

Hello NCSF members,

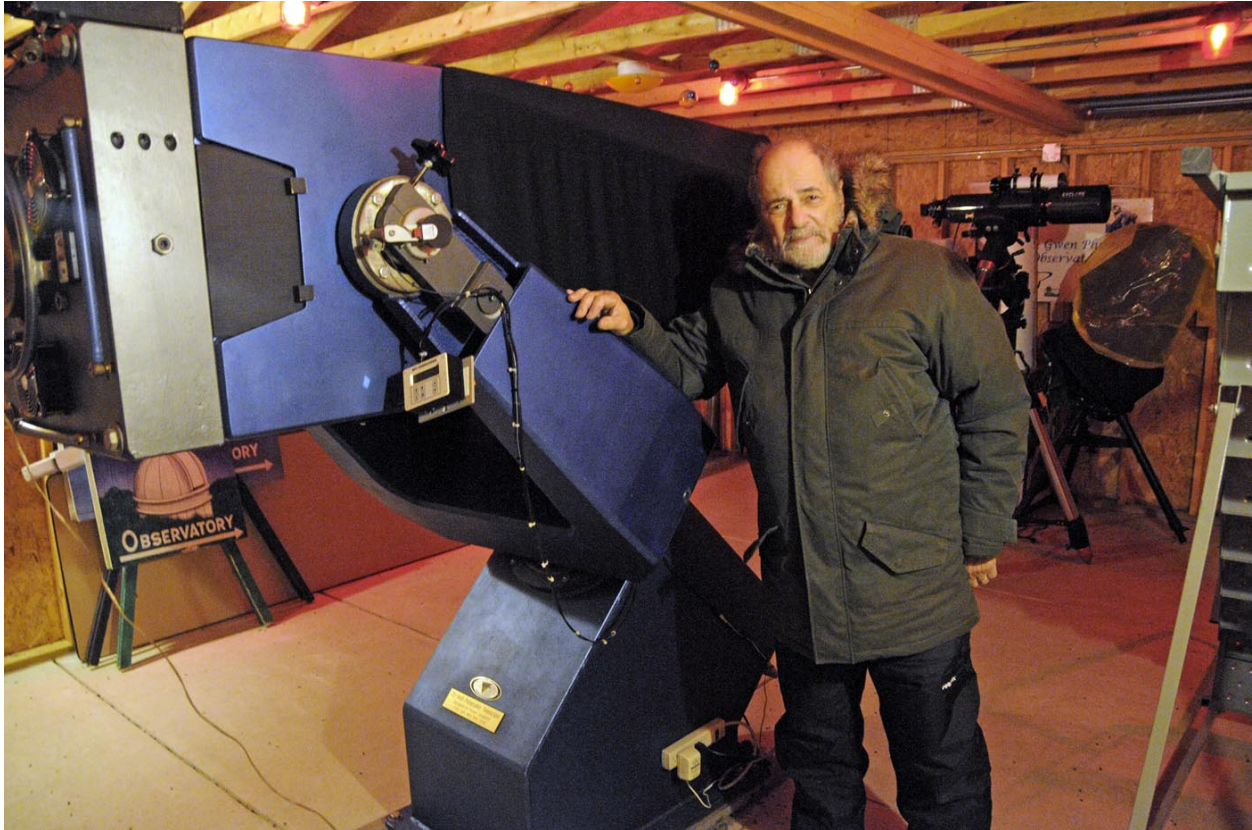
I'm on the road now and this email will have to suffice as the April 2024 issue. I say this because I recently purchased a Windows laptop to replace my 10-year-old Macbook, on which I created our newsletters. Alas, I did not bring that old Mac on my vacation/eclipse road trip to Florida and Texas, and I've not yet mastered Windows software for newsletters. However, for the May issue (my final one as editor), I'll return to the PDF format.

This is also a reminder to all members who are viewing the eclipse, either in totality or the partial eclipse from Wisconsin, **PLEASE send me your pictures, stories and any accounts of your experience on April 8. I want our May newsletter to highlight our club's active participation in a spectacular event that hundreds of millions of people will see.**

- Ernie Mastroianni, Spectrum editor

Remembering Harvey Sherman

I'm saddened to hear that long-time NCSF member Harvey Sherman passed away earlier this month. I remember him as an avid observer, active in our club's public outreach, and just a very friendly and outgoing person who was a delight to be with. We shared hot coffee on cold nights out at the observatory, and he was always tinkering and trying to improve telescopes and their mounts. I recall from our observing times at Harrington Beach that he had a vehicle (a Ford station wagon or maybe a pickup truck), the back part of which was taken up by his large home-built cabinet full of neatly-arranged tools and astro-gear. He would rebuild and improve wobbly mounts into very robust tripods. He experimented with video recording of lunar and planetary subjects. I recall that he traveled one winter to Chiefland, Florida, a dark-sky preserve with his wife Gail, who was often with him on astronomy outings. I took this photo of him with the Panarusky telescope on a cold November night in 2014. Those of us lucky enough to know Harvey will miss him. My sympathies to Gail and the rest of his family.



