



The Prairie Astronomer

June, 2010

Volume 51, Issue #6

The Official Newsletter of the Prairie Astronomy Club

PAC Program

June meeting: instead of a program we will have the PAC social hour - snacks will be provided but please bring your own drink! We will also show photos and video from MSRAL, and Mark Dahmke will show photos and video from the launch of STS-132, Atlantis.

In This Issue

MSRAL Report, Observing in July, Focus on Constellations, Focus on Outreach.

Featured Photo

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



MSRAL 2010: Photo by John Nollendorfs

Club Business

May 25th, 2010 PAC Meeting

Announcements:

Dan Delzell called the meeting to order.

The next PAC star parties will be on June 11th.

There will be a lunar party on June 18th at Jim's.

The next PAC meeting will be Tuesday June 29th, 7:30 PM at Hyde.

MSRAL is June 4th, 5th, & 6th; please register on the website if you are attending.

MSRAL speakers are:

Rob Landis

Pete Shultz

Rick Johnson

Larry Stepp

If you can help with MSRAL BBQ please sign up with Dave C.

If you can help with the conference please sign up with Steve Lloyd.

Door prizes for MSRAL will include Celestron 15x70 binoculars, Cambridge press subscription, pocket sky atlas, and Explorer Scientific 18mm eyepiece.

Waterfest will be held at Holmes Lake on June 12th.

The Nebraska Star Party is August 8th through 13th, 2010.

Observing Chair Report

Club Observing Chair, Jim Kvasnicka provided a review of the planets that are viewable during June which are Venus (which is less than 1 degree from M44 on June 19th), Mars, and Saturn in the evening and Mercury, Jupiter and Uranus which are less than one degree apart in mid June, and Neptune in the morning. Jupiter is losing its southern equatorial belt. There is a comet that is coming up in June. It is comet C/2009 R1 (McNaught) and is best visible in June with a magnitude of 6 or 7.

The Galileo Scopes have arrived and you can pick your scope up if you ordered one.

We concluded the meeting to listen to a very interesting presentation from George Burba who is the Senior Researcher, Laboratory of Comparative Planetary, Russian Academy of Sciences. He gave a wonderful talk on the research of Venus. There were many images of Venus that were fascinating. On behalf of The Prairie Astronomy Club and myself I would like to thank George Burba for taking time to come out to Hyde and share his experiences.

Brett Boller

Secretary

Prairie Astronomy Club

MSRAL 2010

88 people were served at the Star B-Que

82 people were at the Banquet.

A total of 90-95 people were registered or guests at MSRAL 2010.

From the Newsletter Archives, June, 1970 – Mark Dahmke

A number of unanswered questions concerning the [MSRAL 1970] convention have come to our attention, and we feel that they should be brought to everyone's attention, in case someone has the answer.

Why did everyone, in spite of Earl's fine directions, set up the telescopes for the first star party in a swamp rather than in the observing site?

Why were more door prizes won by members of the Lincoln and Omaha clubs than by all the rest of the region combined?

Why did a nest of insects decide to build a nest inside the Olin Hall air conditioner?

Will Eric Rudd be able to collect insurance on his Schmidt corrector, or will Bob Cox have to pay for it?

Club Events

Newsletter submission deadline, July 20, 2010

PAC Club Meeting
Tuesday, June 29, 2010 7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

PAC Club Meeting
Tuesday, July 27, 2010 7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

NSP, August 8-13

PAC Club Meeting
Tuesday, August 31, 2010 7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

2010 PAC Star Party Dates

July	2nd & 9th
August	6th & 13th
September	3rd & 10th
October	1st & 8th
November	Oct 29th & 5th
December	3rd & 10th

2010 PAC Lunar Party Dates

July 16th, September 17th, October 15th, November 12th

Nebraska Star Party

August 8th – 13th Merritt Reservoir South of Valentine, NE

Volunteer Activities

Spring Creek Prairie Twilight on the Tallgrass – September (date not set)
Homestead National Monument Halloween on the Prairie – Sat. before
Halloween
Hyde Observatory on Saturday nights

Additional volunteer events will occur when they are scheduled.

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

PAC can also be found on Twitter and Facebook.

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



July Observing: What to View--Jim Kvasnicka

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

Planets

Venus/Mars/Saturn: On July 1st the three planets are on a slanted line 38° long in the west. Two weeks later the line shrinks to 24°. By the end of the month the three become a skinny triangle with Mars and Saturn less than 2° apart.

Mercury: Becomes visible in the west around mid July.

