

THE NHAS OBSERVER



Newsletter of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society

Volume 2001 No. 3-4

"All the news that fits in print"

March-April 2001

Favorite Astronomy Web Sites

President's Message

Astronomy Day at CMP is right around the corner. Since this is our biggest event of the season, I hope you can find the time to lend your support.

Barbara O'Connell is our guest speaker this month. The topic is "Favorite Astronomy Web Sites." Web heads are invited to bring their wireless laptops for instant gratification.

There is a lot going on in the sky in April. Here are some highlights.

Comet Linear C/2001 A2 has unexpectedly brightened enough (between 8th and 9th mag.) to be seen by smaller scopes. Starting in Monoceros, it is projected to cross into Lepus about the 17th.

The Lyrid meteor shower is expected to peak on the night of April 22nd. See the Meteor News article on page 3.

There is the potential for a significant Northern Lights Event on April 23rd. In accordance with the Carrington solar rotation cycle, the active solar region that spawned a good one on March 31 (we missed it due to a weather front) should be transiting the Sun's disk on that date. Hope for better luck this time around.

On Friday April 27 at about 10:35 pm EDT, you will be able to observe the crescent moon occulting 3rd magnitude star Eta Geminorium. Enjoy the view.

★ John Pappas

Public Observing Highlights

On Weds. Feb 28, I spoke at Peirce School in Newton, Mass, something I've done for the Newton elementary schools for several years. This year we had great weather at night for the first time in a long while.

Special thanks go to club members **Roger Greenwood** and **Tim Parker** for



helping out with a crowd of around 100. Roger's 6-in. Meade refractor was a big hit among the kids.

March 20 Spring Solstice at the Planetarium. About 30-35 adults, children, and staff came out after the show. We served up Jupiter, Saturn, M42, and M35 for their viewing pleasure. **Bob Bain** and **John Pappas** were able to handle the visitors.

April 2 Cub Scout Pack 106 Pelham Skywatch. We were going to cancel this event but it cleared about 7 pm. **John Pappas** was the sole NHAS member (daughter in tow). Difficulties included lights from their club house and a bonfire. About 30 cub scouts and parents enjoyed the moon and a few double stars before the combination of excited children and clouds ended the evening early. We received a fine donation of two astronomical souvenir stamp sheets.

All other events were either snowed out, clouded out, or rained out.

★ Ed Ting

Messier Marathon

The Messier Marathon on Sat. March 24 didn't seem very promising, but it stayed clear all night, not too cold, and mostly not windy. This was one of the most

pleasant Marathons I've had. **Joel Harris's** music was appreciated by all! I would like to thank all present for their support, especially to those who helped clear the snow: **Rick Demidio** (and kids), **Chase McNiss**, and **Todd Miller**. About 12 hours of snow blower time were spent.

The following list identifies the observer, instrument, and total count if any.

David Shelton, 14.5 inch homemade Dob

John W Pappas, 7-in. Dob, 101

Joel Harris, bio-Trumpet apple strudel powered Binoculars, 66

Marion Hochuli, 8-in. f/7 Starhopper Dob, about half.

Dan Smith, 8.1-in. f/5 14-in. Starmaster Dob, Manual, 63

Bill Babineau, Meade 10-in. LX50 80mmF7 acromat, manual circles, 101

Brian & Joyce Icaza, GOTO SCT, 63

Roger Greenwood, 12.5-in. Discovery Truss, 104.

David Tetreault (Frez), TAK MT-160 Classical Newtonian

Jim McCarthy, 9.25 SCT @ f 10 & f6.3, 34

Larry Lopez, GOTO 4-in. refractor (AP400/Traveler), 15. I fell asleep!

Linda Lopez, 80mm Brandon refractor, 52

David Hunt, Todd Miller, Herb Bubert, Rick DeMidio

Remote observers included:

Chase McNiss, Ed Ting, and Herb

Bubert, 10-in. Mak, Amherst, NH

Di & Mike Felong, Meade 10/G11, Arizona, about 55.

★ Larry Lopez

Feature Story

Photon Wars Page 2

Astronomy at the Mall

Back on Feb. 17, we held a mini-Astronomy Day at the Mall of Cow Hampshire. Numerous NHAS members brought equipment, photos, and literature to show to the public who were there in the thousands (shopping, of course).

Photos courtesy of Bob Sletten.



Photography in Focus

Our last meeting was a good one – finally the weather was good. **Todd Miller** had gotten a chance to do some test photographs. After reviewing Todd's photos, we discussed photo related topics.

Our next meeting will be on April 27 at 7:30 pm at the Whipple Free Public Library in New Boston. For directions, send e-mail to joemal50@aol.com. This month we will continue to examine films for astrophotography.