April 4 General Meeting Program, [Jackson Community Center](#), 6-8 pm. If you're still in town on April 4, don't miss **Jeff Setzer's** presentation on eclipses at the general meeting. As club members, we're quite familiar with this astronomical phenomena, but you'll know much more after attending Jeff's talk.

April 8 eclipse public viewing

Many NCSF members are traveling to places where the total eclipse will be visible, such as Indiana, Illinois and Texas. Here in southeast Wisconsin, the sun will be 88 percent obscured, but the eclipse will not be total. **Al Steinberg, Mike Borchert, and Rick Dusenbery** will be stationed at the beach area of Pike Lake State Forest for public viewing with the club's Coronado telescope. This telescope, made for solar viewing only, offers spectacular views of solar flares and the photosphere through a very narrow wavelength of hydrogen-alpha light. As of this writing, the Harrington Beach observatory will not be open, but stay tuned to updated information on the club's [Slack account](#).

Observing Report:

From member **Jim Macak**: If the upcoming total eclipse isn't exciting enough for you, try this: There will be an outburst of a once-every-80-year recurring nova occurring between now and Sept. 2024. T Coronae Borealis, normally a +10 magnitude star, will brighten to +2 magnitude for about a week once the nova occurs. Read about it here: https://blogs.nasa.gov/Watch_the_Skies/2024/02/27/view-nova-explosion-new-star-in-northern-crown/

Member **Gene DuPree** said that about 200 people attended the February public viewing event during the Pike Lake state forest ski and hike event. Joining him were **Charlotte DuPree, Al Steinberg and Joe Barboza**. That large number is good evidence of the upturn in astronomy interest among the general public.

Late March and early April is the traditional time for the Messier Marathon, a window of time when it is possible to view all 110 of the Messier objects. Board member **James Neal** gave it a try earlier this month from his home and located nearly 30 Messier objects in his large reflector. You can see details of his session on the observing channel of [Slack](#).

NCSF President **Jeff Setzer** shared this excellent Sky & Telescope article about public outreach during the eclipse:

<https://skyandtelescope.org/astronomy-news/how-to-do-eclipse-outreach-on-and-off-the-path/>

March Banquet

About 30 members as well as a couple of former members attended the annual NCSF banquet held at the Libby Montana Bar & Grill in Thiensville on March 7. Because our club is marking its 50th anniversary this year, many clips, items and pictures of our history were on display. A big thanks to NCSF secretary **Don Woelz** for providing pictures. You can see more photos on the club's [Slack channel](#).





New digital settings circles for the Panarusky

Member **Kevin Bert** installed the new Nexus DSC Pro digital setting circles on the Plunkett Observatory's 20" telescope on March 11, and gave it a test run on March 16 during observatory training. Kevin reports that the new setting circles are "100 times better" than the older, outdated Sky Commander setting circles, which date to early 2007 when the observatory opened. Because the telescope is accurately and permanently polar aligned, a one-star alignment is all that is necessary to synchronize the push-to telescope to the night sky. **Rob Powell**, who has logged many hours with the old setting circles, said the Nexus "...is an incredible tool. Very intuitive to use. Very accurate". **Jim Macak**, also a seasoned user of the telescope, found the circles to be easy to use. A link to the user manual is here: <https://www.astrodevices.com/Support/ManualsandGuides/index.html>

Below, you can see NCSF member **Dave Minorath** using the Panarusky telescope at Harrington Beach to look at Jupiter. He was one of several

members who attended the observatory training session led by Kevin Bert on March 16. Thanks to Robert Powell for the photo.

