



The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore
Amateur Astronomy Club*

December, 2009

From the President

The first class on astrophotography is planned for early December 2009. Digital Photography, as applied to astronomical targets, is the subject of this class. Approaches to photographing targets such as aurora borealis, sun dogs, rainbows, moon dogs, meteor showers and planetary alignments will be discussed. A brief introduction to digital processing techniques that can be used to enhance astronomy photos obtained from a standard DSLR camera will also be covered. A firm date has not been set. I expect to have a date soon. I will send out an announcement on the club list server with the date and time for the first class. If you are interested, please contact me by email. The free class is open to all NSAAC members with an interest in learning more about astrophotography.

I hope that by now most NSAAC members have checked out the new area on our website. To access this website area, send your browser to www.nsaac.org, and then go to the link "NSAAC News, Activities and Member Login Area". You will find articles and pictures about club activities, astronomy related news feeds, an electronic membership form and an area for NSAAC members that sign-up on the website. The site also offers a sale or swap area for astronomy equipment and books. Most people selling equipment use the club list server, which is still the best way to reach the most members. However, the website has the advantage that you can add pictures of the equipment. If NSAAC members have articles or pictures they would like add to the website, please email them to me. Of course ideas for ways to improve the site are welcome.

Both Thanksgiving and Christmas are around the corner. Seasons Greetings and enjoy the Holidays. Hope to see you next year at a club event.

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, November 6th, 2009

President Foy called the November Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:09PM. There were 9 members present plus 5 Board members. There was not an official quorum. Information only meeting.

Secretary:

No report.

Treasurer:

No report.

Membership:

No 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 will send out later this month. We will get the scopes well ahead of time so the club members can assemble them and check out and fix any problems.

Merrimack College:

Fred Sammartino was open several nights with about 30 visitors each night. These included about 10 students doing their astronomy assignments.

Salem State:

The Observatory was opened several nights with about 6 people each night. Dennis entertained two Girl Scout troops who were working on merit badges. He has also obtained a solar filter for solar observing.

Star Party Committee:

The upcoming star parties are:

Monday, Nov 8th, Sanborn School, Andover, MA

Thursday, Nov 11th, Kittredge Elementary School, N Andover, MA

Wednesday, Nov 16th, Trahan Elementary School, Tewksbury, MA

Collins Middle School, Salem, MA, first clear night between Nov 8th and Nov 20th

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

New Business:

VMP has asked that the club help paint the Pingree Hall. President Foy told VMP management that it was too big a job for the club members. He discussed with the new VMP maintenance man what we might do in the future. There was discussion on fixing up the Lucille Cottage and using the renovated building as a club meeting place. Also, there was mentioned the possibility of adding an observatory somewhere on the VMP grounds such as the old swimming pool.

President Foy indicated that he has put two young astronomers nights on the calendar due to the bad Weather so that we can have alternate dates. He will use the list server to indicate whether or not the event will take place.

Jim Foy has updated the club brochure and has posted it to the website.

Dennis Gudzevich will mentor members show are interested in obtaining the Messier or other Certificate.

Jim Foy will begin the astrophotography sessions the week of Dec 8th and one the week of Dec 16th.

Board meeting is scheduled for Monday November 16th at 7:30 PM.

Entertainment for the evening was outside observing.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

*Respectively submitted,
John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

Star Party News

There were four star parties scheduled for October, but the usual bad New England weather cancelled two of them, to be rescheduled for next year: the Islamic Peace Center School in Methuen and the Friends of Fort Hill Park in Lowell. Brewster LaMacchia gave the presentation at the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library to a varied and very interested group of 25. Brewster also gave his lunar crater presentation to a group of about 15 students and parents at the Collins Middle School in Salem, Mass. Because of the bad weather, observing is to be rescheduled in the coming months. A telescope clinic was provided prior to presentation for three people who had telescope problems. Assistance was provided by Jim Foy, Patrick Amoroso, and John Hobbs.

See the minutes of the November 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.

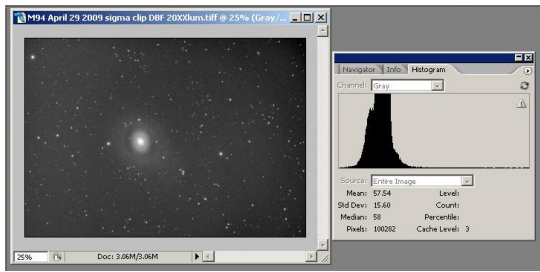
*John Hobbs,
Star Party Coordinator*

The logo for 'Astrotalk' is written in a bold, black, stylized font with a slight shadow effect.

by Jim Foy

Removing Light Pollution Gradients

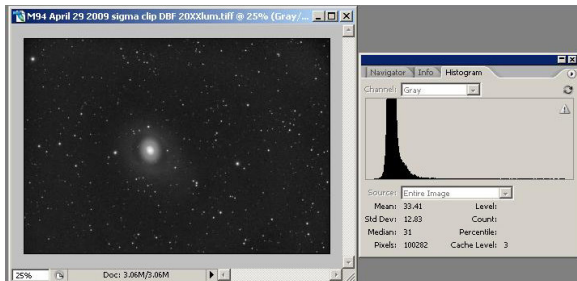
Most astrophotographers are not fortunate enough to live in or have access to a dark sky area. Consequently, nearby lights introduce a gradient in the photo where one section of the astrophoto is lighter than another section. The result is an uneven picture. Examine the picture in last month article appearing below.



Note that the top and bottom right corners are darker than the center and right side of the photo. The histogram also shows this gradient as a second smaller peak on the left shoulder of the larger histogram.

There are several ways to remove gradients. I have experimented with these and found that the best way is to use the GradientXTerminator plug-in software for Photoshop. This software can be purchased (\$50) and downloaded from Russell Crowman's website: <http://www.rc-astro.com/resources/GradientXTerminator/index.php>. One of the best software investments I have made. It has literally saved astrophotos taken from my front yard where cars drive by and outside lights glow.

The picture below shows the results of Using GradientXTerminator to remove the gradient.



Note the uniform background and that the histogram is missing the front shoulder.

Next month: Use of curves to bring out faint detail and add contrast in the brighter areas of the photograph.

Young Astronomer Program

I've added forty-seven schools to the mailing list, mostly in the Haverhill, North Andover, Lawrence, and Methuen areas. The mailings will be going out this week to a total of one hundred schools. The date of the awards has been set for April 24th. Four telescopes are being ordered so that we can pre-assemble and test them during the winter meetings.

Kevin Ackert

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_at_nsaac.org or Jim Foy, President, e-mail president_at_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.

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

