

Messier Marathon

President's Message

We had a very exciting month culminating with the opening of the new McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, where over twenty NHAS members proudly attended. My personal thanks goes to all our members who took time from their busy schedule to attend the ceremony as well as participating in the regular sky watch that evening.

We are also making preparations for our annual Messier Marathon event. We will discuss this more at the March business meeting so come prepared with your questions and contributions. The evening program will be a collaborative discussion on MM topics, chosen and presented by our members. After many years of delivering his MM presentation, **Ed Ting** is taking some well-deserved time off.

Our EOC is getting into full swing and you will start to see some gradual changes to help support their efforts. Finally, we have many scheduled sky watches, as the weather gets warmer. Please remember to check the calendar and help out when you can.

★ Rich DeMidio
NHAS President 2009

Highlights for this Month

NHAS members were invited to the dedication of the new McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center building, and many attended the dedication and the sky watch that evening.

Astronomy Day is 2 May. Mark your calendars!

Comet Lulin passes close by the Earth (for a comet) and presents us with good observing opportunities in February and March.

We have successfully placed a second telescope in our Library Telescope Project.

It's Messier Marathon time again, and NHAS is celebrating.

A progress report on the Dark Sky Bill that is pending before the New Hampshire legislature.

★ Paul Winalski
NHAS Secretary 2009

McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center Dedication



NHAS members at Discovery Center Dedication

On 6 March our friends and partners the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium opened their new Discovery Center building. In recognition of its expanded mission, the Planetarium has changed its name to the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery

Center. NHAS members were invited to the official dedication ceremony and seventeen attended.

New Hampshire governor John Lynch formally opened the Center. Members of the families of Christa McAuliffe and Alan Shepard attended the event.

In addition to its exhibit halls and event rooms, the Discovery Center has a rooftop observatory. The Celestron C14 and 90mm Coronado solar scope planned to be mounted were not there for the dedication, but **R. P. Hale** had his 6" Clark refractor set up next to the mount.

More photos of NHAS at this event are in the "Kitchen Sink" forum on the NHAS website.

Our congratulations go to the Discovery Center and its staff for this big step forward.

★ Paul Winalski

Astronomy Day May 2nd

A quick reminder that 2 May 2009 is Astronomy Day. It takes place at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center in Concord from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM as part of the Center's Spacetacular Saturday. This year we celebrate the International Year of Astronomy, which marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first use of the telescope to study the heavens. We will be hosting solar observing and exhibits for the public. **Chase McNiss** is coordinating our efforts. See the website, or contact Chase, for more details.

★ Paul Winalski

Educational Outreach

The Educational Outreach Committee (EOC) had a meeting 13 March, 2009 at the Ralph Pill building in Concord.

Attending were: Co-Chairs, **Matt Amar** and **Rich Schueller**, **Chase McNiss**, **Marc Stowbridge**, **Tom Cocchiaro**, **Gardner Gerry**, **Scott McCartney**, **Rich DeMidio**, and **Matt M.**

NHAS brochure: The final version is now ready for printing. Tom C. will be getting quotes. A printable version will be made available on the website.

Membership application: We are adding a link to the application form from the website home page. We are investigating using PayPal for dues. This is not a certainty yet—we still need to find all costs associated with its implementation and the officers need to approve it.

NHAS merchandise: Tom C. brought some items with the NHAS logo as well as the Old Man image we've seen around. These included a coffee mug, mouse pad, button, and, for those who have business attire requirements, a tie. There are two sites that are being looked at, one being Zazzle. Matt M. is looking at links to this resource.

Sky watch request form: **Bill Steele** has done some work creating a PDF of the request form. He has also put together a sample online form and information page. Marc feels that this represents the critical information he needs to make contact and, once polished, it will be made available through a link from the home page.

Sky Watch information: We have gotten a bit out of touch with the Sky Watch section in the forums. We are going to push using the calendar to list only the name of the sky watch and link and list to other critical information in the sky watch forum. One thing to consider when posting on the calendar is that it is visible to the outside world. Posting email addresses and phone numbers could make this visible to spam searches, so avoid listing contact info on the calendar and place it in

the Sky Watch forum. Use the same title between the calendar and forum listing so that others can find it easily.

Library scope program: Marc's reports on the program are still glowing. He still has yet to see the scope in the library—it is constantly being loaned out and the feedback is great. Marc reports that ten other libraries are "chomping at the bit" and are looking at getting scopes in their inventory. The program seems to have hit the ground running and is accelerating like a race car. We'll be looking for foster astronomers to maintain the scopes, which should only take about half an hour every month or so.

