

# The Prairie Astronomer

The Official Newsletter Of The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.

May 2003

Volume 44 Issue #5

## Internet Addresses

PAC Web Page: [www.prairieastronomyclub.org](http://www.prairieastronomyclub.org)  
 PAC E-Mail: [pac@4w.com](mailto:pac@4w.com)  
 NSP Web Page: [www.nebraskastarparty.org](http://www.nebraskastarparty.org)  
 NSP E-Mail: [nsp@4w.com](mailto:nsp@4w.com)  
 OAS Web Page: [www.OmahaAstro.com](http://www.OmahaAstro.com)  
 Hyde Observatory [www.hydeobservatory.info](http://www.hydeobservatory.info)  
 NEB-STAR [www.neb-star.org](http://www.neb-star.org)

## MAY PROGRAM

**May program:** To be announced

**PAC-LIST:** 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.

## CLUB EVENTS

**PAC Meeting 7:30pm**  
Tuesday, May 27, 2003

**Club Star Party**  
Friday, May 30, 2003

**NSP Planning Meeting 7:30**  
Thursday, June 12, 2003 Mahoney Lodge

**Mahoney Star Party**  
Friday, June 20, 2003

**PAC Meeting 7:30pm**  
Tuesday, June 24, 2003

**Club Star Party**  
Friday, June 27, 2003

**NSP Planning Meeting 7:30**  
Thursday, July 10, 2003 Mahoney Lodge

**Mahoney Star Party dates for 2003:**  
June 20, July 18, August 22, September 19.

**Nebraska Star Party:**  
July 27 to August 1, Merritt Reservoir, Valentine, Nebraska.

## READ THIS NEWSLETTER ONLINE

Those who wish to help with publishing and postage costs by receiving only the on-line version of the newsletter should contact Liz Bergstrom at 464-2038. Mark Dahmke or Liz can give you the logon account and password for access. You may receive both the mailed version and the on-line version if you wish. A printable PDF version of this newsletter is also available through the website.

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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: **Mark Dahmke, PO Box 80266, Lincoln, NE 68501 or [mdahmke@4w.com](mailto:mdahmke@4w.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 — Lee Taylor

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Prairie Astronomy Club Minutes for the meeting of April 29, 2003

President Dave Knisely called the meeting to order.

The Astronomical League's annual convention, ALCON 2003 will be held July 9-12, 2003 in Nashville TN.

The next NSP Planning Meeting will be held May 8 at Mahoney State Park.

Hyde Observatory will be open on Thursday, May 15 from 8:30- midnight for the lunar eclipse. Also, there will be a dedication ceremony for the new PV and computer system on April 30.

Lincoln Parks and Rec has asked for some assistance in celebrating the Pioneers Park Nature Center's 40th Anniversary on Friday May 16.

A suggestion was made to enhance the look of the PAC website's public page. If you have any ideas, get in touch with Mark Dahmke.

Treasurer's Report: All dues are paid up. Apparently costs for the printed newsletters will be going up, so we will be reducing the number we order.

There was a discussion about ordering club apparel, including debate about a new design. Liz will look into costs.

The club audit has been completed and the treasurer notified.

Adjourn to 2-part program, Hyde's new PV and computer system and THE NEW CLUB REFRACTOR!

NOTE: In order to promote the use of the new telescope by newer members, those checking it are asked to return it at the next club meeting.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lee Taylor

## Hyde Observatory Volunteer Schedule

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Date	Team Leader	Operators		Supervisor	Events
<b>May</b>					
5/17/03	Bill Wells	Joey Churilla	Bob Leavitt	Dave C	
5/24/03	Jeff King	Karla Bachman	Josh Machecek	Rick J	
5/31/03	Dan Delzell	Jeff Campbell	Jared Delzell	Brian S	
<b>June</b>					
6/7/03	Bill Wells	Lynda Beck	Jeff Campbell	Brian S	
6/14/03	Jeff King	Karla Bachman	Josh Machacek	Martin G	
6/21/03	Dave Churilla	Joey Churilla	Steve Lloyd	Dave H	
6/28/03	Bill Wells	AJ Benker	Bob Leavitt	Martin G	
<b>July</b>					
7/5/03	Dave Churilla	Jeff Campbell	Joey Churilla		
7/12/03	Jeff King	Karla Bachman	Bob Leavitt	Martin Gaskell	
7/19/03	Bill Wells	Josh Machecek	Steve Lloyd	Martin Gaskell	
7/26/03	Jeff King	AJ Benker	Lynda Beck	Dave Churilla	
<b>Summer Hours: April through September (Sundown to 11:00 PM)</b>					
<b>Winter Hours: October through March (7:00 PM to 10:00 PM)</b>					

## **Hyde Observatory Photovoltaic System Dedicated**

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The official dedication of the Hyde Memorial Observatory Photovoltaic system took place on April 30th, 2003. This project was conceived in November of 2000 as a replacement for the passive solar heating system that was in need of major repairs. Unlike the old system, which just collected heat energy, the Photovoltaic (PV) system is generating electricity. To date, it has provided over 60% of Hyde Observatory's electrical needs.

