

Fall Messier Marathon

President's Message

I like making connections between details of daily life and bigger pieces of science. For example, there's the connection between the tilt of the Earth's axis and carving pumpkins for Halloween. Perhaps you will like it as much as I do!

You may have noticed the way that Thanksgiving and Christmas are almost the same event: they share turkey, inconvenient travel and family get-togethers. Halloween is a third event at the end of the year of a less similar form.

As my father pointed out to me long ago, we have Thanksgiving precisely because it's **not** Christmas: the Pilgrims didn't like Christmas because of its pagan associations but they wound up creating another festival in its place. Much later, President Lincoln used that ancient local holiday as a precedent for a non-denominational event during the Civil War;

Any society that depends on agriculture in Northern Europe or North America will wind up wanting to have a festival after the harvest is done to celebrate the success of the agricultural year. That'll happen in late October or November. Those dates don't line up with the solstices or equinoxes. The Celts connected those astronomical events with the agricultural cycle by using the "cross-quarter" days. Those days are the days halfway between each pair of the astronomical events. For example, another harvest festival, Halloween, is located halfway

between the fall equinox and the winter solstice.

So we have Halloween when we do because it's a compromise between global astronomical events and local growing seasons. And we have pumpkins because they are a high-yielding plant, the fruit of which keeps well.

When you read this, Halloween and Thanksgiving will be over and the solstice festival will still be in the future; our next cross-quarter day is less memorable but you might like to know that it is called "Imbolc" or "Candlemas", happens on February second, and is connected to sheep-herding!

★ John Bishop
NHAS President 2011

Highlights for This Month

The Wickett family were again our most gracious hosts for the NHAS Fall Messier Marathon event.

The Library Telescope Program continues to spread nationwide and worldwide. We have a report from Michigan of a satellite program.

And we continue to participate in a large number of sky watch and other outreach events.

★ Paul Winalski
NHAS Secretary 2011

It's Election Time

It's time for NHAS to choose its leaders for 2012. At the December business meeting we will elect the officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, for one-year terms) and one member of the Board of Directors (for a three-year

term). All current officers are eligible for re-election.

These nominations were made and seconded at the November Business Meeting.

President: John Bishop
Vice President: David Gilmore
Secretary: Paul Winalski
Treasurer: Ken Charles
Director: Ted Blank

At December's meeting, there will be opportunity for further nominations, and then we will hold the election.

If you think you can contribute to the club at a major level, now is the time to step up. Or, if you know of a member who you think could contribute good leadership, this is the time to put their name in nomination.

★ Paul Winalski

Fall Messier Marathon, 22 October

The Marathon was originally scheduled for September but few were going to be able to attend and the weather was not very good so I canceled it. The Wicketts suggested rescheduling it and after having to move it out of the way of NEFAF and the Friday business meeting we ended up on October 22. The clear sky clock looked great but the weather underground was not so good for the early hours. In fact it cleared and it was pretty good after a few hours.

I didn't get a good count but we had more than ten people attend. Food was very good.

Many came early and left early but this is pretty typical. The early clouds did not help, of course.

This was a very good, relaxed and satisfying Marathon.

Linda Lopez 37 Objects most after 1AM, TV102, brought beef stew

Larry Lopez, 7 Object, Naked Eye, and misc other peoples telescopes (my preferred optical instrument).

The weather was very good when it got late. We finished up by something like 4:30 or 5 AM.

Sue, Scot and Ben Wickett: Thanks for the great time, again!!

★ Larry Lopez

I stayed until 11.30 PM and saw 35 Messier objects. I used a 100mm refractor on an alt-az mount and did all my observations at 33X. Thank you to the Wicketts for hosting the event.

★ Stijn Brand

Seventeen Ghost Hunt objects, Comet Garrarad and several other objects, mostly before 12:00 AM. Had a fantastic time! Nice meeting several people for the first time. Thanks Scott and Sue for hosting.

