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# The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore  
Amateur Astronomy Club*

**October, 2009**

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## **From the President**

This year our Veasey Memorial Park work weekends are Sunday October 4<sup>th</sup>, Saturday October 10<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday October 11<sup>th</sup>. If the weather is acceptable (no rain and warm enough), we will paint a section of the outside of Pingree Hall. If not, we will do some indoor painting or clean-up the grounds around the park. All supplies, tools and equipment needed for the work will be provided. Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> is a day reserved in case we have not completed the 50 hours of work. If our work is completed prior to the 11<sup>th</sup>, this day will be cancelled. If you are planning to volunteer to work at Veasey, send an email to me via the club list server or call me (home phone # 978-470-3902). An approximate count of people attending each day is needed so that adequate supplies and tools are available. Please plan to volunteer for at least part of one day.

This year, NSAAC is working with the Essex National Heritage Commission Trails and Sails Event to sponsor astronomy observations at Veasey Memorial Park. These sessions, which are open to the public, are being held on September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. These will only occur if the weather is partly cloudy to clear for each night. So far, 45 people have signed up for the event, which starts after 8 PM. This event has been set-up so that NSAAC can participate in the International Year of Astronomy 2009 by providing people the opportunity to look through a telescope and talk about astronomy. Two NSAAC members plan to be there each night that the weather is good enough for observations. A few more telescopes would be helpful.

Both the NSAAC and ATMOB websites have been moved to a new updated server by Brewster LaMacchia. This switch will provide better security and access to updated server software. Many thanks to Brewster for his behind the scenes volunteer work to provide the websites and email list servers NSAAC. Most people find our club via the website

and it is hard to image not having access to the NSAAC club email server. Soon (one to two weeks), a link will be added to the current NSAAC website Home Page that will lead to a new area designed for members and to provide the public with news articles about club events such as star parties, observations, photos, etc. Visit the NSAAC website, check-out the new web pages and sign up to become a member.

If you have questions or comments email me: [jefoy\\_at\\_comcast.net](mailto:jefoy_at_comcast.net).

*James Foy,  
President*

## **NSAAC Welcomes Our New Member:**

Daniel Follansbee of North Andover, MA

*Jim Bastable,  
Membership Director*



Comet Lulin – March 15<sup>th</sup> Composite (by Jim Foy)

## **Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

President Foy called the September Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:08PM. There were 6 members present plus 6 Board members. There was not an official quorum. This is an Information meeting only.

Secretary: No report

Treasurer:

Treasurer paid \$104 to Dark Sky Clock for two years of sponsorship.

Membership: 3 new members

Early Meeting Announcements:

Open forum on the agenda after New Business

Committee Reports:

Young Astronomers Program:

Kevin Ackert is preparing paperwork for the 2010 YAP program which he hopes to send out later this month.

Merrimack College:

Bill Drown was open twice with 20 visitors one time and 9 the second time. The viewing was excellent.

Salem State: The Observatory will be opened this month.

Star Party Committee:

The upcoming star parties are:

September 11<sup>th</sup>, Girl Scout Troop Beverley, MA  
September 19-20 and 26-27 Essex National Heritage Commission Trails and Sails Event at VMP  
Friday October 9<sup>th</sup>, Islamic Peace Center, Methuen  
Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, Hamilton, MA  
Tuesday October 27, Fort Hill Park Lowell, rain date  
Wednesday Oct 28

Telescope Clinic: No activity

News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

No information

Old Business:

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

Dark Park was used two times this summer, but the ground fog has been bad. Bill Drown recommended that we look at Blueberry Hill area which is higher.

New Business:

Messier event will take place when the observing gets better; Dennis Gudzevich will mentor members who are interested this function.

Jim Foy will start the Astrophotography workshop in October.

Jim Foy presented an overview of the improved website and showed how to navigate through it including the member's only section. Encourages members to submitted photos and articles on astronomy,

The club is going to remove IRWS as a default listing as Saturday Night observation site on the website and in the newsletter. Instead, members who want to observe there, contact each other on the club list server. Gary Meehan intends to observe there occasionally and he will notify members on the list server.

VMP has asked that the club help paint the Pingree Hall on Sunday Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, Saturday October 10<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday October 11<sup>th</sup>. Depending on the weather, the event might be winterizing Veasey. E-mail Jim Foy if you can and plan to participate.

Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday September 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM.