Hyde Chairman Erik Hubl welcomed the guests and provided opening remarks described the project from conception to completion. Todd Hall, Manager of the Consumer Services Division at LES (Lincoln Electric System) spoke highly of the project, its visible location and of the goal to share PV performance information with the public.



Lynn Johnson, Director of the Lincoln Parks & Recreation department praised the observatory and its volunteers for providing over 25 years of astronomy education to the public.

After the dedication speeches, guests were shown a short Power Point program of the installation process and a Power Point clip containing solar images. Many of the guests had never before seen images of the sun in H-Alpha or from the SOHO satellite.

The PV project was funded through a demonstration grant provided by LES. It is designed to demonstrate the process of capturing solar energy, convert it to alternating current and supply about half of the observatory's

electrical needs.

Lincoln Parks & Recreation provided several major improvements to the Observatory including a new shingled roof and new siding.

Information Analytics, Inc. of Lincoln installed the computer systems and provided programming services. Ron Veys designed and constructed the new cabinets that house the two computer systems. Alltel donated a ADSL service for the Observatory's use. Jon Dixon of Dixon Power Systems, Lincoln NE was the project contractor.

## **Hyde Observatory Computer Systems Installed** – Mark Dahmke

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Two Compaq computers, an LCD monitor and ADSL Internet connection were recently installed at Hyde Observatory. One computer will be used to continuously monitor the Hyde Photovoltaic system, and the other will be used for multimedia presentations and to run astronomy-related software.

The addition of the computers completes a long-overdue upgrade of Hyde's multimedia presentation capabilities. Both computers can be connected to the DLP video projector, and the multimedia computer has a wireless keyboard and mouse, so speakers can run their own Powerpoint presentations. A video splitter/amplifier feeds the VGA output of the computers to both the LCD monitor and projector simultaneously, and a keyboard/monitor/mouse switch allows one keyboard to control both computers. A third VGA input will allow laptop computers to be connected to the video projector without recabling.

Alltel has donated ADSL (asynchronous digital subscriber line) Internet service to Hyde observatory. Hyde now has full-time Internet service. The ADSL connection will also be used to upload data from the Photovoltaic system directly to Lincoln Electric System for analysis, and will eventually support a web server to display charts and graphs of energy output in real-time.



Sunny Boy photovoltaic control hardware, video splitter, keyboard/monitor switch, Netgear router/firewall, two Compaq PCs.



Tape deck, VCR, amplifier, uninterruptible power supply, wireless keyboard and mouse.

## Protecting Dark Skies in Our Parks – from IDA Newsletter

We set aside parks and wilderness areas to be preserved as natural and cultural resources. The nighttime environment, including our heritage of dark skies, needs special stewardship in such areas. The IDA has been working with parks to identify ways to build upon their leadership in environmental issues, to raise awareness, and to protect this endangered resource.

A number of areas have designated dark-sky preserves, and we are seeing more proposed all the time. They range from large, regional parks to smaller protected zones near or in a specific community. Each serves an important role. For example, a school might arrange "dark-sky nights" in a neighborhood park so that students can have an introduction to astronomy without driving long distances.

Whether the parks are large or small, such programs require education, communication, and cooperation. The IDA seeks to be a source of helpful information and networking as well as being a catalyst for action. We have:

- Brought together diverse groups to assemble the expertise necessary to discover solutions.
- Collaborated with groups addressing related research, monitoring, and education needs (for example, the USA's National Park Service Night Sky Team and the National Parks Conservation Association).
- Spoken at conferences and written articles addressing the concerns of resource managers (for example, the George Wright Forum [www.georgewright.org](http://www.georgewright.org), vol. 18, #4).
- Laid the groundwork for an IDA parks working group.

