

# The Prairie Astronomer

August, 2007

Volume 48, Issue #8

The Official Newsletter of the Prairie Astronomy Club

## PAC Program

In this month's program Martin Gaskell gives an illustrated talk about his visit to the home of Sir Patrick Moore in England. To American amateur astronomers Patrick Moore is perhaps best known today for the Caldwell objects programmed into most go-to telescopes.

## In This Issue

THEM - A Family Reunion Tale, by Dave Churilla.

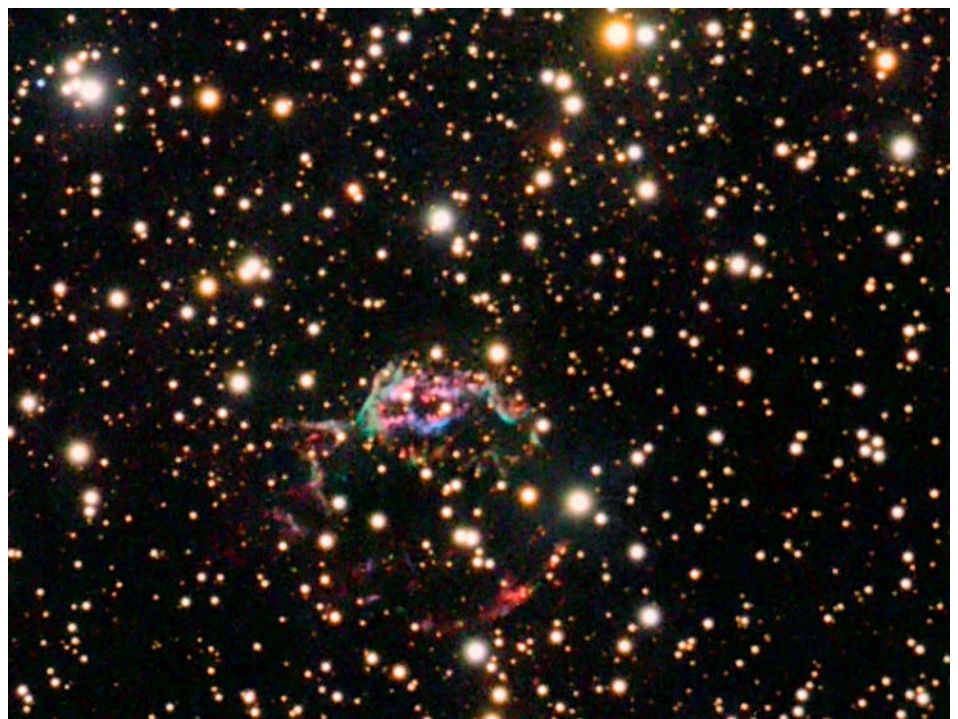
## Featured Astrophoto

SNR Cassiopeia A

Taken with the 14" LX200R on a Paramount ME. Luminosity was 14, 10 minute exposures while each the RGB frames consisted of 5 10 minute frames for each color. Camera is the STL-11000XM. Imaging was done three non consecutive nights. I had to throw out 2 luminosity frames that were out of focus when I forgot to turn on my temperature compensation. Another was lost due to a nasty satellite. One red frame was lost for the same reason except there were 3 satellites in that frame and one plane! I saw it in time to retake it. It took me over a month to get this image.

--Rick Johnson

Please send your  
astrophotos to  
Mark Dahmke to  
be added to the  
PAC website and  
the newsletter.



Saturn image courtesy NASA.

