

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

March 2009

LOOKING UP

March 5, Thursday

General Meeting

7:00 p.m. Astronomy 101
"The Galileo Club"

7:30 p.m. Main Program
"Charles Messier & His List"

March 19, Thursday

Board Meeting

7:30 PM at Joyce's house

March 21, Saturday

Observatory Training

7:00 PM, Harrington Beach

March 27 & 28

Messier Marathon

Dusk, Harrington Beach

April 1, Wednesday

Sidewalk Astronomy

6:00 PM, West Bend Library

April 2, Thursday

Solar Observing

1:00 PM, West Bend Library

April 2 thru 5

100 Hours of Astronomy

Various Locations

(See feature article for details)

Monthly Meeting Location

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

An Event 400 Years In The Making

By Jeff Setzer, IYA 2009 Coordinator

The beginning of April brings the long-anticipated 100 Hours of Astronomy (100HA). This is a Cornerstone Project for IYA2009 and a huge global effort. One of the key goals of 100HA is to have as many people as possible look through a telescope as Galileo did for the first time 400 years ago.



100HA will take place from 2-5 April when the Moon goes from first quarter to gibbous, good phases for early evening observing. Saturn will be the other highlight of early evening observing events.

The NCSF will lead all other Wisconsin astronomy groups by having activities at five locations in our area. Wednesday, April 1, we will be at the West Bend Library for sidewalk astronomy that evening. The following day, we will do solar observing after lunch-

time for several hours at that same library. Before and during our regular meeting at UCN that evening, we will have observing with telescopes in the parking lot.

Friday, April 3 and Saturday, April 4, we will have sidewalk astronomy at three different locations simultaneously: Plunkett Observatory, Pike Lake State Park in Hartford, and Bayshore Town Center in Glendale.

Additionally, on Saturday during the day we will have solar observing and activities at Bayshore Town Center. Specifics to be determined but in addition to the solar observing we plan to have a live Internet link to participate in the 24-hour live webcast from professional observatories around the world. Sunday we will wrap up 100HA with more solar observing at Bayshore.

What we need are volunteers to help cover these activities at these locations. This is your chance to participate in a truly global effort to promote amateur astronomy — let's do our part to make 100HA a success and have some fun at the same time! Please give me a call or email to sign up.

Small Scope Star Party, Part 1

by Kevin Bert

Many of you veteran observers have gotten your start into astronomy many years ago with the acquisition of a small telescope, either as a gift or by laying down hard earned cash. The hope was that it would start you on your way to years of adventure, exploring & learning, and enjoying this hobby. Years ago names like Edmund, Tasco, Bushnell, Sears and Unitron, came to mind and maybe one of these little bundles of joy ended up in your hands. For many there was eager anticipation of celestial

wonders with your new Spyglass.

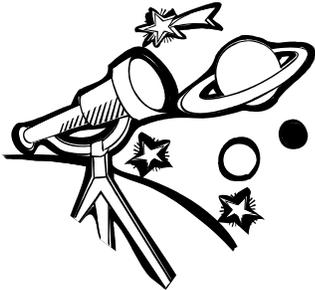
As you took baby steps, tiptoeing through the light years of space, often disappointing results came from your lack of experience. Before long that small telescope took the back seat to larger and even larger telescopes as the desire for better views of stardust took hold. For some, that first scope found an out of the way place to gather a different kind of dust while other interests took priority. In the

("SSSP" continued on page 2)

SSSP (continued from page 1)

back of your mind you knew there would come a time when it might be fun to bring out your once pride and joy under the stars again and reminisce about the excitement and anticipation of nights gone by.

Well the time is coming when you will



have your chance. In appreciation for all those wonderful memories, a special night is set for you and others to gaze again through your old Spyglass and other similar aperture-challenged telescopes at the first Small Scope Star Party, (SSSP). This time however it will be as a more seasoned observer, understanding what it takes to squeeze out every last drop of detail your old Spyglass can deliver. With all the viewing experiences and astronomical knowledge you have gathered over the years you might be surprised just how these small telescopes work when used the proper way. If you are accustomed to a large scope, you might have even

forgotten how nice & easy it was, setting up, (Photon Ready). For some, one minute is more than enough time, with others several minutes are in order.

For some of you new to the hobby, old Spyglass is what you might be using right now. You are still not quite sure how to best use your scope and what kind of things to look for. You will definitely want to attend SSSP as well. No feelings of aperture inadequacy as you might at other star parties here. You will feel right at home and have a chance to learn from other members as advice runs freely. Half the fun is seeing the variety of scopes there and what telescope accessories members are using.

There are other types of people that will benefit from this gathering. The person that may have sold or given their old Spyglass away, figuring there was nothing new left to see with it. There are more objects than you might think that are well suited for smaller telescopes. Be sure to keep that date open.

How about a future stargazer that is looking to get their first scope and would like to see first hand what some of the differences are in small scopes. You might not even know what a refractor or reflector is. I am willing to bet that there will be a few extra scopes set up just waiting to have someone

("Festivities" continued on page 3)

SSSP Rules for September 12, 2009

1. No telescopes over 6.0 inches in aperture are permitted.
2. Larger scopes which are stopped down do **not** qualify.
3. Telescopes of the Reflector, Refractor or Catadioptric persuasions are all acceptable.
4. No binoculars please.
5. No photon amplification equipment allowed. Visual use only!
6. Items for sell or trade are permitted.