Relationships and partnerships with adjacent and regional communities are an important park priority. Through these interactions, parks can address external threats to park resources. Communities discover practical reasons to support better lighting practices when they work to preserve the nighttime environment of a nearby park. Together, they identify community values and priorities, and recognize their shared interests in better lighting.

Park programs offer an excellent infrastructure through which we can reach a large audience, an audience predisposed to value our resources. What wonderful allies for the IDA in our educational pursuits! We need to take advantage of

new opportunities for collaboration with parks and the groups that serve them. To assist and be supportive of our parks, we need to:

- Raise more awareness within our parks of the problems of and solutions to light pollution.
- Prepare new educational materials for use in parks and offer parks useful information for community outreach activities.
- Support monitoring activities and research.
- Work with parks to improve their lighting.

Help us expand this outreach effort. Give a gift IDA membership to a park near you. Volunteer and share your expertise at a park or give talks about the IDA and dark-sky issues to local environmental groups. Make an extra donation to the IDA to help us build upon the collaborations and connections we have begun. Together, we can preserve our nighttime environment.

### **International Dark-Sky Association**

3225 N. First Ave., Tucson AZ 85719 USA

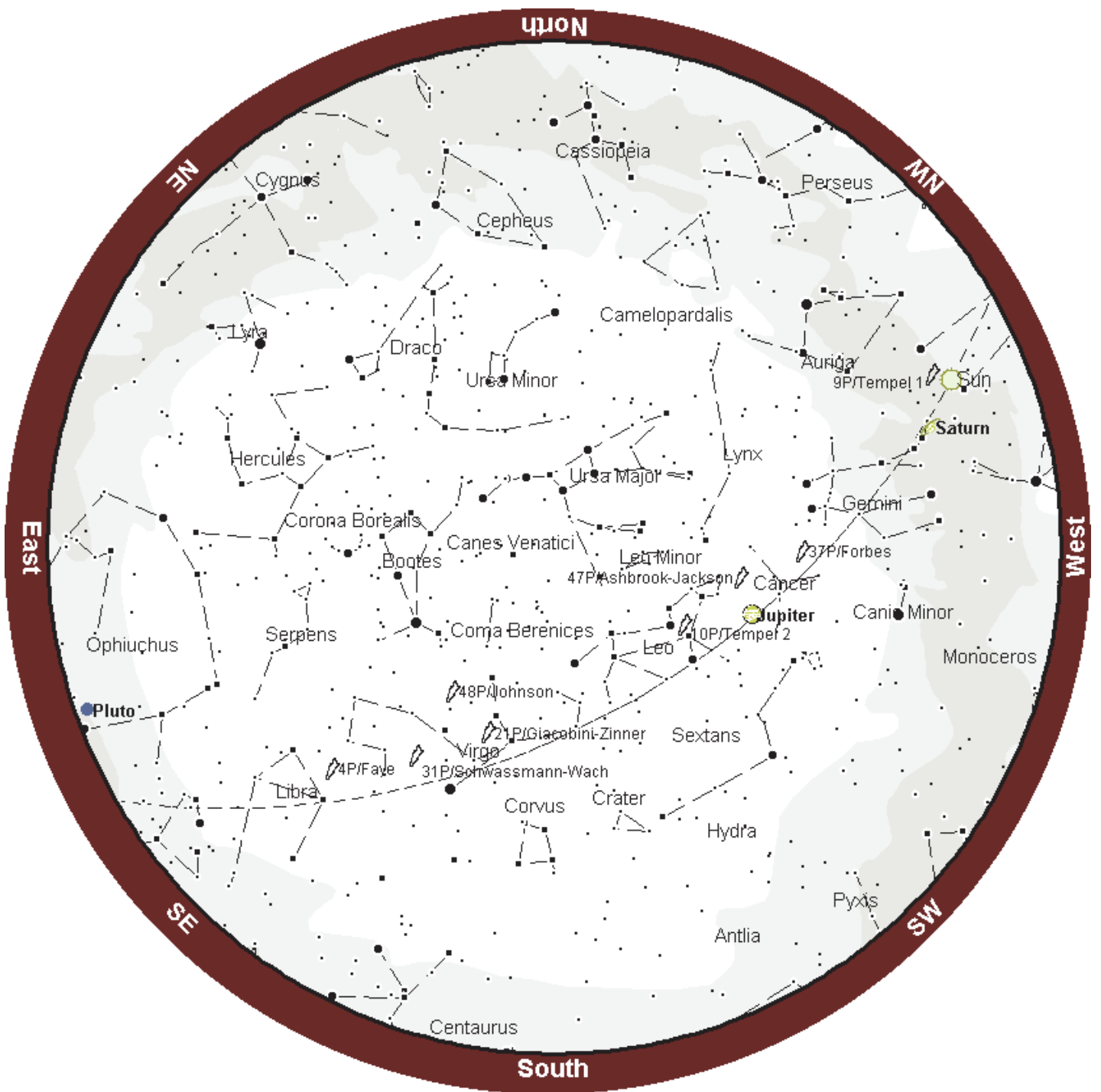
(520) 293-3198 (voice) (520) 293-3192 (fax)

