

Messier Marathon

President's Message

I'm just back from NEAF.

One of the highlights was a live rendition of a song based on "YMCA" by the Village People. It was called "NEAF" and had astronomy-related lyrics.

The singers were Craig Weatherwax of OPT, Gary Hand of Hands On Optics, Vic Maris of Stellarvue and another person I didn't recognize. They were dressed in costume: a biker in leather, a policeman, an Indian chief and I think a cowboy.

There's a lot of enthusiasm in astronomy and at NEAF. It's nice to see it comes with a sense of humor!

★ John Bishop
NHAS President 2011

Highlights for This Month

Unfortunately we got clouded out for most of our scheduled public events this month. One notable exception was this month's scheduled sky watch for the Rey Center—our fourth scheduled presentation there, and the first one that *didn't* get clouded out!

Our annual Messier Marathon celebration did take place on the back-up date. Sky conditions made it a mainly indoor affair, but a great time was had by all, as always.

★ Paul Winalski
NHAS Secretary 2011

Library Telescope Program Update

I have ordered telescopes twenty and twenty one, through the generosity of: **David Speltz**:

Portsmouth Library and Mal Cameron: Deerfield Library.

They will be here soon and I'll modify them. If anyone would like to watch or do the modifications themselves, you are welcome to do so.

I have also received and replied to inquiries from a number of astronomy clubs in (to mention a few...) New Zealand (1), Florida (2) Ohio (2) Arizona (2) Maine (2) California (1) and Massachusetts (1). Most were tasked by their Boards of Directors to ask specific questions, so they seem serious.

★ Marc Stowbridge

Marc Stowbridge sent a letter to the editor of *Astronomy* magazine describing our efforts on the Library Telescope Program. The letter is published in the May issue of *Astronomy*.

★ Tom Cocchairo

Presentation at North Hampton School, 23 March

This was the reschedule date for a sky watch, and, alas, sky conditions again precluded outdoor observing. I gave an indoor presentation on "what we *would* have seen in the night sky, had it not been hopelessly cloudy". Lots of images of what we would have shown had the sky watch been possible. I also had show-and-tell with telescopes (Mr. T. the big reflector and TV 85 the small refractor).

The presentation went well and there were a lot of very perceptive and keen questions from the audience. For me the most incisive

question was, "What is the astronomical breakthrough you most wish to see during your lifetime?" My answer was the discovery of evidence of life on an exoplanet.

★ Paul Winalski

Rey Center Sky Watch, Waterville Valley NH, 2 April

The fourth "inaugural" sky watch with the Rey Center came off without a hitch. The clouds were threatening all day but we decided to go ahead, trusting the Campton Clear Sky Chart, and it did not disappoint. We had approximately two dozen passers-by join us and they were thrilled with views of Saturn, the Orion Nebula, binocular tours of the Hyades, Pleiades, Double Cluster in Perseus, and green laser tours of the constellations. The sky watch lasted from 7 to 9 PM, though we did stay a little past that until all were satisfied.

This being the first of this monthly dark-sky watch to occur with the Rey Center, we (the EOC) were particularly interested in the logistics of the watch. The coordinators from the Rey Center contacted me approximately one week prior to the watch and we remained in contact up to the go/no-go call and they were quite receptive to my telling them to weigh the Clear Sky Charts accuracy in making the final call.

Initial contact included inquiry as to whether I was taking the Rey Center's offer of gratis overnight

lodging and I received my hotel confirmation number within 24 hours of asking for a room. I stayed at the Snowy Owl Inn complete with a wine and cheese bar in the evening and continental breakfast in the morning. There is a swimming pool there along with jacuzzi and fitness room making for a very comfortable stay. Talk about being spoiled for simply enjoying a dark sky.

The location of the watch is next to the Curious George cottage in a parking lot easily accessible for the public and where all lights can be controlled. Hours of the watch are now going to be tied to sunset (an oversight of the Rey Center in initial planning) and with a little assistance from the EOC I think that this can develop into a very well attended watch as we get a few more "under our belts". Currently, all spots that NHAS have committed to are booked with volunteers but I am confident that we will be further extending our commitment and I highly recommend being the NHAS volunteer when the next round of booking for this event comes around. I know that I will gladly do it again.

★ Matt Amar

Messier Marathon, New Boston NH, 2 April

First I'd like to thank everyone who came. It was a wonderful event. The food was great.

It turned out the New Moon was on April 1. I worked the April Fool's angle as much as I dared. It snowed. We rescheduled the Marathon to April 2.

Plowing the snow on the semi-frozen driveway flattened it nicely. The observing field I left alone so it would stay frozen. By sunset it was clear and a little soft.

Rich DeMidio set up his scope in the Daylight causing rain. He put his scope in the garage and it cleared. We had some clouds move in. The clear sky chart said it would get better. It did, and was very good until midnight when some

haze showed up. I was imaging using ACP/Scheduler from DC3 Dreams to automate imaging through the night. People would wander by, and look at what I had just imaged.



