



The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore
Amateur Astronomy Club*

January, 2008

From the President

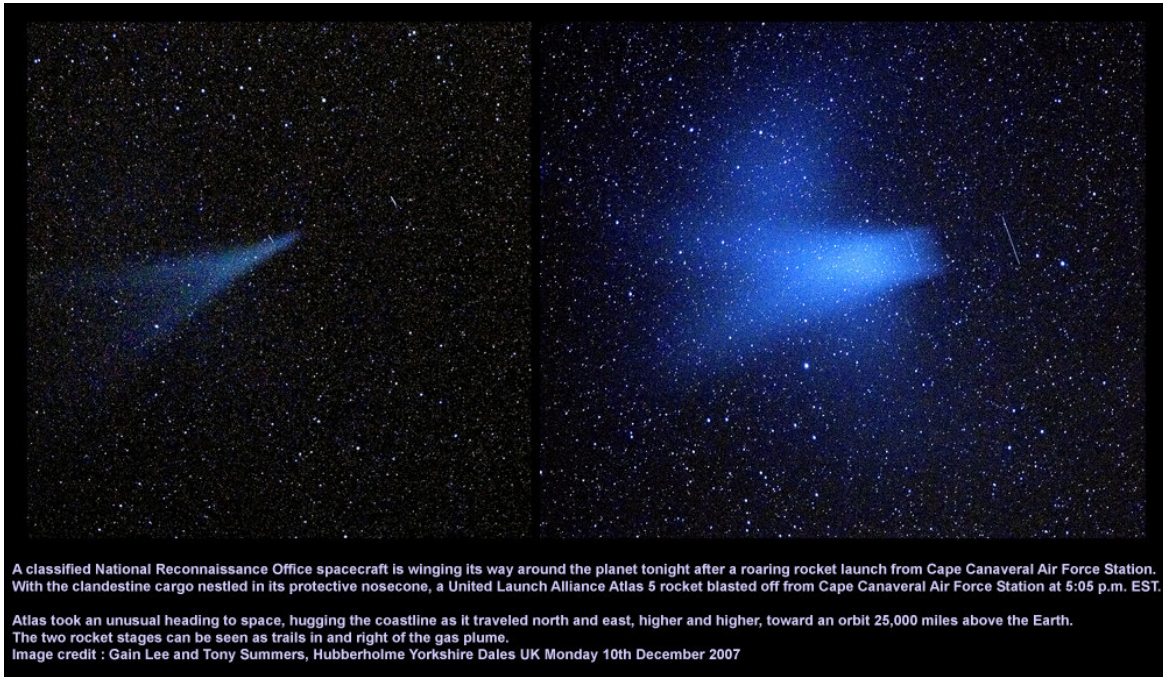
Our new venue has been used twice since we gained permission to use it on Saturday nights. It appears that it will live up to its code name, Dark Park. On the night I was there I could see the Milky Way better than any time I've seen it at VMP, and there was still quite a bit of twilight in the West! In addition to the dark skies it has the best horizon of any site we use. To the North, the dipper was in full view at its lowest point. There is still a light dome from Boston in the South. You won't get away from that anywhere on the North Shore.

The roads in Dark Park are not plowed in Winter, and we have to renew our permit for 2008. We are hoping to get use of it for both Friday and Saturday nights in 2008. At least one person must have a copy of the Use Permit while observing. We have four keys to the gate and are working on a method for sharing one of them between us.

Michael Deneen and Brewster LaMacchia were recipients of this year's Membership Appreciation Awards. Michael is

our webmaster and is responsible for almost all the work done to our website. Brewster manages the server and all the software that makes our website and our email list server possible. Both of these fellows put in many hours of their time behind the scenes and few of us ever realize it. With this year's recipients being high tech guys I wanted to give them a digital award (gift card) but eleventh hour planning prevented it, so they each received an analog gift (cash).