Astronomy day: 2 May is right around the corner. Chase is going to need about 21 volunteers to cover all the things planned. We have two places we can set up—the usual one outside the tent, the other inside the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery center before the ticket counter. Space is limited inside, so we'll be planning that carefully. We are looking at advertising and the PR work needs to be done. Matt M. has a standard display booth he used at NEAF that we might use.

The next EOC meeting is expected to be 10 April. An email will go out when that is confirmed.

★ Rich Schueller

Library Telescope Project



Jane Rice and Nancy McCue with their new Starblast telescope

Moultonborough Public Library is the second library to participate in

our lending telescope project (see the article in the February 2009 *Observer*).

They received three recently donated eyepieces, and an Orion lens pack to keep them in, from NHAS to go with the scope. **Marc Stowbridge** got these comments from Nancy McCue at the Library:

"We put our new telescope on display yesterday afternoon and it was checked out by 1pm this afternoon! I should have taken it home with me for one night, it was so beautifully clear last night. Thank you for ordering it and the instructions and the eyepieces and bag and flashlight and taking the time to show us how to use it."

Marc has been unable to get a photograph of the Tamworth Library scope in its display because it has been checked out every time he has been at the Library.

★ Paul Winalski

Recent Public Sky Watches

McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, 6 March



Setting up at the Discovery Center (Rich Schueller photo)

I joined **Joe Derek**, **Gardner Gerry**, and **Herb Bubert** about 6 PM. We had clear skies for about an hour, then about 45 minutes of heavy clouds with a few holes through which we showed the moon. At about 8pm a front came through from the West which cleared the sky completely and we didn't see another cloud for the entire evening. There was a steady stream of people coming out the front entrance who saw Venus (early), the Orion Nebula, the Pleiades, a few double stars, and finally Saturn. Quite a few guests

stayed for a good long time, as the weather was not as bitterly cold as it has been the last few weeks. The parking lot lights in the new location were a bit of a bother but someone from the Discovery Center told us they could be turned off in the future.

★ Ted Blank

Nashua Public Library, 17 March



The observing field (Rich Schueller photo)

In addition to the usual night sky objects, the public got to see a pass of the International Space Station and the Space Shuttle. NHAS members participating: **Matt Amar, Ken Charles, Steve Forbes, Stephen Forbes, Gardner Gerry, Ed Los, Al Navarro, John Rose, Rich Schueller, Bill Steele, Mike Townsend.**

★ Bill Steele

Astro Photons

The Astrophotography Committee held its first on-line “virtual” meeting on the evening of 10 March at 9 PM. Member **John Buonomo** hosted a web site for the visual and a toll-free conference call number for the audio. Members that participated (and I will apologize up front if I miss anyone) were: **John, Herb Bubert, Dave Weaver, Bob Gillette, Tom Cocchiario, Jon Hill and Gardner Gerry.**

What happens with a meeting like this is that everyone who logs onto the web site sees the presenter’s desktop in real time. The presenter can be changed by the host and then you see his desktop.

First up was Herb, we were able to follow him as he processed raw color DSLR frames of NGC 2244 the Rosette Nebula in Images Plus

(an image capture and processing program) and added H-alpha data in Photoshop.

Later John discussed his processing techniques in Nebulosity (a different image capture and processing program).

It was time well spent, there were lots of questions from the participants and the two hours passed quickly! Everyone enjoyed the meeting and the format it was in, and no one had to drive anywhere! A big Thank You to John Buonomo for making available the technology to make this happen.

★ Gardner Gerry

Comet Lulin Observing, 24 February

Leo’s underside finally cleared the tall pines to the east of my house around 9 pm last night. I located Saturn then scanned up and to the right and found Comet Lulin in short order. It was couched in a trio of stars that formed a flat V shape with 59 Leonis being the middle star. Comet Lulin was just to the left of 59 Leonis and almost touching it.

At around 10 pm, my son Nathan came home from work and we went out to look at it again. It was barely visible in my 7x50 Swift binocs—the sky was too bright. It was easy to pick out in my 15x70 Orion binocs. By this time the comet had moved and it was almost above 59 Leonis.

Since *Sky & Telescope* noted that the comet reaches opposition on Feb. 25, the tail was very short. As it heads back out, I hope the tail increases and it becomes brighter.

When I checked Sky Atlas 2000, the comet seemed to be right on the ecliptic.

★ Michael Frascinella

Shooting at YFOS last night was tough for me. However, I managed to get some shots of the comet with my Pentax 200mm F2.8 lens. The dust tail shows up nice but there was no ion tail. From what I understand, it got blown away by the solar wind which caused a disconnection event. It should

reappear in a few days (I think). I really have not finished processing the image but I wanted to share it with everyone.



