

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

May 2000

LOOKING UP

May. 4 Thursday

Astronomy 101

7:00 PM

Solar System Video

7:30 PM

Carlson Tool & Mfg.

May. 5 - 6 Fri. – Sat.

NCRAL Convention

La Crosse, WI

May. 12 Friday

Public Viewing Night

8:30 PM

Pike Lake State Park

May. 17 Wednesday

Board Of Directors

7:30 PM

Jeff Setzer's House

May. 19 Friday

YMCA Camp viewing

9:00 PM

Pike Lake State Park

May. 26 - 28 Fri. – Sun.

NCSF Campout /

Star Party

Ledge Park, near

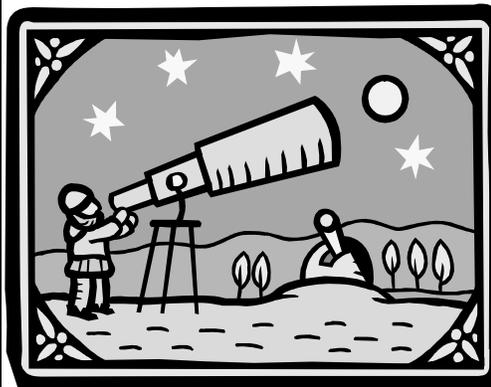
Horicon, WI

A Publication Of
The Northern Cross
Science Foundation

An Observers Event: MarshFest 2000

By Dave Stublaski

Besides being involved in the Wehr Astronomical Society, I am also a member of the Northern Cross Science Foundation. At the NCSF December meeting, I brought up the subject of a joint venture involving both the clubs. The response



was favorable. What was required was a site that had decent dark skies, was reasonably close, and could accommodate a potentially large group of people.

Since a few members of both clubs have been going to Horicon Ledge Park for over a bit over a year now, we knew the skies were pretty good. Located a couple miles east of the town Horicon, it is reasonably close. Being a campground, it can accommodate quite a few people. And so it begins the first annual Marsh Fest. Okay, so it's not really in the marsh, but it's pretty close. And it sounds pretty good too.

This year we will have it over the Memorial Day weekend. While the weather can be fickle at this time of year, we should be able to beat prime mosquito season, and still have nightfall at a decent hour. Nautical twilight starts around 9:00 P.M., and the waning moon rises late. Let's face it, once

the weather starts to warm up, almost any weekend is going to be busy for one reason or another. So why not the first "summer" holiday?

I have found the best way to get to Ledge Park from Milwaukee, is to take Highway 41 north, to Highway 33. Go West for about 11 miles until you come to Highway 67. Continue west on Highway 33 for about three-quarters of a mile until you come to Highway V. Turn north (right) and go one mile until you get to Raaschs Hill Road. Turn west (left) and go one mile until you reach Park Road. Turn right again (north) and about a quarter-mile up you will come to a driveway on your left. Follow the drive and take the first road right. You will come upon the ranger station where you can either register for camping, or ask them where the observing field is. This is not a State Park, so no sticker is required.

If you plan on camping, reservations are up to you. The number of the park is 920-387-5450. The park is divided into two levels. The upper level contains all but two of the campsites, along with a large field with a pavilion and playground area. Bathrooms are of the pit type, (I know, I know. Ewwww), with a couple of portables near the playground. Potable water is available from a couple of well sites. Each tent site has a picnic table and fire pit, and about half have electric available. There are some sites for camper trailers also.

The "observing" field is on the lower level, right across from campsite 1 and 2. By day it's a grass volleyball court, but by night it makes for a passable observing

(See **MarshFest** on page 2)

April Minutes

By Kevin Bert

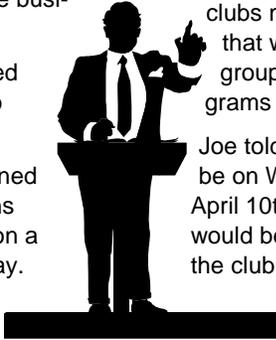
The April meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held in the conference room of Carlson Tool & Mfg. in Cedarburg. The Astronomy 101 class preceded the business meeting.

President Jeff Setzer opened the meeting at 8:20 p.m. To over 26 people.

Secretary Kevin Bert explained the variety of sign up options that would be sent around on a clip board for Astronomy Day. Most activities were a review of the handout contained in the April Spectrum.