★ Stu May

Ghost Hunt. I found a total of eighteen objects. The short number is because I really took my time getting used to my new usage model of the maps at the eyepiece. I took away a few lessons learned to improve. I also packed up and left just after 1AM. Turns out that being in front, was not a good decision. After everyone in the front packed up and left, it wasn't fun being alone. Besides, I kept hearing strange sounds from the woods across the yard and it was just making me nervous (yes, I am a baby). Finally, knowing that I had to get things done today before heading out on business tomorrow, it was best not to stay all night Next year, I will definitely go into the back area and hopefully find a lot more objects. In the meantime, I will be practicing my completing of the list hopefully over the next months from the driveway and at YFOS.

As usual, the food was awesome and the camaraderie even better. My thanks to Sue, Scott, and Ben for another great session. I'm appreciative all of you opening your home to everyone.

★ Rich DeMidio

Thank you Sue, Scot and Ben for hosting. Thank you Ken for letting me use your Ghost Hunt list. Thanks, Scot, for the ride on the back of your riding mower. I stayed until 2 AM but only did thirty-one Ghost Hunt objects. I used my 11" Starmaster most of the night because I once again had trouble with my #S@&%* iOptron Minitower. I apologize to anyone I offended with my foul language on the observing field. I also apologize to Larry for giving him the Minitower then taking it back, not once, but twice!

★ Herb Bubert

Ghost Hunt and a few miscellaneous objects.

I got through two and a half pages of the GH (fifty-one objects) before deciding to pack it in as the moon was due up shortly. In addition to the GH objects, also observed Comet Garrad and spent a half hour or more with Herb just observing the sky with binoculars, since I had to use them for the Northern Coal Sack in the GH anyway. Enjoyed the company, though I was only inside once during the evening. Special thanks to Scott for transportation (via lawn tractor) from the "back nine" up to the house and back. Left with Linda still working diligently on her MM list, and Larry keeping her company.

★ Ken Charles

Rye Public Library Sky Watch, 26 October

Because of overcast skies the outdoor sky watch part of this event was cancelled and it was an indoor presentation only. I gave an extended version of the usual "what's in tonight's sky" talk with more images of the objects they might have seen if we could have held the sky watch. I also threw in

some slides on astronomical distances. There were about ten people there—Andrew said that was probably because most folks thought the whole thing was cancelled, not just the outdoor portion.

The talk went very well, and the library plans to schedule a sky watch for January or February, or possibly in the spring.

★ Paul Winalski

Hooksett Library Sky Watch, 2 November

Kids still say the darnedest things.

A nine year old girl and her mother stopped by the scope to look at the moon. Here's how the conversation went when the little girl was at the eyepiece.

Me: "Do you know what all those holes are called?"

Her: "Yes. Craters."

Me: "Right! And do you know how they are formed?"

Her: "Yes—by astronauts hitting the moon!"

Ouch!

★ Ted Blank

The sky-watch was part of the delivery of two new library telescopes for the Hooksett Library. **Bob Veillieux** was the presenter and ran the two library scopes during the sky watch.

I set up my DGM Optics 6.5-inch off-axis Newtonian on my Osypowski equatorial platform. As usual, the platform worked perfectly even when looking at Jupiter with high magnification. The sky was initially partly cloudy; that changed to overall haze. The seeing was fair. Just as everyone started to leave at 9:00 PM the sky cleared up—isn't that always the way it works!

Jupiter showed the two big bands, with some darker spots on the North Equatorial Band; there were hints of the other bands but mostly the rest of the planet showed no more detail. All four Galilean moons were visible; Europa was close to the planet and most of the people who

looked in my telescope could see it. The Moon showed a lot of detail when I used a moon filter to dim it down. There was a big crater on the terminator with a lit rim and a dark center in which two of the central peaks were lit. It was quite dramatic.

Other club members present were **Matt Amar** were with an 8-inch Newtonian on an equatorial mount and **Marc Stowbridge**.

★ John Bishop

Reeds Ferry School Sky Watch, 8 November

It had been several years since I'd been back to Reeds Ferry, traditionally one of NHAS's largest sky watches. It was good to see that attendance was as strong as ever. I counted about eleven NHAS members in the field. I set up my Celestron C6 about 6:30 PM, and noticed right away that the seeing seemed to be quite steady.



