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# The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore  
Amateur Astronomy Club*

**March, 2008**

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## **From the President**

I am pleased and excited that we have a full slate of candidates for the club officers and members at large positions. Nominations are still accepted right up until the elections. Elections will be at the Business Meeting on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Your 2008 membership dues are also due at that time. New members who joined after October 31, 2007 do not have to pay dues at this time. Members must have their 2008 dues paid to vote in the elections. You do not need to fill out a renewal form unless your information has changed. If you pay your dues with cash at the meeting, please include a note with your name to aid the treasurer. If you pay with a check via US Mail please send it to:

NSAAC  
Veasey Memorial Park  
201 Washington Street  
Groveland, MA 01834-2007

Felipe Ramirez, the young man from Chile to whom we gave the telescope, contacted me via S&T to say that he transported the scope to his home without a problem (other than having to pay some duty) and that he is enjoying it very much. I am looking forward to developing our Young Astronomer Program in 2008. I have not yet contacted the Striking Sparks program in California but will be doing so shortly. They have had their program in place for twenty-three years and I intend to pick their brains for the benefit of our program. Please see

[http://www.sonomaskies.org/striking\\_sparks.htm](http://www.sonomaskies.org/striking_sparks.htm)

for more information about their program.

Our Telescope Clinic is meeting its goal of promoting astronomy and attracting people to the club. Two guests at the February meeting were very pleased with the help and attention they received that night. Did you know that if you Google "Telescope Clinic" that NSAAC is the number one hit!

The Proctor School star party was a huge success. They were able to place us in a darker location than prior years and also turned off the outside lights. The school administrators were very pleased and they gave us a \$200.00 donation! We have a few more star parties before the season ends. Everyone's doing a great job! Let's keep it going!

In the past eight years I've watched the light pollution worsen at our main observing venue, Veasey Memorial Park. Maybe I've been spoiled by too many nights at Starport in NH, but I haven't been doing nearly as much local observing as I used to do. I plan for that to change this year, and I'm really excited about our new venue, the Dark Park. Several members have confirmed that the night skies are really darker here than any venue we've used on the North Shore. We are very fortunate to have the use of the park for both Friday and Saturday nights now. We have yet to work out an easy means of unlocking and locking the gate, but a solution is forthcoming. I would like to caution everyone to use good judgment when using the park, and to keep in mind that you are representing the entire club when doing so. As we now all know, using the unplowed roads in the winter is not a good idea. Be patient, galaxy season is right around the corner and there will be plenty of great nights ahead!

*Kevin Ackert  
President*

## **NSAAC Welcomes Our New Members:**

Anne Cavanaugh of Lowell, MA  
Richard Flynn, Sr. of South Hamilton, MA  
Bob Keizer of West Newbury, MA  
Carl Marchione of Methuen, MA  
Joe Morency of Salem, MA

## **Returning Members:**

Gary Meehan of Danvers, MA  
Brian Wells of Haverhill, MA

*Jim Koerth,  
Membership Director*

## **Membership Renewal Deadline is March 7th**

The deadline for renewing your club membership is Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, the date of our March business meeting. You must renew by this date in order to vote in the elections at that meeting. You can renew by mail or at the meeting.

Thanks to everyone who has renewed already!

Let's try to have all of our renewals done on time this year. Remember, if you joined the club on or after November 1, 2007, your membership is valid through march of 2009; you are not required to renew this year.

*Theresa Earle,  
Treasurer*

### **Annual Elections for Board of Directors**

Our annual elections for the Board of Directors will be held at the next General meeting, Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 8 PM at VMP. All members are encouraged to participate actively in the club, and run for a board position if you are interested. Contact Rick Margolies if you are interested or just have questions. Also, you can announce your intention to run at the meeting.

**Late Breaking News.** Hours before going to press it was learned that Jim Koerth would not be running for Membership Director and the position has no nominees at this time.

The current slate for the election is:

President – Jim Foy  
Vice-President – Tom Rauschenbach  
Treasurer – Kevin Ackert  
Secretary - John Hobbs  
Membership Director – NO CANDIDATE  
Members at Large – Jim Bastable and Bill Drown

Please note that in order to vote, members should be present and “be of good standing” with their dues paid for 2008. Renew today! Membership renewals will also be accepted before the meeting.

### **Veasey Memorial Park Work Weekend**

VMP contacted me as I was finishing the newsletter asking for us to do some painting on the weekend of February 16-17 or the following weekend, 23-24. They are painting the downstairs hall where we hold our meetings. If you are able to lend a hand painting on either of these weekends please contact me at [president@nsaac.org](mailto:president@nsaac.org). I know that this is very short notice, but that's what they gave me!

*Kevin Ackert*

### **Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008**

Vice President Margolies called the February Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:25 PM. There were 8

members present plus 4 Board members. There was not an official quorum; information only meeting.

Secretary: The minutes of the January business meeting will be voted upon for acceptance at the March business meeting due to the lack of a quorum.

#### Treasurer:

We are solvent. The Treasurer gave a brief report and said that we were well ahead of in collecting dues for the coming year.

#### Membership:

Four new members since the last meeting:  
Joe Morency from Salem  
Carl Marchione from Methuen

#### Committee Reports

##### Early Meeting Announcements:

No announcements. Open forum on the agenda after New Business

#### Committee Reports:

##### Young Astronomers Program:

Kevin Ackert has received word from the young man from Chile that he got home with his new scope. Kevin will be contacting the Striking Sparks program in California to discuss the club's YAP program with them since they have been doing this for some 23 years.