Treasurer Brad Plaumann reported on the most recent financial activities.

Joe La Piene explained the concept of the lending library and showed us a list of books that he will be making available. Participants would have to keep



track of their own books.

Joe was asking for club member input on new programs and reassured members that astronomy is still the clubs main focus. But he is hoping that we would be more than a group of astronomers and add programs on other sciences as well.

Joe told the members that he would be on WBKV radio 1470 on Monday April 10th just after 11:00 AM. It would be a chance for him to promote the club .

Kevin reminded members that Astronomy 101 would officially start over at the May meeting. Times would try to be kept to 30 minutes.

Jeff Setzer reported on upcoming NCSF activities. He told members that he would be running a weekly

class at Concordia University on observational astronomy. It will start on June 7th and run through July 12th. Starting time will be 8:00 PM. and last until 10:00 PM.

Jeannie Nichols reminded members that they should start to think about pre registering for WOW. Camping fees are only \$8.00 if you register early. In addition there is limited space. Look for all the details and a form at <http://www.frontiernet.net/~celstar/wow.html>

Rudy Zarlino requested that the Observatory be removed from his property within the next few weeks. Volunteers to work on the project were recorded and would be called .

The business meeting was closed by Jeff Setzer at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Bert, secretary

Help... I'm New Here!

From Lake County Astronomical Society <http://www.bbso.njit.edu/>

I would like to tell you about a telephone call I received one evening last year. Calls regularly come from those who are interested in astronomy and want to attend our meetings. Some are advanced amateurs looking for a local club to join. Many are new to the hobby and want to learn as much as possible; these calls tell a lot about the public's understanding of astronomy.

This particular call was from a man whose wife had given him a telescope back in 1996. He was frustrated to the point of being willing to pay someone to show him how to use the telescope. He exemplifies an all-too-typical situation. His telescope is a 90mm Meade Model 395 refractor, with an equatorial mount and clock drive - not a bad scope for basic visual astronomy. But his aim was to do astrophotography. He asked me whether I could explain how to use the setting circles to find objects so he "wouldn't have to learn the constellations". I told him that learning the constellations really is a necessary step, but to use setting circles, first make sure the polar axle is

aligned with the north celestial pole, which is near the North Star. "Where do I find the North Star?" he asked. "Let's start with the pointer stars of the Big Dipper", I suggested. To this he responded that *he had never been able to find the Big Dipper*. He said his house faces south, and if he goes out in his front yard, could he see the North Star. I replied that he'd have to have a good view of the northern sky. He said he thought the North Star was overhead. I told him to look roughly 40 degrees up in the northern sky. But he pointed out that our latitude is about 42 degrees north. Of course he was correct on that point. He had read that fact somewhere, but obviously with no understanding of how it translated to our view of the night sky. I explained that from a visual standpoint, two degrees doesn't amount to a lot. At this point, I proposed that he forget about setting circles for the time being and learn about the sky using just his eyes. While we were on the phone, he called to his wife and said he finally

found someone who could explain how to use his telescope, and that everything he had been doing for the past year was wrong.

Not to make light of this poor fellow's plight, as I spoke with him, I had the feeling of being in the Twilight Zone! But this is perhaps an extreme case. Misconceptions are often the result of seeing beautiful photos taken by amateur astronomers, which leads to the belief that all it takes is any telescope and a camera. Sometimes there's an impression that the photos represent the way objects actually appear in our telescopes. In many cases, people are too impatient to learn the basics and after just a bit of reading, they want to skip directly to the status of "advanced" amateur. Then frustration sets in. One result is seen in advertisements for used telescopes (especially the latest Schmidt-Cassegrains) that read "used twice" or "seldom used". Simple misconceptions are one thing, but there also exists a fundamental lack of knowledge which

(See **HELP** on page 3)

(*HELP* from page 2)

probably originates in school systems that either do not teach astronomy or teach it poorly. Then add a liberal dose of tabloid newspaper pseudo-science. We should pursue astronomy at whatever level we feel comfortable, but if the goal is to be an observer, then some effort will be required. Astronomy demands a particular mind set of those who would be practitioners -- a patient willingness to proceed by steps while devouring whatever information is needed. I like a quote from Marcus H. Brown, the chief optician of the Palomar 200-inch telescope: "Never mind what you know or what you've done; it's what you can *learn* that counts." When speaking to these folks, we

Astronomy 101

By Kevin Bert

Don't miss the first class for Astronomy 101. We are introducing the class again for newcomers and members who had missed the earlier classes. A total of 27 topics will be included in the Astronomy 101 series.



