

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

January 2007

LOOKING UP

January 4 Thursday
General Meeting
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

January 6 Saturday
Candlelight Hike/Ski
6—9 p.m.
Harrington Beach S. Park

**January 13 Saturday &
January 19 Friday**

Members Training
See Members Star Cruise
For more information

January 18 Thursday
Board Meeting
7:30 p.m.
To be determined

January 27th Saturday
Members Night
Home of Jeff Setzer
/Becca Sher
7:00 p.m.

February 1 Thursday
Annual Banquet
Location to be determined

February 3 Saturday
Candlelight Hike/Ski
6—9 p.m.
Harrington Beach S. Park

February 10 Saturday
Candlelight Hike/Ski
6-9 p.m.
Pike Lake State Park

Members Star Cruise

By Captain Kevin Bert

There was very good attendance for the maiden voyage of a members night at the Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory on December 15th. Temperatures hovered close to the freezing mark for the 8 souls that pried themselves up from their comfortable easy chairs and left their remotes behind. They zipped up their parkas and pulled up their bootstraps to brave the elements for astronomical treasures a book could only hope to capture. There were no gale force winds to lower the wind chill, only light winds that could hardly be noticed from within the hull of the mighty sailing observatory. All things considered, it was very comfortable for a winter's night. You could almost smell the salt in the air and hear the crashing of waves on shore. It was reminiscent of days gone by when Barnacle Bill Barlow would set out to view on a winter's night and you would hear the cry of "More Power!" It always seemed to cloud up though when Bill set up the orange celestial wonder and I think he spent more time looking at sea gulls than heavenly objects. "Enough with the sea gulls," I said. "Hoist the flag of the swan

tonight, it's clear!" After showing the sailors how to open up the observatory and prepare the 20-inch Panarusky telescope for viewing, we pulled up anchor and with the firm hand of the first mate at the wheel of the Panarusky, the mighty scope began sailing to distant deep sky objects. Then low to the east, was it old Triton? No, it was Sirius, that salty sea dog rising from the murky depths and letting out a howl that only the brightest star could muster. But there, off the port bow, a chill ran up my spine as the mighty constellation of Orion took shape. Rarely seen by the land lovers of warm summer skies, the 20-inch light net with 32mm eyeee-piece pulled in billowing clouds of gas and dust that surrounded the brilliant Trapezium cluster at the core of M42. The great nebula was a favorite of all and looked fantastic at low power. The same low power could hardly contain the large open cluster M35 in Gemini and its faint companion cluster NGC 2158. I throttled back power with the 55mm eyeee-piece and the cluster looked like a rich stash of jewels poured out of a pirate's treasure chest on to black velvet. Arrrr, what a catch! In Taurus I pointed a green laser like a giant harpoon at our next target. Only a

(Members continued on page 2)

How I Got My Start In Astronomy (Part 1)

Submitted by Members of the NCSF

Quite a few years ago, a guy I was working with, mentioned that he liked to sit around the campfire up north and just watch the satellites go over. I was in disbelief that you could see them, and decided to give it a try for myself. I was in awe as I actually saw some satellites, and quite a few stars (I never really noticed them like I did that night). I enjoy them just as much today.

Don Miles

My first experience with astronomy was as a very early teen. My uncle gave me a 10x hand held telescope for Christmas. I can still remember looking at Saturn thru the living room window.

When I retired I bought my first (and present) real telescope. I think I enjoy showing objects during public viewing nights the

(Astronomy continued on page 4)

December Meeting Minutes

By Kevin Bert

The December business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held at the Unitarian Church North in Mequon. President Jeff Setzer opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. and thanked the 24 members and guests for attending this annual meeting that is required by NCSF bylaws to elect board members. Jeff asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Rob Powell reports a balance of \$1,511 in the club's checking account and \$5,085 in the observatory account. It was noted that membership dues should be addressed next month unless a member joined last year.

Secretary Kevin Bert had nothing to report from the Astronomical League. He did present the latest membership roster so there was no debate on who could vote in the election for board positions. He encouraged members to review their information on the roster sheet some time during the evening that no mistakes were made.