# The Prairie Astronomer

## NEWSLETTER

### August Program

**A Visit to Patrick (Caldwell) Moore, the World's Greatest Living Amateur Astronomer.**

Martin Gaskell

In this month's program Martin gives an illustrated talk about his visit to the home of Sir Patrick Moore in England. To American amateur astronomers Patrick Moore is perhaps best known today for the Caldwell objects programmed into most go-to telescopes, but in Great Britain Patrick Moore is a household name even among non-astronomers. Did you know that the world's longest continuously running TV program is a show about astronomy?! Patrick Moore has hosted "The Sky at Night" ever since 1957. It was Patrick Moore who anchored the Apollo moon landings for the BBC, and he has personally met most of the central players in astronomy and space research in the 20th century. He is the author of over 100 books. Even apart from his role as perhaps the greatest popularizer of astronomy of all time, Patrick Moore has many achievements to his own credit in amateur astronomy. Martin reports on his visit to Patrick Moore and on the experience of being interviewed by Patrick Moore by the BBC.



## Club Events

PAC Club Meeting  
Tuesday, August 28, 2007  
7:30pm @ Hyde Observatory

Club Star Party  
Friday, September 07, 2007

New Moon  
Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Mahoney Star Party  
Friday, September 14, 2007

Autumn Equinox  
Sunday, September 23, 2007

PAC Club Meeting  
Tuesday, September 25, 2007  
7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

Club Star Party  
Friday, October 12, 2007

Astronomy Class Field School - October 19  
Astronomy Class Seminar - November 8

**Club star parties:** Sept 7, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 7.

**Next newsletter submission deadline:** September 16th.

## Club Telescopes - Checkout Policy

To check out one of the club telescopes, contact Brian Sivill or [nanoamps@windstream.net](mailto:nanoamps@windstream.net). If you keep a scope for more than a week, please check in with Brian once a week, to verify the location of the telescope and how long you plan to use it. The checkout time limit will be two weeks, but can be extended if no one else has requested use of a club scope.



## ON THE NET

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

**PAC E-Mail:**  
[info@prairieastronomyclub.org](mailto:info@prairieastronomyclub.org)

**NSP:**  
[www.nebraskastarparty.org](http://www.nebraskastarparty.org)

**NSP E-Mail:**  
[info@nebraskastarparty.org](mailto:info@nebraskastarparty.org)

**OAS**  
[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)

**PAC-LIST:** You may subscribe to the PAC listserv by sending an e-mail message to: [imailsrv@prairieastronomyclub.org](mailto:imailsrv@prairieastronomyclub.org). In the body of the message, write "Subscribe PAC-List your-email-address@your-domain.com"

For example:  
Subscribe pac-list  
[me@myISP.com](mailto:me@myISP.com)

To post messages to the list, send to the address

[pac-list@prairieastronomyclub.org](mailto:pac-list@prairieastronomyclub.org)

Buy club apparel through the club website. Shirts, hats, mugs, mouse pads and more.



# The Prairie Astronomer

## NEWSLETTER

### Club Business

#### Secretary's Report

Ron Veys called the meeting to order. Attendance: 24 PAC members and 2 visitors. Ron discussed upcoming club events:

- \* The next club star party will be held Friday, August 10 at the farm.
- \* The next Mahoney Star Party will be Friday, August 10.
- \* The next club meeting will be Tuesday, August 28.
- \* Hyde Observatory is open from 7:00 – 11:00 pm on Saturdays.
- \* An Astronomy Field School will be held on October 19.
- \* An Astronomy Seminar will be held on November 8.

Martin Gaskell is leaving UNL for a position with McDonald Observatory. He will actually live in Austin Texas and do his work at the University of Texas. We are considering having a dinner for Martin at the end of August if arrangements can be worked out.

Plans have not yet been made for the fall banquet. We are still considering having a joint dinner with OAS. Brian Sivill is working on this task.

Treasurers Report: No report this month.

Observing Chairman's report: Jim Kvasnicka discussed the July star party and upcoming observing highlights for the month of August. He noted that the Perseid meteor shower is favorably placed this year, with the moon out of the sky. Some meteors will probably be seen during the regular star party on August 10. Several people expressed interest in going out to the farm on the peak night of August 12-13. A total eclipse of the moon will take place on August 28 from 3:51 AM to 6:23 AM. Due to the timing of the eclipse, no special activities are planned.

