

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

December 2006

LOOKING UP

December 7 Thursday

Annual Meeting/Holiday
Party/Election of Board
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting
Holiday party follows—bring
a goodie to share

December 15th Friday

Members Night
8:00 p.m.
Harrington Beach S. Park
(see Page 4 for details)

December 21 Thursday

Board Meeting
Election of Officers
7:30 p.m.
Home of Jeff Setzer

January 4 Thursday

General Meeting
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

January 6 Saturday

Candlelight Hike/Ski
6—9 p.m.
Harrington Beach S. Park

January 18 Thursday

Board Meeting
7:30 p.m.
To be determined

Mercury Transit

Submitted by members of the NCSF

I had to work the day of the transit, but I moved my lunch hour to one hour later, and hoped for clear skies. I set up the solar dob in the parking lot, and got a few clear views as the transit started. As the transit progressed, a few of my co-workers came out for a look. They were fascinated about the event, but even more fascinated at the fact that they were looking at the sun (against everything they've always been told about going blind if you look at the sun). The larger sunspot was a bigger point of conversation than the transit itself! I packed up after about an hour as the clouds were taking over the view where I was. Everybody enjoyed the views.

Don Miles

At 1 PM, the wind was blowing at 15 knots and gusting to 25, but there was plenty of sun and a crowd of interested guests wanting to enjoy the transit. From Park Place, the air was too unsteady to view above 50x. All in all, about 55 employees took time away from their jobs to stand patiently in line to view. Rob mounted an Orion solar filter for an XT4.5 onto a homemade "front-side aperture mask" to fit his 13" AstroSystems Dobsonian. An ultra wide angle eyepiece provided spectacular views of the event.

A big sunspot near the solar limb was just a few degrees away from where Mercury began its transit. It gave quite an illustration of how large sunspots are. Mercury subtended an arc only about one fourth that of the sunspot. Due to increasing cloudcover, too thick to allow any view, the session ended at 2:15 PM.

Rob Powell

I wasn't able to get away from work, so my boss was nice enough to let me set up at work. It worked out well because the kids at the school I work at, were in church when the transit started. I was able to see the beginning of the transit, and then went back to watch it a few more times. The first and second graders were already psyched up about being able to see the transit after they were done with church. By the time they came out of church the clouds had just covered up the sun, so none of the kids got to see it. A few parents who were on hand earlier got a glimpse of it. I packed up, then after work headed out to Harrington Beach and got there just in time to see the last glimpse of the transit before the sun dipped below the tree line. Having also seen the transit of Venus, I was surprised by the small size of Mercury. But the large sunspot nearby added some interest to the view.

Joyce Jentges

Some members gathered at Harrington Beach for the publicized event. Charlotte and Gene DuPree, Bob Radtke, Tony Marek were among those who were available to show the public views of the transit. However, due to the cloudiness, the transit was only able to be seen for a short time. About two dozen guests came to see the transit.

If you watched Channel 6, you might have seen Scott Nehring's video of the transit as part of Vince Condella's showing of the transit. Scott was able to view the transit with one of the classes at the school he teaches at.

November Meeting Minutes

By Don Miles

The November business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held at the Unitarian Church North in Mequon. President Jeff Setzer opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. and thanked 22 members for attending. Jeff asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Rob Powell reports a balance of \$1,511 in the clubs' checking account and \$5,086 in the observatory account.

