



## Portsmouth Market Square Day

### President's Message

With one half of 2009 complete, I am proud to report that it was an excellent one for our organization. Our public participation and awareness is growing through public events participation (e.g. McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center opening, EOC Library Program), along with participation in many events promoting Astronomy (e.g. Astronomy Day, Public Sky watches, Portsmouth Market Square Day). None of this would be possible without the passion exhibited by our members. There is much to be proud of and I look forward to the second half of the year.

The second half of the year is looking very strong. Public observing is in full swing with our coordinator certainly being kept busy. Summertime is traditionally the most popular part of the year with some of the events located in some nice dark sky areas of the state. We will also be putting in place a policy for obtaining public speakers at business meetings to minimize risk of double bookings. In the fall, a Messier Marathon is being planned and in December we will have a club reception at the final business meeting (details of course to be worked and communicated at a later date).

We have some important business to address during the second half of the year. The board is currently looking at the expenditures and budget to support our normal operating costs. The data, analysis, and potential changes will be shared with the membership in subsequent

months. With an influx of new members and even existing members showing interest in education, we are looking to schedule dates for a variety of courses. This change is based on membership feedback noting the on-demand model was not working out well.

I would like to close by thanking the membership for all of their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm. In my first month, I talked about contribution and after six months, it's easy to see how our members contribute. Remember, no contribution is too small and all are of value for it is the membership as a whole who defines and represents NHAS, not any individual.

★ Rich DeMidio  
NHAS President 2009

### Highlights for this Month

NHAS had a busy day on 13 June, with solar observing and a booth at Portsmouth Market Square Day and then two sky watches in the evening.

The Young's Farm Observing Site got its annual spring cleaning.

According to press reports, Betelgeuse is about to go supernova. Or is it?

★ Paul Winalski  
NHAS Secretary 2009

### Membership and Astro 101/201

We have five new members since last business meeting.

Scott Tierno, Candia, NH  
Krista Couturier, Deering, NH  
Evan McCartney, Concord, NH

John Russell, Bedford, NH  
Joe Schmidl, Salisbury, NH

Please welcome our new members when you meet them at a business meeting or sky watch

As we have welcomed many new members since the turn of the year, I wanted to use this newsletter to draw your attention to the Astro 101 courses on the Members Resources page:

[http://www.nhastro.com/member/res\\_db.php](http://www.nhastro.com/member/res_db.php)

Please let me know if you find courses that interest you. Once we have three members expressing interest I will work to schedule the specific Astro 101 course.

Reply by email to  
ashirey@comcast.net .

★ Alan Shirey

### Astro Photons

It has been raining and not many members have been posting new work in the "Pictures" forum on the NHAS website.

★ Gardner Gerry

### Portsmouth Market Square Day

This annual event in downtown Portsmouth took place on 13 June. Market Square and adjacent streets were closed to traffic, and after the start of the 10K road race the public were treated to live music and booths set up by local restaurants and merchants. NHAS had a booth featuring solar observing and promoting our educational outreach activities.

Special thanks to **Tom Cocchiaro** for coordinating our participation in this event.

Here are some reports from Market Square Day.

★ Paul Winalski

Just a note to thank all who participated for traveling out to Portsmouth for this Saturday's Market Square Day festivities and those who helped process the paperwork for our participation. It was a long day, but I think we did some good work in the community as evidenced by a photograph and mention in the Portsmouth Herald article on the event—and the hundreds of folks who stopped by the booth during the day. We pretty much "sold out" of all the materials that were brought to the festival and a number of people expressed an interest in membership.

And Bill, please express our thanks to your wife for running the booth most of the afternoon while the rest of us were showing off the Sun to the crowds.

★ Tom Cocchiaro

Tom Cocchiaro, **Chase McNiss**, and **David Speltz** were there for setup. There may have been more help but I got there after the booth was set up. The location this year was one block higher than last year, nearly on the 10K start line. Very nice location with plenty of room for the scopes.

The booth was equipped with lots of cool free hand outs (Note: next year/time print and bring membership forms). Some members brought old Sky and Telescope issues, bookmarks, solar posters, deep sky posters, magnets, lunar maps and a list of starter scopes was for distribution.

Tom Cocchiaro was there with an APO equipped with a white light filter.

