

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

April 2008

LOOKING UP

April 3, Thursday

General Meeting

6:30 p.m. NCRAL Meeting

7:30 p.m. Business Meeting
and Public Program

April 4, Friday

Messier Marathon

Dusk

Harrington Beach

April 5, Saturday

Messier Marathon

Dusk

Telescope Training - 7:00 p.m.
Harrington Beach

April 12, Saturday

Sidewalk Observing

Setup by - 5:p.m.

Bayshore Shopping Center

April 17, Thursday

Board Meeting

7:30 p.m.

Home of Joyce Jentges

NCRAL Conference 2008

April 18 & 19

**Lakeview Conference Center
Port Washington, WI**

May 10, Saturday

Astronomy Day

2:00 p.m..

Harrington Beach

President's Corner

By Joyce Jentges

One year ago, when the Northern Cross committed itself to hosting the 2008 NCRAL convention, I never believed a year could go so fast! Here it is already, nearly April of 2008 and we are less than a month away from the convention. Planning is intensifying as we make final preparations and begin putting volunteers in place to assist in several areas. It is my hope that you can join us for the convention, but that you will also be able to help in one of the areas, whether it is at the Jim and Gwen Plunkett observatory on Friday night, or one of the other volunteer opportunities outlined in Becca Setzer's article below.

This will be a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase the observatory and the great things our club has done. The convention planning committee has done a great job of getting interesting speakers for the convention; we hope that you will enjoy the variety of their talks. For our first crack at hosting a convention, I think that under the guidance of Becca and Jeff Setzer, we have done a pretty thorough job, and this is shaping up to be a great convention.

Those of you who are trained observatory operators, I encourage you to look at our public viewing night schedule and get your-

self signed up for several nights out at the observatory. Attendance at our public viewing nights increased by leaps and bounds last year, and I expect that trend to continue. It is very important that we have both a leader, and assistant in the observatory to help with the telescope, and answering questions from guests. The next observatory training session is on April 5th beginning at 7:00 p.m. If you are not participating in the Messier Marathon, this would be a great opportunity for you to learn how to operate the Panarusky telescope and the observatory.

Speaking of the annual Messier Marathon on April 4th and 5th, even if you don't plan to do the marathon, you are still welcome to come out to the observatory to set up your telescope to do some observing. After the long snowy winter, it will certainly be good to get out and scour the sky for new objects, and delight in old favorites. We are just over a month from National Astronomy Day, so I hope that you will be able to participate in that as well.

I look forward to seeing you under the dark skies at the Jim and Gwen Plunkett Obser-

NCRAL Convention 2008

By Becca Setzer - NCRAL 2008 Chairperson

As the time of this publication we are 20 days away from our club's first hosted NCRAL convention. So far we have a total of 70 registrants. We have officially cleared our break even number, which means anyone out there who hasn't registered yet, please do so; your registration will go directly to helping the Northern Cross Science Foundation in the coming years.

While you are attending, we are hoping you will be willing to volunteer a small amount of your time. Please look at the list of times and dates listed below for volunteer opportunities, we will pass around a sign up sheet at the April NCSF meeting.

(Continued Pg. 4)

March Meeting Minutes

By Kevin Bert

The March business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held at the Unitarian Church North in Mequon. President Joyce Jentges opened the meeting at 7:40 pm and welcomed over 22 members. She then asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Gene DuPree reported \$3601 in the checking account. Gene said that he would be accepting membership dues or magazine subscriptions that evening. Fundraising leader Rob Powell said that \$3314.48 remains in the savings account.

Secretary Kevin Bert informed the membership that an updated roster should be enclosed in the next Spectrum. Members were encouraged to pay their dues if they have been putting it off.

NCRAL Report from Jeff Setzer said that a brief meeting was held prior to the business meeting. At this point 51

people had signed up for the April 18 & 19 event. Next week members will be walking through the hotel to get a better lay of the land where convention activities will take place. Bob Manske has been added to the speaker list. He is former President of both the Madison Astronomical Society and the Milwaukee Astronomical Society, and honored longtime member of the American Association of Variable Star Observers. Door prizes continue to come in and next month the organizers of the convention will be looking for members to sign up for various activities.

Observatory Director Dan Bert said that the observatory floor had a bad water leak after the last big rain and the floor was covered with ice for the last 2 public viewing nights. Don Miles, my dad and I were on the scene last Saturday chipping out whatever we could. If it should happen again we will resort to sand to prevent a slipping accident. In the spring the

hill to the north and west will need to be graded differently to steer water away from the base of the building. The next Observatory training session will be on April 5th at 7:00 pm. This is the same night as the Messier Marathon.

Under new business Joyce went over upcoming events. In addition to the Messier Marathon on April 4 & 5, four new dates for sidewalk observing at Bayshore were set. Saturday April 12th is the first date. Members that would like to help should be set up and ready to go at 5:00 pm. Superfest will again take place on March 29th and be held at Amateur Electronic Supply in Milwaukee. A table will be reserved for handouts and displays and weather permitting solar scopes are welcome starting at 9:00 am. Jeff Setzer will give a presentation during the event. See him for more details.

(continued on page 3)

Things to See In the April Night Sky

By Don Miles

Mercury: Sets right behind the Sun late in the month.

Uranus, Neptune & Venus: All very low in the Southeast at sunrise, and are mostly lost in the sun's glare this month. Venus will not emerge until mid-late July when it will trail the sun as it's setting.

