

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

February 2006

LOOKING UP

February 2 Thursday

Annual NCSF Banquet

6:30 p.m. Cash Bar

7:30 p.m. Dinner

**At Buchel's Colonial House
in Port Washington**

February 4 Saturday

Candlelight Ski

6:30 p.m.

Harrington Beach S. Park

February 11 Saturday

Candlelight Ski & Stars

6:00—9:00 p.m.

Pike Lake State Park

February 16 Thursday

Board Meeting

7:30 p.m.

Jeff Setzer's home

March 2 Thursday

General Meeting

6:30 p.m. Astronomy 101

7:30 Business Meeting

March 16 Thursday

Board Meeting

7:30 p.m.

Home of Jeff Setzer

March 24 & 25 Fri. & Sat.

Messier Marathon

Dusk

Harrington Beach S. P.

2005 The Year In Review

By Joyce Jentges

January—2005 started off with the Officers retaining the positions they had in 2004. Members attending the January General meeting were treated to a neat program. Kevin Bert demonstrated how to make your very own Kitchen Comet. Between him and Rob Powell, who was assisting him, they entertained the crowd with a demonstration of how to create a comet out of ordinary kitchen materials. January 7th and 8th were at Harrington Beach for Comet Machholz viewing.

February—In February about 22 members showed up for our annual banquet at Klug's Creekside Inn. The food was delicious, and the company was great. I really enjoyed the chance to visit with some of you whom I don't know very well. The annual Pike Lake Ski & Stars was held at Pike Lake. Skies were clear, and temps were pretty cold, but we had a chance to get a nice view of Orion and Saturn, as well as some other good deep sky objects. As always, there was a very good crowd at Pike Lake. The bonfire and hot chocolate were nice additions to a cold night.

March—The annual Messier Marathon was held in March. It was a pretty cold, but clear night. Those of us who attempted the marathon, expressed frustration with finding the first objects in the western sky. Kevin Bert logged the most objects with 84. He left at 2 a.m. and the temperature was 9 degrees. Pretty good work for a night's observing.

April—For the first time, members went to Superfest in Milwaukee. Members brought telescopes to view the sun. A club member also gave a talk during the day as well. Astronomy Day was held on April 16 at Rotary Park in Mequon. During the day, we were able to show guests the small group of sunspots on the sun. A good turnout of mem-

bers showed up for this event. Guests were able to take a 1,000 yard walk through the solar system, which was pretty popular. In the evening a talk was held by Kevin Koski and Jeff Setzer. As evening drew near, so did the clouds and we were forced to leave due to rain.

May—Five members were awarded lifetime memberships in the Northern Cross Science Foundation. They include members who were instrumental in the early history of the club or helped with the original observatory or telescope. Several members attended Pre-WOW in Waupaca. Skies were good early in the week.

June—Northern Cross members attended the Wisconsin Observers Weekend which was cut short due to bad weather predicted on Saturday. On June 28th Jeff Setzer and Rob Powell met with representatives from the DNR at Harrington Beach. The DNR will be responsible for all prep work at the site.

July—Northern Cross members held the first ever brat fry fundraiser on July 2nd at Piggly Wiggly in West Bend. Solar viewing turned out to be quite popular and many public viewing night schedules were handed out. The brat fry left us with a profit of \$194.00. Members agreed that it would be worthwhile to do another brat fry in the near future.

August—The second brat fry, which was at Pick N' Save in Saukville, brought us a profit of \$180.00. A stray rain cloud came along and forced us to grab the scopes and run for cover. Despite the rain, members had fun. Approximately 11 members attended Northwoods Star-

(2005 on page 2)

January Meeting Minutes By Kevin Bert

The January 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 welcomed 24 members. He asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Rob Powell reminded attendees that have been members for over a year that 06 membership dues should come to him as soon as possible.

Secretary Kevin Bert noted that a membership roster would be mailed in April, along with membership cards. Unpaid members, that were due in January, would be dropped and a finalized roster would be set. Kevin said that he still had registration forms for the 2006 NCRAL convention on April 21 and 22 in Appleton for those still procrastinating. The price for a single person is \$95.00 and includes two meals. A special rate for accommodations will be at the Radison Paper Valley Hotel where most activities will take place. The Astronomical League has three new observing clubs; Open Clusters, Planetary Nebula and Lunar II.