Outreach Coordinator's report: Dave Churilla reported that two classes will be held this fall – an Astronomy Field School on October 19 (with October 26 as the rain date) and an Astronomy Seminar on November 8. The theme for the seminar will be "An Introduction to the Night Sky." Dave also mentioned that he has talked to HobbyTown and we may do a joint event with them.

Erik Hubl discussed the latest developments surrounding the proposed sale of park land to Talent Plus. Talent Plus plans to erect a new building on this land, which is less than one-half mile south of Hyde. It looks like the sale will go through. Thus, reaching an agreement with Talent Plus to curb their light pollution is now more critical than ever. Erik urged PAC members to write to the City Council and to Parks Department Director Lynn Johnson.

The Panhandle Astronomy Club is holding a star party on September 7-9 at a site south of Bridgeport, Nebraska. Registration is \$10.

The meeting was adjourned to the program. Jack Dunn presented a report and pictures from NSP. He also showed a DVD on Clayton Anderson and his trip to the ISS, and a new video from the Chandra Office called "The X-Ray Universe."

Submitted by,

Bob Leavitt

## Observing: What to View in September -- Jim Kvasnicka

This is a partial list of objects visible for the upcoming month.

### Planets

**Jupiter:** Shines brightly in the south at magnitude -2.1 in Ophiuchus. Jupiter is getting lower all the time. By the end of September it will be setting by 10:00 pm.

**Mars:** Rises in the late evening while increasing in magnitude to 0.0 in September. Mars will also be reaching a diameter of 10". On the mornings of September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Mars will pass a little less than 1° north of M1, the Crab Nebula in Taurus.

**Saturn:** Magnitude 0.6 in the bright early dawn sky. The rings of Saturn are closing to a smaller 9° tilt.

**Venus:** Begins September low in the east during dawn, rising 1.5 hours before sunup. By the end of September it is rising 3.5 hours before dawn when it reaches a maximum magnitude of -4.8. Venus starts September as a thin crescent, increasing to a third of the planet illuminated by month's end.

**Uranus:** Magnitude 5.7 in Aquarius.

**Neptune:** Magnitude 7.8 in Capricornus.

**Mercury:** All September Mercury is deep in the glow of sunset, low and difficult to see.

### September Messier List

**M13:** The great globular cluster in Hercules.

**M92:** Another globular cluster in Hercules.

**M14:** A small, bright globular cluster in Ophiuchus.

**M22:** Another great globular cluster in Sagittarius.

**M28:** Near M22 this is a small bright globular cluster in Sagittarius.

**M69, M70, and M54:** These three are small bright globular clusters along the bottom of the teapot in Sagittarius. Easy to see, difficult to resolve.

**Last Month:** M6, M7, M8, M9, M10, M12, M20, M21, M23, M62, M107.

**Next Month:** M11, M16, M17, M18, M24, M25, M26, M55, M75.

### NGC Objects

**NGC 40:** Unusual red planetary nebula in Cepheus.

**NGC 891:** Faint, edge on galaxy in Andromeda.

**NGC 6939:** Rich open cluster in Cepheus with over 80 stars.

**NGC 7331:** Large, bright spiral galaxy in Pegasus.

**NGC 7662:** The Blue Snowball. Planetary nebula in Andromeda.

### Double Stars

**23 Aquilae:** Beautiful yellow and greenish pair.

**11 Aquilae:** Yellow primary and blue secondary.

**15 Aquilae:** Pale yellow and deep yellow pair.

**Beta Cephei:** Bright white primary with a pale blue secondary.

**Krueger 60:** Vivid red pair of stars in Cepheus.

### Challenge Object

**Stephan's Quintet:** Galaxy group in Pegasus.

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

**REGULAR MEMBER - \$30.00 per year. Includes club newsletter, and 1 vote at club meetings, plus all other standard club privileges.**