Jupiter: Low in the southern sky at sunrise. Remains above and to the left of the "handle" of Sagittarius (the Teapot or Archer) by about 4 degrees (about the same distance between the end "bucket" stars in the Big Dipper), and slowly moves to the left throughout the month to a distance of about 8 degrees.

Mars: Is high in the sky at sunset, and sets around 2am. Look for the orange/yellow "star" near the "waist" of the western twin of Gemini. Mars will slowly fade and move across

Gemini from right-to-left during the month.

Saturn: Still above and to the left of Regulus (the bottom star of the "backwards question mark" that forms the head of Leo, and will maintain the same distance with Regulus throughout the month. Saturn will be up most of the night, already up at sunset, highest around 10:30, and sets around 4am. The rings will continue tipping till the end of the month, at which time they'll reach their maximum angle, which won't happen again until late 2010.

Moon:

April 5th: New Moon
April 8th: Occultation (See below)
April 12th: First Quarter
April 20th: Full Moon
April 28th: Last Quarter

The night of the 8th brings a unique event. The thin crescent moon will

pass in front of some of the stars of the Pleiades star cluster, and make them temporarily disappear. The moon will approach the cluster around 8pm, and finish passing thru by about 11pm.

One last promotion for the Messier Marathon...If you can take the time, give it a try. Even if you can't do an all-nighter (should the Wisconsin weather cooperate), go out for a while and see if it's something that may interest you. I think you'll surprise yourself at how many objects you can find. Hope to see you there!



April Meeting

By - Editor

There will be no 101 class this month to accommodate the NCRAL committee meeting.

The General Program following the main meeting will be given by Jeff Setzer and is titled:

"Messier Marathon"

What is it?

How to do it?

Why do it?

(March Meeting Notes Continued)

The Sheboygan Astronomical Society has invited us to a swap night on Tuesday May 6th. Mark that day on your calendar and start to round up things you would like to sell for the event. It starts at 7:00 pm. Directions will be coming.

Kevin Bert informed the membership that with all the moisture in the Observatory the primary mirror had frosted up when opened up to view on the lunar eclipse night. Paul Kamikawa came to the rescue with a dew-chasing heater to remove the frost. It worked great and he was later kind enough to donate the heater to the club. Kevin went on to say that he was going to address the problem by regularly applying a small amount of heat. He noted that the primary mirror was looking pretty dirty and may need a cleaning before long.

Jeff Setzer wanted to remind members that 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy. A lot of activities will be planned that tie in with groups around the world. It happens to be the 400th anniversary of the telescope. Stay tuned for more information throughout this year.

With no further new business, Joyce closed the business meeting at 8:15 p.m.

With the Messier Marathon scheduled for April 4th at Harrington Beach State Park, this timely presentation will examine strategies and techniques to accomplish a successful marathon. Those with past experience may wish to share their own secrets.



March Events

Saturn Opposition

The Public viewing of the Saturn Opposition at Harrington Beach on March 7th was hosted by Dave Windorski. Details unavailable.

The Saturn Opposition at Harrington Beach on March 8th was hosted by Gene and Charlotte DuPree. The skies were clear but attendance low, only one family attended.

"Young Astronauts Program"

The Telescope Program for the Allenton school at Pike Lake on March 14th was hosted by Gene and Charlotte Dupree. Thanks to the help of Al Steinburg the event hosted 20 families and their leaders. The skies cooperated and the Moon, Saturn, and Mars were available for viewing.



CURRENT CLACK

Leaders for Public Viewings

April 4 - Open

April 5 - Kevin Bert

April 18 & 19 - NCRAL Conference

Registration material, speaker agenda, and other Conference information are available on the NCSF website:

www.ncsf.info

Swap Night, May 6 - 7:00 p.m.

The first Sheboygan Astronomical Society Swap Night will be held on Tuesday evening, May 6th on the UW - Sheboygan Campus, Science Building, Rm 6101. Parking in the East parking lot puts you almost in front of the building. A map will be available on the NCSF website.

Astronomy Day, Saturday May 10th

Solar Viewing

Observatory Tours

Solar System Walk

Laser Guided Constellation Tour

Educational Videos

Public Viewing

Registration Forms for **WOW** (Wisconsin Observers Weekend) are now available on-line at www.new-star.org.

Have you had any "astronomy-type" adventures this year?

Are you planning on any?

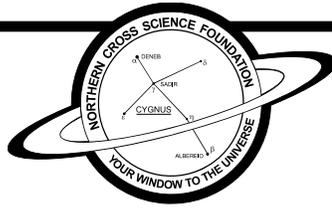
How about sending us a picture with a caption or a short story and share it right here in the Spectrum!

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(NCRAL Convention 2008 Continued)

Registration Table at the Country Inn & Suites:
- Friday, April 18th between 3pm and 8pm
- Saturday April 19th between 7am and 10am
Help with Observatory tours and rides to the Observatory:
- Friday, April 18th between 7pm and 11pm
Astro-Photo Competition
- Friday & Saturday, April 18th & 19th

If there are any members that can not make it to the convention but would like one of the cool NCRAL 2008 logo items feel free to pick up a registration form and sign up for whatever you are interested in. Please feel free to print and post the NCRAL 2008 flyer wherever you find interest.

Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory



Observatory Director:
Dan Bert: 262-375-2239

Monthly Meeting Location
Unitarian Church North
13800 N. Port Wash. Rd.
Mequon, WI 53097

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