Jeff Setzer explained that the Panarusky 20-inch primary mirror was sent to Optical Mechanics Incorporated in Iowa to supply a Cassegrain secondary mirror. This company bought out Taurus optics and still supplies mirrors to Obsession Telescopes. Club members started the Cassegrain project with a 6-inch blank, but trying to finish it would most likely take a number of years. The board felt that having it completed by the observatories dedication would be a positive step in completing the original vision of the workings of the telescope and make it a lot easier to entertain the public at viewing events because no ladder would be needed to reach the eyepiece. Total cost will be about \$1500.00. The 3x amplification of the secondary would yield an equivalent focal length of 270 inches at f/13.5 and would be reached in a comfortable sitting position. A special testing and evaluation of the primary will be made by OMI first. You may recall that Nova Optics in Utah figured the primary a few years ago. Results of the testing should be available by the next meeting. If all is well the optics should be back in our hands in 10 to 12 weeks.

Under old business Jeff explained the observatory status. Contact with Harrington Beach and Backyard Observatories would be made to set up a date for construction now that the holidays were over.

Under new business, Jeff Setzer talked of upcoming events.

The annual NCSF dinner is now set for the Colonial House in Port Washington and takes place on February 2nd in place of the monthly meeting. All members should have gotten a form in the Spectrum and were encouraged to attend.

With no further new business, Jeff closed the business meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Bert, secretary

(2005 from page 1)

fest near Fall Creek in August. Skies turned out to be pretty good, and most of us were up quite late. August 27th, a public viewing night was held at the Ice Age Center near Dundee. As always, there was a huge crowd, and skies were actually clear!

September—Northern Cross members gave a good showing at Astrofest. Skies weren't great, but we did look for some nice double stars one night. Kevin Bert won an award for his solar telescope. Members had plenty of great opportunities to look at Mars. The last brat fry of the season at Piggly Wiggly in Saukville brought in \$347.00!

October — Members were at Harring-

ton Beach October 28 for a public viewing night, and on October 29 for the annual Haunted Hike. The hike brought in a nice crowd, and a lot of people passed by to look through our scopes on the way to or from the hike. We got some really nice views of Mars, and were able to see some nice detail on the planet. It was clear on the 28th, but few guests showed up to look through the scopes.

November—On November 10th, members were invited to Green Tree School in West Bend for a public viewing night. The night was a great success, with over 250 students and parents on hand to look through our scopes. In November, our observatory site was staked out at Puckett's Pond

at Harrington Beach State Park. November was also the official kick off of the fundraising for the new observatory.

December—Members attended the General Meeting and Christmas party. Joyce Jentges was elected to serve a 3 year term on the board of directors. Everyone enjoyed goodies and fun conversation with fellow members. Jeff Setzer was on hand December 6th to give a presentation about buying your first telescope. While the number of attendees was low, the presentation was still very good, and hopefully attendees will take Jeff's advice before buying a telescope.

Astronomy 101 And Main Program

By Kevin Bert

Because of the upcoming NCSF Dinner, look for 101 to resume in March.

There will be no program this month. Look for details on the

March main program in next months Spectrum where the topic will be Astrophotography.

Messier Marathon

By Don Miles

Just what is a "Messier Marathon", and why is it a big deal?

The marathon is different things to different people. What you make of it is totally up to you. To define it in its simplest terms...It's "quantity" observing instead of "quality" observing of the Messier List.

A little background on what this "list" actually is. The list consists of objects that a French amateur comet hunter named Charles Messier had compiled in the mid to late 1700's. The purpose of his list was to document "nebulous" objects that annoyed him by masquerading as comets. (Through years of observing, Messier and his associates added to the list for a total of 110 objects, but the list is still known by his name). Other people had no doubt seen some of these "nebulous" objects, but he documented their locations and appearances, and had them published. With this documentation, he and other observers could quickly dismiss these objects, and move on to other "possible comets". And now, these "objects to be avoided" are targets for today's amateur observers to enjoy.

The "purpose" of the marathon is to observe all 110 Messier objects over the course of one evening. This is only possible in the Northern Hemisphere, and only during a relatively small time window. This window takes place around the time of the Vernal Equinox, which is March 20th. This year, the 20th is a little over a week after the full moon. The closest weekend to the new moon is usually picked for marathon attempts (darker skies always help, all things being equal). Some of the NCSF members have decided to attempt the Marathon at Harrington Beach State Park Friday eve-

ning/Saturday morning (03/24~25), or Saturday evening/Sunday morning (03/25~26) depending on the weather forecast. An alternate date of the following Friday/Saturday (03/31~04/01), or Saturday/Sunday (04/01~02) has been suggested. The actual date is not as important as the weather.

The "marathon" is not really a competition against other observers; it's really a race against time and the weather. Even if you get clouded out (as is usually the case in Wisconsin) you'll be amazed at how many objects you know.

A few things to keep in mind if you haven't attempted the marathon before (just a few things I've learned from previous attempts):

- 1 Try and do some "training" before the marathon. Observe the first few targets right now while they are still high in the sky, and continue watching them up to the date of the marathon. While observing these first few objects, take notice of the brighter stars just to the east for reference. As the marathon date approaches, you will now be familiar with that area of the sky, and by using those guide stars, know where to start scanning, and you'll already be familiar with what the object is supposed to look like. (Once the objects drop below the horizon, they are gone for the evening).

- 2 Check out the observing site

CURRENT CLACK

It's not too late!!!! You can still sign up to get your newsletter online! Just send me an email, and tell me you want to get your email online, and I will add you to the online newsletter list starting in March.

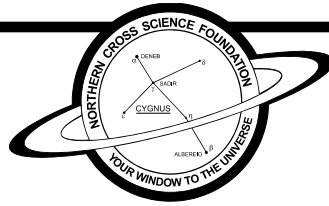
Please note that contact information for Rob Powell has been changed. See page 4 for an updated phone number, and the correct email address.

before the marathon date to take note of buildings or other obstructions close to the horizon that might block your view. It is best to do this during the late afternoon and into the evening, so you don't have to move around because that irritating light you "never noticed before". (Normally, you're not forced to view objects low on the horizon, but during the marathon, every section of sky is going to be used – especially the southern horizon).

- 3 Have reference materials (observing check list, charts, notes, etc.) handy, and be familiar with what you've brought along.
- 4 Bring a watch to log find times and to make sure you're keeping a decent pace.
- 5 Bring extra batteries for your red flashlight, or a spare flashlight.
- 6 Dress warm in layers.
- 7 Bring something warm to drink.
- 8 Bring something to snack on. (If you've kept a decent pace earlier in the evening, you will have "caught up" to the objects rising in the east around midnight. Many people will take a break to "recharge" their mental batteries for the remainder of the evening and let more objects rise high enough to view.
- 9 Bring an alarm clock. If the

(Messier on page 4)

SPECTRUM
 102 N Montgomery St
 Port Washington, WI
 53074



2005 OFFICERS

President - Jeff Setzer
 1418 Trillium CT
 West Bend, WI 53095
 262/338-8614
 jeffrey.setzer@gxsc.com

Vice President/Newsletter Editor- Joyce Jentges
 102 N. Montgomery St. Apt #1
 Port Washington, WI 53074
 (920) 254-6705
 joycejentges@hotmail.com

Secretary - Kevin Bert
 2292 Ridgewood Road
 Grafton, WI 53024
 262/375-2239
 kevin.bert@hotmail.com

Treasurer - Rob Powell
 1429 W. River Oaks Ln.
 Mequon, WI 53092
 262/894-9756
 rkfmpowell@wi.rr.com

Monthly Meeting Location
 Unitarian Church North
 13800 N. Port Wash. Rd.
 Mequon, WI 53097



Help Support
 The NCSF
 Every time
 You Shop

556190

(Messier from page 3)

midnight break includes a nap, you'd hate to sleep thru the last leg of the marathon. Most people get back to the marathon about 2:30~3:00.

10. Don't be discouraged if you don't finish, or can't find some objects. This is supposed to be a FUN hobby. As long as you keep a log, you can see where you might want to do some extra "training" during the warmer more comfortable times of the year for your next attempt. Along with being interesting to read and compare results of previous attempts, you will see progress by the shortening of time between finds as the years pass.

If you do a search on the internet, you will find loads of excellent info, but keep in mind that they base the order of their observing lists on their latitude. Lists that are adjusted for the more northern latitudes usually have M77, M74, & M33 as the beginning points. A few sites and lists that I have found very helpful are:

<http://www.davidpaulgreen.com/extremestargazing.html> (David Freedman's article entitled "Extreme Stargazing",

<http://www.astromical.org/astbook/messier1.htm> (John Barra's "Tips on Participating in the Messier Marathon",

<http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/marathon/marathon.html> (A SEDS site with endless info and links),

<http://www.astras-stargate.com/messlist.htm> (An observing list sequence compiled by Dawn E. Jenkins for use in our latitude).

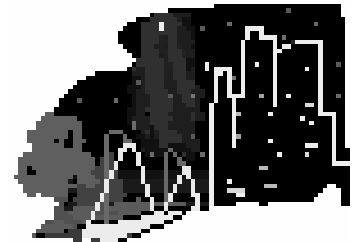
All are welcome, as is the case for *any* club gather-

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.



Send inquiries to:
 SPECTRUM
 102 N. Montgomery St. # 1
 Port Washington, WI 53074

This Issue, along with back Issues of SPECTRUM, can be found on the NCSF Web Site.

<http://www.ncsf.info>