



The Prairie Astronomer

January, 2009

Volume 50, Issue #1

The Official Newsletter of the Prairie Astronomy Club

PAC Program

Learn How to Use Your Telescope

Did you receive a new telescope for the holidays, birthday or just your own purchase? Would you like some help learning how to use it? Or have you been thinking of buying a telescope and could use some advice? The Prairie Astronomy Club can help.

On Tuesday evening, January 27, 2009 from 8 to 9 p.m., there will be a FREE telescope help session for the general public. It won't be "high-tech," just friendly, knowledgeable help provided by the members of the Prairie Astronomy Club. The session will take place at Hyde Memorial Observatory on the south side of Holmes Lake in Lincoln, Nebraska. Those who attend are invited to bring their own telescopes for instructions on their use. And members of the Astronomy Club will also have a number of telescopes of varying sizes to demonstrate their proper use. For those wishing to buy a telescope, this is a good chance to compare different types and sizes of scopes. The members of PAC believe that Amateur Astronomy can be fascinating and fun. Let us help you get started. It's not as hard as you think.

In This Issue

IYA First Light, Focus on Observing, 2008 Observing Summary

Featured Photo

NGC 7479, by Rick Johnson. "This is a barred spiral about 100 million light years away. Since it appears larger than Arp 13 and is more distant we can immediately tell it is a much larger galaxy. The bar, as many do, is feeding dust and gas to the core. This is giving the black hole at the center something to "eat". Thus this is a Seyfert galaxy.

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

Club Business

Minutes for the meeting of Dec. 29, 2008

President Brian Sivill called the meeting to order. 21 members present, and several guests including some OAS members.

Announcements:

The next PAC meeting will be Tuesday January 27, 2009 at Hyde Observatory at 7:30 PM

The next club star parties are scheduled for Jan. 16 and 23 at the farm.

The Strategic Air & Space Museum will be having it's *First Light* IYA event on Jan. 17 from 4-8PM.

The Mid-States Regional Convention of the Astronomical League will be held on March 6-8, 2009 in Columbia Missouri.

Observing Chair, Jim Kvasnicka reported on recent star parties and provided upcoming observing highlights for the coming weeks. Also, Jim profiled the list for the Planetary Nebulae award from the AL.

NSP: Eric Balcom and several members of the NSP planning committee provided details of the 16th annual NSP. The dates for the Nebraska Star Party are July 19-25 at Merritt Reservoir. The next NSP planning meeting will be on January 8 at the Peter Kiewit Lodge in Mahoney State Park.

Brian presented some outreach opportunities for the coming months, including the Star Party at the Air & Space Museum.

Club business

Treasurer's report:

Club treasurer, Dan Delzell reported some issues with the bank, and will be taking care of them soon. The audit will be completed by the end of January. Dan is also taking orders for the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Annual and the Ottwell Calendars.

Adjourn to program by Larry Stepp on the design of the Thirty-Meter-Telescope.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lee Taylor

Club Events

Club Star Party
Friday, January 23, 2009

PAC Club Meeting
“Learn How to Use Your Telescope”
Tuesday, January 27, 2009
7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

Club Star Party
Friday, February 20, 2009

PAC Club Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2009 7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

Club Star Party
Friday, February 27, 2009

Next newsletter submission deadline: February 15

2009 Star Party Dates

January 16th and **January 23rd**
February 20th and **February 27th**
March 20th and **March 27th**
April 17th and **April 24th**
May 15th and **May 22nd**
June 12th and **June 19th**
July 17th and **July 24th**
August 14th and **August 21st**
September 18th and September 25th
October 16th and October 23rd
November 13th and November 20th
December 11th and **December 18th**

The date that is **bold and underlined** is the date closest to the New Moon.

Nebraska Star Party: July 19-24, Merritt Reservoir, Valentine, NE.

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.



Hyde Observatory
training class for all
current deck volunteers
and supervisors.

Saturday, February, 7th
9:30am to Noon.

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

IYA First Light Event at the Strategic Air and Space Museum



Photos by Jack Dunn, Lee Taylor and Mark Dahmke



IYA First Light

To: Everyone who helped with the International Year of Astronomy First Light Event
From: Michael Sibbersen - Outreach Coordinator for NASA Nebraska Space Grant

Good day everyone.

I wanted to send a very special note of CONGRATULATIONS and THANKS to every single person, volunteer and staff, who made our first collaborative IYA event a huge success this last Saturday night. The official numbers are at around the 170 mark for the entire evening, which were nearly double what we were anticipating for this time of the year. I think this certainly goes to show the popularity and viability of astronomy and astronomy-based events.

Our main speaker, Jim Manning of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, provided an excellent, educational and entertaining lecture about Galileo. It was a most apropos topic to start off the International Year of Astronomy. Space Grant is already in talks with Jim and the ASP about potential future joint opportunities within Nebraska.

Thanks to all the volunteers who were ready to set-up and man telescopes outside. The need to call-off the "Star Party" was indeed a disappointment, but I think we would all agree, that the event stood fairly well without it. Hopefully, next time we will have clear skies to accompany the rest the events. Many thanks to Cassie Etmund for giving the general public a nice taste of the night sky with her "What's Up?" presentation, regardless of the weather outside.

We all owe the Strategic Air and Space Museum a huge debt of gratitude for providing their wonderful facilities for the First Light Event. The staff went out of their way to provide the space, equipment, and services required to make this an overwhelming success. I think we all look forward to holding future events, most notably "Astronomy Day" on May 2nd, out at the museum. Further thanks goes to the SASM for donating two Family Memberships to the list of door prizes.