E-Mail: [ida@darksky.org](mailto:ida@darksky.org)





# June Star Chart



# Events Calendar

June 2003						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Sun: 17:57 - 08:51  Jupiter Dual Shadow Transit	2 Sun: 17:56 - 08:51	3 Sun: 17:56 - 08:52	4 Sun: 17:56 - 08:53  Moon near Jupiter this evening	5 Sun: 17:55 - 08:53	6 Sun: 17:55 - 08:54	7 Sun: 17:55 - 08:55  Hyde Observatory open to the public
8 Sun: 17:55 - 08:55	9 Sun: 17:54 - 08:56	10 Sun: 17:54 - 08:57	11 Sun: 17:54 - 08:57	12 Sun: 17:54 - 08:58  NSP Planning Meeting 7:30	13 Sun: 17:54 - 08:58  Earliest sunrise of year	14 Sun: 17:54 - 08:58  Hyde Observatory open to the public
15 Sun: 17:54 - 08:59	16 Sun: 17:54 - 08:59	17 Sun: 17:54 - 09:00	18 Sun: 17:54 - 09:00  Venus and Mercury near Aldebaran	19 Sun: 17:54 - 09:00  Moon near Mars after midnight	20 Sun: 17:55 - 09:01  Mahoney Star Party	21 Sun: 17:55 - 09:01  Hyde Observatory open to the public
22 Sun: 17:55 - 09:01	23 Sun: 17:55 - 09:01	24 Sun: 17:56 - 09:01  PAC Meeting 7:30pm	25 Sun: 17:56 - 09:01	26 Sun: 17:56 - 09:01	27 Sun: 17:57 - 09:02  Club Star Party	28 Sun: 17:57 - 09:02  Moon near Venus at dawn; Hyde Observatory open to the public
29 Sun: 17:58 - 09:02	30 Sun: 17:58 - 09:01					

**Directions to Olive Creek  
Observing Site**

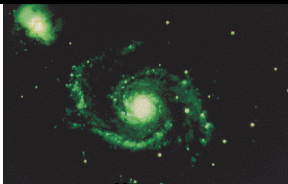
Shorter:

Take Hwy 77 South out of Lincoln until you get to the Crete corner (junction Hwy 77 and Hwy 33). Go West on Hwy 33 (toward Crete) until you get to SW 72 St. Turn Left (South) on SW 72 St. and go about 5 miles until you get to SW Panama Rd. Turn right (West) until you get to SW 100 St. (SW 100 St does NOT go through to Hwy 33). Turn Left (South) on SW 100 St and go about 1 to 1 1/2 miles until you see the sign and entrance to Olive Creek (this is the West side of the Park). It's on your left (East) side of the road. More Black Top:

Take Hwy 77 South out of Lincoln until you get to the Crete corner (junction Hwy 77 and Hwy 33). Go West on Hwy 33 (toward Crete) until you get to about SW 114 St. - the first intersection after SW 100 St. (forgot to look at this street sign, sorry - you'll see a sign for Olive Creek though at this road- but don't count on anymore signs after that, I didn't see any). Turn Left (South) on SW 114 St and go about 5 miles or so until you get to SW Panama Rd (you'll see a church and small school on your right). Turn Left (East) and go about a mile to SW 100 St, then turn Right (South) and go 1 to 1 1/2 miles until you see the Olive Creek entrance and sign (on your left hand side of the road).

**OFFICERS  
OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB**

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<b>2nd VICE PRESIDENT (PROGRAM CHAIR):</b>	Brian Sivill (402) 420-1227 nanoamps@aol.com
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<i>Club Observing Chair:</i>	<i>Jeff King</i> 483-0599
<i>Hyde Volunteer Coordinator:</i>	<i>Dave Churilla</i> (402) 467-1514 weber2@inebraska.com



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

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First Class Mail

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**Next PAC Meeting  
May 27, 2003  
7:30 PM  
Hyde Observatory**