In the early evening on December 10th I saw a very strange object in the sky from my driveway. It looked like a comet in Cygnus. Using 20 x 80 binos confirmed that the object was very comet-like with two tails. It was very bright and extended, and it was really moving fast! From its speed I knew it could not be a comet. I decided it must be an anomaly; a cloud somehow being illuminated by sunlight. Seeing nothing about it on the list server later that night confirmed to me that it must have been a cloud. My friend, Gain Lee, took photos with his digital camera from England of the Atlas 5 rocket that had launched from Cape



A classified National Reconnaissance Office spacecraft is winging its way around the planet tonight after a roaring rocket launch from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. With the clandestine cargo nestled in its protective nosecone, a United Launch Alliance Atlas 5 rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at 5:05 p.m. EST. Atlas took an unusual heading to space, hugging the coastline as it traveled north and east, higher and higher, toward an orbit 25,000 miles above the Earth. The two rocket stages can be seen as trails in and right of the gas plume. Image credit : Gain Lee and Tony Summers, Hubberholme Yorkshire Dales UK Monday 10th December 2007

Canaveral and as soon as I saw them the next day I knew this was my object. A rocket had never occurred to me while observing this object, but next time it will!

The election committee is formed. I am chairman,

John Hobbs and Tom Rauschenbach are members. I have begun soliciting people to be on the board of directors. The president job needs to be filled along with several other board positions. Please consider serving a year on the board when I approach you.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the star parties thus far! We have three in January with our biggest one on the last day of the month. Please consider supporting any that you can attend.

I'd like to wish all members, their families, and loved ones, a very happy and healthy Winter Solstice Holiday season

and the same for the New Year 2008. Oh yeah, clear skies and lower gas prices too!

Kevin Ackert
President

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

President Ackert called the December Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:15 PM. There was one guest: Bob Kiser and friend. There were 9 members present plus 3 Board members. There was an official quorum.

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

Treasurer:
There was no Treasurer's report.

Membership:
No new members since the last meeting.

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

Committee Reports:

Young Astronomers Program:
Time and energy will be directed back to development of this program as it becomes available.

Merrimack College:
The observatory has a full staff. The observatory has not been open for the last 5 weeks due to a malfunctioning dome. The dome motor has been fixed and the observatory is back on line.

Salem State:
Dennis Gudzevich and Dick Collins have been in contact. The primary mirror needs cleaning. A Salem professor mentioned that he thought we were responsible to maintain the scope. Dennis reminded him that we were only to run it for the college. Dick Collins is going to see if he can get the school straightened out.

Entertainment Report:
John Hobbs has made contact with John Briggs to see about another presentation on historical instruments early next year.

Star Party Committee:

There is one Star Party in December (12th with 13th cloud date) at Ft. Hill Park in Lowell for a neighborhood group called Friends of Ft. Hill Park. There will be about sixty people.

There will be a Star Party at IRWS Jan 12th given by Garry Meehan and is entitled Winter Stargazing for Beginners. They will need several scopes from the club for this event.

There will be a Star Party Jan 16 at the Breed Elementary School in Lynn. No details as of yet.

The Proctor School, Topsfield, MA, will be the location a Star Party Jan 31 for 200-300 students. This is the big star party of the year and we will need many scopes.

The next scheduled Star Party is April 6, 2008, at the Cashman School in Amesbury.

Telescope Clinic:
Bob Seibel brought his 10" DOB in to be fitted with a new secondary but the work could not be performed at the meeting due to the extent of work and modification required. Ron Sampson has generously volunteered to address the fix.

News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:
Correspondence from Jason McCrevan, Principal, Moody School thanking the club for the wonderful Star Party and he wanted to know where to send a donation check. A check for \$75.00 was received.

Susan Baeslack of IRWS sent a thank you note to the NSAAC for supporting Birdseed Day

Kim Scotzfried of the Eveleth Elementary School thanked us for their Star Party and send a check to the club for \$250.

John Boudreau video of Mercury made it onto the *Sky and Telescope* website. Amazing video John!!

There will be International Space Station Passovers every evening through mid December.

Comet 8P/Tuttle will reach 6th Magnitude in January.

Old Business:
Kevin Ackert has written a letter from NSAAC to the light owner asking about it's planned use, but has decided not to send it until the new board takes over.

John Boudreau, Ron Sampson, Mark O'Connor and Kevin Ackert did first light at the new Dark Park venue. The club has four keys to the site and several use permits. At least one member observing MUST have a use permit with him.

