



The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore
Amateur Astronomy Club*

October, 2007

From the President

The August meeting was well attended (for August) and the skies were clear enough that members (and the presenter, Alan Peters) voted to postpone the Constellation Conversation on Cepheus until October. We had a short meeting under one hour, and then headed out to the parking lot for observing. Although there were no clouds, the transparency was terrible. A fellow was there with his 10 inch DOB which he had brought to the scope clinic for collimation and we managed to get him straightened out (pun intended).

I have to say that the email thread regarding the offending light at Veasey Memorial Park was the longest thread on the list server since I've been the steward! Since the night of the board meeting (August 21) when we first noticed the light, it has not been seen since. I feel that it would be difficult to make a case against this light unless or until it becomes an ongoing issue. If it does become an issue I will try and get the VMP board to fight it with us.

Last month I mentioned a possible new observing venue that the club may be able to use on Friday nights. Thanks mostly to the efforts of member John Tulik, it is looking like this new venue may become a reality, and that we may in the near future be able to observe on Friday nights from what may be the darkest spot on the North Shore! This venue would be for NSAAC members and would not be available for non-members. For that reason I will not refer to it by name in the newsletter or on the website as I don't want to call attention to it. We do not yet have permission, so please wait for further news regarding the new venue before inquiring.

For the good of the club, for the future of club, for the sanity of the treasurer, and for all future treasurers of NSAAC, the board of directors is proposing that the club spend \$299.00 on new accounting software. We are proposing that the club change from the software program

called QuickBooks to one called MYOB: AccountEdge. For a detailed discussion of why the board is making this proposal please attend the October business meeting, at which time a vote will be taken for this expense.

We enter the Star Party season with a new coordinator (John Hobbs) and a new Star Party Committee consisting of John, Jim Foy, Fred Sammartino, Brewster LaMacchia, Jim Koerth, and myself. I must admit I'm a bit nervous about this, probably unjustly so, but if you have ever faced a crowd of two hundred or more people with only two or three telescopes on hand you'd know why. Please read the Star Party schedule. Please support the club's mission and bring your telescope to any star party where we express a need for numbers. It is not hard to put on a show for the public unless you are overwhelmed and understaffed. We enjoy the privileges of being a non-profit organization because we serve the public. Please help your new Star Party Committee by attending. Sometimes having one additional telescope can make a big difference.

When I awoke this morning it was 49° in Billerica. The transparency last night was amazing! The cool autumn nights are upon us, the Great Square of Pegasus is above, and Orion will soon be rising in the early evenings!

*Kevin Ackert
President*

Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, September 7th, 2007

President Ackert called the September Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:28 PM. There were no guests. There were 14 members present plus 4 Board members. There was an official quorum.

Secretary: The minutes of the August business meeting were accepted by acclamation.

Treasurer:
The Board is waiting for the FY 2006 Annual Report from the treasurer and should be in the hands of the board at the next board meeting. Treasurer is closing out the books for the year.

Treasurer is taking orders for the calendars and RASC handbooks. The last day to order is September 15th.

Early Meeting Announcements:
No announcements. Open forum on the agenda after New Business

Committee Reports:

Young Astronomers Program:

No progress. Board will take up options at the next board meeting.

Merrimack College:

The observatory has a full staff. Weather has been so bad there has been little observing.

Salem State:

Dennis Gudzevich reported that the observatory is closed for the summer and will reopen this month. Lou Groki has resigned his position as a member of the working staff so Dennis has to find another helper. Dennis will try to get together with Dick Collins to see if he can help.

Entertainment Report:

John Hobbs has made contact with John Briggs to see about another presentation on historical instruments in either October or November.

Star Party Committee:

There has been a request from Kim Szotfried for a star party for the Eveleth Elementary School in Marblehead. The chairman responded that the club would do one and that we should do this after daylight saving time so the kids are not up late. Garry Meehan is having a star party October 13 at the IRWS and this will be his last star party so someone from NSAAC will have to step up for these events at IRWS. There will be a star party at the Salisbury Beach State Reservation for about 20 to 30 people on October 4 with a cloud date of October 5.

