

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

March 2008

LOOKING UP

March 6, Thursday

General Meeting

7:00 p.m. NCRAL Meeting

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

March 7 & 8th (Fri. & Sat.)

"Saturn Opposition"

7:00 p.m.

Harrington Beach

March 17, Monday

NCRAL Committee Meeting

7:30 p.m.

Home of Jeff and Becca Setzer

March 20, Thursday

Board Meeting

7:30 p.m.

Home of Joyce Jentges

April 4. Friday

Messier Marathon

Dusk

Harrington Beach

April 5, Saturday

Messier Marathon

Dusk

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

Observatory News:

By Dan Bert

I would like to thank all who helped with our public viewing this past year, especially the observatory operators who volunteered as event leaders. For those operators who have not had a chance to lead or assist in an event please consider doing so. With this years viewing schedule now finalized, a sign up sheet will be available for both public and members nights at the monthly meetings.

At this time we have 24 individuals that are trained to use the observatory and 20" telescope on their own.

They include the following:

Kevin Bert
Dan Bert
Uldis Cinitis
Gene DuPree
Christopher Grenda
Paul Gruener
Joyce Jentges
Paul Kamikawa
Tony Marek
Ernie Mastroianni
Mike Matthies

Don Miles
Scot Nehring
Rick Poulin
Rob Powell
Robert Radtke
Richard Sauve
Steve Schowalter
David Schulz
Jeff Setzer
Harvey Sherman
Alan Steinberg
Dave Windorski
Nolan Zadra

If I have missed anyone please let me know. A training session will be held on Saturday April 5th at 7:00 pm for those interested in learning how to operate the observatory and Panarusky telescope.

A new web page "observatory links" has been created on our Google groups site. Here you can access the observatory calendar for 2008, operator manuals, item inventory & contact information. At www.ncsf.info, under current announcements look for the google groups link.



Observatory Director, Dan Bert completes the installation of the new Jim & Gwen Plunkett Observatory sign. Located on the north wall of the observatory, it can be seen from anywhere on the parking lot.

2007 - The Year in Review - Part 2

By Joyce Jentges

July – On July 7th, Rob Powell hosted three generations of the Plunkett family at a viewing night at the observatory. Skies were fantastic as Rob showed them some of the best of the summer objects. A successful dedication ceremony was held on July 21st with about 50 guests attending. Jim and Gwen Plunkett and Bob Sedgwick attended. Public viewing followed in the evening.

August – a group of members attended Northwoods Starfest the weekend of August 10-12th. A Public viewing night was held on August 17th, and about 50 guests attended. Skies were partly cloudy, but observers managed to work around the clouds finding things for guests. The August 18th viewing night was rained out.

September – The annual public viewing was held at the Ice Age Center in Dundee, with a smaller than normal crowd attending, possibly due to Labor Day weekend. On the afternoon and

evening of September 15 the Fall Astronomy Day was held. It was estimated that a crowd of 150 people came out that evening to look through our scopes! Kevin Bert entertained the crowd with a green laser tour of the constellations in the sky. There was a candlelight hike the night of September 22nd, and even though we weren't scheduled to be there, the DuPree's went out to make sure the observatory was manned. They ended up with a crowd of 75-100 people.

October - Gene and Charlotte DuPree held the first ever "Always Looking Up" camp out on October 12-14.

October 20th, Charlotte and Gene DuPree went to a boy scout camp out near Pioneer Village in Saukville. There were about 30 boys and their leaders. The same night there was a public viewing night at Harrington Beach State Park. We had a very nice crowd with reasonably clear

skies, although winds were pretty strong. We had a nice array of telescopes set up for the public to view through. We had one large group of several families come through with children. Among the objects viewed were, the Andromeda Galaxy, M13, M15, the Ring Nebula, the Owl Cluster, the double cluster and Alberio. The viewing night for October 19th was clouded out.

November – A public viewing night was held on November 10th, but weather was not cooperative. A school group from Milwaukee came out and eventually skies cleared a little.

December – Our annual general meeting was held on December 6th. Elections took place for the board of directors. Al Steinberg and Rick Kazmierki were elected to fill the positions vacated by Rob Powell and Rick Poulin.

Things to See In the March Night Sky

By Don Miles

Uranus, Neptune, Mercury & Venus: All very low in the Southeast at sunrise, and are mostly lost in the sun's glare this month.

Jupiter: Above and to the left of the "handle" of Sagittarius (the Teapot) by about 4 degrees (about the same distance between the end "bucket" stars in the Big Dipper).

Mars: Is still high in the sky all month, and is highest around midnight, so is visible most all night long. Look for the Orange/Yellow "star" between the "foot" star of the western twin of Gemini and the "horn tips" of Taurus thru the month. Around the second week of March, Mars will pass a little over 1 degree north of M35, which is a beautiful star cluster easily seen with binoculars.

