

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

January 2004

LOOKING UP

January 8 Thursday
Monthly Meeting
7:00 p.m. 101 Class
8:00 p.m. Main Pgm
Carlson Tool & Mfg.

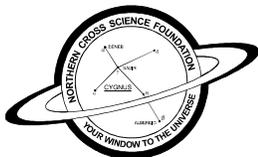
Note: January Meeting is one week later than normal because of New Year's Holiday.

The board meeting is the 4th Thursday in January because Jeff will be out of town.

January 22 Thursday
Board Meeting
7:30 p.m.
Home of Jeff Setzer

February 5 Thursday
NCSF Banquet
6:00 p.m. Cash Bar
7:00 p.m. Dinner
Klug's Creekside Inn
Cedarburg

February 14 Saturday
(tentative date)
Candlelight Ski
Pike Lake St. Park
More details available at
January Meeting



Will Star Hopping Become A Lost Art?

By Jack Kramer

From Lake County Astronomical Society <http://homepage.interaccess.com/~purcellm/icas/>

During an observing session at a remote site, a friend of mine packed up early and went home in frustration. The sky was clear and very dark - an ideal situation for deep sky observers. The cause of his frustration was the set of encoders he had installed on the axes of his Dobsonian-mounted telescope. The encoders and the little computer that comes with them were working okay, but he had a problem with a slightly off-center altitude axis. Faced with an inability to use the electronic finder, he chose not to waste his time searching for objects using just the conventional finder scope. So he went home.

There's perhaps a bit more to this story. You see, my friend works two jobs and that doesn't leave much time for observing. His rationale is that on those few nights when he observes, he wants to see galaxies, nebulae and star clusters...not spend most of his time *searching for them*. This seems like a rather good reason to use an electronic finder; after all, even those who have the luxury of ample observing time are using computer-aided locating devices. Some of these are built right into the latest commercially-manufactured telescopes. I had tried to convince my friend not to go home, even pointing out to him that he was approaching observing with the same frenetic mentality with which he approaches gainful employment. If astronomy is to be enjoyed as a hobby, it should be a change of pace - something relaxing. My gentle cajoling was for nought.

Increasingly, those new to the hobby are impatient to see objects through the tele-

scope; they become restive when faced with the prospect of locating objects by star-hopping. The availability of high-tech gadgets to aid their search is an enticement. Don't get me wrong, I think it's marvelous that we amateurs now have ready access to a level of technology that even some professionals didn't have available only a generation ago. And there are those who glory in the sheer wealth of technology that has become an inseparable part of the amateur astronomy scene. Everyone who pursues the hobby of astronomy has a right to enjoy it at whatever level he or she chooses. What is of some concern is that we may be losing one of the keystones of amateur astronomy - feeling really at home under the night sky.

My contacts with professional astronomers have confirmed what I've heard elsewhere. It is those who pursue astronomy as a *hobby* who really know their way around the night sky. Professionals are concerned about the lofty problems of astrophysics. When they set eye to eyepiece, it is with a very limited and specific goal in mind. Time in the observatory chamber is scrupulously allocated. Professionals do not have the freedom to roam aimlessly. That's why observatory instruments are computer-guided. In fact, the professional need only know the coordinates of the object of interest, not the fact that it's located in the constellation Cygnus. And of course, you just don't go star-hopping with a 3.5 meter telescope! Once in awhile, we even hear about professionals who also pursue astronomy as

(See *Star Hopping* on page 2)

December Minutes

By Kevin Bert

The December business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held in the conference room of Carlson Tool & Mfg. Cedarburg. President Jeff Setzer opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. to welcome 24 members and guests.

Jeff opened the floor for nominations to replace the two outgoing board members Kevin Bert and Al Steinberg. From the November meeting both Kevin, Al and Don Miles were nominated and were willing to serve if elected. In order to know what a board member was in for, Jeff gave an overview of the typical board member duties. Rick Poulin was then nominated by Don Miles and was seconded by Georgine Poulin. He responded that if nominated he would be willing to serve. Brad Plaumann nominated Georgine Poulin and was seconded by Rick

Poulin. She accepted the nomination. The membership gave its approval for the new nominees with a verbal aye! Nominations then closed. Each candidate was given a chance to say a few words on their behalf. Kevin Bert presented a list of the membership that represented eligible voters and proceeded to hand out ballots. Jeff gave the instructions to vote for two of the 5 candidates. With all ballots collected the names of all candidates were listed at the front of the room and Joyce Haussler read off the names of each ballot while Kevin Bert marked votes next to those names. When the final ballot was read the following tally was made. Al Steinberg 3 votes, Kevin Bert 23 votes, Don Miles 15 votes, Rick Poulin 4 votes, Georgine Poulin 3 votes. Jeff congratulated Kevin and Don and gave wishes for the best of luck on their three-year term.

Jeff noted the January 8th meeting date (the 2nd Thursday of the month) and some upcoming events for 2004. Gene and Charlotte DuPree announced a March 27th member's night at their house in Myra.



With no further business, Charlotte DuPree made a motion to close the meeting and it was seconded by Gene DuPree. With all in favor by a verbal aye, Jeff closed the annual business meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Bert, secretary

(Star Hopping from page 1)

a hobby. Apparently, they recognize a clear distinction between the two.

Having logged over one thousand deep sky objects, I sort of know my way around the night sky. I say "sort of" because every now and then I still do get lost up there. I became interested in astronomy as a teenager, and it has taken about forty years to reach the one thousand mark. That classifies me as an "old timer" and perhaps something of a slowpoke. I didn't start out with a goal of seeing a certain number of deep sky objects, that's just the way things turned out after forty years of observing. Many objects fatten the log book simply because one tends to "discover" a lot of interesting things in the process of star-hopping. As you go deeper into space, the star-hopping often is replaced with galaxy-hopping in constellations such as Virgo.