**FAMILY MEMBER - \$35.00 per year. Same as regular member except gets 2 votes at club meetings.**

**If you renew your membership prior to your annual renewal date, you will receive a 10% discount.**

**Club members are also eligible for special subscription discounts on Sky & Telescope**

## CLUB STAR PARTIES

**Club star parties are held monthly on the Friday night nearest the new moon. Since they are held on private land, they are for club members and invited guests only. If you'd like to attend a star party, please contact one of the club officers. Check the club website members-only area for directions to the site.**

# The Prairie Astronomer

## NEWSLETTER

### THEM...a Family Reunion Tale-- Dave Churilla

People never fail to amaze me, and not always for the bad. Working at Hyde on the occasional Saturday night is fun, and often one meets interesting people while working there. But the most amazing times have been spent with people who are genuinely interested in learning about what you are showing them in the telescope. So often you seem to meet those who say "Oh, that's nice" and walk off into the moonlit night, seemingly unimpressed (although I've had a few of those come back, so one never knows).

I was ready for just that reaction this past Saturday night, but not at Hyde. As luck would have it my wife's side of the family was planning its annual family reunion this past warm July weekend and I graciously accepted an invitation to attend (translation: my wife said be there). This summer the reunion was at Grandma's house and as a "featured" attraction, I was asked to bring out my telescope. I said I would as it gave me the opportunity to leave early on Saturday afternoon with the excuse of going home to feed and walk the dog, get stuff ready for the scope (hey, I had to put the finder scopes back on after some solar observing the weekend before, that counts as "getting stuff ready", doesn't it?), then load the scope. I'd plan to be back around 7:30 or 8 PM.

Unfortunately hazy clouds rolled in, but I figured the Moon and Jupiter would still be able to be seen quite well. So around 8:30 I began setting up the scope with the anticipation of over 2 dozen kids and 20 adults wanting to view through it. I figured the moon would be good at this point and by the time the throng got through with it, it would be dark enough to spot Jupiter.

For those who don't know, my scope, a Newtonian, is on an Orion Atlas Mount. The heavy mount is a bear to set up and takes me about 20 minutes counting a quick collimation. Lately I've learned to set up quickly due to an addition that Bob Kacvinsky and Jim Kvasnicka like to razz me about. A big Newtonian on an equatorial mount means you need to roll the scope in the rings from time to time to view through it in order to avoid having to bring a 7 foot step ladder to see in the eyepiece. To make that process easier, I've lined the

rings with soft, thin, slick fabric. I found some, but for the life of me I can't remember what it's called (it's slicker than felt). But the "pattern" I had to get to avoid something in pink, chartreuse, or being covered in bunnies has a pattern much like the Gateway Cow pattern. I have a genuine fear that my scope, currently nicknamed SAM since set up it looks like a Surface To Air missile launcher, will be renamed Bossy to go with its cow pattern inside the rings. Setting up quickly avoids anyone seeing the rings open and thus laughing at my cow ☺

By now it's 9 PM and the moon can be seen in the southwestern sky. I go into the house to get everyone, and all but 3 adults have started 2 tables of Texas Holdem! "I've got the scope set up, anyone want to come out?" I inquire. "Later" is the reply from the same adults who asked for me to bring the scope...never to be seen again.

With steam wafting from my ears I go to the backyard and announce to the kids that I have the scope ready. "THEM" (my euphemism for the holy terrors I figure I'm unleashing on my telescope and equipment) are all in this bouncy blow up house that my brother-in-law rented to entertain the rug rats. Great! Their energy level is going to be WAY up now! I let them know that if they want to see the moon to come out of the jumpy castle and come to the front yard. I then make a mad dash for my scope to try to beat them there to protect it.

With in seconds after I get to the scope, a dozen kids are stampeding towards me. I stand in front of the scope with my arms held out screaming "DON'T RUN". Luckily, they all know that Uncle Dave usually means business (sure wish that worked on my wife) and they come to a screeching halt 7 feet from my hands, now balled into a fist to protect my precious, if not outdated telescope.