★ Tim Printy

Tonight I wanted to see if I couldn’t completely bollix a photo of Lulin. Well I did! Sort of. ☺ Mainly, the DSLR is far too heavy for the Odyssey’s mount, so as soon as I put in the PF adapter with camera, the end sank slowly down, ever down. This particular mount doesn’t have any way to increase the friction, so there it was.

I couldn’t find that darned thing to save my life, and some friends were coming over for a quick peek, so I finally resorted to the binos. Pointed *right* at it, I mean the first time the bino eye cups hit my glasses, it was in the field of view! But I couldn’t point the newt there for some reason, until a brain cell kicked in and I used the binos to find a star hop from Saturn, which about anyone can point to. ☺ Then it was piece of cake.

Side note... while I was scanning around looking for Lulin I tossed in the 50mm EP Rich let me borrow. Wowzers that’s some field! And eye relief! I still don’t quite understand what vignetting is, but there was plenty of obvious distortion nearer the edges of the view with that guy in. I even noticed some with my 30mm tonight, more so than usual.

I saw a distinct and very long tail on Lulin, but not twin tails, and a distinct hard dot coma. The friends showed up and were suitably impressed, so I bumped the mag to about 123x. Coma was still quite obvious and the head nearly filled the EP, which they all liked. I knew the collimation was still not quite right, and the sky was quite frankly

pretty ikky, so I didn't try any higher than that.

They wanted to see Saturn, so I showed them that at 50x & 123x. I noticed flaring (from what I presume is the collimation still off) but not so much the planet was hard to recognize (like when I first got the newt), and they all oooo'd and aaaah'd so it must not have been that noticeable to them. I did jump to 290x briefly on Saturn but it was so messy looking that I didn't leave that EP in long, but I had to give it a go. ☺ Kinda like 20's era silent film quality viewed under water, without the white flecky bits popping in and out all the time.

Next was the Great Orion Nebula, which looked like it always does... simply stunning, and we ended up our quickie observing session with M81 and M82. All in all a very nice 30-odd minutes under the stars in questionable sky conditions.

★ David Gilmore

2009 Messier Marathon

NHAS's traditional annual Messier Marathon observing session will take place the evening of Friday, 27 March. **Larry and Linda Lopez** have graciously offered to host the event at their home in New Boston. Come to see how many Messier objects you can find, or come to do other observing, or just come to socialize. Plan to show up early or mid-afternoon to get a good spot on the observing field.

Snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and other food items are welcome. Who's bringing what is being coordinated at the "Resources" area on the NHAS website.

In lieu of a guest speaker at the March NHAS Business Meeting, there will be a group presentation and discussion of Messier Marathon preparation: where to find observing order lists and star charts; observing tips for different types of scopes, etc.

★ Paul Winalski

Dark Sky Bill Clears NH House Committee

HB 585, the NH Outdoor Lighting Efficiency Act, was approved 19-0 on 19 March by the full House Committee on Science, Technology and Energy.

Because it was unanimously approved, the Committee then marked the bill to the Consent Calendar, which means that it can be approved on a voice vote by the full House, without floor debate, providing no one objects—a rare but not impossible occurrence on the House floor. Absent any such glitches, the bill then moves in April to the Senate.

You can follow developments on the website of the New England Light Pollution Advisory Group (NELPAG) at www.nelpag.org.

★ Robert Gillette

NHAS February 2009 Business Meeting

ATM

No news.

YFOS

The observing field was bare to the ground last Saturday, and the heater is working fine.

Membership

Alan Shirey reported three new members over the past month. So far there has been no interest in Astro 101/201 presentations.

Astrophotography

Gardner Gerry reports that there are lots of new images being posted in the Pictures forum on the website. 24 February will provide a good photo-op for Comet Lulin as it passes two degrees from Saturn.

Radio Astronomy

No report. Bob has been asked if he wishes to continue as chairman of the committee.

Public Observing

Marc Stowbridge reports that he has received requests from Copper Canyon Camp in Franconia, New Durham Public Library, and Nashua Public Library.

Library Telescope Program:

Moultonborough received their scope today. Newington and Portsmouth are potential libraries to extend the program. Marc has reformatted the Orion user manual for the scope into a laminated, spiral-bound compact booklet.

We are looking for donations of old eyepieces that you aren't using to use with the library scopes.

