



The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore
Amateur Astronomy Club*

February, 2008

From the President

Our club begins the new year looking pretty good overall and your president is happy ☺! One New Year's resolution I made was to take more time to enjoy my life. I was bent over the eyepiece looking at Mars when the New Year arrived, and the skies were in the truck ready to go to the mountains after sunrise. That night was the best Mars I've seen so far during this apparition with exceptionally steady seeing. I was also able to get great views of Comet 8P/Tuttle that evening. It was just South of Triangulum and was about 5.6 magnitude. I'm planning on a lot more eyepiece time for myself in 2008!

The star parties so far this season have been successful and well attended. I was worried about this aspect of the club back in the late summer when the star party coordinator resigned. Our biggest star party of the year is coming up in a few days on January 31st at the Proctor School. We will have between two and three hundred people. Please support it if you are able.

With John Tulik's help, we have acquired our 2008 Use Permit for Dark Park, AND, we have permission for both Friday and Saturday nights! We are still working on a method of sharing a key to the gate. With the roads not plowed in the park the deep snow depth has been a deterrent to using the venue.

The nominations process for the 2008 board of directors is proceeding normally. At this time I am hopeful that I will have a full slate of candidates for the Vice President to present at the February meeting. Nominations for the board are open right up until the elections, so please come forward if you would like to nominate yourself, or discuss serving on the board of directors.

In 2007 the club gained 12 new members which brought our total membership to 95. Our website had 7,665 hits with 2,977 of them being first time visitors. That's 8 new visitors

per day. I'm planning to use the website to promote the Young Astronomer Program once details of it are worked out.

The Treasurer has challenged the club to try and set a record this year for dues paid on time! She claims that the more members who pay their dues on time, the less work she and the board have to do. Sounds to me like she just wants to coast down easy street, but I'm going to take her up on the challenge and pay my dues at the February meeting. Dues are due by the March business meeting and must be paid in order to cast a vote in the elections. Members who joined the club after October 31, 2007 do not have to pay their dues until March, 2009. Dues are \$20.00 per year. If any of your information has changed please fill out a renewal form so we can update your data. If nothing has changed you can just pay the dues without the form. Forms are available on our website.

*Kevin Ackert
President*

Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, January 4th, 2008

President Ackert called the January Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:05 PM. There were 13 members present plus 6 Board members. There was an official quorum.

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

Treasurer:

We are solvent. The Treasurer is waiting for the new Treasurer before renewing the checking account as a checking account that is also a saving account and renewing the land fund CD.

Membership:

Three new members since the last meeting:
Anne Cavanaugh from Lowell
Bob Keizer from West Newbury
Richard Flynn Sr. from South Hamilton

Committee Reports

Early Meeting Announcements:

No announcements. Open forum on the agenda after New Business.

Committee Reports:

Young Astronomers Program:

Kevin Ackert has come up with a new plan for the YAP program which he will unveil at a later business meeting after discussing the plan with the board.

Merrimack College:

Weather hampered most observing sessions. Paul Koval had 4 visitors the Wednesday after Jan 1.

Salem State:

Observatory was closed over the Christmas vacation.

Entertainment Report:

John Hobbs has made contact with John Briggs to see about another presentation on historical instruments early next year. Entertainment for the evening will be a presentation by John Boudreau on his astro images.

Starr Party Committee:

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. This is a science night affair and as many as 300 students could participate. Jim Foy will do a staggered presentation if necessary and if it is only a booth type exhibit will do a small continuous presentation and have scope on exhibit. If there is good weather scopes will be needed for outdoor observing. A post to the list server will be made the week of the event to notify members if scopes are needed.

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:

No recent interest.

News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

A thank you note was received from Anne Cavannaugh for the Friends of the Fort Hill. \$55 donation was made to the club.

Brewster LaMacchia has returned his member appreciation award back to the club as a donation.

Kevin announced that the NSAAC Web page had 7,655 hits in 2007: the Scope Clinic 351 hits; and the Yap 381 hits.

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

Old Business:

We have our 2008 use permits for the Dark Park Venue for both Friday and Saturday. We still need to work out a key arrangement.

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. He has not yet purchased the new software.

The nomination process is in progress and it going about the usual pace for this time of the year.

New Business:

The Treasurer reminded members the dues are due at or before the March business meeting. We hope to set a record for most renewals by the March meeting.

Kevin Ackert read a letter from Dick Collins regarding Salem State observatory. He listed several items that need looking into. The first issue is that there is currently no astronomy programs at the college. There is no one at the college who is interested in the observatory. He indicated that he thought they might need a new mount and maybe a CCD camera. Dennis indicated that the mount needs some mechanical work and the wiring is in bad shape and need replacing. The mirror and optics need to have a good cleaning. Dennis usually brings his own eyepieces etc for observing. Kevin intends to contact the school to discuss their interest in repairing the scope. Digital setting circles might be good. We need to find if the college would want to put some money into the scope.