The "footprint on the Moon", Schiller crater (Ed Ting image)

Hmmm.... there were no kids in the field yet, so I quickly powered up the laptop, fired up the Imaging Source DBK camera, and took a few quick captures on the moon. As it turned out, just then the kids came swarming down on us and the crowds didn't let up until two hours later. I never got a chance to change my rig back into visual mode, so I improvised and used the live feed on my laptop as a teaching tool. I showed Aristarchus, Plato, and Schiller. The latter proved very interesting to kids as I pointed out that the crater is shaped like a giant 110 mile long footprint. Later, I heard kids exclaiming that they had seen the footprints left by the astronauts. I tried to correct them,

but my voice got drowned out in the noise.

Total attendance was very strong at about 250. My laptop batteries died just as I was packing up.

★ Ed Ting

Barrington Library Sky Watch, 9 November

Attendance was much higher than expected. Twenty-two people had pre-registered, but forty-three showed up for the talk. Fortunately **Bob Cossette** and **Herb Bubert** also brought scopes, so the lines didn't get too long. The full Moon hindered deep-sky observing, but we got excellent views of the Moon, Jupiter, double stars, and open clusters. I was also able to help two of the library patrons sort out their own scopes.

The site is a playground field next to the library. It's quite dark except for one very annoying security floodlight. The library is going to see about getting it temporarily disabled if we do another sky watch there. Putting a cardboard box over the light made it bearable.

★ Paul Winalski

NEFAF Feedback

We received this letter from the University of New Hampshire, regarding the New England Fall Astronomy Festival:

"Dear Members of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society: "It has been about a month since we held the New England Fall Astronomy Festival. As the organizing committee met Wednesday evening to discuss what went right and what went wrong, what we could have done better, and what NOT to change, it became very obvious that the Astronomy Festival was an enormously successful event because two organizations, both with their own strengths and areas of expertise came together so that a large astronomy outreach event could take place. And, in that event, hundreds of New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts residents

were given a chance to experience a little piece of what excites us all very much—the universe around us and how accessible it is. There is no doubt that we achieved our objective and much more. We may never know the full impact of NEFAF, or perhaps someday we will when a future Nobel prize-winning scientist makes their speech and makes an obscure reference to our humble festival!

"On behalf of the University of New Hampshire Physics Department, and all of those that helped to make NEFAF happen from the Durham end of the local universe, we would like to say thank you very much! This event would not have taken place and those young, budding scientists would never have enjoyed the astronomy experience they had if the New Hampshire Astronomical Society did not come to the table and extend its knowledge, its expertise, and its efforts to make NEFAF a reality.

"No doubt this is the result of all of the outreach NHAS has performed over the years. There is no more important or noble a duty for an astronomy organization to perform for society than to illustrate to the general public, in a variety of ways, what an exciting and wonderful universe we are all a part of. Each of you helped to make that happen at NEFAF. Thank you again for a job very well done.

"You may have heard rumors that there will be a NEFAF II. Well, that is what we met about on Wednesday night. Despite the ever increasing challenges of fund raising, we are going to try to make a go of holding NEFAF again next year and are working to put together an argument to gain the support of the University once again. We have learned much about how to make a large event like this happen and we will be putting a proposal together in a few weeks. We hope we can count on the support of NHAS. Thank you all! And, have a happy, safe, and restful Thanksgiving,

Sincerely,

*Professor Jim Ryan,
Observatory Manager Ian Cohen,
John S. Gianforte
University of New Hampshire”*

★ Ted Blank

Cub Scouts Pack 901, 15 November

The indoor presentation went very well. I gathered the Cubs around in a circle while I assembled and collimated Mr. T, the 14" TScope dob. As might be predicted, laser collimation was considered way cool by the Cubs.

Also this evening, Pack 901 awarded four or five Astronomy belt loops. It seems to be a popular topic with this Pack. I told the Pack leaders that we are available to provide telescopes, advice, and whatnot to Cub Scouts in pursuit of their Astronomy pin or belt loop.

The only regret is that we couldn't do outdoor observing, due to bad sky conditions.

★ Paul Winalski

Library Telescopes in Michigan

Our Library Telescope Program has been adopted in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I received this letter:

“Hi NHAS,

“I wanted to give you a little update on the Kalamazoo Astronomical Society's progress on the Library Telescope Program. First and foremost, I wanted to thank you for all the guidance you've given us in starting this program. We only hope that it takes off here as well as it has in New Hampshire.