The four keys have been given to Kevin Ackert, John Hobbs, and Jim Foy. Arrangements will be made for a shared key to be available.

Hats/logo purchases are still on hold awaiting a new comet logo. Mark O'Connor has been working on improving the existing logo.

Kevin Ackert will transition the books and train the treasurer between now and March.

The Election committee has been formed. Kevin Ackert is the chairman with John Hobbs and Tom Rauschenbach as members.

New Business:

Michael Deneen and Brewster LaMacchia were presented member appreciation awards.

Entertainment for the evening will be a small presentation by John Hobbs on members of the San Antonio Astronomy club, their equipment, observatories and images and Jim Foy will give a presentation of his Astro photos.

VMP has indicated that they are going to install walkway lights. A switch will be made accessible to us.

Board Meeting will be Monday December 17 at 7:00 PM at VMP.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

*Respectively submitted,
John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

Star Party News

Members of NSAAC and ATMob both assisted with telescopes, binoculars, and laser guided constellation tours at two Andover Star Parties in November. Brewster arranged for these parties and gave the presentations. Thanks to Brewster for all his effort.

At the first on its 3rd attempt this year (and first star party ever), West Elementary had 150 parents and children from the 4th and 5th grade attend an event on Nov 7th. Assisting were James Bastable, James Foy, Neil Fleming, Scott Romanowski, David Wilbur, and Joseph Rothchild and Mass. Electric which was needed to turn off the huge parking lot lights.

On Nov 16th a star party was held at the Eveleth Elementary School in Marblehead with about 60 students. A presentation was given by stalwart Jim Foy and there were scopes provided by NSAAC. Kim Scotzfried has sent a

nice note thanking the club for its effort and a check for \$250 donation to the club. Well done!

For the second Andover Star Party despite rain earlier that day and a few clouds threatening that night, High Plain Elementary had 100 parents and children from the 4th and 5th grade attend an event (their 6th attempt) on Nov 29th. Assisting were Scott Romanowski, George Paquin, John Blomquist, Fred Sammartino, James Foy, Kevin Ackert, Neil Fleming, John Maher, and, James Bastable.

The club received a thank you note from James McCraven, principal of the Moody School in Lowell for our fine star party and a request as to where to send a donation.

The Star Party Committee thanks all our members who take the time to support these activities.

*John Hobbs,
Star Party Coordinator*



by Barrie Sawyer
Spreading the Word

I mentioned Comet Holmes to my minister and she asked me to send out some information on it through our church email list. I sent a brief description of how to find it and included some other items of interest about what is currently up in the night sky. At the end of the email I said anyone who wanted to continue getting astronomical updates in the future should contact me. There were over 20 responses. So, once a month I will send out an email describing what is visible in the night sky that can be seen by a novice in an urban area. Comet Holmes, the ISS schedule, the Geminid meteor shower and the planets are some of the items I listed in the last email. I also included a paragraph or so that discusses something in a little more detail. This time I talked about how the Great Orion Nebula, the Pleiades, the Hyades and the Ursa Major Moving Group represent different stages in star cluster formation and evolution.

If you belong to a house of worship, social group or organization that has a newsletter or email list, perhaps you should consider doing some similar outreach program. The effort takes only about an hour a month and is very rewarding. Several people mentioned how they appreciated the updates and expressed the hope I would continue to do them. Here is a fun way to spread the word.

HELP WANTED: I write the monthly newsletter article Astrotalk. I would like to hear from you if you have an idea for a topic or if you would like to write an article yourself. Please contact me at barrie_sawyer@yahoo.com.

*Clear skies,
Barrie Sawyer*

Help Wanted

Below is a list of positions which need to be filled in our club. Please consider volunteering for one of these positions if you have the means. Please contact any Board member with questions about these positions

President: No knowledge of astronomy required! Write a piece for the newsletter once a month. Attend meetings. Fill in a few cracks when needed. Occasionally field questions from reporters. Keep the club's rhythm going.

Board of Directors: Please consider filling one of the board positions. All positions need filling at this time.

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

Entertainment for May

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 January. If Dr. Briggs is not able to present alternative entertainment will be announced via the list server.

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@nsaac.org or contact Kevin Ackert, President, e-mail at 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.

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 with your ideas.