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# The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore  
Amateur Astronomy Club*

**March, 2009**

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## **From the President**

At the March business meeting we will elect new officers and propose a budget for the Young Astronomers Program (YAP). I encourage all members to attend this meeting, to vote and to discuss YAP. The NSAAC depends on the work and commitment of it's of volunteers. For the business year 2010, the NSAAC is able offer a full slate (see election section) of officers for election. Nominations are still open. Please Contact Dan Smoody if interested in running for office.

The Young Astronomer Program is another way that NSAAC reaches out to our community. It provides opportunities for young people to win equipment for observations and to learn more about astronomy. We are also recommending that they come to club observation sessions to learn how to use the equipment. This year, teachers were mailed letters informing them of the program and how to apply. Our website ([www.nsaac.org](http://www.nsaac.org)) has a blinking red YAP link that also provides information. At the board meeting and February business meeting club members discussed a budget for 2009. The proposal is the following:

- Approve a limit of \$2000 for purchase of telescopes and binoculars
- Based on the number of essays received, decide what will be purchased
- The actual amount spent will depend on the number of essay received from students

The plan is to vote on the proposed budget in the March business meeting. In the future, the plan is to write grant proposals to fund YAP. We're investing to get this program established.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration is only six weeks away. Program outline so far:

Date: Saturday, April 4, 2009  
Place: Veasey Memorial Park - Pingree Hall (place where we hold our business meetings)  
4 to 6:30 PM: Set-up and decorate Pingree Hall  
6:30 to 7:00 PM: Punch and appetizers  
7:00 PM: Opening remarks  
~7 to 8:30 PM: Dinner  
8: 30 to 9:00 PM: Comedy show by Comedian (and NSAAC member) Bob Seibel  
~9 to 9:15: History of NSAAC  
9:15: Open

Look for an announcement on the club list server asking people to confirm they still plan to attend. Please remember to send in photos of club members/events or astrophotos to club officers.

If you have questions or comments email me: [jefoy at comcast.net](mailto:jefoy@comcast.net).

*James Foy,  
President*

## **Annual Elections for BoD**

Our annual elections for the Board of Directors will be held at the next General meeting, Friday, March 6 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 Dan Smoody if you are interested or just have questions. Also, you can announce your intention to run at the meeting.

The current slate for the election is:

President – Jim Foy  
Vice-President – Tom Rauschenbach  
Treasurer – Kevin Ackert  
Secretary – John Hobbs  
Membership Director – OPEN – PLEASE HELP!  
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 2009. Renew today! Membership renewals will also be accepted before the meeting.

## NSAAC Welcomes Our New Member:

Peter Dryden from Haverhill, MA

*Theresa Earle,  
Membership Director*

## 2009 Membership Dues

Membership dues for 2009 are due by the March business meeting. Please note the following concerning dues payments:

- Membership dues for 2009 are \$20.00
- If you joined the club after October 31, 2008, your dues are not due until March of 2010. If you are unsure of when you joined and whether you owe, check with me before paying.
- *If none of your information or club options have changed, you do not need to include a renewal form with payment.* If your information has changed, please download a renewal form from our website.
- If you pay with cash at the meeting, attach a note to your check with your name on it, or, write your name on the bill. Cash payments with no name attached will not be accepted.
- If you send your payment via US Mail, the address is NSAAC, c/o Veasey Memorial Park, 201 Washington St., Groveland, MA 01834-2007
- Members who have not paid dues may not vote in the March election.
- Please lower the workload of your club treasurer by paying your dues in a timely manner. We have a grace period for unpaid members. Members who have not paid their dues in March receive reminders until the grace period ends, at which time membership privileges are lost, but this creates extra work for the treasurer. With the Young Astronomer Program and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration both occurring in April, I already have an extra heavy club workload for this spring. Please pay early and we'll make this a record breaking year for "On-time Dues Payments!"
- Questions about your dues can be sent to [treasurer at nsaac.org](mailto:treasurer@nsaac.org)

*Kevin Ackert,  
Treasurer*

## Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, February 13th, 2009

President Foy called the February Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:08PM. There were 10 members present plus 5 Board members. There was an official quorum.

Secretary: The Minutes of the January business meeting were approved by acclamation.

### Treasurer:

Treasurer gave an abbreviated report. We are solvent. The treasurer paid the club insurance for the coming year.

### Membership:

There was 1 new member since the last business meeting,

### Early Meeting Announcements:

Open forum on the agenda after New Business.

### Committee Reports:

#### Young Astronomers Program:

The board worked out a budget that will be put in the February newsletter so it can be voted on at the March business meeting.