Jeff Setzer then opened the floor to additional nominees to replace outgo-

ing members Don Miles and Kevin Bert. Don and Kevin were nominated to run again at the last meeting and said that they would serve again if elected. Don Miles nominated Rick Kazmierski, and Rebecca Sher seconded. After a brief discussion his name was accepted even though he was absent. After two more requests for nominations, none were given. With nominations closed, Kevin Bert handed out membership ballots and members were instructed to vote for two of the three candidates. Rob Powell had a proxy vote from Kip Kaplan to add to the collection. Joyce Jentges collected the ballots and Joyce and Bob Radtke then counted votes. Final results were; Rick with 12, Don with 17, and Kevin with 19. Don and Kevin were congratulated and Jeff said the entire board of directors would vote for officer's positions at the next board meeting.

Under old business, Rob Powell told Kevin Bert that the electrical hookup was either complete or would be by the end of the week for the Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory. Kevin said that the first observing/training session would be on Dec. 15th at 8:00 pm. The 20-inch Panarusky Telescope is func-

tioning well after a clock drive adjustment and will work in the Newtonian mode until the Cassegrain secondary is completed. Small adjustments will continue to be made during winter. Kevin said that there were still several tools available to donate and a list of them could be found by the roster or by calling him by phone.

Under new business Jeff Setzer gave a list of upcoming public events. Jan. 4 is the next regular NCSF meeting. The 6th is a candlelight ski at Harrington Beach starting at 6:00m pm. Set-up would be in the upper parking lot. Additional nights will be given for February at the next meeting. February will again schedule a dinner in place of the regular meeting on the first. Look for details in the January newsletter.

With no further new business, a motion was made by Rob Powell to adjourn the meeting and Becca seconded it. With all in favor, Jeff closed the business meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Bert, secretary

(Members continued from page 1)

stone's throw away, the 20-inch light net hauled in the famous Crab nebula with the 32 mm showing a classic irregular cloud that seemed to float in the foreground among a sea of background stars. "Look out for those claws! They've been known to take out an eyeeee. But that's what them astronomers' eye patches are for. Right swab!" Next, a site sailors dream about. The cry across the deck was "Seven Sisters ahoy!" High overhead, M45 could be seen easily without a spyglass. After the 20-inch net was repositioned I took a high climb up to the crows nest to see the brilliance of this beautiful bright cluster. But after my first peak, I realized that I was three sisters short! "Hoist up the 55mm," I said. As it made it's way to

me I thought I would have to beat the sailors off with my peg leg to keep them from falling over each other to get a glimpse. Ahhh, the sisters never disappoint. They don't look a day older than the first glimpse I had as a wee lad on me first 60mm net. My memory drifted back to late nights in the summer when their arrival meant winter was soon to come and it was time to fold up the charts and head for port. Each sailor took a turn at the wheel of the big scope. "Easy does it," I said, as they counted down to zero on the Sky Commander's display. They all picked up on how it handled without much trouble. Other wondrous sites were pulled in off the starboard side with the 20-inch light net and only two sailors walked the plank and left early that night. Close to 10:00 pm a dense bank of clouds slowly covered the skies and

the remaining group charted a course for home to swab the deck, put away the rum and drop anchor for the night. In the captain's log I ended with "We caught our limit tonight, of celestial wonders so bright. Many more wonders yet to be, we look forward sailing celestial seas." All sailors were promoted to captain and can now chart their own course when they get back their sea legs at the observatory. You can set sail with us on the next members/training night at 7:00 pm on Friday January 19th or at 1:00 pm. on Saturday January 13, if you want a daytime cruise to get your feet wet. I will be out for the training even if cloudy or cold enough to shiver me timbers. In if doubt, give the captain a call at 375-2239.

January Meeting

By Joyce Jentges

There will be no Astronomy 101 at the January meeting. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a short business meeting. The main program will be a show and tell of new astronomical items gotten as gifts. People who received a new telescope recently are welcome to bring the scope to the meeting. Members will be on hand to

help work out any problems with the scopes. If you are available to help out with fixing telescopes, please bring some basic tools such as: allen wrenches, Phillips and flat head screwdrivers.

December 14 Aurora Reports

By Joyce Jentges

I really hope you were able to see the awesome aurora display on December 14th. I had just left my brother's house in Waubeka, and was driving along the country roads when I saw them. I called my brother and turned around and went back to his house, where we watched them from the cemetery across the street from him. We saw mostly green, one small area of red, and some white pulsating going on. What follows are reports from a few of our members who got to see them also.