From The Editor

By Kevin Bert

Greetings NCSF Members. Astronomy day started off a more active routine for the club after a quiet winter. May has a number of activities by glancing at the Looking Up section. One in particular is new event. Marsh-Fest 2000 should get you back into the summer star party mode. See details in the lead article this month by Dave Stublaski. I had the pleasure of viewing at the park last year and was impressed how good the skies were. I

should expect a lot of misinformation out there. But be gentle. Recall your own experiences when starting out in astronomy. Perhaps you too were frustrated. It took some time, but at some point you experienced the exhilaration of at last understanding a concept or finding the object of your search.

As far as I know, he never came to any of our meetings. His telescope is probably gathering more dust than starlight.

Each class will start at 7:00 PM on regular NCSF monthly meeting nights and last approximately 30 minutes. Topic selections will be random with some needing more than one class to cover completely. A list outlining topics will be available at May's meeting.

All participants should bring a notebook, folder and pencil. Handouts will accompany most of the classes.

Each of the classes will set aside about 5 minutes at the end of each period to study a constellation visible in the early evening, highlighting a few prominent objects within it. The current locations of the major

planets and when to look for them will complete each class.

The topic for May's 101 class will be Apparent Motion of the Sky by Kevin Bert. What causes the seasonal changes in the sky? Get the answer along with other basics that every star gazer should know. The featured constellation will be Bootes.

Next month's class will be Properties Common to Star Charts by Kevin Bert. The featured constellation will be Leo.

hope there is a good response by our membership. Remember that you are not required to camp overnight. A view through one of the big scopes will make it worth the trip. This month's meeting will present a new video tape entitled Journey To The Planets. It is produced by the BBC. A voyage to visit our own neighbors in



our solar system. This is a 110 minute tape that will be shown in two parts. Joe tells me that visuals are outstanding.

Loren Krug and I would like to thank all those members that helped at National Astronomy day.

CURRENT CLACK

Dome Preparation

On April 15th several members of the NCSF started to prepare the 16 foot observatory dome for moving. On April 29th the dome was lifted off its base and most of the components were taken apart.

Help!

In the coming weeks Joe La Piene will be giving talks to area schools. He has the Meade LX10 and would like someone with a refractor, another with a reflector to participate. Any one interested?

Would the person who borrowed Joes' tape on Asteroids return it at the May meeting, please!

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Check out our great site
On the World Wide Web
<http://www.gxsc.com/ncsf>

(MarshFest from page 2)

site. The upper field usually gets a lot of light spill over from the other campers. I was unable to reserve the two sites right across from the volleyball field, so we might have to deal with some lantern light spill over. But I've found most people to be reasonable if you talk to them a bit. I did reserve site 23, and was told that there is room there for a couple of additional tents. I'm paying for the site with electric, but additional tents would be charged the non-electric rates. So if you would like to share the site with me, or if you have any questions, give me a call at 414-352-3081 (After 4:00 P.M. please). Or E-mail me at TEgWIS@aol.com.

Camping is not a requisite for attending, so if you want to come just to observe, you are welcome. Most people don't mind sharing their eyepiece, so a telescope is not necessary either. However the more people who bring their telescopes, the better. We usually have a small surge of campers walk over to see what's happening. Most of the time you'll end up with a good sized crowd for about an hour or so and then 90% just seem to disappear back into the dark.

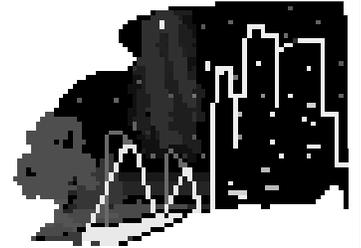
There is no curfew for observing, but keep in mind that we need to observe "quiet time" rules after 10:00 P.M. If you have problems seeing at night using just your running/accessory lights, you might want to give some thought to parking in one of the picnic areas located before you get to the observing field and camp areas. Remember, a little courtesy will go a long way. Thanks, and I hope to see many of you there.

SPECTRUM

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