



The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore
Amateur Astronomy Club*

September, 2009

From the President

The club bylaws have a provision for filling Board of Directors positions in case of resignation. According to these bylaws, the Board can elect a member in good standing to the position for the remainder of the term. Bill Drown volunteered for Vice president and was elected by the NSAAC Board of Directors to fill out the remainder of the term. This left an opening for Member at Large, for which Ron Sampson has volunteered. Thanks to both for volunteering time to help the club.

During the summer break, Brewster LaMacchia (maintains the NSAAC and ATMOB list server) Michael Deneen and I started work to program additional web pages that will eventually be added to the current website. Joomla, which is open source software designed to allow people without website programming ability to create web pages, was selected as the way to create the new web pages. Trial, error and mostly learning resulted in a prototype version. There are still bugs that have to be worked out before converting to an active site. When all the problems are solved, the web pages will have a public area for news articles, electronic membership renewal, and Paypal for dues and donations. Members that register on the site will manage their own contact information, user name and password, be able to contact other NSAAC members (mutual agreement needed), and view astronomy items for sale/loan offered by registered members. Committee members (NSAAC members as well) can add news articles (Authors, publishers and editors) to the website. Many thanks to Brewster for spending time to fix problems. Look for future updates.

According to our agreement with Veasey for use of the facilities, NSAAC is obligated for at least 50 hours of work plus a yearly rent of \$600. This year Veasey Memorial Park has proposed that NSAAC paint the outside of the Great Hall. So, set aside the full moon weekend days, October 3-4

and 10-11, in your busy schedule and plan to volunteer to help with painting. Look for details in next months' newsletter and announcements appearing in the club's email.

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

*James Foy,
President*

Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, August 7th, 2009

President Foy called the August Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:08PM. There were 4 members present plus 4 Board members. There was not an official quorum. This is an Information meeting only.

Secretary: No report

Treasurer: No report

Early Meeting Announcements:
Open forum on the agenda after New Business

Committee Reports:

Young Astronomers Program: No Report

Merrimack College:

Weather has been bad. Bill Drown was open twice with 4 visitors one time and 35 the second time.

Salem State:

The Observatory is closed for the Summer.

Star Party Committee:

The upcoming star parties are:

Sept. 11th, Marblehead Girl Scouts Troop #1215 at a camp in Beverly.

September 18-19 and 25-26 Essex National Heritage Commission Trails and Sails Event at VMP.

Thursday, October 15th, Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, Hamilton, MA.

Telescope Clinic: No activity

News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

No information

Old Business:

John Tulik has renewed the dark park permit and we will make copies when it is received. Kevin Ackert will send

out a PDF form on the list server to those members who request it.

New Business:

Bill Drown has volunteered to replace Tom Rauschenbach as the club Vice-President. Ron Sampson was nominated and voted in as the member at large to replace the position vacated by Bill Drown.

Jim Foy will start up the anthropography classes in September.

President Foy has begun to update the club website. He has sent out a "dummy website using the free open source software Joomla. Brewster LaMacchia has been helping with numerous suggestions. This dummy website was sent to board members for comments. The club will keep the current NSAAC website and in the website will be a link to the new website which will have to areas, an area available to the public and a registered site available to members only. The member's only site will list club events and have sign up logs for the events; provided electronic membership renewal or make a donation using Paypal; have access to contact information; and allow members to upload a picture for contact information or to add articles. Jim hopes to have the full website up and running by September.

VMP has proposed that the club assist in painting the exterior of the Great Hall in lieu of rent for the coming fiscal year. The dates of the painting will be in either late September or October. The dates will be advertised on the list server and at the next business meeting.

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. Jim Foy is going to contact State Parks and where we do our usual observations, to plan for public outreach sometime in the fall. Look for information from Jim on the list server

Entertainment for the evening was observing outside.

Board meeting is scheduled for Monday August 17th at 7:30 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

*Respectively submitted,
John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*



John Hobbs, Pat Amoroso, and Jim Koerth set up at Dark Park, August 1, 2009

2010 Calendars and Handbook Orders Being Taken

We will be selling calendars again this year. We are asking for pre-paid orders. You may place your order via email directly to me at treasurer@nsaac.org and then send your check in the mail, or bring it to a meeting.

The Astronomy calendars are easy to order as the price is not on a tiered system and we can place as many orders as often as we want. The Astronomy Calendars are \$10.00 each. They retail for \$12.95.

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) products are more expensive and they have a tiered pricing system. There are also high shipping charges from Canada. The prices for the 2010 products are not yet on their website, so I'm posting the 2009 prices. We will accept payment at the lowest price, which is based on a minimum order of ten of each product. If we do not make the minimum order (we almost always do) then you will be asked to pay the higher price, or we will refund your money.