Chase McNiss staffed the booth and brought white filter binoculars

**Don McDaniels** was there with a white filter reflector

David Speltz was there with a 6" 155mm AP refractor with a H $\alpha$  filter

**Herb Bubert** was there with the club Lunt H $\alpha$  scope

**Marc Stowbridge** was there with a Coronado PST H $\alpha$  scope

**Bill Steele** was there with Dobsonian 10" Open scope as static display.

**Rachel Steele** got tired of shopping, brought pizza for lunch, and stayed the afternoon staffing the booth.

I think I handed out hundreds of brochures. I guess there was well over a thousand people that visited the booth. Rachel thinks that she saw a thousand in the afternoon. I was busy all day long. When I did take a five minute break to swallow a piece of pizza there were at least ten people looking at my unattended scope. Lately my tanning has come from Astronomy events. There may be something wrong with that. ☺

★ Bill Steele

I had set up the AP 155 by 6 AM and was trained on the Moon for some of the morning while the Sun approached the church steeple. Once it cleared the steeple, most of us moved to observing the Sun. Tom arrived about 6:20 AM. The bagel shop (The Works) had great coffee and bagels, but also permitted us to run power from their store the full day (Dennis appears to be the owner-authorizer).

The Sun had no sunspots whatsoever. It was asleep except for one good looking prominence that looked like a candle flame early in the morning, lost its density during the day, and became a wisp in space toward the end of the day. I could see no other prominence until the end of the day when a baby prom was being born. Quiet sun.

There is no doubt in my mind that a Seacoast branch of NHAS should be created. The interest was amazing with many, many asking where to go for public observing and the answer was, of course, Concord or Hillsborough (not so smiley faces). We need to think about this one.

★ David Speltz

## Recent Public Sky Watches

After NHAS's busy day in Portsmouth, we had two sky watches scheduled for the evening of 13 June. Unfortunately it was overcast and there was no real observing, but NHAS members did set up telescopes for the kids to see and touch.

### Cub Scout Pack 610, Raymond Park, Pelham NH

**Matt Amar** was there before me and the Cub Scouts were firing off rockets. At that time the skies still looking promising between 7:30 and 8:00. The talk followed inside with Matt presiding and that went well. By the time the group was finished with the talk the skies became dark and the clouds became thick. I did a small presentation with my 12.5 inch scope outside demonstrating a typical night observing for **Joe Derek**. Questions were asked during this time and then came the hint of rain. We packed up and made it known that we were available throughout the year.

★ Joe Derek

The event went very well. Joe Derek and I were present, and there were about fifty Scouts and parents. I gave a talk about the planets that focused between the past and present and the changes of our concepts of the solar system and universe brought about by Galileo's act of turning a telescope to the sky. Joe set-up his 12.5 EQ. Alas, clouds came in, but he did a whow & tell on its workings and answered questions.

Our s'mores were great.

★ Matt Amar

**Marc Stowbridge** received this note from Diane Andrews:

*I just wanted to tell you that Matt & Joe did a great job last night. The kids really enjoyed the talk the Matt did, very interactive for the kids, they thought it was great (so did the parents!). Joe's telescope was unbelievable. The kids were so impressed by that. Unfortunately, the sky did not cooperate so we*

were not able to actually view anything from the telescope, but everyone enjoyed themselves and the kids learned a lot.

*Thank you guys so much for making this happen, especially since it looked like the weather wasn't going to cooperate. I can't believe they actually came and did something anyway, I am so appreciative. We'll have to try and do this again, so the kids can actually look through the telescopes. My thanks go to each one of you!*

### Girl Scouts Camp Chenoa, Antrim NH

It helped that my daughter, Susie, went to the camp in her youth, because it's not easy to find. I met with the three leaders and eight girls just in time for s'mores and rain. After washing our hands, I gave them some shuttle pictures (always a prized memento). We settled into the craft pavilion and stayed dry, if not warm. I set up my LX90 in the doorway and each girl was able to see a distant treetop at moderate magnification. There were lots of "Wows". just like other sky watches when the stars were out. They appreciated the little 12 V hair dryer, as it was getting chilly out. They warmed themselves up with it. The kids were wonderful, asked lots of good questions and were very interested. One scout had a scarf that her grandmother brought from Israel, printed with an accurate star map. We used that to do some star hopping. I brought out a very large format book of Hubble pictures, and we went over views of the planets, star clusters, and the deep field pictures of distant galaxies. They admitted to being somewhat confused and inspired by it all, and I told them that that's what astronomers felt, too. As usual, the green laser was a big hit.

This was a small group of small people, but worth every moment of the event and the drive. Pound for pound, they were the most enthusiastic group I've met with, so far.

