

SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

October 2013

Looking Up

October 3, Thursday

General Meeting

7:00 p.m. - Astronomy 101

7:30 p.m. - Main Program

Business Meeting to follow

October 3 & 4, Thurs & Fri

Family Fun Night

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

LacLawrann Conservancy

October 4 & 5, Fri. & Sat.

Public Viewing

7:00 p.m.

Harrington Beach

October 5, Saturday

Public Viewing

7:00 p.m.

Pike Lake

October 12, Saturday

Luminary Walk

7:00 p.m.

LacLawrann Conservancy

October 17, Thursday

Board Meeting

7:30 p.m.

Home of Jeff Setzer

October 19, Saturday

Haunted Hike

6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Harrington Beach

October 25, Friday

The Great Pumpkin Event

6:00 p.m.

Bayshore Towne Center

Cloudy Night Astronomy *by Jack Kramer*

Especially during the colder months, it seems there is a better than average chance of our being beset by clouds. So what are you going to do if you get antsy to pursue your hobby of astronomy? Do you fondle your telescope and eyepieces? Do you go to a window every little while to check for sucker holes? You're not alone!

If you can't get out under a clear night sky, here are a few other pursuits that all relate to astronomy:



Equipment

Don't just stare longingly at those optics...clean them! While it's not a good idea to clean mirrors and lenses more often than absolutely necessary, do take this opportunity to check their condition. Look at your eyepieces and filters, as well. (We tend to ignore them until they get really filthy.) Also check the collimation of your reflector, and perhaps lubricate your mounting and focuser with a good quality, light-weight grease.

Is there something you've been meaning to do to improve the performance of your instruments? This could be a set of weights to better balance your telescope tube fore and aft. Or perhaps you've wanted to install a better finder. Could you beef up your mounting to minimize some of those annoying shakes?

Be Inventive.

Do you need a hands-free red light? Would the addition of tabs make your charts easier to use while observing? You could make a camera mount that attaches to your telescope. Perhaps it's as simple as getting a better case to hold your accessories; inexpensive toolboxes available at home center stores are great for this purpose. Observer's chairs really improve the observing experience. With just a little effort and

virtually no skill you can make one yourself; plans are on the Internet (the "**Denver Seat**" works great).

Talking Astronomy

Sometimes just discussing astronomy with a friend on the phone or in a "virtual" sort of way takes the edge off observing fever. You could join an Internet chat group devoted to observing or instrumentation. There are groups specifically targeted toward different types of observing and certain telescope designs. You can learn a lot from these groups, too. CloudyNights.com is a good place to start.. Or simply pick up the phone and call one of your observing buddies, if for no reason other than to console each other about the weather conditions.

Plan for the Next Clear Night

Okay, so you can't go out tonight, but it won't be cloudy forever. Look over your star atlas and draw up an observing plan. Do you have a goal, such as the Messier list, Herschel 400, or Double Star Challenge? It might be interesting to make an observing list of close double stars in order to get some feel for the resolving power and optical quality of your telescope.

Organize Past Observations

If you've kept notes on your prior observations, are they organized in such a way that you could find out how a particular object looked to you? Maybe this means simply designing a form on which to record your observations, plus getting a binder to store those notes. This process could become even more organized if you have a computer - you could develop an observing database, maybe even with search and sort capability, depending on what software you have.

When I haven't been able to observe for awhile, it's enjoyable to simply look over the notes from past observations. Sometimes we find objects that should be re-observed in order to confirm certain features noted or to take a stab at seeing more detail than previously observed.

New "Stuff"

A long stretch of overcast nights of weather gives you time to think about "stuff". Your wallet may be imperiled; it is at times like these when

Continued on Pg 2

September Meeting Minutes

By Kevin Bert

The September Business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held at Unitarian Church North. President Jeff Setzer opened the meeting at 7:45 pm and welcomed 26 members and guests. Jeff then asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Gene Dupree reports that the balance in the checkbook was \$10,023.97 and \$1,109.07 in the Observatory account.

Secretary Kevin Bert noted that the membership roster was up to 69 with the addition of Jamie Hanson, and Troy Thompson. The newest member joined tonight and he is Edward Kroke from Belgium. The Astronomical League's 2017 National Convention, (ALCON), will take place in Casper Wyoming on the same date as the August total solar eclipse.

Mickey Kazmierski reports that the NCRAL 2014 committee will meet next Monday.

Observatory Director Dan Bert reported that he is in need of leaders and assistants.

Jeff Setzer covered upcoming events for September. Sidewalk Astronomy at Bayshore on the 11th, Harrington Beach PVN on the 13 & 14. Pike Lake PVN is on the 14th. The 21st is the Harrington Beach after Summer Hike. The 28th is the Small

Scope Star Party.

Under new business Gene Dupree announced that 2014 Calendars are now available from him after the meeting. They are \$8.00 each and being that there is a limited supply it is first come first serve.

Charlotte Dupree reports that in the June 2013 Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine, Pike Lake made reference to our astronomy club and the help that we give to them with public viewing nights.

After a few questions concerning the club's finances Jeff noted that no serious spending outlays are designated for projects with the exception of standard operating costs. An astrophotography purchase is still being considered.

With no further business Jeff closed the meeting at 8:15 pm.

