

# SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

October 2008

## LOOKING UP

**October 2, Thursday**

**General Meeting**

7:30 p.m. - Main Program  
Business Meeting to follow

**October 4, Saturday**

**Members Night** (Dusk)

Home of Gene and Charlotte  
Dupree

**October 10 & 11 (Fri. & Sat.)**

**Public Viewing**

7:00 p.m.- 11:00 p.m.  
Harrington Beach

**October 18, Saturday**

**Observatory Training**

7:00 p.m. start  
Harrington Beach

**October 25, Saturday**

**Haunted Hike**

(Public Viewing)  
7:00 - 11:00 p.m.  
Harrington Beach

**October 31, Saturday**

**Sidewalk Observing**

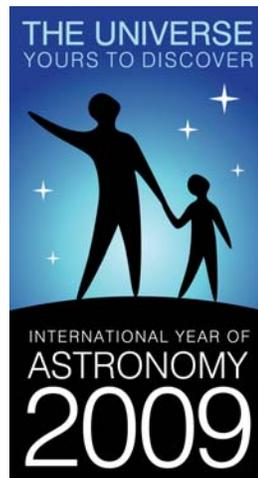
**"Halloween Bash"**

Bayshore Shopping Center

**TENTATIVE DATE**

Discussion at General Meeting.

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



## 2009 International Year of Astronomy

"Whereas the International Year of Astronomy has been designated by the United Nations for celebrating the science of astronomy, and the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Galileo Galilei's use of the telescope to revolutionize science and human awareness of the nature of the universe..."

It is Resolved that the Northern Cross Science Foundation endorses the International Year of Astronomy and pledges to support the Year through local efforts in the spirit of international cooperation."

*Information on Club activities supporting the IYA can be found on the NCSF website, monthly General Meetings, or the Spectrum.*

## Greek Influence On the Constellations

*By Joyce Jentges*

We have heard of names like Hercules, Orion, and Ursa Major in the constellations. While the Greek civilization were not the first one's who have attached names to the constellations and stars, the mythological legends have stuck with them for centuries. In this article I will explore the Greek influence in star and constellation names, and Greek myths associated with the constellations that Odysseus mentioned in The Odyssey.

Today, each star in a constellation carries a Greek letter to identify it within the constellation. Usually, the brightest star is alpha, the next brightest star is beta, or Beta. According to Geoffrey Cornelius, "The naming and lore of individual stars often reflect the perceptions of later Persian and Arabic cosmographers, combining with the tradition handed down from Greece." Many of the constellations represent a figure (sometimes a hero or heroine) in Greek mythology, that was important to the Greeks. The Greeks believed in many gods and goddesses who played a very active role in their lives. This is seen very evidently in Homer's Odyssey. Many times during this long story, the god

dess Athena intervenes in the life of Odysseus.

In The Odyssey, when Odysseus was sailing from Kalypso's island, he looked up and took note of a few of the constellations. Homer says, "And his eyes picked out the Pleiades, the laggard Ploughman, and the Great Bear, that some have called the Waine, pivoting in the sky before Orion". Of this, Richard Hinkley Allen sites Thomas Cooke, "the names of which naturally run into a hexameter verse.". He goes on to say that "But the general assumption that these great poets knew no other constellations does not seem reasonable".

Of these celestial sites that he named, the Pleiades is the only one which is not a constellation. It is a nice grouping of stars – a star cluster, in the constellation of Taurus, the bull. Seeing this naked eye star cluster is a good sign that Fall is on its way. Another name for it is the 7 sisters, and in the ancient days, this star cluster used to be a test of a person's eyesight. If you could see all seven of the bright stars, you had exceptional eyesight. Actually, this cluster is made up of more than 40 stars.

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## September Meeting Minutes

By Secretary, Kevin Bert

The September business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held at the Unitarian Church North in Mequon. President Joyce Jentges opened the meeting at 8:45 pm and welcomed over 26 members and guests.

Joyce reported that the foundation had purchased a 90mm Coronado hydrogen Alpha telescope at a special sale price. The sun telescope had been the subject of conversation at a number of board meetings and regular meetings. The purchase was made possible by a large donation from Bayshore that covered 80% of its cost. One problem that came up and postponed the purchase to near the end of the special sale was the delay in the donation from Bayshore. The donation had to work through the proper channels before it would end up in our hands. With the sale deadline approaching, Rob Powell stepped in and advanced the club the funds to lock in

the sale price. With the Coronado back ordered, it should to be shipped to us some time in November.

