



# The Prairie Astronomer

The Official Newsletter Of The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.

October 2001

Volume 42 Issue #10

## Internet Addresses:

PAC Web Page: [www.4w.com/pac/](http://www.4w.com/pac/)  
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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/)

## OCTOBER'S PROGRAM:

Check the PAC website for an update.

**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.

**ELECTION OF PAC OFFICERS:** Election of PAC officers as well as further recommendations will be made at the October PAC meeting. Be sure to attend so you can vote your preference.

**ONLINE NEWSLETTER:** Access to the online newsletter can be accomplished by going to:

[www.prairieastronomyclub.org](http://www.prairieastronomyclub.org)

Those members that wish to continue to receive the newsletter by mail and haven't already contacted me, please do so as soon as possible so you will not miss any newsletters.

**OTTWELL AND RASC ORDERS:** Page 3 provides information on ordering 2002 Ottwell calendars and 2002 RASC Handbooks. Orders need to be in by 11/3/01.

## CLUB EVENTS

### PAC MEETING

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

### UNL STUDENT OBSERVATORY PUBLIC NIGHT

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2001**  
UNL Student Observatory

### CLUB STAR PARTY

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2001**  
Olive Creek S.R.A.

### PAC MEETING

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 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](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

No meeting minutes were received.

## UNL Student Observatory Public Night

### SATURN RETURNS

Saturn returns in all its glory to the evening sky after a spring and summer absence. The UNL Student Observatory will be presenting its first views of Saturn of the season on Friday November 2. The observatory will be open from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.

Saturn will be visible from about 8:15 p.m. onwards. If the air is steady the large Student Observatory telescope gives stunningly sharp views of this perennial celestial favorite.

Saturn and the bright star Aldebaran are the two bright objects in Taurus. The full moon will be nearby to the upper right of them. It will be possible to see the moon in various telescopes during the evening.

Three other planets will be visible at the start of the evening: Mars, now getting left far behind by the earth, and the two outer giant planets of the solar system, Uranus and Neptune.

The UNL Student Observatory is located on the roof of the Parking Garage across from Memorial Stadium at the corner of Stadium Blvd. and T streets.

The observatory will not be open if the sky is totally cloudy.

There is no charge for admission to the observatory. Children of all ages are welcome. The observatory is unheated and fall nights are very chilly so visitors are advised to dress warmly.

The next public night will be Friday December 7. The observatory will also be open on the afternoon of Friday December 14 for the solar eclipse.

For more information about the Student Observatory contact Dr. Martin Gaskell, 472-4788 (MGASKELL1@UNL.EDU) or visit <http://www.blackstarpress.com/arin/unl/stdobsv/>

# Hyde November Schedule

November	Team Leader	Operators
11/3/01	Jeff King	Dave Hamilton      Jeff Campbell
11/10/01	Dave Churilla	Dan Delzell Jared Delzell
11/17/01	Brian Sivill	Bob Leavitt Joey Churilla
11/24/01	Bill Wells	Steve Lloyd Dave Brokofsky

**LAST CALL!**

**TO ORDER OTTWELL 2002 CALENDARS**

**PRICE IS \$18.00 EACH ORDER**

**AND**

**TO ORDER 2002 RASC HANDBOOKS**

**PRICE IS \$16.00 EACH ORDER**

**ALL ORDERS MUST BE PAID BY 11-03-2001**

**PLEASE SEND YOUR ORDER REQUEST AND  
PAYMENT TO:**

**PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB**

**C/O LIZ BERGSTROM**

**6611 VINE STREET**

**LINCOLN, NE 68505-2234**



## The Stars

The boy stood there, alone in the dark. The air was cool and the breeze crisp. It felt good on his face. There was that look about him tonight, that look of awe and deep wonder. They invaded his mind often when he was out here, alone with his thoughts and his friends.

The stars twinkled brightly, almost beckoning him to join them somehow. He often wished he could. What lies up there, what wonders could he not see from here? It was so huge, this universe of his. They say it's infinite, but he could not grasp that concept, could anyone? He reached out a hand as if to touch one of the points of light, a relatively close star called Vega. But of course he could not, it was so far away it would take years to get there, even if he traveled at the speed of light. There were billions of stars in his own galaxy and so much distance between them.

And yet there was comfort for him in these points of light. His world had opened wide when he began looking at them, began exploring the many wonderful sights among them, and beyond them. Not comfort of purpose exactly, but of not being alone. That even without life anywhere near those points there was a sense that the miracle of creation was still happening among them.

He closed his eyes, but could still see the stars. He imagined that he was in a spacecraft hurling through space. How fast he was going he didn't know, nor care. Spectacular objects sped past him as he left his solar system, entering the deep space zones of his galaxy. To his right he saw a Nebula, one of hundreds he'd viewed with awe through his telescope. His dream/time ship turns and heads toward it, the glowing cosmic material shining on his face.

Like in some otherworldly time machine he watches as clouds of gas and dust begin to swirl, to form a small ball of material. He shivers as he realizes he's seeing the birth of a star. More and more material is pulled around the shimmering ball until all at once it seems to ignite as the nuclear fusion that will fuel the star begins.

