

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

March 2004

LOOKING UP

March 4 Thursday

7:00 p.m. 101 Class

8:00 p.m. Main Pgm

Carlson Tool & Mfg.

March 12 Friday

UWM Planetarium

Details on page 3

March 18 Thursday

7:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

Jeff Setzer's Home

March 20 Saturday

Messier Marathon

Harrington Beach St. P.

Set up before dusk

March 27 Saturday

Members Night/Home of
Gene & Charlotte DuPree

5:00 p.m.

April 1 Thursday

7:00 p.m. 101 Class

8:00 p.m. Main Pgm

Carlson Tool & Mfg.

April 15 Thursday

7:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

Jeff Setzer's Home

Messier Marathon

By Joyce Haussler

As you look at our March schedule, you will see a listing for March 20th that lists the event as a Messier Marathon. If you are new to the club or hobby, you may be wondering just what a Messier Marathon is. I will attempt to explain that in this article.

Most observers are familiar with the Messier Catalog. This catalog is composed of 110 objects that were cataloged by Charles Messier as he was searching for comets. He created this list so that other people who were looking for comets would be aware of these objects. Little did he know that this list would become the most famous observing catalog in the world!

New observers will usually start using the objects in this catalog as they become familiar enough with the sky to locate objects. Often times, these objects are the brightest and the best objects in the sky. At this point you may be thinking: Well if these objects are so bright, and so popular, then what's the big deal about a marathon? The purpose of the marathon is to view as many objects out of the Messier catalog as you can in one night. Not an easy feat!

Marathon's are typically held during March, which is one time of the year when you can see all 110 objects in one night. You begin the marathon by having all of your equipment set up and ready to go before the sky gets dark. There are several objects you will need to locate during dusk.

Those who participate in a marathon usually have a plan of how they will begin to

look for objects. You must sit down with a star map, or charts and plot out your plan of action. You want to begin with the objects that will set first in the west, and end with the objects that rise in the east near dawn. There are published lists available if you need assistance. I use a book called The Year-Round Messier Marathon Field Guide, by Harvard Pennington. This guide has all the charts and objects listed in order. I especially like the section on the Virgo Cluster and the detailed maps that he provides for identifying objects.



The primary objective of the marathon is to see as many objects as possible in one night. With this in mind, remember that this is not the time for extensive note taking or working on your Astronomical League Messier List. To view 100 objects in one night, you simply will not have the time. You need to locate the object, verify it, and move on. One of the reasons for using a guide of some type, is that they usually have objects grouped together by area, so you don't waste time looking for an object in one area, then leave it for another direction. You want to finish all of the Messier objects in that area at one time, if possible. However, you don't want to spend too much time looking for one object, or you won't have enough time to find all the other objects. If you begin to have trouble finding objects, at some point, you will have to look at the time you have left, and how many objects you still need to find, and move on to the next object or section.

(See Marathon on page 4)

Solar Dobsonian

By Kevin Bert

There was a meeting of all the sun scope participants last month to kick off the project. All of the finished components that make up the prototype were on display. Several handouts and a discussion about the function of each part used up most of the evening. A grinding demonstration with members preparing their glass finished the evening. There were a number of good

questions over the course of the evening and I feel everything is coming together. I hope that the group will maintain interest over the estimated two to three months to complete the scopes. The first session will be at my home March 11th. I am getting close to having the area cleared out in my basement and all the materials ready.



March Celestial Events

By Charlotte DuPree

Venus is the bright evening star in the west, moving from Aires to Taurus during the month. It reaches greatest elongation from the sun on March 29th. Mars is in Taurus; Saturn is in Gemini.

Jupiter in Leo, reaches opposition on March 4th.

On March 1st, sunset is at 5:42 p.m., and by March 15th it is at 5:59 p.m.

From The Editor

By Joyce Haussler

Those of you who missed the Candlelight Ski at Pike Lake, also missed a great night for observing, if you are a cold weather goer. Skies were beautiful, but it was very cold. The Rangers estimated a crowd of about 800 people showed up for the event, and our area received a lot of traffic. We looked at Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, the Orion Nebula, NGC 457 (which was seen naked eye by one member!) and several other objects. There were 8 or 9 different members and families who showed up with telescopes and binoculars to brave the elements.

Charlotte DuPree mentioned a website to me that I think members will want to know about. Recently we heard on the news that NASA has decided not to repair the Hubble Space Telescope. I do not remember the amount of years that Hubble has left, but considering the amount of great scientific data and discoveries that

Hubble has contributed, it would be a shame to see it die. The website is: www.savethehubble.org. Take out just a few minutes of your day to visit this website and join the fight to save the Hubble.

At our February board meeting, Jeff Setzer mentioned that Harrington Beach was happy to find out that we are scheduling nearly all of our public viewing nights at their park this year.

Also at the board meeting, it was mentioned that member Bill Richards approached a board member asking if we would be interested in attending Garden Marketplace Day at St. Rose Church in Fredonia on Saturday, May 15th. We could give a 30 to 60 minute talk on beginning astronomy, with the possibility of doing an evening of observing there. The board will look into this matter in more detail. Contact Bill Richards for more information about this event.