Secretary Kevin Bert could not attend the meeting, but passed along some observatory/telescope status for Jeff to present:

- A revised tool list (with the committed tools removed) was printed out and placed by the sign-in sheet for anyone still wishing to contribute.
- Kevin was out to the observatory, and had noticed the power wiring had been run to the building, but as of yet, had not been connected to the power source.
- Mention had been made by some of the members about being preliminarily trained to use the observatory/telescope before next years' "viewing season". Kevin would agree to hold an informal session before the end of November if there was enough interest. A sign-up sheet for preliminary training was presented. Also noted, was that the Observatory Directors' position and the final rules had yet to be determined, but this would give members wishing to get some use of the facility right now a chance to use it. If there was enough interest, Kevin would contact the individuals on the sign-up list to organize the training.
- The light shroud has been completed by Kevin's wife, Kathy, but has yet to be installed.
- The second Newtonian focuser has been modified to stop at its proper limits.
- The clock drive needs some fine adjustments, and the recently fabricated drive cover has yet to be installed.
- Final collimation has to be finished as well as the final polar alignment.
- The preliminary balancing of the telescope was done, but "fine tuning" needed to be done to accommodate

the recently purchased 4" eyepiece & diagonal, light shroud, focuser modifications, Cassegrain secondary, (etc.).

- Kevin has been in touch with OMI (the optical company that is fabricating the Cassegrain secondary mirror), and they are working on the mirror.

- The observatory tool chest (that was donated by Carlson Tool) has arrived, and will be modified with drawer dividers (etc.) before being moved to the observatory.

Jeff reminded the group about the Mercury transit happening Wednesday, (11/08), afternoon. The transit will start at approx. 1:10p.m., and will continue as the sun sets. There will be a group of NCSF members at Harrington Beach State Park setting up solar scopes for the transit. The local newspapers had been notified, and a reminder had been sent to TV-6 that the NCSF would be present at the park for the event.

Rob Powell mentioned that the board would like to know what subjects the members would like to know about for upcoming Astronomy 101 programs, and asked the members in attendance to jot down their interests on an idea sheet on the front table. Jeff mentioned that (like the November meeting), there may not always be an Astronomy 101 program, and to watch the newsletter for the announcements. On a related note, the start time and length of the "101" class was discussed. The result was the "101" class, when given, will start at 7:00, and will be shortened to the original 20 minutes, with a couple of minutes at the end of the program dedicated to the "Constellation of the Month". The regular meeting will start at the regular time of 7:30. This will take affect for the January 2007 meeting.

Another reminder was mentioned about the December meeting being held at the regular time for the main meeting (7:30) without an Astronomy 101 presentation, but will include the nominations and election of (2) Board of Director positions opening for the

2007 thru 2009 term, and the annual Christmas party. Drinks will be provided by the club, and members are invited to bring a snack to share if so inclined.

Jeff opened the nominations for the board positions opening up. Rick Kazmierski nominated Don Miles, with Bob Radtke seconding, and Kevin Bert was nominated by Mike Matthies with Chris Grenda seconding. Kevin had previously indicated to Jeff that if nominated, would accept the nomination. Don also accepted the nomination. With no other nominations, Jeff closed the nominations and reminded everybody that nominations would re-open at the December meeting before the voting process.

Robb mentioned a few points in closing:

Bob Sedgwick is recovering from cataract surgery, and that he's sure any well wishes sent to Bob would be appreciated. If you send Bob an e-mail, please use a larger font, as it would make it easier to read.

The Unitarian Church North was having its Fall Craft & Bakery event on Saturday (11/04) at the church, and everybody was invited.

With no more new business, Jeff closed the meeting at 8:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Miles



December Meeting

By Joyce Jentges

Due to the holiday party, there will be no Astronomy 101 at the December meeting. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a short business meeting and elections to fill two spots on the board of directors. Instead of a main program, the annual holiday party will take place. Please bring something to share, whether it is cookies, your favor-

ite hors d'oeuvres, a favorite dip, or other party favorite. It's always nice to have some variety so we don't have all desserts to choose from. Beverages and paper products will be provided.

Nominations for Board of Directors

By Joyce Jentges

During the month of December, nominations will once again be taken for the board of directors. The terms of both Kevin Bert and Don Miles are both up for grabs. They are both able to be re-elected, or we could have 2 new members, depending on your vote.