His space/time machine turns and he sees another ball begin to grow hot and he watches as it forms into a planet. Will it orbit the new sun that's glowing near it?

He leaves the nebula, saddened by his all too brief visit. His attention is grabbed by a group of stars in the shape of a ball. He smiles widely at their beauty. There are thousands of them, all bound together by each other's gravity, forever companions of the one near it. It always reminded him of a snowball just beginning to break up. It was beautiful, elegant, and awesome.

One would think that all this would make him feel very insignificant in the Universe, but watching these things has the opposite effect. He has a strong sense of his place. The beings on his planet may be only a spec in the cosmos, and their pathetic life span may be so short as to be immeasurable in the Universe's time frame, but they are part of all he's watching unfold here. They not only have a place in the cosmos, but also are as wondrous as every other creation, and even more so as they possess the miracle of life, and intelligence.

He often closes his eyes and imagines what is happening on other planets of his solar system. Watching the storms of one as his planet crosses the night sky, or spanning the billions of years it takes to form a star in a Nebula. He tries futilely to imagine approaching a nebula, to imagine its immense size as it spans light-years across his view.

Then he sees it, the celestial object he dreamt the most about, but never can see in his telescope. The Planet. It was discovered orbiting a very ordinary star not too long ago. It's not a large planet, as planets go. They don't know much about it yet. He chuckles as he thinks, "perhaps they should day dream more".

In his mind it's like his planet. His space/time machine swoops down on it, slowing to afford a good view of this new discovery. He can see trees and green plants, steams and lakes. He flies through a few puffy clouds as he descends to near ground level. Oh, it's just like he always imagines it! And there, just off in the distance is what he's really looking for!

People!

People going to work, people playing in parks, people eating supper, people walking with their loved ones.

People!

Can his real world, of all the worlds that must be circling the billions and billions of stars just in his own galaxy be the only world with life? He's always refused to believe that. Perhaps it was the dreamer in him, maybe the little boy or perhaps an insight. Whatever it was, he just knows there are other beings on other worlds like his, or perhaps not at all like his.

He smiled at that thought. He tried to imagine little boys with 4 legs and 5eyes. Or people made of crystals, or stone, or plants. What kind of telescope would someone who lived underwater use?

But the planet his mind was now flying over has people much like him. Oh, maybe their ears are different, their eyes shifted a little, so what if they had less toes than he did and their skin was a different color.

He moved to the dark side of the planet. He could see lighted skylines in every direction. Ribbons of light ran along the countryside as vehicles moved through the night. He could almost feel the cool night, taste the air. Then he saw him, standing there like he always is in his dreams.

The youngster is always there, standing and looking up at the stars. Is he wondering if there's life out there? Oh how he wished he could tell him there was, how desperately he wanted to meet him, to talk to him, to tell him of his world. To compare what they've both seen of their universe. He calls him Adam.

He opens his eyes. He's back. Looking up he sees the stars of his own world and picks out the group of stars that holds that newfound planet – the planet where his imaginary friend lives. He swings his telescope toward it to find that star, knowing he won't be able to see the world his friend is on, but he always tries. He finds the star and tries without success to see the planet. He knows it's too small for even his world's largest telescopes to see.

He looks at the star, that star that gives life to that newfound planet, just his star gives life to his planet. A smile crosses his lips. "Hello Adam" he whispers, wondering if Adam is out there, trying to find him through his own telescope.

His father quietly walks up behind him and puts a hand on his shoulder. It was time for dinner. Reluctantly he turns and smiles at his father.





"I heard on the news tonight that they've given a name to that planet you're always trying to find" his father says.

"Really? What is it?"

His father tells him, and they turn to walk back to the house.

# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB CALENDAR

## For November 2001

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				<b>1</b> <b>FULL MOON</b> 	<b>2</b> <b>UNL Student Observatory Open House</b>	<b>3</b> Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 p.m.
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> <b>3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER</b> 	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 p.m.
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <b>NEW MOON</b> 	<b>16</b> <b>Club Star Party</b>	<b>17</b> Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 p.m.
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> <b>1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER</b> 	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Hyde Observatory open to the public 7-10 p.m.
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>PAC Meeting</b> 7:30 p.m. Hyde Observatory	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	

**Directions to Olive Creek  
Observing Site**

Take US 77 south to Hallam Road, and go west on Hallam Road through Hallam and on to SW100th St. Then turn north (right) on the gravel and go about 2.4 miles to the Olive Creek entrance on the west side of the lake.

**OFFICERS  
OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB**

**PRESIDENT:** Dave Knisely  
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KA0CZC@navix.net

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Dave Brokofsky  
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dbrokof@msn.com

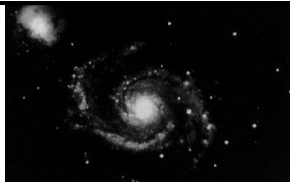
**2nd VICE PRESIDENT  
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The Prairie Astronomer  
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First Class Mail

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