★ Joe Malinowski

Photon Wars

This is not about a war with weapons, casualties, and captured territory, but about a philosophical battle to restore and preserve the wonder and beauty of dark night skies for generations to come. A few photons, like a few rain drops, are not a problem. But when billions and billions are emitted indiscriminately into the sky in the name of public safety or business advertising, then there is due cause to take a stand in defense of dark skies using economics as the stick and aesthetics as the carrot.

Lighting the sky is a waste of money and shining more light on buildings and grounds does not lead to more public safety. These issues have been the focus of the NHCRL, a grassroots organization that has been working since 1998 to



educate NH governments and businesses about the economic and aesthetic benefits of reduced outdoor lighting. The biggest effort by NHCRL involved House Bill HB-222, the Light Pollution Bill, which stipulated use of full cut-off lamps. The bill was voted down in committee in March and recently defeated in the House. The Department of Transportation has instead proposed funding for a phased-in street lighting conversion program.

This has been a setback for NHCRL but spokesman Mike Pelletier has called for continued local ordinance efforts and education. He noted several successes and ongoing initiatives:

- Manchester Civic Center engineers confirmed that all lighting for the new center will be full cut-off.
- A light pollution pamphlet will be sent by the NH Dept. of Planning to all NH local Planning Boards later this spring. The pamphlet will be based on the Light Pollution Bill, studied in 1998-99.
- A study is being made of all Manchester gas stations that use very bright lights. This study will be used to help Manchester to expand its lighting ordinance.

- NHCRL has been frequently updating the Manchester Building Dept. on lights that are out of local ordinance and state law.

- Gladstone Ford in Londonderry has been sent a detailed report asking the dealership to voluntarily correct its lighting problem.

- Wendy's food chain has started to re-evaluate its outdoor lighting based on input from NHCRL.

Although NHAS does not engage in such activities, it does commend NHCRL for its work in restoring and preserving the dark night skies that we amateur astronomers so highly value.

New Hampshire citizens who are concerned about our slowly disappearing dark skies should contact **Mike Pelletier** at NHCRL for more information (867-8557). They can also review the information at the NHCRL web site: <http://www.mv.com/users/lopez/nhcrl/> NHCRL asks everyone to continue sending them reports of bad lighting. They plan to focus on town-by-town efforts to combat light pollution.

★ Michael Frascinella

★ Mike Pelletier

ATM True Grit

We had our first meeting on April 1, 2001. **Ed Dougherty, Donald Ware, Linda and Larry Lopez, Barbara O'Connell, and Paul Norris** attended.

We need to find out how many mirror blanks to order so if you are interested, you must tell me so and show up at the next meeting.

We decided to have meetings on April 29, May 6, May 20, May 3, May 24, July 8, July 22.

Stellafane is August 10-12 and there is some thought to bringing our mirrors to that event.

At the next session on April 29, we will be setting up work areas for this year.

All meetings take place at my barn or basement in New Boston.

We have additional teaching help from **Donald Ware**.

★ Larry Lopez

Meteor News

The Lyrid meteor shower starts acting up this month around Apr. 16, and will probably peak on the night of Apr. 21-22. They gradually fade until Apr. 25.

The radiant begins near the east edge of the Keystone, and ends just south of the mag. 3 star Kappa Lyrae. At the peak, it lies right near the Lyra-Hercules border.

You can start watching the Lyrids as early as 11 pm each night, and they are considered medium-fast. They are faster than Geminids, and slower than Perseids.

Under dark rural skies, with the radiant high, observers can see from 10 to 30 Lyrids per hour. However, on rare occasions the Lyrids will put on special "outburst" show, with 50, 60, or more meteors in one brief hour-long period!

For more information on meteors, go to: <http://web.infoave.net/~meteorobs>

★ Lew Gramer

Web Downloads

The NHAS Members page now boasts a mug shot of the new officers.

In other news, our web host, newwww.com, went offline in early April, one of the innocent victims of the bankrupt Vits Networks. Vits was a Manchester-based Internet Service

Provider that failed after expenses continued to exceed income. Hopefully by the time you get this newsletter, our host will be back online.

Egroups merged with Yahoo! so our NHAS newsgroup is now located at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nhas>. The old web address may work for a short time, so change your browser bookmark to use the new address.

You will also need to link your Egroups account with a Yahoo! account. If you don't have a Yahoo! account to link to, you'll need to create one.

Please e-mail Barbara O'Connell at spo@tiac.net if you need help.

★ Barbara O'Connell

The Bottom Line

As of April 8, NHAS had 128 paid members. Our bank balance was \$7,438.12.