##### Merrimack College:

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

##### Salem State:

Dennis had the Observatory opened one day this month and had two visitors. Kevin has e-mailed Lorrie Comeford at the college to open discussions as what they may or may not want to do regarding the observatory. She e-mailed back that she had not been involved with the observatory since 2001 and she has forwarded the e-mail to Todd Wimpfheimer, the current department chair.

##### Entertainment Report:

John Hobbs has made contact with John Briggs to see about another presentation on historical instruments next year. Entertainment for the evening will be a discussion of member's favorite books. Kevin plans to do another constellation conversation this year and would like for more members doing these.

##### Star Party Committee:

The January 16<sup>th</sup> star party at the Breed School in Lynn went off with three presentations by Jim Foy and one scope

provided by Kevin Ackert. There were about 75 students attending.

The Proctor School, Topsfield, MA, star party was a huge success with Jim Foy giving the indoor presentation and 6 telescopes provided by members. The school made a \$200 donation to the club..

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

There will be a star party May 16<sup>th</sup> at the Bell Elementary School in Marblehead.

We are trying to arrange a star party for the Sanborn School in Andover Early this Spring.

There will be another star party this spring for Friends of Fort Hill Park in Lowell.

#### Telescope Clinic:

Steve Giglio brought his Nexstar 80 to the clinic prior to the meeting and Dan Smoody and John Hobbs got him started in the right direction. He has some issues with his hand controller that he needs to straighten out with Celestron.

Joe Morency brought his 8 inch Newtonian in because he was having trouble focusing. Dan Smoody and Ron Sampson discovered problems with both his primary and secondary mirrors that need to be corrected. Dan and Ron will continue to help with this problem.

#### News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

Tom Meyer is new in the area and contacted the club about joining. He attended the Proctor School star party and manned Kevin's 20x80 bins and did a fine job in handling the observers.

Saturn is once again observable before 9 PM.

#### 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.

Mar O'Connor presented some of his ideas for the improved club logo. There was favorable discussion of some of his ideas and he would like to attend the next board meeting and present his ideas for the board discussion.

Kevin Ackert will transition the books and train the treasurer between now and March. He has purchased the new software.

The treasurer reminded the members that dues are do before or at the March business meeting. Members do not have to fill out a renewal form unless your information has changed.

The Vice President read the slate of candidates for the officers of the club for the upcoming election.

President – Jim Foy

Vice President – Tom Rauschenbach

Treasurer - Kevin Ackert

Secretary - John Hobbs

Membership – Jim Koerth

Members at Large – Jim Bastable and Bill Drown

Members were informed that the nominations are open right up until the vote at the March business meeting.

#### New Business:

Astronomy Day is Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup> this year. The board is discussing what to do for this event. Kevin has suggested organized guerilla astronomy groups in public places. Doing nothing is NOT an option.

Board Meeting date is tentatively set for Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM Date will have to be decided by e-mail.

Meeting adjourned at 905 PM.

*Respectively submitted,*

*John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

#### **Star Party News**

There was a Star Party at the Breed Elementary School in Lynn, Ma, on Wednesday, January 16, with about 75 students. Jim Foy gave three staggered indoor presentations and Kevin Ackert provided his Dob for observing.

On Thursday, January 31, there was a star party for the Proctor School of Topsfield, MA. Jim Foy again gave his well received indoor presentation. Six telescopes were provided by Bill Drown, Kevin Ackert, Jim Bastable, Jim Foy, John Hobbs, and Alan Peters. In all there were about 100 students enjoying the event and a donation of \$200 was presented to the club.

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

*John Hobbs, Star Party Coordinator*



by Barrie Sawyer

## Spinning Through the Milky Way

One of the unfortunate consequences of being an amateur astronomer in New England is the few really good nights we have to observe. On top of that, even when we do get a decent night, there is no guarantee we won't have some obligation that will prevent us from going out. When we do get lucky, most of us pursue a list faint objects worthy of the effort and opportunity as if we were just granted time on the Hubble Space Telescope. Not many people will take the time to just sit back to take in the night sky with nothing more than our eyes and our imaginations for more than a few minutes. However, I want to suggest that you do spend the time to really appreciate our place in Cosmos. I have the advantage of retirement, a hot tub with a view, and a dark sky site. One of my favorite activities is imagine my journey through the Milky Way. I think of it as similar to trying to hear the individual instruments while listening to a symphony.

First, I face east and imagine being carried along by the earth's rotation. Next, I draw the plane of the solar system in my mind. This is easiest when there are a couple of planets like Mars and Saturn out at the same time. Then I establish my position in relation to the Milky Way. *Binocular Astronomy* by Crossen and Tirion has excellent descriptions of the structure of the galaxy. Add in the earth's orbit, the Moon, the Sun's motion and the rotation of the Milky Way and one can almost get dizzy trying to experience all of it. And because of all this motion the view differs from hour to hour, month to month, season to season. Nothing else has quite given me the feeling of living in a 3 dimensional as this simple exercise. Try it and let me know how it worked for you.

Clear skies,  
Barrie Sawyer  
[barrie\\_sawyer at yahoo.com](mailto:barrie_sawyer@yahoo.com)

## 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>

## 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

**Membership Director:** Jim Koerth has withdrawn his nomination for Membership Director and the position is open at this time. Nominations for this and all other board positions are open at this time. Please consider serving on the board and filling this important position.

Nominations are accepted right up until the election on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Star Party Volunteers:

Please check the Star Party schedule and help out if you are able.

## 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.