Jupiter: Rises just after midnight to start July and by 10:30 pm at the end. It will increase in magnitude from -2.5 to -2.7 and its disk will increase to greater than 45".

Uranus: In Pisces close to Jupiter.

Neptune: Look for it in the pre dawn sky.

July Messier List

M3: Class VI globular cluster in Canes Venatici.

M4: Class IX globular cluster in Scorpius.

M5: Class V globular cluster in Serpens Caput.

M53: Class V globular cluster in Coma Berenices.

M68: Class X globular cluster in Hydra.

M80: Class II globular cluster in Scorpius.

M83: Galaxy in Hydra.

Last Month: M58, M59, M60, M84, M86, M87, M88, M89, M90, M91, M98, M99, M100

Next Month: M6, M7, M8, M9, M10, M12, M19, M20, M21, M23, M62, M107

NGC and Other Deep Sky Objects

NGC 6124: Bright, rich open cluster in Ophiuchus.

NGC 6210: Planetary nebula in Hercules.

NGC 6229: Class IV globular cluster in Hercules.

NGC 6441: Class III globular cluster in Scorpius.

NGC 6543: The Cat's Eye Nebula in Draco.

Double Star Club List

Nu Draconis: Equal pair of white stars.

Psi Draconis: Light yellow pair.

40/41 Draconis: Equal pair of light yellow stars.

Xi Scorpii: Yellow primary with a light blue secondary.

Struve 1999: Two yellow-orange stars.

Beta Scorpii: Blue-white primary with a light blue secondary.

Nu Scorpii: Yellow and light blue stars.

Delta Serpentis: Pale yellow pair.

Theta Serpentis: Blue and white stars.

Challenge Object

NGC 5897: Class X globular cluster in Libra. Large and faint, difficult to see due to low surface brightness.

PAC History Book – Mark Dahmke

If you've paid for a copy of the PAC Book, please pick it up at the next club meeting, or email me. If you still want a copy but didn't get in on the first order, we've had enough requests that we'll probably need to order some more copies. I'll bring the copies we have to the next club meeting.

Feedback received:

Greetings Mark,

Thanks so much for sending us a copy of the book about your club's 50th anniversary! It's a very nice book. I will share it with the staff, and we will keep it in our library for future reference. Congratulations to you and everyone in the Prairie Astronomy Club for your 50 years of excellence in astronomy!

Clear skies,

Robert Naeye, Editor, S&T

Hi, Mark.

It arrived safe and sound. Wow! If every astronomy club were this thorough, the volumes would fill the Library of

Congress. I plan to blog about this book in the near future. Thanks for sending it.

Best wishes,

-Michael E. Bakich

Senior Editor/Photo Editor, ASTRONOMY magazine

Mark, this is a most valuable thing you did for the club. As time goes on, the accumulated knowledge often goes away, so your foresight in saving this while the resources are still available is impressive. Thanks for sharing this with the League. At some point in the future, you might consider an article in the Reflector regarding this project. I have a feeling that clubs across the country face the same issues as the membership changes and memories get blurry. Likewise, it was great meeting you at Mid-States. I thoroughly enjoyed the convention. The presentations had a good deal of depth to them. Your club is certainly to be commended for such a high-quality convention.

Best wishes!

Carroll Iorg

Vice President, Astronomical League

Focus On Constellations - Jim Kvasnicka

Scorpius

Scorpius, the Scorpion is one of the constellations in the Zodiac. It is not only a Milky Way constellation; it lies in the general direction of the center of our Galaxy, which is near the Sagittarius and Scorpius border. Because the family of globular clusters in the Milky Way are concentrated toward the interior of our Galaxy, Scorpius is rich in globular clusters, with two of them M4 and M80 being Messier objects. Scorpius also contains numerous open clusters including M6 and M7 from the Messier catalog. Scorpius contains a number of deep sky objects and double stars to keep an observer occupied for a long time. The constellation Scorpius is best seen in July. .

Mythology and History

Scorpius represents death, darkness, and everything we look on as evil. In Greek mythology Scorpius represented the Scorpion sent to sting Orion in the heel. The Mayans named Scorpius "the sign of the Death god." In New Zealand the constellation is not seen as a Scorpion, but as a heavenly fish hook. The Chinese looked on Antares as a star to worship as a safeguard against fire. The farther south you travel and Scorpius is higher in the sky, it loses its image of evil.