Board Meeting date will have to be decided by e-mail.

The entertainment of the evening was a presentation by John Boudreau on his astro photos.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

*Respectively submitted,
John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

NSAAC YAP Scope Goes South For First Light In Chile!

Felipe Ramirez, a fourteen year old boy, has made around a dozen trips from his home in Santiago, Chile to have brain surgery performed at Children's Hospital. On one of the trips a few years back, he came out of the recovery room

just in time to attend a talk at the hospital by a visiting speaker, Professor Stephen Hawking.



Felipe was overwhelmingly impressed by Professor Hawking and found himself totally drawn to the cosmos afterward. In addition to what Professor Hawking had to say about cosmology, I'm sure the boy was inspired by meeting someone with a disability who has had such a successful and fulfilling life.

On subsequent trips to Boston Felipe attempted to find and buy a telescope to take back to Chile, but failed each time to find something decent and suitable to his budget and travel restrictions. One of his doctors at Children's contacted Kelly Beatty, Executive Editor of Sky and Telescope. Kelly posted an appeal to the ATMoB list. After getting the rest of the board's thumbs up, I called Kelly and discussed giving the boy one of our Young Astronomer Program 6" inch DOBs.



Felipe Ramirez, friend of Tony's, Kevin Ackert, Paul Roy, Ron Sampson behind Paul, Jim Bastable, Tom Rauschenbach, and Tony Costanzo.

Paul Roy, Ron Sampson, Tom Rauschenbach, and Jim Bastable joined me in presenting the telescope to Felipe at the ATMoB January meeting. Tony Costanzo gave him a pair of 10 X 50 Celestron binoculars. Needless to say the boy was overjoyed, as was his mother. I told him what

would really make me happy would be to teach him how to use it at his home in Chile!



Kelly Beatty, Kevin Ackert, Rafael D. Martinez, MD, Felipe Ramirez, Felipe's Mother, Tony Costanzo

The networking to make this happen occurred in one afternoon and the event was the next day. Felipe lives far from the North Shore of Massachusetts, but the Young Astronomer Program would be hard pressed to find a better recipient than he.

Kevin Ackert



Felipe and Kevin checking out the scope.

Star Party News

There were no star parties in the month of December. There are three star parties in January.

Gary Meehan is presenting a star party entitled "Winter Star Gazing for Beginners" Saturday, January 12 at the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary. A few scopes will be need from club members.

There will be a Star Party at the Breed Elementary School in Lynn, Ma, ON Wednesday, January 16, with about 250-300 students. Scopes will be needed from club members if the weather permits. Information will be posted to the club list server the week of the event.

On Thursday, January 31, there will be a star party for the Proctor School of Topsfield, MA. Several Scopes will be need as this a well attended event with about 300 students. Details to follow on the list server.

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

*John Hobbs,
Star Party Coordinator*

Astrotalk

by Barrie Sawyer

The Long Dark Night of the Soul

I don't know about you, but my desire to go out to observe takes a big hit when the temperature is -13F. As I write, it's now up to 42 degrees out, but the sky is cloudy and the ground is muddy. Let's face it; winter is not the best season for our hobby. So, here are some suggestions to help you get through the winter blahs:

1. Go to a club meeting and volunteer to do a presentation to a group.
2. Read that astronomy book you got for Christmas.
3. Treat yourself to some astronomical trinket like a book or new filter. No, I am not going to buy a Nagler Ethos (sigh) but I am enjoying the process of selecting something.
4. While you're at it, go through your old *Astronomy* and *Sky and Telescope* magazines and read the articles you told yourself you would get to when you had the time.
5. And while you are going through your old issues, cut out the articles you want to keep. I have a file folder for each season and one for miscellaneous topics.
6. Start that project, like tuning up your scope or building a bino mount.
7. Rent "Seeing in the Dark", the 2 hour PBS special based on the book by Timothy Ferris
8. Visit a planetarium or astronomy store.
9. Clean your scope, eyepieces and organize your astronomy gear.

10. Make up a observing list(s). I usually only think about doing it just before I head out.
11. Draw constellation outlines on your star charts to make them easier to read.
12. Watch the History Channel's "Universe" series.
13. Cruise the internet...need I say more?

Finally, remember, Spring and the Virgo Cluster are coming up fast.

*Clear skies,
Barrie Sawyer*

Entertainment for February

Barrie Sawyer's Astrotalk this month inspired me to have a Winter Book Review for entertainment this month. Everyone should bring in a book or publication on which they would like to share their opinions with the club. It doesn't have to be a good review, nor does it have to be a book. Favorite star charts or atlas or any type of publication is fine.

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

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

Board of Directors:

Please consider filling one of the board positions. There are still some openings at this time.

Star Party Volunteers:

Please check the Star Party schedule and help out if you are able. We have a very large star party on January 31 and can use all the scopes we can get.

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.