Saturn: Still below and to the left of Regulus (the bottom star of the "backwards question mark" that forms

the head of Leo, and will slowly close the gap with Regulus throughout the month. Saturn will be up all night, rising around sunset, and setting around sunrise.

Moon:

March 7th: New Moon

March 14th: First Quarter

March 21st: Full Moon

March 29th: Last Quarter

Just a reminder...

This years Messier Marathon is next month (April 4th and/or the 5th), and some of the members will be at Harrington Beach attempting it. Now's a good time to preview some of the more difficult objects that will be setting early. If at all possible, try to view from the same spot (within a

few feet) that you'll be observing from (so you can use an area landmark to make mental references) while they're still a little bit higher in the sky. You'll also find out if there's a tree or something in your way that you'll want to avoid before setting up your equipment. Using binoculars in conjunction with a telescope now helps you "get the big picture", and will make it less frustrating when you are trying to find those first few objects. Following them thru March will familiarize yourself with the late-winter sky and give you a jump on the rest of the crowd. Dress warm.



March Meeting

By Kevin Bert

There will not be a 101 Class this month.

The General Program will be "Lunar Survival \ NASA Exercise" by Kevin Bert.

This months program will give the membership the opportunity to participate in testing their knowledge of what it takes to survive on the moon. It was produced by

NASA years ago as a fun way to stimulate interest in the space program. A scenario will be set at the start of the program where teams will be established. Who will make it back alive? And who will be a casualty of the space program? Be sure to attend and see.



February Events

(Considering we are talking about February (the coldest month of the year) this has been an eventful month! Who says Astronomy isn't a Winter activity?)

Candlelight Hike/Ski Report

The Candlelight Hike/Ski at Harrington Beach on February 2nd was hosted by Gene and Charlotte DuPree. Although the weather was cloudy, the event still drew 75 interested people.

Candlelight Hike/Ski Report

The Candlelight Hike/Ski at Pike Lake State Park on February 9th was again hosted by Gene and Charlotte DuPree. The skies cleared for an hour and the event drew approximately 90 people.

Lunar Eclipse

Despite the sub-zero temperatures, more than 50 people came to Harrington Beach State Park to witness the lunar eclipse on Wednesday night, February 20, 2008 at the Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory.

The crystal-clear skies offered a beautiful view of the lunar eclipse, framed by Saturn and Regulus in the constellation Leo. Photos from the event have been posted on the Google Groups site, under the name Winter Eclipse.

While conditions in the sky were great, the ground was extremely icy. Large portions of the observatory floor were coated with ice, as were the sidewalks that surround the building. Fortunately, there were no serious spills.

The event was covered by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Photo-journalist Mike Sears took pictures and transmitted them back to the newsroom from the parking lot at the observatory.

Observatory leaders for the night included Kevin Bert, Ernie Mastroianni, and Nolan Zadra. Visitors looked at the Moon, Saturn, and the Orion Nebula. On the back porch, Bert set up the six-inch Newtonian and Mastroianni offered views through 20x77 Miyachi binoculars and a 3.5-inch Questar.

The observatory roof rolled open at about 7 pm, and was closed a little after 11 pm. Although it was bitterly cold, there was little wind, and for those who were prepared, the evening was surprisingly comfortable.

Nolan and Ernie also took pictures of Saturn through the Panarusky telescope. While the seeing was poor in the clear, cold air, Nolan and Ernie established that it is possible to take pictures through the telescope with both Canon and Nikon digital SLR cameras using eyepiece projection equipment. -By Ernie Mastroianni

Continued on page 4

CURRENT CLACK

Leaders for Public Viewings

March 7—Dave Windorski

March 8 - Gene and Charlotte DuPree

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

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

Our club has been invited to attend a Swap Night hosted by the Sheboygan Astronomical Society. The event will be part of their monthly club meeting, which is held on the UW-Sheboygan campus. Additional information regarding this event will be made available in next month's SPECTRUM.

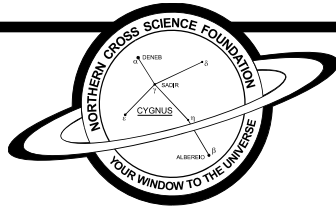
Registration Forms for **WOW** (Wisconsin Observers Weekend) are now available on-line at www.new-star.org.

Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory



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Joyce Jentges took this photo at our Annual Banquet which was held on February 7th at *No No's Restaurant* in Newburg.

Food was excellent! Conversation was lively!!

A Great time with Great friends!!!

Membership Dues:

Unpaid 2008 Membership Dues are now past due. If you fall in this category, please submit your dues ASAP. The 2008 Dues Invoice is available on the Club's website at www.ncsf.info.

Questions can be directed to our Club Treasurer, Gene DuPree at 262 675-0911.

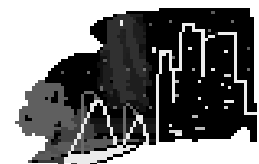


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