Joyce has been in regular contact with Bayshore and they are excited about the purchase we are making. Upcoming dates for viewing at Bayshore are September 10<sup>th</sup> and October 8<sup>th</sup>. Considering Bayshore's recent support, it was agreed to attend if clear or cloudy. Parking passes again are available from Joyce. An additional date of October 18 or 19 was considered. Joyce then asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Gene Dupree gave a list of recent expenditures. The largest was our liability insurance premium. A final balance was stated at \$1704.00.

Secretary Kevin Bert recognized new members Adam, James and Debbie Birenbaum from Plymouth. James and Stephanie Marsala are from Wauke-

sha.

Observatory Director Dan Bert reported that Rob Powell would be the leader of the upcoming Friday's public viewing night while Jeff Setzer and Joyce would run the following Saturday's PVN. Training sessions to run the Observatory will be announced by next meeting.

Under old business Joyce reminded members that take advantage of the meeting snacks to help with replenishing the supply by dropping some coin into the donation pail.

Under new business Joyce gave a list of upcoming events.

Jeff Setzer told members that 20/20 Telescopes was falling on hard times as of late and would appreciate any business you could send their way.

With no further new business, Joyce closed the business meeting at 9:25 p.m.

## Things to See In the October Night Sky

By Don Miles

**Mercury:** Check the eastern horizon about 45 minutes before sunrise starting about mid-month. Mercury will continue to increase in brightness while increasing its "lead" the sun until the 22nd, and then starts to slide back towards the sun. Mercury will pass behind the sun in November, then gets lost in the glare again.

**Mars:** Is presently lost in the glare of the setting sun, as it too is on the "back side" of the sun.

**Venus:** Look for Venus above and behind the setting sun with your naked eye. It will be visible without a telescope, but take a look at it with one if you can. You'll be able to see the planets disc is not fully illuminated. As is the case with all the inner planets, we look at the side that faces us, but the sun is shining on it from an angle compared to us. This is the same reason for the phases of the Earth's moon.

**Saturn:** Look in the east-southeast around 5am as it rises about 2 hours before the sun. Saturn will continue to rise earlier as the month progresses

(about 3am by the end of the month whereas the sun will then rise about 7:30am). Saturn will still be in Leo, but continues moving eastward away from Regulus.

**Jupiter:** Will be at its highest as the sun is setting (~6:30pm early in the month, but by about 5:45 towards months end) and continues to set earlier and earlier as the month passes. Look up and slightly to the left of the "handle" in the teapot of Sagittarius (lower in the southern sky).

**Uranus & Neptune:** Both visible using binoculars and good finder charts. Both are highest in the sky around 11pm, and set early in the morning. Uranus is still in Aquarius, and Neptune is still in Capricornus. Uranus, at (mag 5.7), is just within the lower limit of naked eye visibility under dark skies, but easy in binoculars. Neptune is even dimmer (mag 7.9), but still easy in binoculars. If you're interested, check the internet (or ask a fellow NCSF member) for a detailed chart of each area. These planets are much easier to find if you have progres-



sively detailed charts to help guide your way.

**Moon:**

October 7th: First Quarter  
October 14th: Full Moon  
October 21st: Last Quarter  
October 28th: New Moon

**Special Event:** Watch for the Orionid meteor showers as they peak the before sunrise the morning of the 21st, but are worth watching for a couple of mornings either way from the peak. The last quarter Moon will be washing out the dimmer meteors, but they're still worth watching. As the name implies, they will generally appear to originate from Orion's "left arm" (southwest). The best equipment for meteor watching is your naked eye. You want the largest field of view you can get, and few things beat your own "factory equipment". Dress warm and secure a comfortable reclining chair as it gets pretty cool as you watch. Enjoy the show as this will be the last of the warmer showers left till spring.

## October Meeting

Editor

### No 101 Class

## Main Program

The main program will be presented by Gerry Kocken and is entitled:

### “Refurbishing Antique Telescopes”

*About our Speaker...*

Gerry Kocken is currently the President of the Neville Public Museum Astronomical Society, Chairman of the North Central Region of the Astronomical League, and is a member of two other clubs. He refurbishes telescopes and currently has 24 telescopes on site dating from 1887 to present. In addition to telescope restoration, he runs a mirror grinding class in which five mirrors are being completed while another eight are being ground, polished, or figured. His shop also includes telescope tube and mount construction. Gerry does public outreach, including telescope maintenance, collimation, and use. His work shop is open to Club members weekly and toured by other clubs members and the general public periodically.

Gerry's presentation will include his refurbishing of antique telescopes and his telescope mirror grinding class. He will describe for us some of the history of his telescopes, pitfalls he has encountered, as well as triumphs he has enjoyed.