The organizers of this collaborative IYA event have already started working on making future programs even better. If you have any suggestions, please let us know. Of course, our strongest allies of success for any event like this are the many volunteers from the Omaha Astronomical Society and Prairie Astronomy Club. We hope you will join us for future endeavors.

Lastly, the former First Light advertisement webpage is still online, but has been retooled to provide a history and a photo album of the event. You can find it at http://iyanebraska.org/First_Light.html . If you have any First Light photos you would like to share, please send them to msibbersen@unomaha.edu .

Thanks again! I look forward to working with you in the future.

Clear Skies,
Michael Sibbersen
Outreach Coordinator
NASA Nebraska Space Grant Consortium & EPSCoR
University of Nebraska Omaha

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

February Observing: What to View--Jim Kvasnicka

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

Planets

Venus: Reaches a brilliant maximum magnitude of -4.8 the later half of February.

Jupiter, Mercury and Mars: The three are low in the SE a half hour before sunrise.

Saturn: In Leo's hind foot. Rises around 9 pm to start the month and by 7 pm to end the month. In February the rings open just a little from the near edge on view.

Uranus: In the west at nightfall. By the end of the month it will be too low to see.

Neptune: Not visible.

February Messier List

M1: The Crab Nebula in Taurus.

M35: Open cluster in Gemini.

M36/M37/M38: Open clusters in Auriga.

M42: The Orion Nebula.

M43: A smaller nebula next to M42.

M78: A small emission nebula in Orion.

M79: Small, dim globular cluster in Lepus.

Last Month: M31, M32, M33, M34, M52, M74, M76, M77, M103, M110

Next Month: M41, M44, M46, M47, M48, M50, M67, M93

NGC and Other Deep Sky Objects

NGC 2261: Hubble's Variable Nebula in Monoceros.

NGC 2403: Large, bright galaxy in Camelopardalis.

NGC 2477: Open cluster in Puppis.

Abell 31: Planetary nebula in Cancer.

Double Star List

32 Eridani: Yellow and white stars.

55 Eridani: Yellow and pale yellow pair.

Gamma Leporis: Pair of yellow stars.

Epsilon Monocerotis: White primary with a pale yellow secondary.

Beta Monocerotis: Three bluish white stars.

Kappa Puppis: Equal white pair.

Alpha Ursa Minoris: Yellow-white primary with a white secondary.

N Hydrae: Equal yellow pair.

Challenge Object

Abell 12: Planetary nebula in Orion. Also called PK 198-6.1; faint, on NW edge of Mu Orionis. OIII filter required.

FOR SALE: 8" Meade LX200 GPS f/10 with accessories - see <http://www.mark.dahmke.com/misc/lx200/>
Asking \$2,000 for the entire set, or will sell scope and accessories separately. The scope is lightly used and in excellent condition. Tripod, electric focuser, 26mm lens, 1.25" diagonal, f/6.3 reducer, wedge, counterweights, flip mirror, etc. Call 402-475-3150 or email mark@dahmke.com.

2008 Observing Summary--Jim Kvasnicka

2008 Star Parties

In April of 2008 we started to schedule two star parties a month. We believed this would give us greater opportunities for observing especially if the weather forced us to miss one of the dates. Having two star parties a month turned out to be a huge success.

Even though the weather forced us not to have any star parties for January, February, November and December in 2008 we were still able to have thirteen star parties for the year. We were able to have two star parties for the months of June, July and September. With two new moons in August we were able to have three star parties for that month.

Attendance for our star parties was good. For the thirteen star parties we had a total of 105 people attending. This is an average of 8 people per star party. There were five star parties where we had 10 or more people attending. I hope to continue and build on this success in 2009. For any PAC member who has not been to the new observing site at "The Farm" I strongly encourage you to attend one of our star parties in 2009.

2008 Observing Awards

One observing award was presented in 2008. Jim Kvasnicka completed the Double Star Observing Club and received his certificate and pin in February of 2008. Several members did complete various observing clubs at the end of 2008 and they have been submitted to the Astronomical League Observing Club Chairs for review and we are waiting for them to be returned. We also have several members working on different observing clubs and they are close to completion.

Focus On Observing Clubs--Jim Kvasnicka

Solar System / Planetary Observers Club

This month we focus on the Solar System / Planetary Observers Club. In these times of increased light pollution, the wonders of our own solar system may take an increased importance among amateur astronomers. Dark skies and moonless nights are not required to complete the Solar System / Planetary Observers Club.

The Solar System / Planetary Observers Club consist of 27 selected projects which will introduce you to the joy of planetary observing. These 27 projects are divided into three groups.

- Projects for the Sun and Moon
- Projects for the Inner Solar System
- Projects for the Outer Solar System

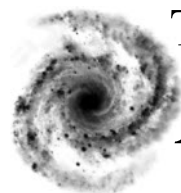
To earn the certificate and pin for the Solar System / Planetary Observers Club you must complete 25 out of the 27 selected projects. A list of the projects can be printed from the Astronomical League web site along with copies of the included log. Print as many logs as you need. Some observations require sketches. Don't panic, they are not complicated. Fill out the included log sheet with the information needed to complete the selected project.

When you are finished with the 25 projects submit a copy of your observation logs to me and I will review them and send them to the Solar System / Planetary Observers Club observing chair for approval.

If you have any questions regarding the Solar System / Planetary Observers Club or getting started please ask and I will be glad to help you.

List of PAC Solar System / Planetary Observers Club Awardees

No PAC members have completed the Solar System / Planetary Observers Club.



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
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Next PAC Meeting
MONDAY
January 27, 2009
7:30 PM
Hyde Observatory