Now that the observatory is in operation, the board will be shaping the rules for use, and making other important decisions about the observatory. If you would like some say in this, please consider running for election to the board of directors. Also, if you have

an opinion about the way the club should be run, perhaps you should consider being nominated for the board. It is always nice to have more candidates than spots available!

The election will take place at the December general meeting. Plan to attend the December meeting to defend or speak in favor of yourself, in case you are nominated!!!

If you are email/web savvy, consider getting your newsletter online! All you need to do is send me a email telling me that you want to get your email online, and I will add you to the list. You will get an email when the newsletter is online and available for you to see. Help maximize your club dues, by letting us save money on postage and printing.

At the December meeting we will vote for 2 members to take terms on the board of directors. This is also our annual holiday party, so please bring a snack or goodie to share.

Members Night at Plunkett Observatory!
December 15th at 8:00 p.m.

Please note: the deadline for submission of items for the newsletter is the 20th of the month. Please get your items to me no later than December 20th.

From The Editor

By Joyce Jentges

As we close out the year 2006, I marvel at how far we have come this past year. It is wonderful to see the Panarusky in its final home, and nearly ready to be put to use. Due to time constraints I am not ready to put together the annual year in review article that I normally do at the end of the year. I should be able to get that in the January newsletter.

I hope you were able to see the transit of Mercury before the clouds came in. It really was a pretty neat event to watch.

The board of directors generally does their planning for next year in January, so if you know of dates for possible

members nights or public viewing nights please let us know in advance.

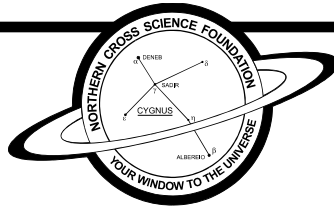
A dues invoice is included in this newsletter. Please see Rob Powell at the December meeting to take care of your dues for the year. If you joined part way through the year, your dues are not needing to be paid now. See Rob for details on when you should pay.

Now that winter has finally arrived, its time to get out there and find some of those glorious winter objects! See page 4 for details on a members night at Harrington Beach.

I am still looking for people to send me information on what got them involved or interested in astronomy. At this point, I'm guessing that article will go into the February newsletter. All you procrastinators out there - this is your final call! Drop me an email with just a few lines at joycejentges@hotmail.com.

On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to wish everyone very happy holidays. Hopefully you will all be getting some good astronomical goodies to use next year!

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Monthly Meeting Location
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Mequon, WI 53097

Winter Viewing Opportunities at the Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory By Kevin Bert

With the Observatory and telescope functional, member nights will be scheduled over winter and posted in the Spectrum so potential operators can get a feel for using the observatory and have their first chance at viewing through the Panarusky telescope at wonderful winter subjects. This would be a good initial test on how things work and a way to work out any bugs that might come up in the cold. Friday December 15th at 8:00 pm. will be the first opportunity.

It was decided to hold off training of members for individual access to the facility over winter and stay with groups of people during members nights. Many details of the operation are not in place, – scheduling system, finalized rules, observatory door locking method, electrical hookup, cassigrain components, final balancing of OTA, final polar alignment, eyepieces and accessories, clock drive cover and general operating procedures.

Members interested in being an operator for next year can start to pick up the information on how things are done under working conditions and get the upper hand on future testing once more procedures and observatory workings are resolved. So dress up warm and take advantage of those scheduled crisp winter nights at Harrington Beach.

Picture taken by Becca Sher at Mercury Transit viewing at Park Place with Rob Powell

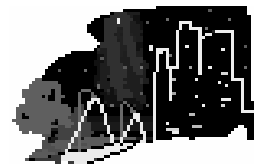


SPECTRUM

Is published by the Northern Cross Science Foundation, Inc. A nonprofit organization based the state of southeastern Wisconsin and is a Member of the North-Central Region of the Astronomical League.



The NCSF supports the International Dark sky association.



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