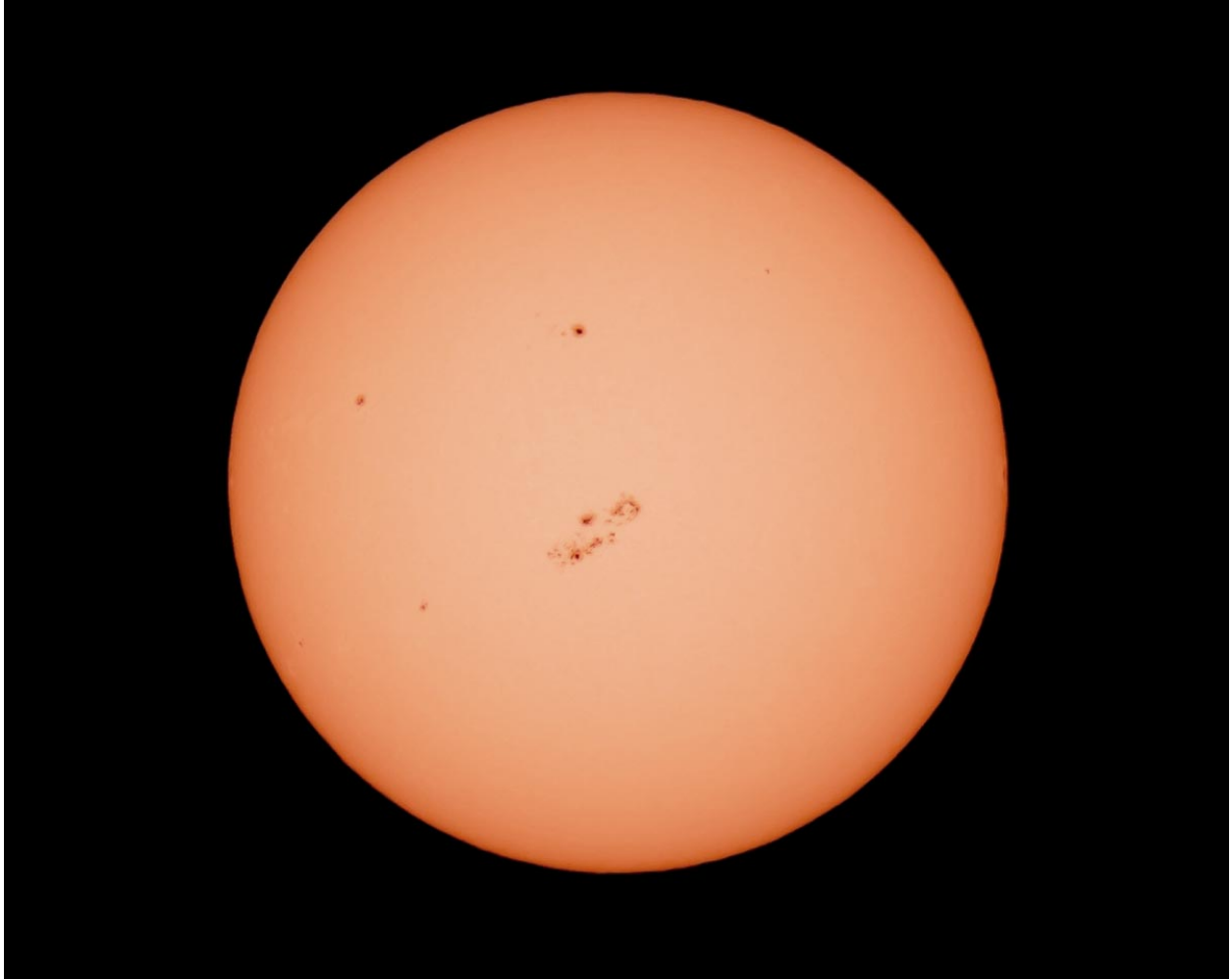


Imaging Report

I usually post an image taken by our astrophotography members in the newsletter, but this remarkable SpaceX launch image was taken by **Megan McElhinny**, an emergency room physician in Tempe, Arizona. She's the daughter of NCSF former secretary and board member **Mike Borchert**. The mission, launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on March 18, lifted a cluster of Starlink satellites into orbit. Mike says the conditions have to be just right to see a launch: sunlight illuminating the contrail, a dark sky from the observing site, and of course, no clouds. Mike said his daughter took the picture from right outside her front door. A very cool video of this launch by Megan can be seen in the [Slack general channel](#). You may have to scroll down a bit to see the post. For the record, her Tempe home is about 500 miles away from the Vandenberg launch site.



Mark Weber posted this photo on the Slack imaging channel showing an active sun on March 23. The large sunspot group at center is known as Active Region (AR) 3615. He used a telephoto lens at an equivalent 540mm at 1/500 of a second at f/8 on a tripod, with a 5-second shutter delay.



Rick and Susan Sell went to Harrington Beach State Park and captured this shot of Comet 12P/Pons-Brooks with a Nikon Z6 II, a RedCat 51 telescope, and an IDAS NB12 filter. They shot 11 one-minute exposures of the comet, which was less than 30 degrees above the horizon.



I wish clear skies to everyone who will watch the eclipse. I'll be looking forward to your pictures and reports. Also, if you have not yet done so, I urge everyone to sign up for the [NCSF Slack channel](#). I have the App on my iPhone and I also sign in through my laptop computer. It's a very good place to share ideas, links, stories and gear talk. There is much more there than I can possibly put in this newsletter.

Best,
Ernie