#### Merrimack College:

The observatory is open and fully staffed. Visitors have been good when the weather has cooperated.

#### Salem State:

The scope has been installed, a 5 amp power supply was donated by Ron Sampson, and the scope just needs to polar align before use.

#### Star Party Committee:

The upcoming star parties are:

Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, Boy scouts, Steward School, Topsfield, MA

Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, Salem Science night, Witchcraft Heights Elementary School, Salem, MA

Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, Elementary School, Amesbury, MA

April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Cub Scout star party, Topsfield, MA

Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, Oakland Park Ave Elementary School, Methuen

Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, rain date Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, Chelmsford Conservation Trust

August 6<sup>th</sup>, Peabody Institute Library, Danvers, MA

#### Telescope Clinic:

No requests for the telescope clinic.

#### News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

The club received a thank you note from the National Kidney Foundation for our contribution in the name of Chris McCarthy.

#### Old Business:

We currently have 105 members in good standing,

The President asked if anyone was interested in becoming the membership director. See Jim Foy if interested.

John Tulik has renewed the Dark Park permit and we will make copies when it is received.

#### New Business:

President Foy has proposed a straw plan for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration:

4-6:7 PM decorate and set-up Pingree Hall at VMP

6:30-7PM Arrive

7PM Welcome remarks (5 min)

7-8:30 PM Dinner

8:30-9 PM Comedy show and dessert

NSAAC History

Tony Costanzo Music

Dan Smoody, chairman of the Election Committee announced the slate of candidates for club offices. The slate is:

President- James Foy

Vice President- Thomas Rauschenbach

Treasurer- Kevin Ackert

Secretary- John Hobbs

Membership Director- open

Member at Large- Jim Bastable

Member at Large- Bill Drown

Nominations are still open. Anyone interested in running for an office should contact Dan Smoody.

The president handed out the new business cards for the club.

International Year of Astronomy is taking place in 2009 and is a global event initiated by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO to help the citizens of the world to rediscover their place in the universe. For more information see the website: <http://www.astronomy2009.org/>. The club needs to make some effort for this event and any ideas are welcome and should be sent to President Jim Foy. Jim Foy would like to have a party at Dark Park with the combined NSAAC and the GAAC club. The club will also set up star parties for the public at our other venues.

Entertainment for the evening was observing in the parking lot.

Board meeting is scheduled for Monday February 16th at 7:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM.

*Respectively submitted,*

*John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

### **Star Party News**

The star party season is just beginning and as can be seen from the schedule below we are in for a busy season.

The star party at the Breed School in Lynn was only an indoor presentation by Jim Foy as the weather prevented outside observing,

The upcoming star parties are:

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The Star Party Committee would like to thank all the members who have supported our star party effort and look forward to your participation in the coming months.

*John Hobbs,*

*Star Party Coordinator*



### **Astrophotography using a Digital Camera**

by Jim Foy

The barriers to starting in astrophotography are usually either cost or a long learning curve. However, there are several objects, such as the sun, moon and planets, that don't require a lot of expensive equipment. Take for example the sun. The goal is to photograph a sundog or rainbow with a digital camera. A sun dog, or perihelion, is a bright circular halo resulting from reflection or refraction

of sunlight by small ice crystals in cirrus or cirrostratus clouds. The incredible dynamic range of a “normal” digital camera, plus a creative way to block the sun, is all that is needed.



A Perihelion at the South Pole (photo from Wikimedia commons Ref. sundog in Wikipedia)

Add a tripod to photograph objects needing several seconds of exposure. Now more objects such as Aurora Borealis, interesting planet alignments, conjunctions with bright objects, meteor showers and 1-2 minute exposure(s) featuring the Milky Way behind a landmark can be photographed. For example, a light house as the landmark and framing the photo such that the Milky Way appears to be flowing from the top of the light house.

Learning is part of the astrophotography journey and is a good reason to start. Searching the web, reading books and actively looking/planning for when these events occur are as much fun as actually taking the photo. Our club website features NSAAC member astrophotography pictures. This resource is available to all members and it is a good way to share/show your pictures.

*Jim Foy*

## 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 Therese Earle, Membership Director, email: [membership at nsaac.org](mailto:membership@nsaac.org) or contact Jim Foy, President, e-mail [president at nsaac.org](mailto:president@nsaac.org).

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).

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.



This is a picture of Godzilla, the 36 inch monster scope owned by a group of club members. I inserted it in this extra space to remind members that Spring Galaxy Season is almost upon us! Godzilla's lair is on a mountaintop near Plymouth, NH that we call “Starport.” Watch for Starport event announcements in upcoming issues of the *Celestial Observer*.