I headed up to Harrington last night completely

unaware of the possibility of auroras. Needless to say...it was an amazing display. I also managed to get in a few M objects along the way. M15, M77. M1, M33, M34, M35, M36, M37, the Persied double and of course An-

dromeda and Orion.

Scott Nehring

—

The photos don't do it justice. It was spectacular! The family viewed from Rotary Park, in Mequon, between 7 PM and 8 PM. Then the clouds started to roll in. We saw several meteors including one beautiful bolide.

Rob Powell

Rick Poulin reported the northern lights he saw were ghostlike.

Gene DuPree saw a green arch, green rays to the zenith, white shimmering and red rays.

CURRENT CLACK

Members training nights at Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory: January 13 at 1 p.m., or January 19th at 7 p.m. Call Kevin Bert for more information

Please note: the deadline for submission of items for the newsletter is the 20th of the month. Please get your items to me no later than January 20th.

Rob Powell and I called each other about the aurora. At 6:00 PM I called him from the backyard of a neighbor in Whitefish Bay. At 6:30, he urged me to drive to Rotary Park in Mequon. On the way up I-43, I could see a bright green aurora above the lights of Brown Deer Road.

Soon after I arrived at 7:00 PM, a bright green aurora formed horizontally across the northern sky. It forked on the west end. Soon it became obvious to me and then to Rob's children that the aurora had formed a strong resemblance to the dragon-like "Mark of Voldemort" that terrorized the quidditch fans in the last Harry Potter movie. Rob captured a picture and sent it to Vince Condella, who then put it on his blog at myfoxmilwaukee.com.

Mark Hirschmann

From The Editor

By Joyce Jentges

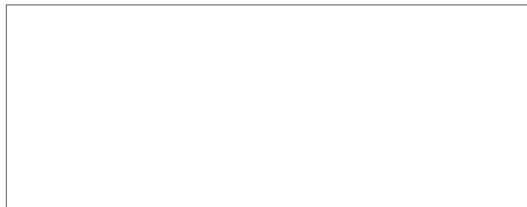
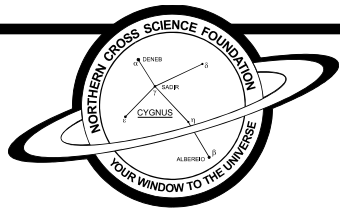
Welcome to 2007! If you look at the calendar on page 1, you will notice that we have a members night scheduled for January 27th. I am looking forward to this night as we will be reminiscing and taking a look back at the past history of the Northern Cross Science Foundation.

Bring pictures to share, past newsletters, news clippings, etc. Whether you are a new member, or have been in the club a long time, you need to come, no telescope needed.

At the time of publication, no information was available for the February

banquet. A restaurant in Saukville was being considered, but they had not gotten back to us with information. Look for more information at the January meeting, and on the club website at www.ncsf.info.

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Monthly Meeting Location
Unitarian Church North
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Mequon, WI 53097

(Astronomy from page 1)

most, especially the eight year old kids.

Bob Radtke

I was in a doctor's office waiting room, in October of 2000, I was reading a (very) little sidebar in the (then current) National Geographic. All it said was that 2001 was going to be a banner year for astronomical events. I decided that it was about time "the family" purchased a telescope.

After weeks of on-line research, we ordered the Orion XT-10, joined NCSF, and started subscriptions to Astronomy and Sky & Telescope. The telescope was difficult to operate, between frigid temperatures, a metal telescope tube, eyepieces with way-too small field stops, and no knowledge of how to locate deep-space objects.

My difficulties quickly became a thing of the past when I attended my first NCSF meeting, which coincided with a pre-meeting parking lot star party. Gene DuPree kindly invited me to set up my scope, Paul Kamikawa helped with its collimation, and others assisted in teaching me where to point the telescope. Best of all, I was introduced to Harold Rogers, who became my astronomy mentor. Over the course of that year, we met at Rotary Park in Mequon, where he showed me the constellations and how to find all my (now) favorite Messier objects.
Rob Powell

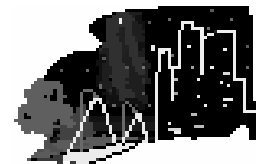
(Part 2 will be in the February newsletter, space permitting.)

SPECTRUM

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