RASC Calendars are \$13.00 each if we purchase at least ten. If we purchase between five and nine the price will be \$16.00 each. If we buy less than five the price will be \$24.00 each.

RASC Observers Handbooks will be \$20.00 each if we purchase at least ten. An order of five to nine will bring the price up to \$23.00 each, and an order of less than five would make the price \$35.00 each which is the suggested

US retail price. Most clubs sell these for \$25.00 each and they are a real bargain at \$20.00.

Please make your check out to NSAAC and mail or bring it to a meeting right after you place your order. Your merchandise will be available to pick up at the October, November, and December meetings. You must come to a meeting to pick up your merchandise.

*Kevin Ackert,
Treasurer*

Star Party News

The summer star party season is winding down and the Fall school series will be starting in October. We really need volunteers for these events. Let's hope that we will have clear skies for these events.

Ted Blank did the presentation at the Islamic Peace Academy in Methuen on Thursday, May 28th. He showed a video of the flight of the Huygens probe through the atmosphere of Titan. There were about 15 children plus parents and when they went outside they were rewarded with great views of Saturn and Titan through Ted's refractor and Dave LeClerc's Dob.

On July 27th Brewster LaMacchia gave a presentation to the summer reading class at the Langley-Adams Library in Groveland. There were about 40 students and parents and limited views of the moon were seen in scopes provided by Jim Foy, Jim Bastable, John Hobbs, and Dave LeClerc (see Brewster's write-up, below).

There was an impromptu star party August 5th at a Full Moon affair at the Salisbury State Beach. Jim Foy and Jim Bastable provided scopes.

Jim Foy gave a presentation on "What is up at a star party?" for the Peabody Institute Library on August 6th. There were about 25-30 kids with their parents and scopes were provided by Jim Foy with Sarha Smyth as operator, Jim Bastable, and John Hobbs. Because of clouds only views of Vega, Arcturus, and Mizar could be provided.

See the minutes of the August business meeting for the list of up coming star parties.

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

*John Hobbs,
Star Party Coordinator*

Groveland Library Star Party Success

Despite thunderstorms to the North and South on Monday, July 27th, about 40 parents and their children showed up at the Groveland Library for a short presentation by Brewster LaMacchia about Galileo, the moon and its craters, and the Apollo 11 mission.



That was followed outside by observing with scopes brought by Jim Foy, John Hobbs, Jim Bastable, and David LeClerc. Due to the early hour and variable skies most were looking at the moon, but a little after 9 the sky cleared up and some deeper objects were viewed as well.

The evening ended with being yelled at by someone from the town for parking on the sidewalk. Such is the risk we take.

Brewster LaMacchia

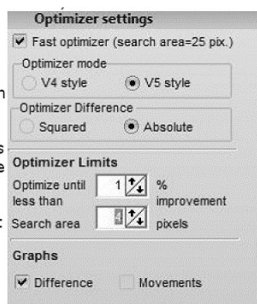
Astrotalk

by Jim Foy

Using Registax to Process a Web Cam Movie (Part 3)

In the summer issue, we found an above average image in the movie, set alignment parameters and decided on how many individual frames to include in the next part of the processing. On to Optimization and Stacking, which take the most processing time and can run for several minutes. I recommend starting with the default settings of the program

that appear on the Optimizer pop-up. Specifically (see Pop-up below), check the radio buttons for Fast optimizer, V5, Absolute, less than 1% improvement, 4 pixels and Difference. The program proceeds to optimize the estimated shift in alignment points for all the frames selected. The user has two choices, Either *Optimize and Stack*, which is what I usually use, or *Stack*. Hit the *Optimize and Stack* button, relax and let the computer take over. Depending on how many frames and alignment points, this can take several minutes. Once both Optimization and Stacking is complete, the option pops up to use the stacked image as a reference to repeat Optimization and Stacking. I recommend using this option, which generally gives a better final image.



At this point the image looks much better than individual frames in the webcam movie. To bring out the hidden detail use the wavelets function. Many new functions have been added to the wavelets section of the software. These functions are located on the right side tab. As a general rule, I don't use these functions, because I prefer to use Photoshop instead. The most useful part of wavelets is the six slider bars that are moved to the right to bring out the detail. Typically, the first slider bar is moved to around 70%, the second slider bar to 35% and the remaining slider bars to 10% or less. Adjust these as needed to increase detail and contrast (signal), with out adding a grainy look (noise).

In closing, the final image is significantly better because stacking hundreds of aligned images dramatically improved the signal to noise ratio.

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 James Bastable, Membership Director, email: membership@nsaac.org or Jim Foy, President, e-mail 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@nsaac.org.

Suggestions regarding the content of the NSAAC web site are always welcome; Please email webmaster@nsaac.org with your ideas.