Objects Magnitude 12.0 and Brighter

Galaxies:

Open Clusters: M6, M7, NGC6281, NGC6383, NGC6416, NGC6124, NGC6322,

NGC6242, NGC6178, NGC6425, NGC6259, NGC6249, NGC6451, NGC6192, NGC6396, NGC6400, NGC6374, NGC6268, MGC6222, NGC6216, NGC6404, NGC6318, Cr316, Cr338, Cr333, Cr345, Tr24, Tr25, Tr27, Tr28, Tr29, Tr30

Globular Clusters: M4, M80, NGC6388, NGC6441, NGC6144, NGC6139, NGC6496, NGC6453, Pal 15

Planetary Nebulae: PK355+3.2, NGC6153, PK345-4.1, PK342-4.1, PK344+4.1

Bright Nebulae:

SNREM:

Dark Nebulae: B40, B44a, B48, B50, B53, B55-6, B58, B231, B233, B235, B252,

B257, B263, B283, B287, SL17, SL26, SL28, LDN1710

Named Stars: Antares (Alpha), Graffias (Beta), Dschubba (Delta), Sargas (Theta),

Shaula (Lambda), Jabbah (Nu)

Number of Objects in Various Observing Clubs

Messier Club: 4 objects

Double Star Club: 4 objects

Herschel 400 Club: 2 objects

Globular Cluster Club: 10 objects

Open Cluster Club: 6 objects

Planetary Nebula Club: 4 objects

Urban Club: 4 objects

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

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 Magazine.

Club Telescopes

To check out one of the club telescopes, contact **Jason Noelle**. If you keep a scope for more than a week, please check in with Jason 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.



Focus on Outreach–Dave Churilla

Well, after the MSRAL convention it was nice to relax a bit. However a few of us had to work Waterfest on June 12. Unfortunately (or fortunately depending on how you look at it) the weather was poor and it looked as if it would rain. That kept most people from coming out. I understand they still had about 1,000 people there throughout the evening but since it was overcast we had very few people at our area. Showing up to help out were Joey Churilla, Jim Handeland, Jim Kvasnicka and Jason Noelle along with Bob Kacvinsky who was busy at our table talking to kids mostly. I had made a poster of comparative planet and star sizes as a conversation opener and Bob used to the maximum extent. I think he was pretty stiff by the end of the night from squatting to get down to the kids level to talk to them. Hats off to Bob...he's great at Outreach as are the volunteers who usually help out. Thanks to all of you.

And in that vein we really do need to get more involved with Outreach before we start seeing that aspect of the club diminish. The same volunteers working these things causes burn out...and that's not just rhetoric because I'm beginning to feel that and I often feel for those who ALWAYS help out because they are spending so much of their personal time from family. I'm nearing 60 and trust me there are times when I'm ready to turn down an Outreach activity just because I know it will be the same people working at it.

So please, give us a hand with some of this. It's important to the club and can be a lot of fun.

Here's what's coming up so far for the rest of the year.

Spring Creek's Twilight on the Tallgrass: Saturday, September 18th from 5 pm to 8 pm. We like to have at least 6 telescopes (more is better) to set up for this event. The scopes set up on the Prairie as 1 of about 3 stations for hikers to stop at during a nighttime trail walk. The event usually attracts between 300 and 400 people and is at Spring Creek Prairie west of Denton with viewing from about 8 pm to 10 pm.

Homestead National Monument's Howling Halloween: This is the Federal Park's Open house and is geared toward kids and their parents and is usually held the Saturday before Halloween. It attracts over 400 people and is west of Beatrice.

What if you're contacted for Outreach? If you are

contacted for an Outreach Activity and want to handle it, that's great – I don't need (nor want) to be involved with every event that we do. I do, however, ask that you let me know about it and afterward send me information about the event so I can track and log it. I need:

Event Name

Event Location

Organization

Contact Name and Information (phone, email, etc)

Volunteers (and who organized)

Event Date & Time – include set up time – so we can track volunteer hours

What you did (i.e. Set up scopes, did presentation or a talk, etc.)



MSRAL 2010: The Year We Made Contact—Jack Dunn

June 4th - 6th, PAC played host to some 83 participants in the MSRAL 2010 convention held on the UNL city campus at Morrill Hall, at Hyde Observatory, and at the Knoll's Restaurant for the Banquet.

Special thanks go to all those who helped me chair this thing by doing all the stuff that makes a convention happen.

Dave Churilla - master of the Star-B-Que and Hyde Open House
Bob Kavinsky - master chef and PAC treasurer.

Dan Delzell - for keeping a steady hand and being the authority when I needed the official PAC word to keep various convention goers from asking for the Moon.