So now here it is. No adults to impress and some 15 kids who I'm sure will look at the moon, then maybe Jupiter and say "that's cool...let's go swimming again!!!" and run off. Since over half of them are under 6 years

old I'm certain that this will be the shortest time I've ever had my scope set up.

The first in line is Sam (or is it his twin brother, Jake?). Being the fastest of the 5 year old twins he's up the ladder first as I give the ubiquitous litany of every Hyde worker and all scope owners at Public Star Parties:

**“NOW DON'T TOUCH THE TELESCOPE OR THE EYEPIECE !!!!”.**

Sam looks into the scope. Silence. I'm looking at Sam and asking him if he sees the Moon. No answer. “Sam...can you see the Moon?” His little head nods nearly imperceptibly. “Well?” No answer, but I notice his jaw drop open. I smile and it suddenly occurs to me that this group of “THEM” may actually be smarter than their parents. “What do you see, Sam?” asks Matte, Sam's 4 year old cousin. “Holes!” Sam replies, after he resets the dropped jaw. I explain that the “holes” are craters and what they are and after a good 2 minutes of staring into the eyepiece, Sam finally relinquishes his spot on the Step ladder and lets Matte up. She looks into the eyepiece and immediately backs away, her head snapping towards me. “That's the Moon Uncle Dave?!” she gasps. I assure her it is and she looks again. Sam, by the way, has taken a place at the back of the long line to get another look.

Some forty minutes later I'm still showing kids the moon. The line is now down to just 6 kids (the “middle aged” ones have left to play hide and seek), and to my very great surprise, it's the younger ones who are still here – all between the ages of 4 and 7 years old. By now I've let them all use the hand controller to move the scope around the moon, have even pumped the power up to 317x (my 9mm Nagler and the 2.5x PowerMate) which elicited at least 4 “oohs” and one “holy cow” from Matte (can she see my rings????).

It's time for Jupiter. If I thought the Moon impressed them, then Jupiter blew them away. Adorable little 4 year old Matte (did I just call one of “THEM” adorable????!!!!) looked at Jupiter and described all the brown bands she could see on the surface. She didn't want to give up her turn, even after 2 minutes and 15 seconds (yes, I was timing “THEM” because they were starting to complain that so-and-so was getting more time looking).

Another 30 minutes go by and I have the same 6 kids

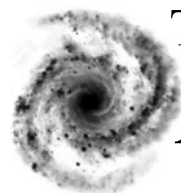
with me, now wanting to look at the Moon again. Three of the adults are seen approaching the telescope. It's aunts Sharon, Amy and Kay. Before I can utter word, Sam, Jake and Matte chatter in unison:

**“DON'T TOUCH THE TELESCOPE OR THE EYE THING”!!!**

For 30 minutes more the kids enjoy telling their aunts everything they've seen, and what to look for. They take additional looks at the Moon and at Jupiter. Imagine “THEM” enjoying these wondrous sights. They learned a lot that night, and I enjoyed getting closer to my nieces and nephews. The 5 year old twins, Jake and Sam, and the 4 year old, Matte, want to go out with me to a Star Party sometime. Don't know if they'd really get into that, but I may bug Jim to come to his house where it's darker and show them the Ring Nebula, the Dumbbell Nebula and M13. Those may really amp up their curiosity. Elise, the twin's older sister by nearly 2 years was interested in Neptune and Uranus, which I couldn't get in from where I was.

It was, without a doubt, the most enjoyable and satisfying time I've ever spent showing someone something through my telescope.

And with “THEM” yet!!! Who woulda thunk????!!!!



# THE *Prairie* *Astronomy* *Club*

Amateur Astronomy --  
A Hobby as Big as the Universe

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 \$30/yr, Family \$35/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 to the right. Newsletter comments and articles should be submitted to: **Mark Dahmke, PO Box 80266, Lincoln, NE 68501 or mark@dahmke.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.

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<b>VICE PRESIDENT:</b>	Brian Sivill (402) 325-0997 nanoamps@windstream.net
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**Next PAC Meeting**  
**August 28, 2007**  
**7:30 PM**