Messier Marathon observing field. Joe Derek photo.

Twenty-one people showed, six stayed all night, one left at 3 AM, temperatures were moderate:

Linda Lopez (food beef stew) 55 objects, TeleVue 102, Brandon 80mm, Ethos 13mm, Nagler 7mm, Panoptic 35mm.

Larry Lopez 2 objects by eye, 89 imaged perhaps 9 of which were very poor.

Ken Charles, (food meatballs).

Kristy Tierney, (food potato salad), first Messier Marathon

Dusty Lavoie, first time with Kristy at a Messier Marathon

David Gilmore aka Rags, (food Nori baked goods), 57 objects.

Rich DeMidio, (food beef jerky), 72 objects, TeleVue102, Nagler 31mm, Nagler 22mm, Ethos 17mm.

Joe Derek, (food wings), 81 objects.

David Weaver.

Stijn Brand, 30 objects.

Marion Hochuli, (food veggies), 41 objects.

Ed Ting, 9 objects and one image of Saturn.

John Pappas.

Gardner Gerry, 99 objects, 70mm TeleVue Pronto, 17mm Nagler, 13mm Nagler.

Mike Townsend.

John Rose.

Herb Bubert, (food shrimp), 102 objects, 11" Starmaster and 22mm Nagler. Binos. Overslept nap and missed M83.

Sue Wickett.

Ben Wickett.

Scott Wickett

Mari Anne McDaniel with the Wickett group.

★ Larry Lopez

Thank you for hosting all of us! I saw about 30 objects in three hours in my first partial marathon.

★ Stijn Brand

I stayed all night. Food was great as always. I brought a Mexican cheese dip and chips. I can't remember all the food but there was plenty and it was all great!

As to the observing, I found 99 Messier objects with the 70mm TeleVue Pronto using the 17mm Nagler T4 and 13mm Nagler T6 eyepieces. I should have had 100, but missed going for M26 while it was still up due to my charts being mixed up in my 3 ring binder. I also missed M74, M77, M33, M32, M110, M55, M75, M72, M73 and M30.

Thanks again to Larry and Linda for hosting our Spring Messier Marathon!

★ Gardner Gerry

My thanks to you and Linda again for hosting a wonderful event. In the spirit of New England weather, we had nearly all the elements including Wind, Rain, and Sunshine. As fast the sky darkened and rained, it cleared up beautiful for a wonderful evening and morning of observing. My thanks to everyone who attended for the great food and camaraderie.

For the record ...

Telescope: TV102

Eyepieces: 31mm Nagler, 22mm Nagler, 17mm Ethos.

Results:

72 objects observed

I took my first break too soon and missed some objects in Puppis, Canis Major, and Monoceros

I still need to work more on the Virgo cluster—only got about four of those objects

Managed to get M31, but M33 was too low.

Not bad for my first time with this scope. I also learned of operational efficiency improvements to reduce the amount of time to quickly lookup and record observations.

The starbeam worked well but I can not wonder if a Telrad might fit on a TV102 or whether it would be worth to use one. I like the degree markings, which help in positioning the finder. It's hard to judge the degrees from the guide stars for hopping in the starbeam. But the flip mirror works great which is the tradeoff.

I had a 2.6 FOV with my 31mm Nagler and 2.0 FOV with the 22mm.

★ Rich DeMidio

Mercury Observing, Litchfield NH, 23 March

Finally a clear night at this current apparition. I went to a small parking lot along Rt. 3A close to home that provides a nice western horizon. At 7:10 Jupiter was visible, but I could not find Mercury. By 7:20 I could see it with my 9x25 Nikon binos so I set up Mr. Pronto and got some observing in. At 68x with the 7mm TMB planetary ep Mercury was a pale yellowish object, and showing the phase of a 1st quarter moon when the seeing allowed. Higher magnification with the 5mm TMB (96x) did nothing as the planet was only about 8° above the horizon and swimming about in the poor seeing. Obviously I need to fill out my planetary ep set with the missing focal lengths. NEAF is coming...

Happy to visit Mercury again, especially now that Messenger is in orbit there.

★ Gardner Gerry

NHAS March 2011 Business Meeting

The March business meeting was held at St. Anselm College on 18 March, our President, **John Bishop**, presiding.

President's Report

Welcome to spring!

Future business meeting dates for the second half of the year are being set.

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

Board of Directors

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

- The XT6 has a caretaker.
- Refurbishment of the 10" Coulter is in progress.

Membership

Bill Steele reported nothing new to add. A new member who joined at Goffstown was present at the meeting.

Webmaster

The cleanup of the member email list is still incomplete but is in progress. The NHAS website is now a cloud-based service as opposed to being hosted on **Matt Marulla's** personal server.