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The Ploughmann, who is the constellation of Bootes the Herdsman, is a spring constellation which somewhat resembles a kite. Bootes is assumed to be the Greek character Icarus. The legend states that “The god Dionysius taught Icarus the secret of winemaking. Subsequently, Icarus gave wind to some peasants, who became drunk. Icarus was killed by the peasants thinking that he poisoned them. Icarus' daughter, Erigone found his grave after much searching, but ended up hanging herself because of her grief. According to this legend, Erigone became the constellation Virgo the virgin, and Icarus became Bootes. The brightest star in Bootes is Arcturus. Sophocles

Jim and Gwen Plunkett

Observatory



Observatory Director:  
Dan Bert: 262-375-2239

### Observatory Note:

A reminder to those members helping with public viewing nights at Harrington beach: The club has a 10" Dobsonian, 6" Dynascope and 9-1/4" Schmidt Cassegrain that are stored in the observatory. These telescopes are normally available for member use during a PVN. Check with the event leader for availability.

We are in need of some volunteer work for minor observatory maintenance. Some painting, cleanup, etc. will be required before the snow flies. Please contact the Observatory Director for further details.



mentions Arcturus in Oedipus the King, when he says “We both struck up together, three whole seasons, six months at a stretch, from spring to the rising of Arcturus in the fall.” One very important point to make here is that throughout the history of the constellations, they have been used, for navigation for ships, and shepherds used them for telling of the seasons.

Hercules, is a very nice summer constellation. The Greek lore for this is quite interesting, as that is mentions Gilgamesh as being a predecessor of Hercules (Heracles in Greek). His mother was a mortal woman, who slept with the god Zeus without knowing it. Zeus' wife, took out her revenge on Heracles by causing him to be insane. This caused

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## CURRENT CLACK

### New Members

NCSF welcomes the following new Club members, effective September 1st

Adam Birenbaum

Jim Birenbaum

Debbie Birenbaum

James Marsala

Stephanie Rose Marsala

### Leaders for Public Viewings

October 10 & 11

Leaders Needed

October 25

Leaders Needed

### Observatory Training

October 18

Leader: Kevin Bert

### Members Night

October 4

Home of Gene and Charlotte Dupree

6219 Jay Street

Myra, WI 53095

Setup after 6:00 p.m.

We will provide snacks and soda.

For directions call 262-675-0941.

We will have a map at the Oct. 2 meeting.

*This event will be held stars or clouds.*

*We'll have a campfire if cloudy.*

### For Sale

Celestron 80mm Refractor with 6 filters and battery case.

Celestron 4.5 inch Reflector

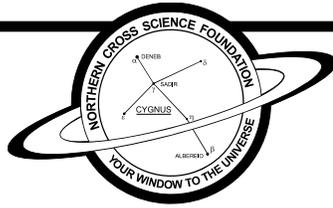
Meade EXT 125 PE

Meade 4000 Series 1.25" E.P. Set

Call for pricing

John Weidemer 262 268-1352

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Rick & Mickey Kazmierski  
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him to kill not only his wife but his three sons as well. A guilt wracked Heracles carried out penance set out by his cousin King Eurystheus, which became known as the 12 Labors of Heracles.

The Great Bear is perhaps the most familiar constellation in the entire sky, also known as Ursa Major, or the Big Dipper (for the shape of the constellation). The Greek legend that I am familiar with starts with a nymph named Callisto. She is raped by the god Zeus, and has a baby named Arcas. Callisto is a servant of Artemis, and when Artemis finds out about the pregnancy, she banishes Callisto to a forest. Zeus' wife, Hera became very jealous and turned the child Arcas into a bear cub. In the forest, Callisto heard the voice of Arcas and rushed to great him. Arcas did not recognize her voice and was going to kill her. The mighty Zeus rescued both Callisto and Arcas from tragedy by placing them in the heavens as the Great Bear and the Little Bear .

Orion the hunter is the last of the constellations mentioned by Homer. The Greek myth associated with this constellation is that Orion was a hunter who boasted that he could kill any living being. A goddess named Gaea became upset about this boasting, and sent a scorpion to sting him. Orion is a winter constellation, and Scorpius is a summer constellation, so they spend their time in the heavens pursuing one another. A healer by the name of Ophiuchus is sent to kill the scorpion and heal Orion . He is placed just to the West of Scorpius in the sky. Orion is probably the most recognizable constellation in the winter sky and also contains the Great Orion Nebula, which is one of the best nebula's in the Northern Hemisphere.

These constellations that Odysseus mentions are some of my favorite constellations, as well as being some of the better known ones. It is interesting to see the influence that the Greek civilization had on the constellations and stars of today. I find it interesting that these names and legends have survived so long, without being replaced by modern ones. This does show that a civilization can have a lasting effect on societies to come

## 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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