Mark Dahmke - for taking care of our computer and AV needs and always being there to help some of the less computer literate attendees.

Michael Sibbersen - for going beyond the call of duty again in helping support Peter Schultz and his demonstrations. It was Michael's gathering of all the materials and hauling them down to Lincoln which made the demonstration work out so well.

Then there are all the volunteers who followed Steve Lloyd and Dave Churilla's lead to keep registration going, serve the food, arrange the food and generally help out whenever needed.

Ron Veys deserves a note for trying to get out of the convention by going to the hospital. But he still came and joined us and we were really glad he was able to share the time with us and old friends. Take care of yourself Ron.

That brings me to the speakers. They are old friends. What can you say about someone who works on the world's largest telescopes and came from the humble PAC beginning. We always appreciate Larry Stepp coming back to tell us of his new giant toys.

Rick Johnson has stories aplenty, and now with the Fell cartoon, he's immortalized (even his plaid shirt is in there). His photography never fails to amaze everyone and I think he blew the doors off with his images that many in the other clubs hadn't seen.

Pete Schultz sure has a fun career - one of the biggest

guns in the world and he's still trying to blow up those "anthills" - except now they are on the Moon, Mars and asteroids. His enthusiasm is catching.

Rob Landis didn't come from our club, but he has been out here before as an Astronomy Day speaker. We know he found some new friends. As someone who has known him for 25 years in the Planetarium profession, it is always great to hear his insights into various space exploration concepts. He has such a broad history of work with NASA and both manned and unmanned missions. Guess we could adopt him as he fits the mold of our other speakers so well.

MSRAL opened with the Star-B-Que and the weather even cooperated so we didn't have to get wet. Bob's cooking made sure everyone started the conference with a satisfied tummy. Glad Eric was able to demonstrate the Solar system and we talked Hyde history. There was so much of it in that room. It was great to see Earl Moser again.

Saturday, I'll admit, is a blur to me as there was so much running around. But I think the talks all went well and thanks to Dave C., Dave K. and Eric for supplanting our main speakers and making our club look even better.

If nothing else, I think we did a lot for PAC's reputation among the region and it was great to have a few folks from the Astronomical League office here.

The banquet - what can you say about the Knoll's buffet except what convention have you ever attended where you've eaten so well!

Rob's talk about manned missions to asteroids brought the day to a great close.

Sunday morning was the MSRAL business meeting and I really want to thank Cook Feldman for helping me get through it and basically running it for me as I wouldn't have a clue otherwise what to do. If I were to name all the volunteers, to give them what they deserve, I'd have to name half the club. Again I especially thank Dave C., Dan, Mark and Bob K. for being there all the time to see this thing through all the twists and turns. Running a convention like this takes a lot out of yourself. So, I am very happy to announce I am no longer chair of MSRAL and ITS OVER!

Give yourselves all a big pat on the back.



Above: Pete Schultz, Rick Johnson at Hyde.
Below: Steve Lloyd and Bob Leavitt at registration table.



Dave Knisely's talk on observing the sun in H-Alpha.



Left: Rob Landis presents "Human Missions to Near Earth Objects" at the banquet.



Far left: Dave Churilla on Outreach

Photos by Michael Sibbersen.



Left: solar observing at the Star-B-Que.

Right: John Johnson, Earl Moser and Marjorie Moser.





Pete Schultz, Rob Landis and Larry Stepp. Photo by Jim Atkins



Jack Dunn. Photo by Jim Atkins



Dan Delzell giving away a door prize. Photo by Michael Sibbernsen.

Rizwan Siddiqui was named the winner of the Jack Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award. Astronomical League vice president, Caroll Iorg used the convention as an opportunity to present Rizwan with a plaque and monetary award, while Bill Bond presented Rizwan with an honorary one year membership to the OAS.

Photo by Michael Sibbernsen.



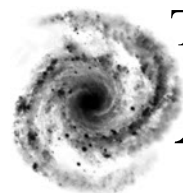
Eric Balcom of OAS was recognized as the Mid States Region 'Amateur Astronomer of the Year' for his dedication to and support of the Nebraska Star Party as a long time coordinator, along with his active involvement with the OAS in general in the capacity of program coordinator. Photo from OAS newsletter.

Pete Schultz, Jack Dunn, Rick Johnson, at the banquet. Photo by Michael Sibbernsen.



The Prairie Astronomer





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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Next PAC Meeting
TUESDAY
June 29, 2010
7:30 PM
Hyde Observatory