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THE NHAS OBSERVER

Newsletter of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society



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"All the news that fits in print"

March 2002

MESSIER MARATHON

President's Message

Well, it's already March. Time for Messier Marathon! For those of you who have never been to one, please join us for the March business meeting where **Ed Ting** will explain the event and give observing tips. [Cut the photo

into small squares, turn them over on a tabletop, and play Messier Memory.

Photo courtesy www.seds.org.]

Messier Marathon is also a chance for the club to get together for an informal pot luck dinner. We all bring a snack or meal item to give us the fuel to stay up all night trying to see as many

Messier objects as possible.

Usually, I end up chatting in the warm house over the pot luck table more than looking through the scope, but one of these days I'll see more than 10 Messier objects in one night <grin>.

Also, I'd like to mention that the March business meeting is the last chance to contribute an idea for the Astronomy Day T-shirt design. We have a few designs now, but we welcome more. The theme is modern telescopes (as opposed to antique telescopes).

Also, it's not too late to volunteer for the Museum of Science Astronomy Day or the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium Space Spectacular (a.k.a. Astronomy Day). More information will be provided at the meeting.

Happy Observing in March!

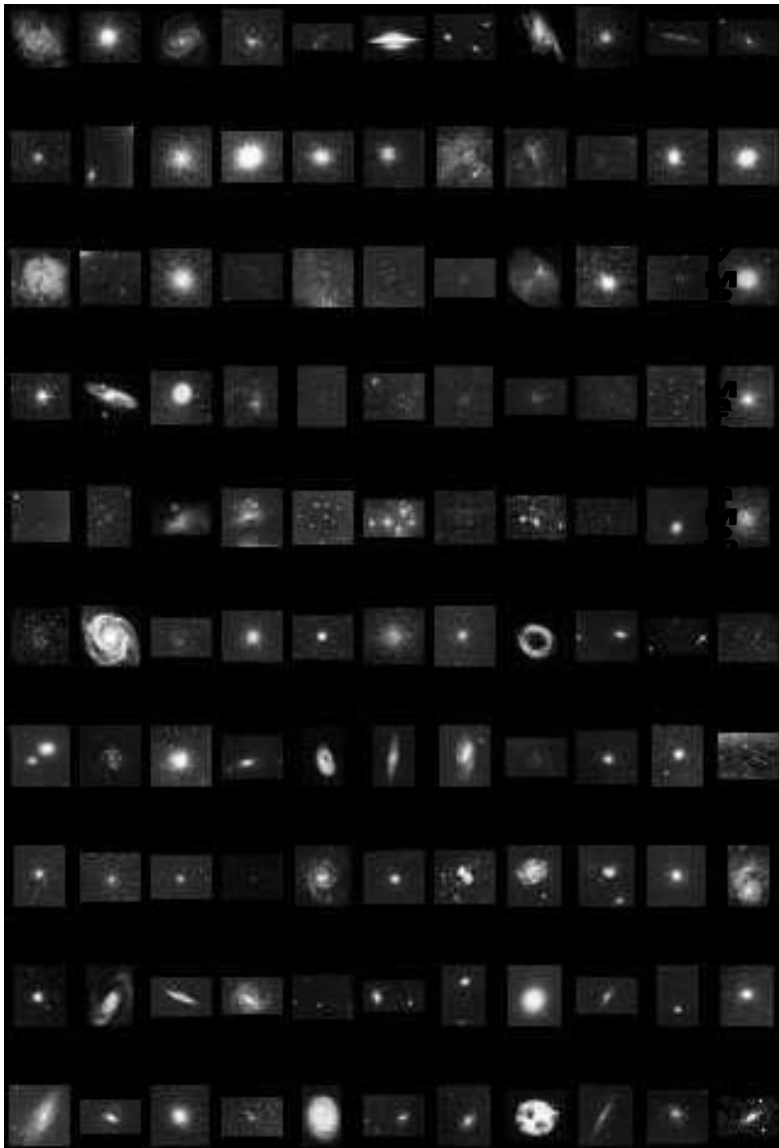
★ Barbara O'Connell
NHAS President 2002

Public Observing Highlights

Freeze Your Buns was rescheduled for Friday Feb 15th. The weather didn't cooperate, so a spirited group tried again the next night and was rewarded with a few hours of clear skies.

I did not attend FYB Jr., since I was speaking on Astronomy to MENSA, the intellectual group in which you must be in the top 2% of intelligence to get in. Not being in this august company, and figuring that every other speaker there would be trying to wow the audience with their intellect, I took the opposite approach and did my children's slide show. They loved it!