Astrophotography

Gardner Gerry invites us to check out the many wonderful images posted in the "Pictures" forum on the NHAS website. He also recommends an article on "Do Science with Your DSLR" in the April issue of *Sky & Telescope*.

Educational Outreach

Matt Amar and **Rich Schueller** report that 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 solar observing, static telescope displays, and a magnification display outdoors. Indoors we will again have a booth and will assist MSDC in manning their observatory.

Unfortunately, all three events at the Rey Center have been clouded out. The April, May, and June events are not on the Rey Center website calendar. We will be checking with them about this.

We are looking into supporting MSDC's Astronomy Bowl event

again by providing prizes for the winners.

The Library Telescope Program has placed twenty telescopes. Scopes 21 and 22 (both donated) are on the way to Deerfield and Portsmouth.

Public Observing

No report.

Miscellaneous Business

We need speakers for meetings after March.

The Messier Marathon will take place on April 1 and 2.

Book of the Month

John Rose presented Phil Harrington's latest book [Cosmic Challenge](#). A feature of the book is that it's organized by observing category (naked eye vs. binoculars vs. small telescope, etc.).

Scope of the Month

Ed Ting presented the new Synta-produced C90 Maksutov-Cassegrain. In 1980 the C90 was \$315, which works out to \$733 in 2010 dollars. The new C90 comes with a 32mm eyepiece, 12mm Plössl, and water-resistant backpack, all for \$159 shipped. That works out to \$66.09 in 1980 dollars.

Evening Presentation

Ed Ting presented an introduction to webcam astrophotography. It turns out that one can use an ordinary USB-based webcam to produce very fine images of brighter celestial objects such as the Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn. One can use modern image stacking software to remove variables such as air turbulence and tracking error. Astrophotography need not be an incredible money sink.

The Bottom Line

Starting Balance:	\$7721.21
Deposits/Credits:	
Membership:	120.00
Donations:	95.00
Bank Interest:	1.73
Calendars:	7.00
Total :	216.73
Accounts/Paid:	
Cynric (plowing):	561.80

Total: 561.80
Net Account Balance: \$7367.14
Petty cash drawer: \$100.00
Cash Balance: \$7467/14

Membership: 133

Donations:

Portsmouth Skywatch (EOC) 75.00
Jordan Chadwick (EOC) 20.00

New Members:

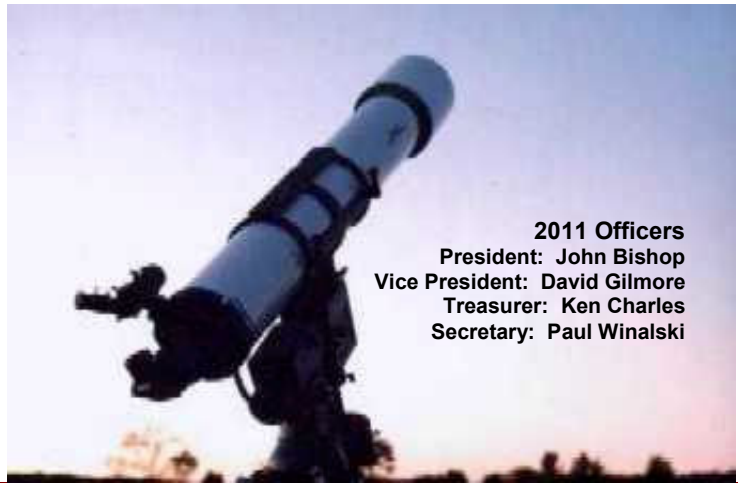
Patrick Adams, Amherst NH

Renae Bouchard, Bow NH

Shane Cross, Pelham NH

John Shnole, Dover NH

★ Ken Charles
NHAS Treasurer 2011



2011 Officers
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DEADLINE May 2011 Issue: 5 PM May 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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P.O. Box 5823
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Attn: Treasurer

Send E-mail to:

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Use our web site:

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

This month's contributors:

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
NHAS Coffee House Night	April 29	5:00 PM	YFOS
AeroSpaceFest 2011 Sky Watch	April 29	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
AeroSpaceFest 2011 Daytime Events	April 30	10:00 AM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Discovery Center Sky Watch	May 6	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Sidewalk Astronomy	May 7	6:00 PM	Market Square, Portsmouth NH
Rey Center Sky Watch	May 7	6:30 PM	Curious George Cottage, Waterville Valley NH
Alvirne High School Sky Watch	May 10	7:30 PM	Alvirne High School, Hudson NH
Antrim Elementary School Sky Watch	May 12	6:30 PM	Antrim Elementary School, Antrim NH
Greenland Central School Sky Watch	May 13	7:30 PM	Greenland Central School, Greenland NH
Nichols Memorial Library Sky Watch	May 17	7:00 PM	Nichols Memorial Library, Kingston NH
NHAS Business Meeting	May 20	7:30 PM	St. Anselm College, Manchester NH
NHAS Coffee House Night	May 27	5:00 PM	YFOS