★ Marc Stowbridge

### YFOS Work Session

This took place May 30, 2009, Saturday, 9AM at the Young's Farm Observing Site.

**Chase McNiss, Joe Schmidl and Larry Lopez** cleaned up the warming room and observatory.

The Mosquito Magnet is getting unreliable again. I restarted it without doing anything to it. It will need a new tank of propane this coming week, I think.

The Porta Potty was supposed to be pumped by Handy House by now but wasn't. Perhaps they didn't take into account the memorial day rush.

We have some damaged boards on the observatory in the panels which fold down at the south end.

Nothing too scary. No evidence of carpenter ants that I could see. We are showing slight water damage near the roof lock down near the door. There is also some on the corresponding roof lock down on the other side.

The sink hole is filled.

**Steve Forbes** mowed the lawn, his sons pulled water and generally helped out.

★ Larry Lopez

### Guest Speakers at Business Meetings

We like to have a guest speaker at each business meeting to give us a presentation on some topic current in the field of Astronomy. Club members have been very good about lining up outside speakers for us. However, we ask that all guest speakers for the business meetings be coordinated through our President, **Rich DeMidio**.

Rich has placed a spreadsheet of potential guest speaker resources in a "Guest Speaker List" topic in the "Meetings" section of the Forums on the club website. The URL is: <http://www.nhastro.com/member/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1127>.

If you have an idea for a guest speaker, please contact Rich or another of the officers.

★ Paul Winalski

### Betelgeuse About To Explode?

Seeing as we had so many conversations about the star Betelgeuse, I could not pass up the opportunity to share some interesting, if not exciting, news. As you know, Betelgeuse is a super red giant, at the end of its life. Recent observations have shown it to be reducing its radius rather dramatically (15% in 15 years). Photometry has been showing it to continue its rather slow oscillations in magnitude like any normal long period variable star. Is something changing? Yep—most likely. Perhaps the fuels inside are being swapped for the next heavier element. We do not know.

Now, beware the recent sensationalism. Fox News has put out a sensational article titled "Nearby Star May Be Getting Ready to Explode" (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,525695,00.html>) which predicts at the end "It's possible we're observing the beginning of Betelgeuse's final collapse now. If so, the star, which is 600 light-years away, will already have exploded—and we'll soon be in for a spectacular, and perfectly safe, interstellar fireworks show." I guess they do not know what a light-year really is!

For an excellent opinion on the Fox article, see the recent post on the Discovery site titled "WARNING: Betelgeuse is Shrinking. Supernova or Supernothing?" located at [http://blogs.discovery.com/space\\_disco/2009/06/warning-betelgeuse-is-shrinking-supernova-or-supernothing.html](http://blogs.discovery.com/space_disco/2009/06/warning-betelgeuse-is-shrinking-supernova-or-supernothing.html). This puts it all into perspective.

★ John Blackwell

### NHAS May 2009 Business Meeting

My thanks to Bill Steele for taking the minutes while I was away.

### Highlights for the Last 30 Days

**Rich DeMidio** acknowledged the key role of **Chase McNiss** in

coordinating our participation in Astronomy Day.

The Dark Sky Bill has passed the New Hampshire Senate. A copy of the bill was passed out to members in attendance.

A couple of members attended the North East Astronomy Forum (NEAF) and gave a presentation on it. It is primarily a vendor's show and is a good chance to look at expensive equipment and to see applications such as Sky Tools.

**Marc Stowbridge** will offer family counseling to those members in trouble from purchases.

YFOS is seeing a lot of activity. Cabin fever?

There was a double booking of guest speakers, so going forward we would like to have all presenters approved by the Executive Committee to insure that appropriate resources are scheduled.

We would like to sponsor a barbecue event, possibly at YFOS or at Elmbrook State Park. Suggestions during discussion: start a discussion thread in the forum area on the website? Do it on a coffee house weekend?

### Educational Outreach

**Rich Schueller** reported that **Rich DeMidio** met with Jim Zimbrowski from a club in southern Massachusetts. They are interested in exchange information to help them expand their outreach program.

There was discussion on reaching out to home school. **Ted Blank** gave a presentation on Barnes & Noble as a good forum.

**Marc Stowbridge** would like to share the Library Telescope Program in public internet forums. This is not viewed as advertising public observing. **Dave Weaver** suggested using fixup.com.

