

The Prairie Astronomer

March, 2008

Volume 49, Issue #3

The Official Newsletter of the Prairie Astronomy Club

PAC Program

This Month's Program will be a club Swap Meet. Bring all of your surplus Astronomy items, trading stock and telescopes. Some tables will be provided, but it is wise to bring your observing table. Simple refreshments will be made available.

In This Issue

Focus on Observing Clubs, Win a Telescope Essay Contest, Astronomy Day 2008.

Featured Astrophoto

Lunar Eclipse - taken by Taylor Chonis and Tom Miller - Lincoln, Nebraska. Taken with Taylor's with Takahashi FSQ106N with Extender-Q yielding 850mm FL. Taylor reports they used a Canon 10D Digital SLR with an exposure time of 10 seconds. February 20, 2008.

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



Saturn image courtesy NASA.

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NEWSLETTER

Focus on Observing Clubs--Jim Kvasnicka

Telescopic Messier Observing Club

As the observing chair for the club I thought it would be a good idea to focus on one of the many observing clubs offered by the Astronomical League that PAC members can participate in. I will start with the most popular observing club, the Telescopic Messier Observing Club.

All amateur astronomers become aware of the Messier Catalog soon after they get into the hobby of astronomy. The Messier list consist of 110 objects to observe. Observations must be made using manual methods. Use of a GOTO telescope is not allowed. The Astronomical League offers special recognition in the form of a Messier Club Certificate for those who have observed at least 70 of the Messier objects. They offer an Honorary Messier Club Certificate for those who have observed all 110 objects along with a Messier Pin.

As the club observing chair I need to examine your Messier observing log when you are finished and I will send a letter to Scott Kranz, the Messier Club Chair and he will forward your certificate to me to present to you.

In the PAC monthly newsletter I include an observing list for the month. This list includes the Messier objects for the month. If you observe and log these Messier objects monthly you can complete the Messier Observing Club in 12 months.

If you have any questions regarding the Messier Observing Club or need help getting started please ask me and I will be glad to assist you.

List of PAC Telescopic Messier Club Awardees

Rick Johnson, Earl Moser, Dave Knisely, Ron Veys, Lee Thomas, Erik Hubl, Kevin Dowd, Larry Hancock, Dave Churilla, Joey Churilla, Dave Hamilton, Bill Wells, Dave Brokofsky, Jeff King, Bob Kacvinsky, Jim Kvasnicka

Club Events

PAC Club Meeting
Tuesday, March 25, 2008 7:30pm
Hyde Obsv.

Club Star Party
Friday, April 04, 2008

Mid-States Regional Conventional of the Astronomical League
April 11, 2008, Des Moines, Iowa

International Side Walk Astronomy Night
Saturday, April 12, 2008.

PAC Club Meeting
Tuesday, April 29, 2008 7:30pm
Hyde Obsv.

Club Star Party
Friday, May 02, 2008

PAC Astronomy Field School
May 13, 2008 @ Hyde Obsv.

Western Nebraska Star Gaze for 2008
Panhandle Astronomy Club
May 29 - June 1

Astronomy Day 2008
Saturday, May 10, 2008 Morrill Hall - UNL Campus National Astronomy Day
will be celebrate by PAC and a number of other organizations 9:30 a.m. to 4:30
p.m including the chance to win a Meade Telescope

Nebraska Star Party: July 27th -August 1st, 2008

Next newsletter submission deadline: April 19th.

Club Telescopes - Checkout Policy

To check out one of the club telescopes, contact Cassie Etmund at cggymnast1@aol.com. If you keep a scope for more than a week, please check in with Cassie 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

PAC E-Mail:
info@prairieastronomyclub.org

NSP:
www.nebraskastarparty.org

NSP E-Mail:
info@nebraskastarparty.org

OAS
www.OmahaAstro.com

Hyde Observatory
www.hydeobservatory.info

Panhandle Astronomy Club
Panhandleastronomyclub.com

PAC-LIST: You may subscribe to the PAC listserv by sending an e-mail message to: 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

To post messages to the list, send to the address

pac-list@prairieastronomyclub.org

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



The Prairie Astronomer

NEWSLETTER

Club Business

President Brian Sivill called the meeting to order. 18 members present, 1 guest.

Announcements:

The next PAC meeting is Tuesday, March 25 at Hyde Observatory.

The next PAC star party will be Friday March 7, 2008 at the farm.

The first Western Nebraska Star Gaze for 2008, presented by Panhandle Astronomy Club will be May 29 - June 1

The International Side Walk Astronomy Night will be Saturday, April 12, 2008.

The Mid-States Regional Conventional of the Astronomical League will be April 11, 2008, hosted by the Des Moines Astronomical Society, DMAS.

The 15th Annual Nebraska Star Party will be July 25 - August 1, 2008 at Merritt Reservoir.

Outreach Reports:

The next PAC Astronomy Field School is scheduled for May 13, 2008 at Hyde Observatory. Jim Kvasnicka reported that there will be some changes to the class this time. Including incorporating some of the seminar class into the field school. Also, Dave Churilla has proposed allowing members to take the class for free with a current paid membership.

Jack Dunn reported that the Astronomy Seminar *The Universe from Supernovae to Black Holes* had 11 enthusiastic attendees on January 27.

The lunar eclipse on February 20, 2008 was well attended, with around 400 enthusiastic members of the public out watching the eclipse and viewing Saturn, and other seasonal sights.

Jim Kvasnicka reported that Outreach Coordinator, Dave Churilla has been approached by Arbor Lodge in Nebraska City asking if someone from the club could assist them with astronomy classes up to 2 times per month later this year, with compensation offered for travel expenses, etc. The PAC executive board will consider this request and will respond soon.