“One regret from here in Michigan, I wish we had the dark skies here that you do ☺ That said, we'll accomplish what we can. Your club has a beautiful program, and has offered it to any club that is willing. The program is made easy, since all documentation and steps needed are on your website. What a gift!

“The program has been presented and accepted by our board, and is awaiting the finishing touches on the proposal to our first library. Our board has agreed upon the

purchasing of two telescopes, which will be placed in separate libraries. The board loved the idea, and some of the board members signed up on the spot to either help out or become foster parents! It was great!

“Personally, finding out about the program and working on proposals has been an absolute joy! The potential for this is truly exciting, which makes the entire process so much fun. When you're doing what you love, you don't work a day in your life!

“Our plan is to approach each library with our proposal within the next two weeks, followed by the purchasing and modifying of the telescopes. All it will depend on is which libraries accept, which is hopefully all of them! I appreciate your time, and wish you continued success on your library program as well!

Mike Cook,

*Kalamazoo Astronomical Society
Michigan”*

★ Marc Stowbridge

NHAS October 2011 Business Meeting

The October business meeting was held at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center on 21 October 2011, our President, **John Bishop**, presiding.

President's Report

It's time to start thinking about the 2012 NHAS officer elections. First nominations will be at the November business meeting.

NEFAF was a big success! **Tom Cocchiario**, who organized the event on our side, thanked all of the volunteers. UNH really took the ball and ran with it. Their marketing department gave us publicity, the University found us tents, porta-potties, etc. About 500 people attended; we would have had even more if we'd had better weather on Friday. UNH was over the moon about the event and wants to do it again next year.

Rich Schueller said that the Scope Clinic was pretty successful. He

helped out a couple with a 5" ETX. Rich was able to get the alignment corrected but something in the motor broke down. In the future we need a workbench or something for the scope clinic.

Orion and Oceanside Photo and Telescope sent \$3000 worth of equipment for the raffle, on short notice.

The Fall Messier Marathon is on 22 October, with no rain date. If skies are overcast we'll just socialize. Dinner is pot luck. The event is completely informal and it's OK to leave early.

YFOS

Larry Lopez reports that **Joe Derek** fixed the steps on the porta-potty. Larry fixed the dead outlet on the Observatory building.

Board of Directors

Gardner Gerry reports that NHAS is accepting the offer of a Celestron NexStar 8i. This could be raffled off at NEFAF 2 next year, or some other event. Surplus eyepieces from the Library Telescope Program are still for sale.

Membership

Bill Steele reports that last month's Astro 101 registration was filled with attendees. Members seem to prefer the more advanced Workshops; other presentations have had very low attendance.

Let Bill know if you have a workshop or course that you'd like to present, or if there is one that you'd like to see presented.

Astrophotography

Gardner Gerry reports that the sky has not been cooperating for imaging. But there is some new work on display in the Pictures forum at the NHAS website.

Educational Outreach

Rich Schueller reports that we are getting a bunch of web-based requests for library telescopes.

Marc Stowbridge and **Ted Blank** helped Plymouth State set up an old scope for use. **John Rose** helped get a scope set up. Volunteers for "scope clinic" work are needed—email Bill Steele.

It was suggested that we make it more prominent that our First Friday sky watches are also scope clinics.

Marc reports that the LTP continues to astound. The Royal Astronomical Society in Calgary, Alberta, Canada has set up a LTP and will be delivering their second scope soon. "Foster parents" for the NHAS LTP scopes are still welcome and needed!

The Cornerstones of Science people in Brunswick, Maine like our program a lot, especially the model of small telescopes with everything right there. They are talking about over 100 more scopes. Marc has asked Orion if they would like to help us modify the scopes. The follow-up scope modification party will probably be held on Saturday, 5 November.

Public Observing

Gardner Gerry reports that we were in Benedictine Park in Bedford for Bedford HS. It is a very nice site. There was a sky watch for Amherst Public Library the same night. The last MSDC first Friday event was successful. Market Square Day had 100s of people participating. We also did a successful event for the Pelham Boy Scouts.

Miscellaneous Business

We need guest speakers for the 2012 business meetings!

Rich Schueller knows of a Bird and Nature group in Athol, MA that is asking for a sky watch, and asked if anyone at NHAS wants to participate.