Also, if you are interested in purchasing the Sky Tools program that was mentioned in the February newsletter, please see me at the March meeting. At this point, I would like to know how many people would like to order a copy of this program. Once I know who wants to order, I can collect money and place an order.

Those of you who might be considering attending one or more of the starparties in the area, need to think about registering. Registrations are now being accepted for the Nebraska Star Party in July, and I believe that you should be able to register for the NCRAL convention very soon. As soon as registration becomes available for any of the major star parties, we will have registration information available at the next meeting.



Astronomy 101 Class

By Kevin Bert

The March meeting will have a brief talk and demonstration about grinding a telescope mirror. This will give the members of the club that are not in the sun telescope class an opportunity to see what the class will be doing over the next two months. So roll up your sleeves, grab the glass and take a walk around the barrel.

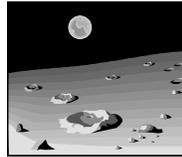
The constellation of the month will be Canis Major.

Main Program

By Joyce Haussler

The program for the March Meeting will be a talk by member, Scott Nehring. His topic will be Lunar Exploration. He will talk specifically about the space program from 1959—through the Apollo flights. He will also show a model of a Saturn 5 that he has. Scott

has also shot another lunar video similar to one he brought to our meeting several months ago.



Meteorites For Sale

By Nick & Jeanie Nichols

We recently purchased a meteorite from Chaco, Argentina.

The "New Campo del Cielo" meteorites are less weathered and much more desirable and valuable. These meteorites fell to Earth about 3000-5000 years ago. These were part of the last biggest falls on Earth, and were discovered by the Spanish during their conquest of South America in 1576.

These meteorites are hunted by using metal detectors, and are found to be anywhere from several inches to 8 to 10 feet under the surface of the ground.

We also purchased several smaller marble size pieces for resale, if

anyone might be interested. We will bring some samples to the March meeting.

New Members

Please give a belated welcome to the following new members:

Robert & Carol Radtke and Palmer Krueger, both of Cedarburg. Welcome!

Planetarium Field Trip

March 12th, the NCSF is sponsoring a field trip to the UWM Planetarium. A count will be taken at the March 5th meeting of who will be attending so that we can have some tickets reserved for us. Those interested in carpooling should meet at either the I-43 and Pioneer Rd. park and ride lot, or the lot in Menomonee Falls at Hwy 45 and Pilgrim Road. Cars will leave at 6:00 p.m. Tickets will cost \$1.00, and the program starts at 7:00 p.m.

Astronomy Day

Astronomy Day will be held on April 23 and 24th at Harrington Beach State Park.

At this point, this looks like it will be primarily an evening event, with the exception of solar viewing. If you have any ideas for daytime events that could take place, or would like to help with astronomy day, please contact a board member.

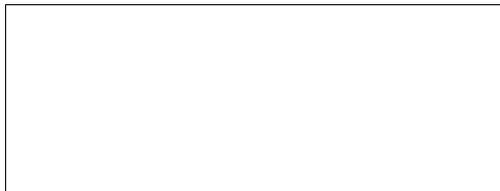
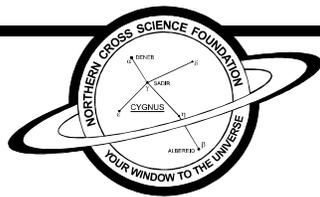
February Meeting Minutes

There are no minutes for the February meeting because of the NCSF dinner.

Headlights For Sale

Those of you planning on attending upcoming observing events, don't forget that the Northern Cross has red lights that you can wear around your head to keep your hands free as you maneuver between eyepieces and charts. See Rob Powell if interested.

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**Monthly Meeting Location—
Carlson Tool & Mfg. Corp**
W57 N14386 Doerr Way
Cedarburg, WI 53012
(enter from south parking lot)

(Marathon from page 1)

If you can view the objects that set early in the evening, you should be able to keep a pretty steady pace the rest of the night, except for the Virgo cluster, and the area around Sagittarius.

It will also be handy to have a book such as The Messier Album, to help you identify the objects. This book has been a staple in my observing gear for years, because each object has several pages devoted to it, including pictures and sketches. I use this book when I think I might have located an object I have never seen before, but am not sure what it looks like.

If you are considering joining us for the marathon, also remember that this is an all nighter—IF you can make it that long. Of course, you are free to come and go as you please, but just use caution if you pack up early or come in late. As always, refrain from using white lights, whether from headlights or interior car lights.

Other things to consider: Make sure you get an afternoon nap if possible, and dress in layers as the night will get cold. Bring whatever food and drinks you may desire (no alcohol please).

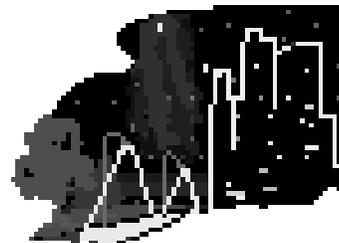
Messier Marathons can be a challenge for observers, but with some preparation, they can be a rewarding opportunity, and an accomplishment.

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