Club business:

Jim Kvasnicka gave a review of the objects observable for the next few weeks.

Treasurer's report: No treasurer's report this month, however, there are still one or two RASC handbooks left unclaimed. If you asked for one and didn't get it, contact Treasurer, Lee Thomas!

Adjourn to programs of Mark Dahmke's astronomical activities with his new HD video camera. Thanks, Mark!

Also, we watched Jack Dunn's full version of the Explorer I story.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lee Taylor

Observing: What to View in April -- Jim Kvasnicka

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

Planets

Mars: Will move across Gemini in April. Starts the month at mag 0.8, ends at 1.2

Jupiter: Rises several hours before the Sun. Left of the Teapot in Sagittarius.

Saturn: In Leo, well up in the east at dusk. Close to Regulus. Magnitude 0.4.

Venus: Hidden in the Sun's glare at dawn.

Mercury: At superior conjunction, hidden from view.

Uranus and Neptune: Too low in the dawn sky to observe.

April Messier List

M40: Pair of faint stars in Ursa Major.

M108: Thin, faint galaxy in Ursa Major.

M109: Spiral galaxy in Ursa Major.

M106: Galaxy in Canes Venatici with a fairly bright core.

M95, M96: Pair of galaxies in Leo that fit into the same FOV

M105: Small elliptical galaxy in Leo. Same low power FOV as M96.

M65, M66: Another pair of galaxies in Leo that fit into the same FOV.

Last Month: M41, M44, M 46, M47, M48, M50, M67, M81, M82, M93

Next Month: M49, M51, M61, M63, M64, M85, M94, M101, M102, M104

NGC Objects

NGC 3628: Edge-on galaxy in Leo. Same FOV as M65 and M66.

NGC 4214: Large irregular galaxy in Canes Venatici.

NGC 4605: Bright edge-on galaxy in Ursa Major.

Double Stars

Alpha Leonis: Regulus. White primary with a pale yellow secondary.

Gamma Leonis: Algieba. Pair of yellow stars.

54 Leonis: Yellow primary with a greenish colored secondary.

Alpha Canum Venaticorum: Cor Caroli. Light blue primary with a greenish yellow secondary.

Zeta Ursa Majoris: Mizar. Pair of white stars.

Gamma Virginis: Close pair of yellow stars.

24 Comae Berenices: Yellow primary with a pale blue secondary.

Delta Corvi: White primary with a beautiful rose colored secondary.

Challenge Object

Leo I: Dwarf elliptical galaxy. Satellite of Milky Way. Very low surface brightness.

Look 0.3 degrees N of Regulus.

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.

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NEWSLETTER

Win a Telescope Essay Contest

The Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln is giving away a telescope – and it's not a toy or a small department store model. This is a 10 inch Schmidt-Cassegrain computerized reflecting telescope capable of doing some serious observing. PAC President Brian Sivill indicates: “the club would like to put a serious instrument into the hands of an enthusiastic student – one who might make full use of it.”

In order to give away this magnificent telescope, PAC is having an essay contest. The best entry, judged by PAC officers, will win the telescope....and a year's free membership in the PAC....and training in the use of the telescope

Rules of the essay contest are as follows:

- The Essay contest is open only to persons in 7th grade through College.
- Essay topics may be on any subject directly related to Astronomy or Space
- Length: 3 pages double-spaced minimum in 10 point font. 5 pages max
- In addition to the Essay, provide a short summary (1 -3 paragraphs) stating why you want this telescope and what you will do with it.
- Include your full name, address, e-mail address, phone number and current grade.
- Contest is open only to attendees of schools within the state of Nebraska.
- Entries must be submitted by April 26th, 2008. E-mailed or post marked.



Winner will be announced on **Astronomy Day, May 10th 2008 at Morrill Hall** on the UNL Campus. Winner will be required to pick up the telescope in person on Astronomy Day.

E-Mail Essays to: Brian.Sivill@Bryanlgh.org Subject line: essay contest

Or US Mail to: Brian Sivill 7206 Walker Ave. Lincoln, NE 68507

For further information: E-mail Club President Brian Sivill or call (402) 310-2280 Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln
<http://www.prairieastronomyclub.org>

FREE HANDOUTS • FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Join us for **National Astronomy Day 2008**

Win this scope!



MEADE ETX 80AT-TC
Great telescope for beginners!
Valued at \$299.00

9:30 am - 4:30 pm
Saturday, May 10

University of Nebraska State Museum
Morrill Hall • just south of 14th & Vine St.
UNL City Campus • Lincoln, Nebraska
www.spacelaser.com

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| <i>Full-dome Planetarium Shows</i> | <i>Rocketry</i> |
| <i>Talk to Astronomers</i> | <i>Free Handouts</i> |
| <i>Telescopes & Astrophotography</i> | <i>Robotics</i> |

There is an admission fee.



Enter to win **THE GRAND PRIZE**

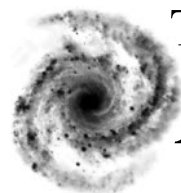
MEADE 8-inch LX-90
Valued at \$1,999.00



Astronomy
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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.

PRESIDENT	Brian Sivill (402) 325-0997 nanoamps@windstream.net
VICE PRESIDENT	Cassie Etmund
2nd VICE PRESIDENT (Program Chair)	Jack Dunn jdunn@spacelaser.com
SECRETARY	Oliver L. Taylor (402) 327-0804 otaylor89@hotmail.com
TREASURER	Lee Thomas lleet@alltel.net (402) 483-5639
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FIRST CLASS MAIL

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Next PAC Meeting
March 25, 2008
7:30 PM