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Feature Story

Warm FYOB Part 2.....Page 2

Public Observing Highlights

(from p. 1)

Later that night, among the 120 or so attendees to the conference, an estimated 60 people showed up. This is an unusually high percentage. We got enthusiastic comments from the attendees and have been asked to return next year. By the way, this is the first time as a speaker, I have followed a bare-footed pagan witch who spoke on secrets of interpersonal relationships.

The Saturn Occultation drew a large crowd at CMP on Feb. 20, but clouds prevented viewing. Thanks to **Joel Harris** for showing up anyway. He had his camcorder and **Larry Lopez's** Celestron 14, and piped video to two monitors. The scope and electronics worked flawlessly. Too bad it completely clouded over just 3 minutes before first contact. Below is a sample image from **Joel Harris**. A QuickTime movie can be viewed here:

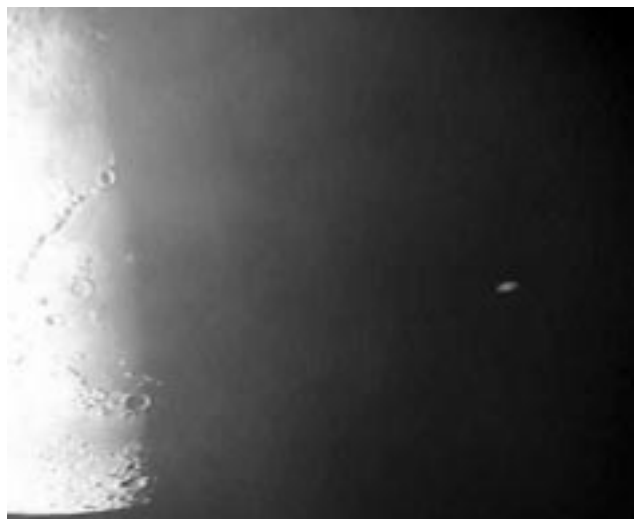
<http://nhastro.com/moonsat.mpg>

The CMP skywatch on March 1st was well-attended. Over 100 people came out and saw Saturn, Jupiter, and the Orion Nebula. We couldn't get the streetlights turned off, making for adverse observing conditions. The silliest thing that happened was when the lights went out just when we decided to pack up for the night!

★ Ed Ting

Astronomy Day 2002

Thanks to those who volunteered at the last meeting. At this rate we will have the event well-covered. The only outstanding issue is the Astronomy Day



T-shirt logo.

Several members have expressed interest in doing a T-shirt design, but we have yet to receive samples. Please get your designs in early so we can give Joe Malinowski plenty of lead time!

Remember: Astronomy Day is May 4th at CMP.

★ Ed Ting

Web Uploads

The web site is slowly being updated. If you have any skills in writing, editing, HTML coding, or graphics, contact me to find out what you can do.

★ Barbara O'Connell

AstroPhotons

The Feb. 15th meeting of the Astro-photo Committee was canceled due to bad weather. Look for an update at the next club meeting on March 8.

★ John Blackwell

ATM True Grit

After some investigation into the effects of weathering on telescopes kept outdoors, it might be a good idea to periodically replace the club 16-inch Dob (now at YFOS) with my Celestron 14-inch Schmidt Cassegrain, which is currently somewhat of an extra scope. We might try a 6-month rotation cycle.

★ Larry Lopez

Boston Astronomy Day

The Boston Museum of Science Astronomy Day committee meet on Feb. 19, discussed many interactive projects for the April 20 Boston event, and selected seven. Projects are in the planning stage and will be reviewed at

the March 8 NHAS meeting before the regular business meeting at 7:15 p.m. Thank you, Joe Derek for hosting the planning meeting.

NHAS members will be needed to staff the event on April 20 from 8 a.m. to 5 a.m. If you are interested, please contact me. The Museum has some nice exhibits (free for NHAS staff) and an exceptional solar

observatory with high quality H-Alpha filter, which will be open weather permitting.

★ Mike Stebbins

"Warm" Freeze Your Buns, Part 2

"Freeze Your Buns" was more like "Roast Your Rump". The temperature at the beginning of the evening was a "balmy" 37 F. As predicted by Clear Sky Clock, the sky cleared *totally* by 8:00 p.m. (1 hour off) and remained totally clear until about 10:00 p.m. (4 hours off). Transparency as predicted was moderate, not great for deep sky objects, but not bad either.

However, planetary observing was superb! Some of the best planetary detail (including color!) of Jupiter and Saturn I've ever seen, particularly through one member's 8-inch StarMaster Dob and another's 10-inch Meade LX50.

Joel Harris was there using **Larry Lopez's** C14 doing afocal eyepiece projection with his camcorder of Jupiter and Saturn.

Barbara O'Connell was using the club's 6-inch Dob. **Roger Leighton** took the club 16-inch Dob for "a spin." It didn't "spin" very well. The bearings need some work.