Telescope Clinic:

We have had 2 requests for help at the business meeting.

News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

IRWS blackout dates are:

Halloween Program nights of Oct 26 and 27

Astro Assembly will take place in Rhode Island September 28 and 29. For information see:

<http://www.theskyscrapers.org/astroassembly>

Member Barrie Sawyer has volunteered the use of Starport for the new moon week in September. Those wishing to attend please let Barrie know so he can provide ample food for those coming. Food donations or money for food is welcome.

Bird seed day will take place November 10 from 8 AM to 2 PM at IRWS. This is our opportunity to payback to IRWS for use of their facility for observing. Coffee, donuts, and lunch are provided for all volunteers who come to help.

Old Business:

Member John Tulik has made contact with the officials at the new venue and they would like to meet with President Ackert to discuss using the park as an observing venue. Kevin has visited the site and thinks that it has great potential and is about the darkest site on the north shore. John Tulik is working on obtaining a special use permit for the club.

The hat purchase is on hold until we get a new logo or decide to keep the old one. Board thought that we could update and correct the comet on the logo. We are looking for pictures of comets that we could use.

New Business:

Rocco field lighting has presented a special problem for observing from the VMP site. If it becomes a problem then we must get VMP on our side and make a strong pitch to the town of Groveland to have the situation mitigated. We should not act unless it becomes an issue and we will not respond without the support of VMP. Time will dictate our course of action.

The board is proposing an accounting software change from QuickBooks to MYOB accounting edge. The software is \$299 and we will announce the proposed purchase in the newsletter and vote on the purchase at the October meeting.

Entertainment for the evening was to be a Constellation Conversation given by Alan Peters, but in view of the excellent observing conditions this evening, he agreed to give the presentation at a later time,

October business meeting is the 12th and not the 5th.

Board Meeting will be Tuesday September 18th at 8:00 PM at VMP.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Respectively submitted,

John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC

October Meeting and Salisbury Beach Star Party

Please note that the October business meeting will be on the 12th instead of the 5th due to the Columbus Day weekend.

On Thursday, October 4th (cloud date October 5th) we are hosting a star party at Salisbury Beach State Reservation for about 20 to 30 people. This is one which we have not done before. It was conceived of and organized by the park interpreter at Sandy Point State Park. There will not be an

indoor presentation, but they are expecting a vocal program under the stars in addition to telescope observing. By vocal program I mean a tour of the sky and/or just about anything interesting.

I am planning to attend on October 4th but can not attend the next day should it come to that. We want to present them with a good program as this type of networking with state officials can open doors for us within the State Park system. Anyone with the ability to give a tour of the night sky and the willingness to help, please contact [starparty at nsaac.org](http://starparty.atnsaac.org) and volunteer. Or, if you just want to show up with a scope, that will help. I especially need a speaker for the Friday night event if Thursday is clouded out.

Kevin Ackert

Star Party News

Jim Foy has been running the NSAAC star parties for many years and has announced his retirement from heading up this effort; but will still participate in star parties for the foreseeable future. The Board decided to form a committee to handle the star parties. The committee coordinator and point of contact will be John Hobbs with assistance from Kevin Ackert, Jim Foy, Fred Sammartino, Brewster LaMacchia, and Jim Koerth.

Upcoming star parties are the following:

- 1) October 4 with a cloud date of October 5, Salisbury Beach State Reservation. About 20 to 30 people expected.
- 2) October 13 IRWS with Gary Meehan talking about Deep Sky Observing.
- 3) November 19, Marblehead Eveleth Elementary School grades K-3 and with a sister school about 370 students and their parents will attend. We will need about 6-8 scopes for this event.
- 4) January 31, Annual star party at the Proctor Elementary School Topsfield, MA and we typically have several hundred students at this event.