NHAS wishes to thank the following for donations to our cause.

Smyth Public Library Association \$100.00

Ray Grizzle \$10.00

The club paid reimbursements for observatory materials totaling \$225.53.

★ Jim Warendt

Looking Back at Last Month

Opening Remarks. **John Pappas** welcomed one new member present and reviewed items received in the mail. The Museum of Science/Boston sent an invitation to their Astronomy Day.

Book of the Month. **Larry Lopez** brought *Moons and Planets* by William Hartmann. **John Reid** brought two books to show us called *Celestial Sights and Celestial Splendors* and *The Observer's Sky Atlas*. **Eric Adriaansen** brought in a

DVD called *Star Gaze* containing over one hour of Hubble images and music.

Scope of the Month. **Bob Sletten** and **Steve Semuskie** displayed Steve's Coulter Odyssey I, a 13.1-in. f/4.5 Newtonian, 1980s vintage, that Steve retrieved from his

parents home in Pennsylvania. Bob presented a PC slide show (uh-oh!) of the scope's components and construction details. By the end of the talk, it sounded like "How to avoid making a good scope." Bob asked members for help in recommending ways to fix the defects.

Joe Derek brought in a model of the Space Shuttle, a cool sculpture made by his brother from steel pipe and pipe fittings.

Photo courtesy of Bob Sletten.



Club Scope: Where are you?

Committees. **ATMs:** **Larry Lopez** said the first meeting was to be in March.

Web Comm: **Barbara O'Connell** said that our news group has been switched to Yahoo (their idea not ours). Also, nonmembers have been removed from the e-mail lists.

Photo Comm: **Joe Malinowski** said the last meeting was sparsely attended but there was good discussion. Next meeting will discuss film types (no, not drama vs. comedy).

YFOS Observatory. **Larry Lopez** reported that the Freeze Your Buns event went very well. The site has been closed lately due to piles of snow and ice.

Public Observing. **Ed Ting** noted that few public events were planned for Feb and March. He asked for help with a school event Feb. 28 in Newton, Mass.

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Mike Pelletier reviewed plans for the event at the Mall on Feb. 17 and asked members to volunteer to bring scopes and other equipment.

Treasury. **Jim Warend**a reported a balance of \$7300 and one new member bringing the total to 119. He also handed out new membership cards.

Visiting Club. **Barry Sawyer** of the North Shore Astronomical Society explained that his club has a \$60,000 pledge for purchase of a dark sky site for their 36-in. Obsession telescope called "Godzilla." They are looking for help in finding land in New Hampshire.

Evening Program. **Mike Ansager** of CMP presented an entertaining and interactive planetarium show. We actually injected quite a bit of kibitzing into the show and went wild with the voting buttons each time Mike displayed a polling question onto the dome.



Mike Ansager

No astronomers were injured during the performance of this show.

★ Michael Frascinella

YFOS Site

On Saturday, April 7, two snow blowers and a lot of shovels substantially opened up YFOS. If you don't know what mud season is, then YFOS is closed.

The north parking area and observing area have been cleared. The central section has been left under 12 inches of snow so that it can remain frozen if the north area becomes boggy. About 8 people pushed snow.

The electrical outlets in the Observatory are live. Last year's waste wood was burned up. It is estimated that YFOS could take 5 or so cars. If you haven't been checked out on the Observatory or Warming Room then do not use it.

★ Larry Lopez



YFOS Scrapbook

The first three photos are of the observatory, one with Bob Sletten yelling to Larry Lopez "Don't throw the breakers yet!"

In the bottom photo, Larry is telling Chase McNiss he can finally put down the gas can.

Photos courtesy of Mike Stebbins



>> **DEADLINE FOR MAY 2001 ISSUE: 4 PM May 4**<<

E-mail articles to Editor. Call to schedule late submissions.

How to Join N.H.A.S.

Write to us:

NHAS
PO Box 1001
Manchester, NH 03105-1001
Attn: Treasurer

Send Email to:

Treasurer@nhastro.com

Use our web site:

<http://www.nhastro.com/>

2001 Officers

President:: John Pappas President@nhastro.com

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Secretary: Michael Frascinella Secretary@nhastro.com

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Astronomy Web Sites, Apr. 13, Planetarium

Event	Date	Time	Location
Apr. Club Meeting	Apr. 13	7:30 pm	Planetarium, Concord, NH
Coffee House	Apr. 20	dusk	YFOS, Hillsborough, NH
May. Club Meeting	May 4	7:30 pm	St. Anselm's College, Goffstown, NH
Astronomy Day	May 12	All day	Planetarium, Concord, NH