Entertainment for the evening was a continuation of Jim Foy's presentation on Sky Tools Software.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

*Respectively submitted,  
John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*



Full Moon star party at Great Brook Farm, Carlisle

**Star Party News**

There has been only one star party this month to report on. Fred Sammartino gave a presentation to a Girl Scout Troop

from Marblehead at Camp Paradise in Beverly, MA, on Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>. He gave a very good presentation which was geared to the requirements of the Girl Scout astronomy merit badge and showed the essential parts of a telescopes. Since the girls did not get to do any viewing due to the weather, they are going to schedule a trip to the Collins Observatory at Salem State.

See the minutes of the September 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*



The Essence of Starport. Not just a place in the state of New Hampshire, but a state of mind.

## **2010 Calendar and Handbook Orders Being Taken**

NOTE: Insufficient RASC quantities for an order at this time!

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](mailto: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 Royale Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) products are more expensive and they have a tiered pricing system. There are also high shipping charges from Canada. 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*

## **Young Astronomer Program**

The mailing for the 2010 YAP program is going out at the end of September, first week of October. I have received one request for a school to be added to the database. Tony Costanzo requested a school in Pelham, NH to be added. Members wishing to have an elementary or middle school from their town included in the mailing should email the schools address and contact information to me ASAP.

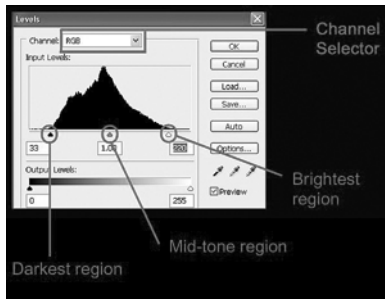
*Kevin Ackert*

# **Astrotalk**

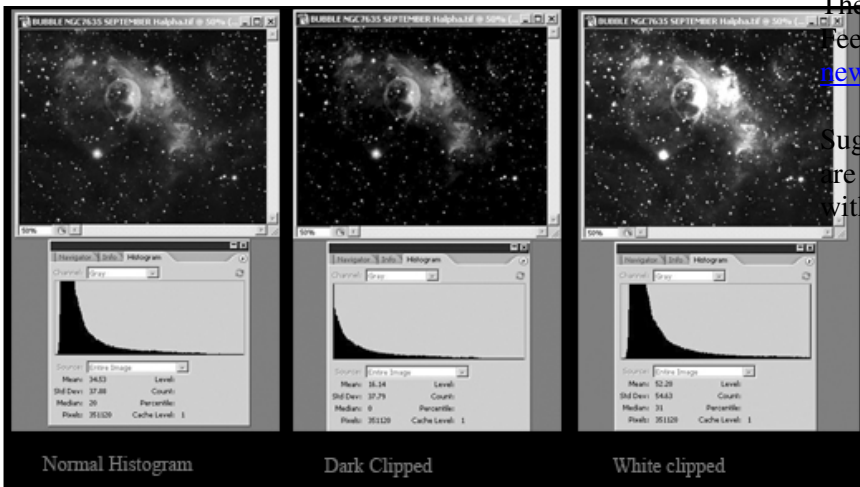
by Jim Foy

## **Introduction to a Photographs' Histogram**

A histogram is simply a plot of all the pixels in a photograph, where the vertical axis represents the number of pixels, and the horizontal axis represents the brightness value. The far left side is black (0) and the far right side is white (255).



A histogram is a key tool, which provides both guidance and information on how to proceed with processing the digital information contained in each photograph. Below is a processed black and white digital photograph of the bubble nebula (NGC 7635), shot with a Halpha filter, shown with a normal histogram, a dark clipped histogram and a white clipped histogram.



Full faint detail appears in the left side photo with a “normal” histogram. The middle photo shows loss of faint detail in the photo and the histogram has been clipped (data loss) on the far left side (dark clipped). The right side photograph shows bright white washed out areas and the histogram is clipped on the far right side of histogram. Several hours were spent gathering this data, so the goal is to digitally process the photo to show full detail in both the dark (faint) and white (bright) areas of the deep sky object.

Next month, will start with series on curves and stretching of the histogram.

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 James Bastable, Membership Director, email: [membership@nsaac.org](mailto:membership@nsaac.org) or Jim Foy, President, e-mail [president@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@nsaac.org](mailto:newsletter@nsaac.org).

Suggestions regarding the content of the NSAAC web site are always welcome; Please email [webmaster@nsaac.org](mailto:webmaster@nsaac.org) with your ideas.



Lunar Eclipse – Feb. 2008 (by Jim Foy)