Notices of these events will be placed on the list server. Reminders and requests for telescopes will be sent out near the time of the events along with directions and times for talks and telescope setup.

Star Party Volunteers Needed!

As we get into the star party season, please watch for announcements and provide support when you can. It is a rewarding experience!

*John Hobbs,
Star Party Coordinator*

Astrotalk

by Barrie Sawyer

Cassiopeia Challenge

Most of us have too few precious hours to observe. So we try to find everything we can over the entire sky when we do get the chance to go out into a clear night. I would like to suggest an alternative. Spend at least two hours on just one constellation.

During the last quarter moon, I set up my 25x100 binoculars with red dot finder to see how many objects I could find in Cassiopeia. Big mistake. The whole area is a mass of star 'clumps' and dark splotches. The big binoculars pulled in so many faint stars that I had trouble correlating what was on the charts to what I was seeing even with the help of the red dot finder. I then grabbed my 7x50s and went back to the basics. I spent a half hour with them, getting a feel for the spatial arrangement of the pointer stars and asterisms. Maybe it's just me, but I often need some time to become comfortable with orientation of some constellations, especially when I have to hold the chart upside-down. This is where having binoculars on a mount really helps. I then went back to the 25x100s and proceeded to have a great time finding dozens of objects.

Next time I go out, I will set up my 10" reflector to get a more detailed look at what I found. Gary Seronik in a recent issue of *Sky and Telescope* stated that, for him, big binos were not worth the extra weight, effort to set up and the relatively narrow field of view. I respectfully disagree. Bino vision gives you a sense of depth and size and is easier on the eyes. Large clusters and nebula are just as impressive. Many dark nebula are easier to spot and map in binoculars. For reasons I've already mentioned, I prefer to use a mount, even with 7X50s

Here is some of my favorite Cassiopeia objects:

Stock 2; near the Double Cluster, large and easy to spot.
NGC 7789; a large open cluster
NGC 663; This cluster is near M103 but it looks brighter and larger to me.
NGC 457; I'm surprised Messier didn't find this one. It looks like a comet with a bright head in my 7x50s but like the Owl Cluster should in my 25x100s.

*Clear skies,
Barrie Sawyer*

Entertainment for October

The entertainment for the business meeting on October 12th will be a Constellation Conversation on Cepheus to be presented by Alan Peters. Alan's presentation was postponed from September due to clear skies.

John Hobbs is working on having another presentation by Dr. John Briggs. Dr. Briggs presented earlier this year and we are hoping to possibly have him back in November.

If you have a suggestion for an entertainment idea please submit it to us with no obligation to do it yourself.

Getting to Veasey Memorial Park

From Interstate 95 north, take the Route 133 west (54B) exit, and follow it into Georgetown Center. Go straight through the light, now on Route 97N. Go about 1.5 miles and take a left onto Salem Street (Tea Garden Restaurant at this intersection). Stay on Salem Street and turn left onto Washington Street. VMP is down a bit on the right.

Directions to all of the NSAAC observing sites are available on our web site's "About" page at:

<http://www.nsaac.org/about.htm>

Contact Information

For more information about the club and its activities, contact Jim Koerth, Membership Director, email: [membership at nsaac.org](mailto:membership@nsaac.org) or contact Kevin Ackert, President, e-mail at [president at nsaac.org](mailto:president@nsaac.org). If you have no email access, you may phone Kevin Ackert at (978) 663-5305

Our club web site is: <http://www.nsaac.org>.

The *Celestial Observer* is edited by Leor Zolman. Feedback, and member contributions are welcome. Contact: [newsletter at nsaac.org](mailto:newsletter@nsaac.org).

New development on the NSAAC web site is currently being coordinated and implemented by Mike Deneen. Suggestions regarding the content of the NSAAC web site are always welcome; Please email [webmaster at nsaac.org](mailto:webmaster@nsaac.org) with your ideas.