I've taken it as a personal goal to help

as many newcomers as possible learn their way around the sky. Our club has made it a practice at each meeting to set aside about twenty minutes for a presentation on how to star-hop to some interesting objects currently visible in the evening sky. The presentation job is rotated among different members who are experienced observers. At times, an entire program is devoted to wandering the sky. And this is still how most newcomers begin their observing. Many find a unique thrill in finding things, confirming for themselves that they are spacefarers who can get from point A to point B. Witness the popularity of the "0 power" finders such as the Telrad.



I don't advocate that interested people be required to pass a star-hopping test that grants them a license to be anointed as amateur astronomers. But I do contend that knowledge of the sky is a time-consuming, but important rite of pas-

sage for the amateur. It's something that sets us apart from the all-business professional. If this stage of the journey is bypassed, then something elegant will have gone out of amateur astronomy. The latest technology will always be there, and so it should. It's unfortunate, though, that technology is feeding an impatience among more and more newcomers - a desire for immediate gratification. Perhaps that is one reason why we don't see many young people in amateur astronomy - patience is an infrequent strong suit. Of course, that generalization isn't always true. My friend who went home in frustration is fifty-five years old.

There's a common trait among many experienced amateurs who are deeply into astrophotography and CCD imaging. During the course of a night after they tire of the intensity of following a guidestar or integrating electronic images, they kick back and just relax with some wandering of the night sky that they know so well. One commented

(See Star Hopping on page 4)

January Programs

By Kevin Bert

In place of the 101 class for the January meeting we will conduct a "Telescope Clinic" Starting at 7:00 p.m. This class is meant to help members and the public if they are having problems with a telescope or related equipment. Those members that are willing to help out or give advice for struggling astronomers should bring appropriate tools along.

If all "Telescope Clinic" activities can be addressed by 8:00 p.m. or sooner, the remainder of the evening will be open for "Show & Tell." As I recall the last time we had one it was very entertaining. If you have a new toy for Christmas or some project you are working on consider sharing it with the club. Try to keep it brief, in the 3 to 6 minute range so we can try to get through as many members as possible.



2004 NCSF Dinner

By Kevin Bert

Enclosed in this issue of Spectrum you will find a form to fill out, to attend this special NCSF dinner at Klug's Creekside Inn. Last year's dinner was enjoyable event and the hope is that all NCSF members and family members would plan on attending this year. **We need you** to make this successful.

The deadline for getting this form to Brad Plaumann is **January 24th**. Mark your calendar now. If you can't

attend the meeting, mail post-marked to Brad by January 22nd will be acceptable as well. (His address is on the form). Be sure to include a check made out to the Northern Cross Science Foundation, with the form to cover the quantity of menu items selected. If there are any special needs please let Brad or me know.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

From The Editor

By Joyce Haussler

Welcome to 2004! It is hard to believe that another year is gone. I am looking forward to another brand new start. I am also going to set some observing goals for myself.

At the last board meeting, new officers were chosen for 2004. All officers from 2003 will retain their position for 2004.

In the next several months, the board of directors will begin putting together the 2004 observing calendar. Be thinking of dates for membership nights.

One change you will see at the meetings in 2004 is name tags. This idea

was brought up by a new member, and with so many new members, this makes sense. I remember some years ago, that we had name tags at the meetings, and it is a good idea. Kevin and Jeff will be making name tags for everyone, so, make sure you pick yours up at the January meeting, and drop it back in the box before you leave. Also, remember to sign the attendance "register" at the meeting so Kevin can keep track of attendance.

I received in my email, a thank you note to the club, which is listed on the

Current Clack

Membership Dues

Just a reminder to members who have been with the club for over a year: it is time to pay your annual membership dues. To refresh your memory the rates are as follows:

\$12.00 for a Student membership.

\$24.00 for an Adult membership.

\$48.00 for a Supporting membership.

With an adult membership, additional family members wanting all membership privileges would cost \$4.00 each.

Any new member that joined during the 2003 year can wait a full 12 months from the month they joined to pay dues. At that point their dues will be adjusted and collected in 2004 so as to come due with the long-term members in January of 2005.

See Brad Plaumann at the meeting to pay your dues, or send him a check at the address listed on the back page on the newsletter.

Planetarium Field Trip By Kevin Bert

Field trip to the UWM Planetarium will take place on a Friday night in mid March. The specific date will be set at the January meeting. Tickets go on sale at 6:00 p.m. for a 7:00 p.m. presentation and cost \$1.00 per person. Car pool details will also be covered at that time. A trip to the Adler planetarium will be scheduled later in the year.

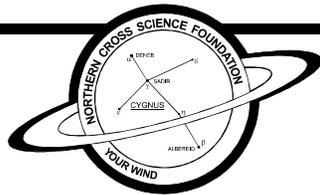
back page of the newsletter.

I am in need of some member written articles for the newsletter. You may mail, or email them to me at the address on the back page.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to wish each of you a healthy, and prosperous new year. I am looking forward to a successful year for the Northern Cross Science Foundation. Your participation at public events helps make that happen. Thank you for the countless hours you donate to our organization.



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**Monthly Meeting Location—
Carlson Tool & Mfg. Corp**
W57 N14386 Doerr Way
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(enter from south parking lot)

SPECTRUM

Is published by the Northern Cross Science Foundation, Inc. A nonprofit organization based the state of southeastern Wisconsin and is a Member of the North-Central Region of the Astronomical League.



The NCSF supports the International Dark sky association.



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Www.ncsf.info