Jim McCarthy had his Celestron 9.25 SCT and we used a Meade "electronic eyepiece" to view Jupiter and Saturn on a small 5-inch battery powered monitor. Not bad for \$60!

Bob Sletten arrived a little later and tried to light the warming room auxiliary gas heater with great difficulty. I ran for cover!

By 10 o'clock the haze thickened and temperature had dropped to 27 F so we all retreated to the warming hut to see if it would improve later. We had a great time discussing a myriad of topics ranging from the potential of image-stabilized eyepieces to my rendition of "Rocky Raccoon."

All-in-all, those of us that were there had a great time and got some great planetary views, visually, digitally, and otherwise.

★ Steve Stefanik

The Bottom Line

Balance: \$9,275

2002 members: 122

NHAS offers its thanks those who joined or renewed this month and for the following donation:

John McClean \$5.00

★ Jim Warend

Looking Back at Last Month

Opening. Barbara O'Connell

welcomed members and visitors.

Book of the Month. none this month.

Scope of the Month. Ed Ting showed us his newest homemade Dob scope, a 4.3-inch f/7.6 Newtonian made from a \$60 Russian kit obtained from a Canadian vendor. Club scope went to Jim McCarthy.

Committees. Web: Barbara noted no problems so far. If you can help with updating web pages, please speak up.

ATMs: Larry Lopez said they tested the figure on John McLean's mirror at the past meeting. John brought photos of the telescope he is building. Photo:

John Blackwell had taken on the committee but job commitments forced him to step down.

YFOS. The observatory roof is icy but is does roll. The parking area is open but icy.

Public Observing. Ed Ting stated that FYOB moved to Feb. 15. A big event coming up on Feb. 20 was the lunar occultation of Saturn. A CMP skywatch was to be held that night. He will present the Messier Marathon talk at the March meeting.

Treasury. Jim Warend reported a \$9200 balance and 114 members and climbing.

Astronomy Day. Ed Ting circulated a sign-up sheet for the May 4th event.

Official hours are noon - 9 p.m.

Barbara brought photos of t-shirt design suggestions. Morning volunteers should arrive at 10 a.m. An evening skywatch is planned, weather permitting.

Ed has been meeting with CMP reps. and planning sessions have been going smoothly.

Astronomy Day Boston. Mike Stebbins has been organizing NHAS for this April 20 event. We will do solar observing and an indoor hands-on exhibit. He asked for ideas for a suitable indoor exhibit.

Messier Marathon. Larry Lopez will be hosting this event in New Boston. It will depend on snowfall and how clear and solid is his road and parking areas.

Field Trip. A field trip, suggested by Mike Townsend, may be possible to the optical shop at Insight Technology in Manchester, makers of night vision goggles and laser gun sights.

Observatory. Mark Stowbridge displayed an intriguing model of an observatory he was planning. The design was for a 3 meter (9+ foot) diameter building with a 10-panel wall and roll-off geodesic dome. It would be just big enough for one person and a small scope. His estimated cost for materials was \$200.



Evening Program. Jim McCarthy presented his "Astrophoto Review," a slide show of favorites from years past.



He began with the May 2001 annular eclipse shot with Kodak 200 print film and transferred to slide film; the 1996 lunar eclipse; numerous lunar close-ups; Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn (using a hat trick to make one second exposures); Comet Hale-Bopp; the 2001 Leonids in Orion and Taurus; The Orion Nebula (22 minute exposure); star fields at Stellafane; star clusters and nebulas; Sagittarius star cloud; auroras; solar flares; and the 1998 solar eclipse in Aruba (courtesy of Larry Lopez.)

★ Michael Frascinella

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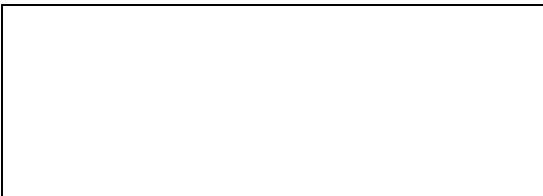
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Messier Marathon Training, St. Anselm's

NHAS Upcoming Events

| Event | Date | Time | Location |
|----------------------|---------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| March meeting | Mar. 8 | 7:30 p.m. | St. Anselm's College, Goffstown, NH |
| Messier Marathon | Mar. 15 | all nighter | Lopez Mountain, New Boston, NH |
| CMP Equinox Skywatch | Mar. 20 | 7:00 p.m. | Planetarium, Concord, NH |
| CMP Skywatch | Apr. 5 | 7:30 p.m. | Planetarium, Concord, NH |
| Coffee House | Apr. 12 | 7:00 p.m. | YFOS |
| April meeting | Apr. 19 | 7:30 p.m. | Planetarium, Concord, NH |