Matt Amar will meet with the Rey Center folks on 29 October, to collect feedback. There was some discussion about public participation, and whether we are getting a "return on investment" for our participation. It was pointed out that the event could be better publicized.

Meteorite of the Month

Bob Veilleux passed around a slice from the Fukang meteorite, from China. This is a Pallasite, from in between the core and outer crust of the asteroid Pallas.

Book of the Month

Marc Stowbridge presented The Power of Stars by Brian Penprase, and Packing for Mars by Mary Roach, which is about what it takes to get people into space and back in one piece. It is a fun book.

Evening Presentation

Sean Walker from *Sky & Telescope* gave a talk on Astro imaging.

The Bottom Line

Starting Balance:	\$9325.18
Deposits/Credits:	
Membership:	1020.00
Donations:	1005.00
Bank interest:	1.81
NEFAF raffle:	240.00
Sale of LTP eyepieces:	5.00
Total :	2271.81
Accounts/Paid:	
Rymes Propane (YFOS)	54.02
Kalmbach Publishing (calendars)	233.10
Total:	287.12
Net Account Balance:	\$11309.87
Petty cash drawer:	\$100.00
Cash Balance:	\$11409.87

Membership: 41
Peak for 2011 was 151

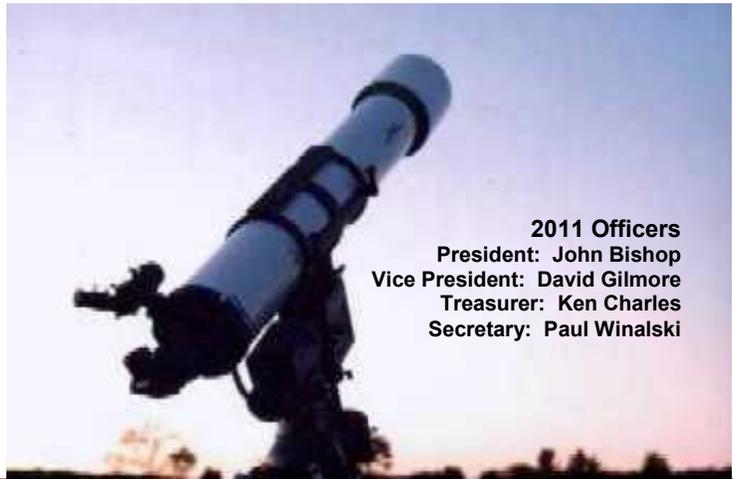
New Members:

Todd Nelson, Goffstown NH

Donations:

Hooksett Kiwanis	650.00 LTP
John Shonle	10.00
Ken McKenzie	15.00 YFOS
Jon Pounds	20.00 EOC
Tim Saguear	50.00
Rich DeMidio and	
Jean Buckley	40.00
Mike O'Shaughnessy	5.00
	200.00 EOC
Robert Zelons	15.00

★ Ken Charles
NHAS Treasurer 2011



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

DEADLINE December 2011 Issue: 5 PM December 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
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 Bishop, Larry Lopez, Stijn Brand, Stu May, Rich DeMidio, Herb Bubert, Ken Charles, Ted Blank, Ed Ting, Marc Stowbridge

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
Coffee House Night	November 25	5:00 PM	YFOS
Nashua Winter Holiday Stroll	November 26	5:00 PM	Main Street, Nashua NH
Rey Center Sky Watch	November 26	6:30 PM	Curious George Cottage, Waterville Valley NH
Maple Wood School Sky Watch	November 29	6:30 PM	Maple Wood School, Somersworth NH
Discovery Center Sky Watch	December 2	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Sidewalk Astronomy	December 3	6:00 PM	Market Square, Portsmouth NH
Broken Ground Elementary Sky Watch	December 7	6:30 PM	White Farm, Concord NH
Educational Outreach Committee Meeting	December 8	6:30 PM	Manchester City Library, Manchester NH
Gilmanton School Sky Watch	December 9	6:00 PM	Gilmanton School, Gilmanton NH
NHAS Business Meeting	December 16	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Rey Center Sky Watch	December 17	6:30 PM	Curious George Cottage, Waterville Valley NH
Coffee House Night	December 23	5:00 PM	YFOS