Things to See In the March Night Sky

By Don Miles

Mercury, Mars, & Jupiter: Look ahead of the rising sun for Mercury and Jupiter in the southeastern horizon before sunrise early in the month. Jupiter will be much brighter than Mercury, and Mercury will be much brighter than Mars. They'll form a fairly tight group (~6 degrees) on the morning of the 1st, with Mars and Mercury being a tight pair to the left of Jupiter. Mercury will continue to pull away from the others (towards the sun) as it continues its journey around the "back" side of the sun. **Pluto:** Still viewable early in the morning, but at only about 14th magnitude, and low in the south, you'll need at least a 12" scope and dark skies.

Uranus & Neptune: Both are presently "behind" the sun, so not visible.

Venus: Look for brilliant Venus in the western sky after sunset. Venus will pass between the Earth and Sun on the 27th, after which it will next become a morning object.

Saturn: Rises about 7pm early in the month, and by about 8pm by the end of the month. Saturn is still located below the "hind legs" of Leo and will be highest in the sky around midnight, but stays up the whole night. Saturn's rings continuing to "open up" until the next maximum tilt, which is around the middle of April. Saturn will be at its brightest for the whole year on the 8th as it will be directly opposite the sun from us.

Moon: 3/1 First Quarter, 3/10 Full Moon, 3/18 Last Quarter, 3/26 New Moon

Annual Messier Marathon:

Come join your fellow enthusiasts as we "run" the marathon the weekend of the 27th & 28th at Harrington Beach State Park. This is the most favorable window to view all the Messier objects in a single night of observing. "Quantity, not quality" is the idea as there is only about 10 hours of darkness to try to view everything. Check the spring issues of past newsletters and search the internet for tips and suggestions to help you succeed. Hope to see you there!

Join The Galileo Club!

By Kevin Bert

The February 101 class is entitled "The Galileo Club," led by Kevin Bert. This is the latest of a growing number of observing clubs sponsored by the Astronomical League. An overview and rules of the program will be presented for you to consider. If an interest is there, the club will incorporate opportunities for you to join other members in completing the necessary requirements. The purpose of this observing program is to experience the thrill that Galileo had when he was the first person to turn a telescope towards the sky. If you decide to participate in the



exercises during 2009, you will make observations like those that caused such a great uproar throughout Europe, as you find evidence that shows that the Ptolemaic model of the Universe (geocentric) was wrong and that Copernicus might be right (heliocentric), and that Aristotle may not have been right either.

There will be no featured constellation of the month. However, some relevant objects will be highlighted in the 101 program.

Brat Fry Coordinator Needed

By Jeff Setzer

With the promise of warmer weather, it's time to start thinking about a Wisconsin tradition: brat frys! As our only source of fundraising outside of regular dues, brat frys enable the NCSF to keep investing in equipment we all enjoy at the observatory and elsewhere. With all of the IYA2009 events being handled by the usual suspects, we are looking for someone else to take on the responsibility for organizing two or three brat fry events this year.



area grocery stores to set up the events, coordinating volunteers to help with the cooking and public observing (easily gathered at the meetings through this newsletter), and handling the money. Joyce Jentges and Charlotte DuPree have done this in the past and have all the information you would need to get going. Contact Joyce today to help us out in this very important task.

Coordinating the brat frys is a "low stress" job. It's a matter of contacting

Festivities (Continued from page 2)

step up behind the eyepiece to put it through its paces. Even if you are simply curious, come out to peruse the celestial festivities. You can come and go as you wish and refreshments will be available as on other members nights. The Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory will be open for the event, but the Panarusky telescope will remain capped to comply with the rules of the event.

The term "small telescope" has scaled up over the years. In more recent times a 4-

inch refracting telescope and 6-inch reflecting scope approximate the upper end of the small scope spectrum. Next month, Part 2 will look more closely at the telescopes themselves.

Like other classy events, a few ground rules need to be set up. This is to insure that no bloated aperture light buckets ruin the setting. Read the rules and mark your calendar for the first annual SSSP on September 12.

Observatory Training

March 21 (Kevin Bert)

Leaders for Public Viewing

April 1 & 2

West Bend Library:
Gene & Charlotte Dupree

April 2 thru 5

100 Hours of Astronomy

Bayshore: Jeff Setzer

Plunkett Obs: Kevin Bert

Pike Lake: Help Wanted!
Email or call Jeff Setzer.

Star Parties

WI Observers Weekend

July 23 - 26

Waupaca, WI

www.new-star.org

Northwoods Starfest

August 21- 23

Fall Creek, WI

www.cvastro.org

Prairie Skies

September 17- 20

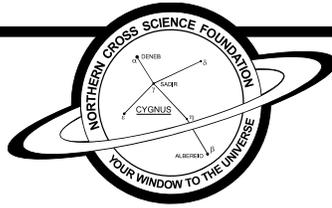
Bourbonnais, IL

www.prairieskies.org

Oops! Please Note

The Public Viewing day at Harrington Beach scheduled for June 6th has been changed to Sunday, June 7th. Update your calendars.

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Annual Banquet 2009

by Mickey Kazmierski

"Delicious", "Cozy Atmosphere", "Great Service" "The Best Banquet Yet!". These were just a few of the statements heard in praise for our 2009 Annual Banquet held at the Historic New Fox and Hounds Restaurant in Hubertus. Many brought their spouses. This was yet again a great way to get to know each other better. Our heart-felt thanks goes to Gene and Charlotte DuPree for handling all the details to make this a relaxing and enjoyable event!



SPECTRUM

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