Educational Outreach

Rich Schueller reports that the committee met last Friday. Club Astronomy Day preparations were the main topic of discussion. **Chase McNiss** is the A-Day coordinator. He asked for astro images from club members to put on posters. **Tom Cocchiario** has set up an account on Zazzle as a way to order club clothing and paraphernalia. The committee is working on a brochure to hand out at A-Day to describe NHAS, what we do, and how to reach us. Work is also in progress on adding a sky watch request page to the website.

Webmaster

No report.

Book of the Month

Scope of the Month

None this month.

Miscellaneous Business

Astronomy Day planning: The official date is 2 May and that is also when McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center are planning their Spacetacular Saturday event. Chase will send out broadcast e-mails asking for volunteers and listing some of the exhibits and projects that are being worked on, including new posters. We will be short on literature. We especially need a "how to get started in astronomy" brochure. It was suggested to post the topics on the website.

Dave McDonald invited us all to attend the opening of the Discovery Center building on 6 March.

Paul Winalski cautioned members that NHAS must remain uncommitted regarding political issues such as the "Dark Sky" bill currently before the NH legislature. Individual members are encouraged

to let their views be known on the issue, but must not claim or imply to be representing NHAS.

2009 Officer Nominations and Election

See report elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Evening Program

Belinda Wilkes, Assistant Director of the Chandra X-ray Center, .

★ Paul Winalski

The Bottom Line

Starting Balance:	\$5728.64
Deposits/Credits:	
Membership:	165.00
Donations:	250.00
Bank interest:	5.20
Calendar sales:	7.00
Miscellaneous:	3.51
Total :	430.71
Accounts/Paid:	
Plowing:	110.00
Insurance:	406.64
Total:	516.64
Net Account Balance:	\$5642.71
Petty cash drawer:	\$100.00
Cash Balance:	\$5742.71

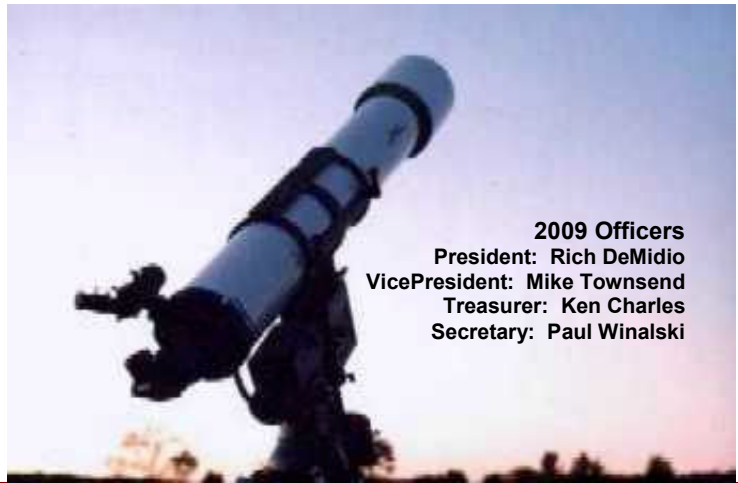
2009 Membership: 108

New members:

Selene Dumaine, Henniker, NH

Steve Sexton, Milford, NH

★ Ken Charles



2009 Officers
 President: Rich DeMidio
 VicePresident: Mike Townsend
 Treasurer: Ken Charles
 Secretary: Paul Winalski

DEADLINE April 2009 Issue: 5 PM April 13

E-mail articles to the Editor.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS – Notify the Treasurer of changes to postal or e-mail address.

How to Join N.H.A.S.

Write to us:

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 Attn: Treasurer

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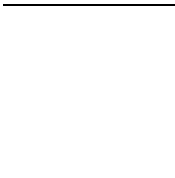
Use our web site:

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

This month's contributors:

Rich DeMidio, Rich Schueller, Marc Stowbridge, Ted Blank, Bill Steele, Gardner Gerry, Michael Frascinella, Tim Printy, David Gilmore, Robert Gillette, Ken Charles

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
Messier Marathon	March 27	3:00 PM	Lopez residence, New Boston NH
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	April 3	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Public Sidewalk Observing	April 3-4	7:00 PM	Portsmouth, NH
North Hampton Library Star Party	April 8	6:30 PM	North Hampton MA
Public Sky Watch	April 14	7:00 PM	New Searles Elementary School, Nashua NH
NHAS Business Meeting	April 17	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
NorthEast Astro-Imaging Conference (NEAIC)	April 16-17	all day	Rockland Community College, Suffern, NY
NHAS Business Meeting	April 17	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
NorthEast Astronomy Forum (NEAF)	April 18-19	all day	Rockland Community College, Suffern, NY
Moultonborough Library Sky Watch	April 20	7:00 PM	Moultonborough Public Library, Moultonborough NH
Coffee House Night	April 24	5:00 PM	YFOS