

Amherst and Goffstown Beat the Weather

President's Message

The arrival of the Spring Equinox and the end of Winter remind us that time is both linear (everything changes) and cyclic (often the change is to something familiar).

As the weather improves we should have fewer cancellations of our sky-watches. If you haven't been to one recently, try one! With or without a telescope you will be welcome. The great crowd-pleaser Saturn is back in the sky and it's fun to see how much our viewers enjoy seeing the ringed planet!

★ John Bishop
NHAS President 2011

Highlights for This Month

Winters tend to be overcast in New England, and this year has been no exception. Nevertheless, we still managed to hold a few public observing events.

Our annual Spring Messier Marathon event is scheduled for the Lopez residence the weekend of 1 April.

★ Paul Winalski
NHAS Secretary 2011

Board of Directors Report

The Chair has little to report. I am expecting to transfer the Club XT6 and accessories to **Mike Townsend** who has volunteered to be its caretaker.

Bad weather has stopped progress on the 10" Coultter. I have found a

focuser in a box of Stellafane acquisitions that allow some eyepieces to focus. I am hoping for a decent Friday or Saturday night to finish collimating it and further testing.

★ John Rose

Spring Messier Marathon

The 18th century French comet hunter Charles Messier published a catalogue of 103 celestial objects that shouldn't be mistaken for comets. Later extended to 110 objects, Messier's catalogue has many of the best deep sky objects in the Northern Hemisphere.

During the days surrounding the Spring Equinox, it is possible for the keen observer in mid-Northern latitudes to see all 110 of the Messier objects in a single evening. This is called running the Messier Marathon.

Larry and Linda Lopez have again graciously offered to host the NHAS annual Messier Marathon event at their home in New Boston. See the Members' Forum area at the NHAS website for driving instructions to the Lopez residence.

How many Messier objects can *you* find in one evening? Try your luck at this event. Or just show up for the food and socializing.

Festivities start mid afternoon on 1 April, and go through the night to the morning of April 2. If there is bad weather on 1 April, the event will take place on 2 April regardless of the weather—if there's no

opportunity to observe, we will just socialize.

Even if you never take a look at the sky, the dried beef and chili are worth coming to the event.

★ Paul Winalski

Amherst Library Sky Watch, 11 February

On Feb 11, 2011, NHAS donated a telescope to the Amherst Library under the club's Library Telescope Program. We kicked off the event by hosting a talk and a sky watch. I gave an introductory presentation inside at 4 PM. The room holds 40, but they had booked 69 by the time of the event!

After the talk, we held an observing session outside. Even though it was 5 PM and not dark yet, we had no trouble finding the 1st Quarter Moon and Jupiter to show to the patrons. There was much enthusiasm and some local people stayed and asked questions long after the even was over.



★ Ed Ting

Goffstown Public Library Sky Watch, 23 February

For many years now we have held a summer sky watch for the Goffstown Public Library. The event is always one of our best attended and most loved for the crowd of enthusiastic people who show up, and for the gracious hospitality of our hosts. It's also notorious for the many hungry mosquitoes who show up.

This year the Library invited us for a winter observing event as well. Our first attempt was clouded out, but we got clear skies the second time around. The usual observing venue hadn't been plowed so we set up scopes in the parking lot behind the library. Viewing was somewhat restricted, but we nonetheless managed to show off the night sky to the hardy souls who braved the cold.

★ Paul Winalski

I went to the sky watch at the Goffstown library. The location was in-town with lots of lights but the skies were clear. There was a small but enthusiastic group there to see what we could show them. Jupiter was low in the sky and close to featureless but the four moons were easy to see. I showed Jupiter, M35, M81 and M82, and γ Andromedae. At the end when there just a few people I showed M76.

Bill Steele gave the indoor presentation. Other members there included **Paul Winalski**, **Gardner Gerry** and a new member named John.

Inside the library I got to see a real "library telescope". The librarian said that it's popular but that some people are scared to take it out because they fear they will break it. She also said that a library in Arizona had emailed the Goffstown library asking for help on setting up a library telescope program.

★ John Bishop

We received this letter of thanks:

"Thank you for your presentation and skywatch yesterday. I think everyone had a lot of fun! Please

extend my thanks to the other members of your group that kindly brought their telescopes and weathered the cold with us. We look forward to seeing everyone again in summer.