### Public Observing

**Marc Stowbridge** reports that **Jim Nelson** is moving to metro NYC and has donated an Orion 6" scope, carry bag, and various equipment approximately valued at \$657. Marc cleaned and collimated the scope and prepared for potential use

as a library scope. The finder scope is available to a member who needs it. There was discussion of using this scope as a club loaner.

Marc has prepared a laminated eyepiece magnification chart for the LX-90 and put it on the side of the library scopes. Rich DeMidio will post it in the forums.

A letter was read thanking us for the New Searles School sky watch.

There are a couple of observing events coming up in June.

Our request for a grant from the NH Charitable Foundation was denied.

### Membership

**Alan Shirey's** report was presented by Rich DeMidio. Members interested in Astro 101 or 201 presentations need to send requests to Alan. There was discussion about the by-request system not working, and maybe it would be better to just schedule some of the Astro 101 presentations. It was suggested to have an Astro 101 presentation on Astrophotography.

No new members were present.

### ATM

**Larry Lopez** reported that the club loaner scope needs some work. ATM of Boston and Springfield are good ATM resources.

Is there interest in engaging a local school in telescope building activities?

### YFOS

**Larry Lopez** reported that the warming hut needs a screen cleaning. He will follow up with email. The propane has been turned off and the porta-potty will be pumped.

The observatory site has a sink hole.

### Astrophotography

**Gardner Gerry** reported that we had a slide show running at Astronomy Day with 82 images, all from the pictures forum at the website.

The club has a 35mm camera.

### Webmaster

No report. **Matt Marulla** has done a lot of work for the EOC.

### Board of Directors

No report.

### Book of the Month

**Peter Kelly** presented Parallax, the Race To Measure the Cosmos by Alan W. Hirshfield (ISBN 0-7167-3711-6). How the universe has been measured, from the ancient Greeks to the present. An excellent read concerning a supernova explosion.

**Mike Townsend** presented The Cambridge Double Star Atlas by James Mullaney and Wil Tirion (ISBN 978-0-521-49343-7), which he found at NEAF. The print is in green and useful under red light at night. The scale is generous. Each chart has a favorites list. The list is missing coordinates, and it would be nice if it were detachable.

### Miscellaneous Business

The club's fall Messier Marathon event will be hosted by the **Wickets** again.

### Evening Program

The Cassini/Huygen Prime Tour and Extended Mission, presented by **Ted Blank**.

★ Bill Steele

### The Bottom Line

<b>Starting Balance:</b>	<b>\$5530.13</b>
<b>Deposits/Credits:</b>	
Membership:	75.00
Donations:	100.00
Bank interest:	2.82
Mugs:	10.00
Total :	187.82
<b>Accounts/Paid:</b>	
Insurance:	98.67
Handy House:	54.30
Pro Portsmouth:	260.00
Total:	412.97
<b>Net Account Balance:</b>	<b>\$5304.98</b>
<b>Petty cash drawer:</b>	\$100.00
<b>Cash Balance:</b>	<b>\$5404.98</b>

**Membership:** 125

### New members:

**John Russell**, Bedford NH

**Evan McCartney**, Concord NH

**Scott Tierno**, Candia NH

**Krista Couturier**, Deering NH

★ Ken Charles



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

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**DEADLINE July 2009 Issue: 5 PM July 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:**

NHAS  
P.O. Box 5823  
Manchester, NH 03108-5823  
Attn: Treasurer

**Send E-mail to:**

[info@nhastro.com](mailto:info@nhastro.com)

**Use our web site:**

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

**This month's contributors:**

Rich DeMidio, Alan Shirey, Gardner Gerry, Tom Cocchiario, Bill Steele, David Speltz, Joe Derek, Matt Amar, Marc Stowbridge, Larry Lopez, John Blackwell, Ken Charles

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**New Hampshire Astronomical Society**  
**P.O. Box 5823**  
**Manchester, NH 03108-5823**



## NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
NHAS Business Meeting	June 19	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Coffee House Night	June 26	7:00 PM	YFOS
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	July 3	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Daytime Program	July 7	2:00 PM	Manchester City Library, Manchester NH
Educational Outreach Committee	July 10	6:30 PM	Ralph Pill Building, Concord NH
NHAS Business Meeting	July 17	7:30 PM	St. Anselm College, Manchester NH
Goffstown Public Library Sky Watch	July 22	8:30 PM	Cemetary Field, Rte. 114, Goffstown NH
Coffee House Night	July 24	7:00 PM	YFOS
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	August 7	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
NHAS Business Meeting	August 21	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH