "For somebody that wants the antithesis of the vacation in Disney World - no traffic, no lines, just nature - it's awesome."

The Nebraska Star Party was first held in 1994 and attracted 70 people. This year, about 400 people over the course of the week are attending.

As city lights interfere more with a dark night sky, the rarity and beauty of places like the Sandhills increases, said Forrest Hamilton, who works as a computer programmer for the Hubble Telescope project at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore.

"East of the Mississippi, there's just no site that compares to this," Hamilton said.

Being able to look up and pick out the Milky Way without a telescope is a spiritual experience, Oesper said.

"Areas like this need to be protected," he said. "We need to have places like this where people can go to see a night sky essentially the way it looked 100 years ago or more."

Once limited only to scientists, stargazing took off among amateurs in the 1960s when John Dobson developed a cheap but powerful telescope for the masses. So-called Dobsonian telescopes are popular at the Nebraska star party, which is sponsored by astronomy clubs 250 miles away in Lincoln and Omaha.

Star parties typically are scheduled around the weekend nearest to the new moon of a month, when skies will be at their darkest.

In Nebraska, they congregate each July on a 20-acre observatory field along the Merritt Reservoir, about 26 miles away from Valentine and its 2,820 residents.

The strictest rules involve keeping out light.

Car headlights are banned, as are interior car lights, brake lights, campfires and lanterns. Smoking a cigarette is allowed, as long as the lighters and cigarettes are shielded. Flashlights only with a red filter or red light bulb are permitted.


Each star party has its own personality.

The Stellafane party in Springfield, Vt., which has been an annual event since 1926, caters to those who make their own telescopes, while an event in California is only for users of a certain type of telescope. The Nebraska party is geared toward beginners.

"It's really glorious to see the Milky Way and much up there that so many of us are unaware of," said Warren Porter of Gaithersburg, Md. "The number of stars you see is just tremendous."

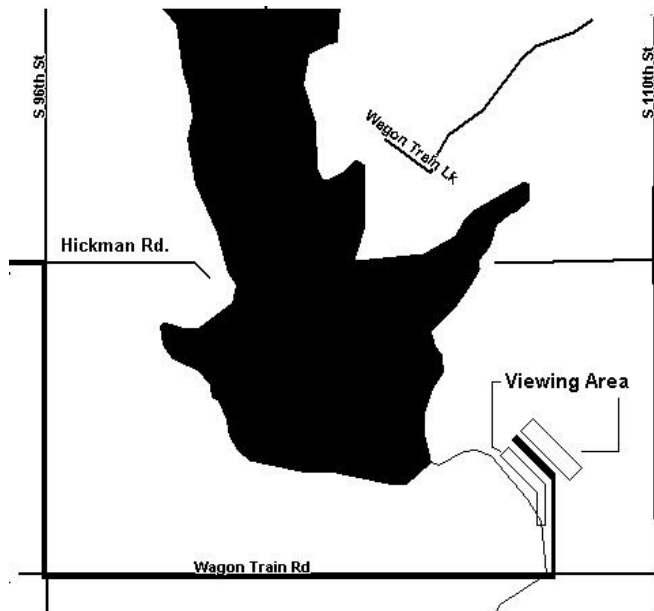
THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB CALENDAR

For August 2001

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
<h3 style="margin: 0;"><i>Perseids</i></h3> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Best Night: August 12-13, with about 80 meteors per hour</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Total Duration of Activity: July 23 to August 22</p>			1	2	3	4 Hyde Observatory open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m. FULL MOON 
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 Hyde Observatory open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m.
12 3 RD QUARTER 	13	14	15	16	17 Club Star Party	18 Hyde Observatory open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m.
19 NEW MOON 	20	21	22	23	24	25 open to the public sunset-11:00 p.m. 1ST QUARTER 
26	27	28 PAC Meeting 7:30 p.m. Hyde Observatory	29	30	31	

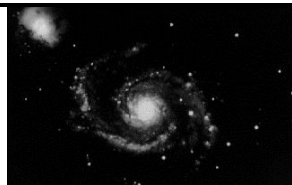
**Directions to Wagon Train Lake
Observing Site**

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**

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P.O. Box 5585
Lincoln, NE 68505-0585**

First Class Mail

**Next PAC Meeting
July 31, 2001
7:30 PM
Hyde Observatory**