Regards,

*Marsha McKay
Head of Youth Services
Goffstown Public Library"*

★ Bill Steele

Observing Report, Nashua NH, 8 March

After a long string of nights that were either too windy or not clear, there was a clear calm night. I set up my Off-Axis-6.5 to cool for three hours before using it. With a cooled mirror and good seeing I took the opportunity to do a star collimation. Doing the collimation was the main point of the observing session, as my usual observing spot was still deep in snow and thus I had only a limited amount of sky I could look at.

The conditions were good. Stars showed flashes of arcs of the first diffraction ring. Castor split easily at 76X. The third star was easily visible.

Saturn was up and I moved my telescope much closer to a streetlight to look at it. The rings are more open now; I could see Cassini's Division in the ansae. In my view, the rings cross the planet "above" the equator. The body of the planet had a light zone below the ring and a dark band below the zone. Three moons were visible: Dione, Titan and Rhea (confirmed by CalSky). There were two other dim specks of light which I noted in my sketch, but CalSky clearly shows that they were not moons. Presumably they are background stars.

★ John Bishop

NHAS February 2011 Business Meeting

The February business meeting was held at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center on 18 February, our President, **John Bishop**, presiding.

President's Report

There has been too much snow this winter!

Thank you for all the help in finding speakers for the NHAS business meetings.

In Astronomy news:

- The Sun, after two years of inactivity, is waking up again. We had an X-class solar flare recently, and there is a good chance of Aurora Borealis as a result.
- The Kepler-11 spacecraft has discovered a 6-planet system.

Board of Directors

John Rose reports that the club's loaner scope program is moving ahead:

- The XT6 is ready to be loaned out and has a borrower lined up.
- We have two volunteers to be caretakers (providing physical storage) for scopes.
- A 10-inch Coulter was donated and is being refurbished.

Membership

Bill Steele reported that he is scheduling more Astro 101/201 workshops for club members. Email notifications will be sent one month prior to the planned event and the final reminder will be sent two days before the workshop.

Web requests for memberships are still coming in at a good rate.

The cleanup of the membership email distribution list and of website access has been stalled.

Astrophotography

Gardner Gerry reports that a presentation on Astrophotography was given at the January NHAS business meeting.

There are a lot of excellent images being posted in the NHAS Pictures forum. Check it out!

Ed Ting will give a presentation on webcam Astrophotography at the March business meeting.

Educational Outreach

Matt Amar and **Rich Schueller** report that **Ted Blank** met with the Discovery Center staff concerning our participation in AeroSpaceFest

2011. This will be a two-day event this year—a Friday night sky watch and a Saturday daytime event. We will be coordinating with the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center’s advertising effort this year and not holding our own publicity campaign. We will be hosting the Friday night outdoor sky watch. On Saturday we will again have an outdoor presentation at the excellent location we had last year, along with an indoor presentation on the second floor, as last year. We will again assist in manning the MSDC observatory.

Unfortunately, our first two events planned at the Rey Center in Waterville Valley have been clouded out.

We are looking into supporting MSDC’s Astronomy Bowl event again by providing prizes for the winners.

Public Observing

Marc Stowbridge asks that sky watch requests go through the website as opposed to other channels.

Library Telescope Program: There was an article on us in the January issue of *Sky & Telescope*. A letter to the editor of *Astronomy* magazine is upcoming. The Astronomy Outreach Foundation, a consortium of amateur Astronomy vendors and other organizations interested in the hobby, has posted a description of our LTP on their website. Similar efforts starting up elsewhere (Arizona, San Diego) are referencing us and linking to us. Emails asking about the program have come in from as far away as New Zealand. We have placed our 19th scope; Rye should be the 20th.

Miscellaneous Business

Dave McDonald thanked the club for their participation in AeroSpaceFest. The Discovery Center can always use more volunteers to man the observatory.

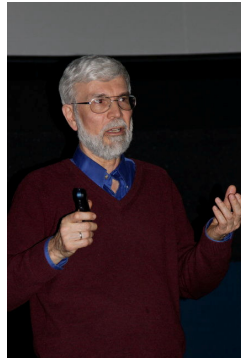
Book of the Month

Tom Cocchiaro presented The Essential Cosmic Perspective (Jeffrey Bennett, Megan Donahue, Nicholas Schneider, Mark Voit), a textbook used to teach Astronomy

at the University of New Hampshire.

Evening Presentation

Dr. Eberhard Möbius, Professor of Space Plasma Physics at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space at the University of New Hampshire, gave a wonderful talk on his work in conjunction with NASA’s Interstellar Boundary Explorer (IBEX) space mission.



