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# The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore  
Amateur Astronomy Club*

**November, 2007**

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## **From the President**

Having Alan Peters do a presentation has done wonders for our clear skies on meeting night! His Constellation Conversation was postponed for the second month in a row in favor of observing following the October meeting.

We arrived at Veasey Memorial Park to find a party in full swing occupying the entire first floor! We had been double booked! After considering just crashing and mingling into the party, we were offered the downstairs meeting room. I didn't even know there was one. It is underneath the church section and has full kitchen facilities, two rest rooms, and some room to store stuff. We may be in this new section for the November meeting, so look there if we're not upstairs.

Paul Roy and I attended the VMP Board meeting on October 2 and opened a discussion with them on our problems with the Rocco Field light. They are sympathetic to our case and are willing to work with us towards the goal of eliminating the light problem. We agreed that the first step is to gather information, and then to approach the owners of the light with a letter. This particular lighting problem is different in that the offending light is only on during one of their sporting events. The VMP folks will be talking to the town of Groveland, and I will be forwarding them a copy of the Gloucester lighting ordinance written by Mario Matto.

At recent meetings and in recent newsletters, I talked of a new venue that the club was in the process of acquiring a "use permit" for observing. We received that permit today (October 17<sup>th</sup>) hours before newsletter deadline! The next step in the process is working out the details with the supervisors of the facility. This new venue will be an NSAAC members-only venue and information regarding its use will not be made public via the newsletter or website. We do not want non-members contacting us, or the facility, about observing from there. I realized how public our newsletters were when a fellow contacted me about using

our old "Moose Dodge" site up in Rangeley, ME. Information will be passed on to NSAAC members via meetings or private email once the details have been worked out. The name of the venue has been removed from prior issues of the online newsletter, and it will be referred to from now on as "Dark Park." Hey! Now we have a real club secret just like a club should! *[I guess this means that now we need a secret handshake? -Ed.] [See Late Breaking News on Page 4. -Prez]*

Members attending the October business meeting approved the purchase of the new accounting software which will make bookkeeping much easier for the current and all future Treasurers of the NSAAC. Between now and the end of our fiscal year (February 28<sup>th</sup>) I will work with the Treasurer to convert our books to the new system with the goal of using the new software exclusively for fiscal year 2008.

I absolutely love it when thirteen year old amateur astronomers correct me on some fact, or pronunciation, while out under the stars with them! It has happened to me twice in recent weeks! It is truly inspiring to find a youngster deeply engrossed in the hobby. A young man attended our October meeting with his Dad and we set up his 10 inch DOB outside afterwards. It has rekindled my desire to get the YAP telescopes placed into the hands of youngsters who would appreciate them. I'll engage the board to come up with something at the next meeting; suggestions are very welcome.

I've really been enjoying the conjunctions of Venus and Saturn in the early mornings this month. On November 3, 4, and 5 they will be joined by a waning crescent moon.

Clear skies,  
*Kevin Ackert,*  
*President*

## **NSAAC Welcomes Our New Member:**

Michael Barrington of Lynn, MA

*Jim Koerth,*  
*Membership Director*

## **Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, October 12th, 2007**

President Ackert called the October Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:25PM. There were two guests: John McMahon and his son. There were 10 members present plus 4 Board members. There was an official quorum.

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

Treasurer:  
No report.

Membership:  
There is one new member: Michael Barrington from Lynn.

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. Kevin had 9 people the week of the full moon.

Salem State:  
Dennis Gudzevich opened a couple of times, clouded out the rest of the time. The observatory is opened on Mondays for this year. Lou Groki will now help out a few times each month. Dennis will try to get together with the Collin's to see if they can help.

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

Star Party Committee:  
There is a Star Party at IRWS Sat evening Oct 13 with Gary Meehan giving a presentation on the deep sky and scopes are needed from the club.

Wed Oct 17 there will be a Star Party at High Plains Elementary School in Andover with Brewster LaMacchia giving the presentation and scopes provided by NSAAC and some from ATMob. 200 students expected.

Fri Oct 19 there will be a Star Party at the Eleventh Elementary School in Marblehead with Kevin Ackert giving a presentation and scopes from NSAAC. About 65 students with parents will attend.

Mon Oct 29 Kevin Ackert will be presenting a Star Party at the Moody Elementary School, at Fort Hill Park, Lowell MA, for about 200 students. No indoor presentation, but scopes needed from NSAAC.

Wed Nov 7 there will be a Star Party at the West Elementary School, Andover MA, with Brewster LaMacchia giving the presentation and NSAAC providing scopes. 100 students expected

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

News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:  
Lew Gramer has sent a letter thanking the club for making him an Associate Member.

IRWS blackout dates are:  
Halloween Program nights of Oct 26 and 27.

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:  
Baseball field light has reoccurred and Kevin attended the VMP board meeting and they indicated that they would be behind the club. VMP will be talking to the Town of Groveland and Kevin will send some information on lighting ordinances. The club and VMP will be drafting a letter to the offender and then begin discussions on what arrangements can be made.

The new venue is how the other observing site will be referred to in the future so that the public does not start calling the places to see about public observing. There is a new park supervisor at the venue and he is in favor of the club using the facility.

Hats/logo purchases are still on hold awaiting a new comet logo.

New Business:  
A motion was made and seconded for the club to spend \$299 to purchase MYOB Accountant Edge professional accounting software for the treasurer to help in managing the clubs books. Motion carried unanimously.

Entertainment for the evening was to be a Constellation Conversation given by Alan Peters, but he agreed to give the presentation at a later time,

Board Meeting will be Monday October 22 at 7:00 PM at VMP.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

*Respectively submitted,  
John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

## **Birdseed Day, November 10**

Bird seed day is when we show our appreciation to Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary for allowing us to use their parking lot as an observing venue. We unload sacks of seed from a truck, then distribute it to people arriving in cars. Coffee, donuts, and homemade lunches are provided. We unload the truck from 8:00 to 9:00, then distribute the seed from 9 to 12 in the IRWS parking lot. Please mark the date on your calendar. Typically we need about six to ten people, the more the better! Please email me at [president at nsaac.org](mailto:president@nsaac.org) if you would like to volunteer.

## **Star Party News**

The Star Party on Oct 4 at the Salisbury Beach State Reservation kicked off the star party activity of the club for this winter season. The sky was very dark to the east and west and Sagittarius could be seen in the southern horizon. There were five members with scopes as this was an observation event only. There were about 30-40 attendees. This local may be an alternate dark side for some special observing if the club can obtain free and late night access.

There is a Star Party at IRWS Sat evening Oct 13 with Gary Meehan giving a presentation on the deep sky and scopes are needed from the club.

Wed Oct 17 there will be a Star Party at High Plains Elementary School in Andover with Brewster LaMacchia giving the presentation and scopes provided by NSAAC and some from ATMob. 200 students expected.

The Star Party scheduled for Fri Oct 19 at the Eleventh Elementary School in Marblehead has been rescheduled to Fri Nov 16, at 7:00 pm. About 65 students with parents will attend.

Mon Oct 29 Kevin Ackert will be presenting a Star Party at the Moody Elementary School, at Fort Hill Park, Lowell MA, for about 200 students. No indoor presentation, but scopes needed from NSAAC.

Wed Nov 7 there will be a Star Party at the West Elementary School, Andover MA, with Brewster LaMacchia giving the presentation and NSAAC providing scopes. 100 students expected.

*John Hobbs,  
Star Party Coordinator*



by Barrie Sawyer

## **Sky and Telescope's Pocket Sky Atlas**

I've had the chance to use this new atlas by Roger Sinnott for two seasons and it has become my favorite. It's not the most detailed and doesn't have the biggest format, but it is the most handy one I've ever used. The *Pocket Sky Atlas* is spiral bound, 6 inches by 9 inches, and printed in moisture resistant paper. The smaller size is easier to hold in one hand while looking through the eyepiece or up at the sky. This atlas has many features I appreciate. The stars are plotted down to magnitude 7.6 which make star hopping with binoculars or a finder scope easier. It plots many objects of interest including the Herschel 400, 55 carbon stars and a host of clusters, nebulas and galaxies not usually found in pocket atlases. Many double and variable stars are included. I really like the stick figure outlines drawn for the constellations. It makes getting oriented much quicker. There are numbers on the borders of each map indicating the numbers of the adjacent maps. One remarkable feature is that few constellations are split up on different pages. This is because Sinnott and his colleagues at Sky and Telescope overlapped the maps as necessary to minimize the splits. There are 80 main maps, 4 detail maps, and several useful indices. The layout of the atlas takes some getting used to since the maps are arranged by declination rather than right ascension.

The *Pocket Sky Atlas* is a welcome addition to my equipment case and at \$19.95 it is a bargain to boot.

*Clear Skies,  
Barrie Sawyer*

## **Entertainment for November**

The entertainment for the business meeting on November 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a Constellation Conversation on Cepheus to be presented by Alan Peters. Alan's presentation was postponed from September and October 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 December.

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

## LATE BREAKING NEWS FROM PRESIDENT

We are now in possession of the key to our new observing venue "Dark Park", and a special use permit. The board will be meeting on October 22 and will attempt to work out the details of how we will manage the stewardship of this key and permit. The use of Dark Park will be an exclusive members only privilege.

There are a few caveats. We only have permission for use on Friday nights. I had attempted to gain use for Saturday nights, as we already have VMP for Fridays. I'm not sure at this time why this decision was made, but I'll find out. If we establish ourselves with them we may be able to have access on other nights in the future. The other caveat is that the roads are not plowed in winter and the bathroom water is turned off in winter. However, there are outhouses available. Brrr....

Member John Tulik was key in making this happen for us. I briefly spoke with John on the phone and have yet to speak with him regarding details. More information will be available about Dark Park at our November meeting and via the list server as it becomes available.

*Kevin Ackert,  
President*

## 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@nsaac.org](mailto:membership@nsaac.org) or contact Kevin Ackert, President, e-mail at [president@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@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@nsaac.org](mailto:webmaster@nsaac.org) with your ideas.