Dr. Möbius (Dave Weaver photo)

Professor Möbius led the design of the IBEX hardware at UNH, which have allowed direct observation, and the production of all-sky maps of, low energy neutral hydrogen, oxygen, and helium gas flow in the heliosheath (the boundary between the outer reaches of the Solar System and the interstellar medium).

The Bottom Line

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Starting Balance: | \$9278.60 |
| Deposits/Credits: | |
| Membership (renewals): | 60.00 |
| Membership (new): | 120.00 |
| Donations: | 10.00 |
| Bank Interest: | 1.74 |
| Calendars: | 7.00 |
| Total : | 198.74 |
| Accounts/Paid: | |
| Peerless Insurance: | 1308.00 |
| Cynric (plowing): | 290.13 |
| State of NH Corp Div: | 27.00 |
| US Postmaster (PO box): | 140.00 |
| Total: | 1765.13 |
| Net Account Balance: | \$7712.21 |
| Petty cash drawer: | \$100.00 |
| Cash Balance: | \$7812.21 |

Membership: 128

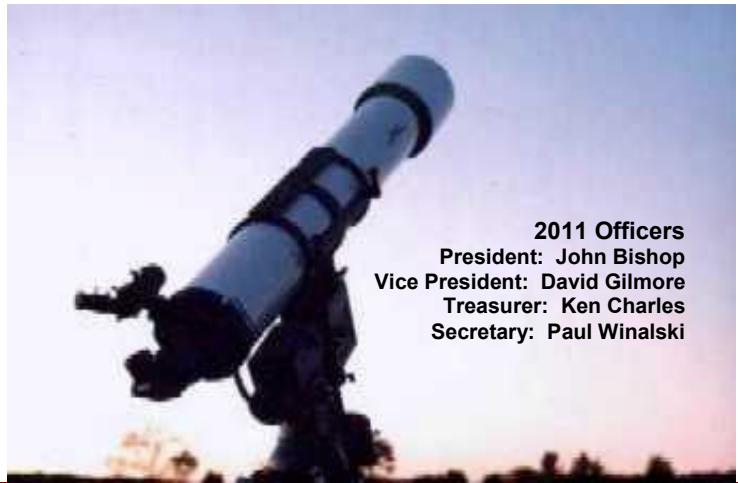
Donations:

Denis Parent (YFOS) 10.00

New Members:

- Chet Myslinski**, Harvard, MA
- Art Gardner**, Hudson NH
- Denis Parent**, Merrimack NH
- Jay Volinski**, Dover NH

★ Ken Charles
NHAS Treasurer 2011



2011 Officers
President: John Bishop
Vice President: David Gilmore
Treasurer: Ken Charles
Secretary: Paul Winalski

DEADLINE April 2011 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:

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

Send E-mail to:

info@nhastro.com

Use our web site:

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

This month's contributors:

John Rose, Ed Ting, Bill Steele, John Bishop, Ken Charles

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NHAS Upcoming Events

| Event | Date | Time | Location |
|---|----------|---------|--|
| Sandwich Central School Sky Watch | March 23 | 7:00 PM | Sandwich Central School, Sandwich NH |
| Chichester Globe at Night and Sky Watch | March 23 | 7:00 PM | Chichester NH |
| North Hampton School Sky Watch | March 23 | 7:00 PM | North Hampton School, North Hampton NH |
| Coffee House Night | March 25 | 5:00 PM | YFOS |
| Spring Messier Marathon | April 1 | 3:00 PM | Lopez residence, New Boston NH |
| Discovery Center Sky Watch | April 1 | 7:00 PM | McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH |
| Thorntons Ferry & Mastricola Sky Watch | April 6 | 7:00 PM | Thorntons Ferry School, Merrimack NH |
| Sidewalk Astronomy | April 9 | 6:00 PM | Market Square, Portsmouth NH |
| NHAS Business Meeting | April 15 | 7:30 PM | McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH |
| Stratham Hill Park Sky Watch | April 21 | 7:00 PM | Stratham Hill Park, Stratham NH |
| Highland-Goffe's Falls Sky Watch | April 22 | 7:30 PM | Highland-Goffe's Falls School, Manchester NH |
| Nichols Memorial Library Sky Watch | April 26 | 7:00 PM | Nichols Memorial Library, Kingston NH |