"Cloudy Night Astronomy" from Pg 1

many of us start itching to buy some new piece of equipment - telescope, eyepieces, filters, etc. If you've already succumbed and have a new telescope and/or mounting, you might practice setting it up in a dark or semi-dark room in order to minimize fumbling about some night when you finally get out to use it. Also make a check-off list of items you need to take with you to a star party. From personal experience,

there's nothing worse than forgetting to bring a critical part.

Images

One thing that Astrophotographers often do is to work on reprocessing some old images to maybe tease out just a bit more detail. Cloudy nights could be a time to search out new imaging software or develop additional imaging skills. There are even courses online which address astrophotography image processing.

Club Activities

Now might be a good time to work on putting together a program for one of the club meetings, or perhaps working up a program that you could present to a school or scout troop. Are there some images you might need to get or some demonstrations that could be prepared? What else could you do for your Club? Help is always needed somewhere. And to be really creative, how about writing an article for the Newsletter? There are loads of topics that would be of interest to your fellow members.

It's a shame to waste a cloudy night!



Things to See In the October 2013 Night Sky By Don Miles

Mercury, Saturn, & Venus: All follow the Sun very closely, with Mercury being the nearest at the beginning of the month. It's at its greatest eastern elongation on the 9th (the largest separation between it and the "East side" of the Sun this lap around...as seen from our vantage point). It's at (mag 0.2), but since it's so close, will be very rough getting a glimpse. Your next best chance will be before sunrise mid-November. Saturn (mag 0.6) also trails close behind, and will also be difficult until it also emerges as a morning object mid-November. Venus is the next to set, but instead of the distance between them shrinking like the others, it actually stays up later and later until mid-December. It's at (mag -4.3), so should be a pretty easy object, even under light polluted skies.

Pluto, Neptune & Uranus: Pluto is highest at sunset, and sets about (11:30pm/9:45pm) in the constellation Sagittarius. As is with all the fleeting summer objects, they're not going to get any higher in the sky this year, so if you've been meaning to do some observing of any summer objects, you may have to

wait till next year. Neptune (mag 7.9) is in the constellation Aquarius. It's up at sunset and transits about (11 pm/9 pm) this month. Uranus follows Neptune by about 2.5 hours, so will transit about (1:15am/11:30pm). It's in the constellation Pisces, and at (mag 5.7).

Jupiter & Mars: Brilliant Jupiter is at (mag -2.3), so will be hard to miss in the morning sky, and rises about (12:30/10:45pm) in the constellation Gemini. It will remain in the "body" of the left twin throughout the month. Mars (mag 1.6) rises about (3:00/2:30am) in the constellation Leo, and passes 1 degree above Regulus the night of the 14th. It continues its easterly drift until late February.

Moon:

October 4th: New Moon

October 11th: First Quarter

October 18th: Full Moon

October 26th: Last Quarter

Special Events:

* **Meteor Showers...** There are two meteor showers to watch for this month...the Draconids and the Orionids. The Draconids peak the night of the 9th with predicted rates around 50/hr. The moon sets at 9:47pm, so it shouldn't be a factor. The Orionids peak the 21st with predicted rates of about 20/hr. The recent full moon rises at 7:48pm, so will wash out most of the more faint meteors. These are known to be fast (>66km/second), so the ones you do see, should be exciting.

* **Comets...** There are two that should be worth taking a look at, and those are Comet Encke & Comet ISON. Comet Encke is in the constellation Leo Minor, and about (mag 9.0), so should be an easy binocular object. The second is the highly anticipated Comet ISON. It's also at about (mag 9.0), and is in the constellation LEO. The talk of it getting "naked-eye brightness during daylight" has subsided, but like all comets...you won't know for sure "till it gets here". Check the web for their current positions & brightness.

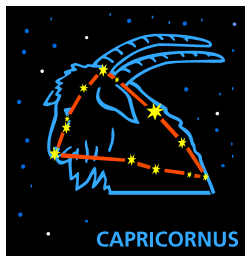
October General Meeting

101 Class... with Kevin Bert

The Astronomy 101 class for September is entitled “**Camera and Tripod**”. If you have ever considered it, pick up some basics on photographing the night sky with minimal equipment. There might be an upcoming opportunity to record a special event.

The Constellation of the Month:

Capricornus



Main Program

Guest Speaker: Wally Wahlberg

“The 10-Meter Gamma Ray Telescope”

Wally Wahlberg was a technical director at the Milwaukee based company *Optics for Industry* which in the early 1970's was given the contract to build the 10 meter gamma ray telescope for Mt. Hopkins Arizona. Being a mechanical engineer Wally was heavily involved in the design of the mechanical structure of this multiple mirror telescope as well as having designed tooling for the grinding & polishing of the telescope's 248 hexagonal mirror segments. Meet Wally, see one of the actual mirror segments and hear his story of this historic telescope. *Continued on Pg 4*

September Events

Bayshore Towne Center September 11

Reported by *Jeff Setzer*

The Bayshore event was well-attended despite persistent clouds; everyone got a chance to look at the Moon if they waited around a few minutes.

Harrington Beach September 13

Reported by *Charlotte DuPree*

There was a continuous line of members from a home school group with us most of the night. They just waited for us to move from one object to another. With a first quarter moon, most of the objects we looked at were very washed out. Thanks to Al, Rick D., Jeff, Scott and Rich for setting up scopes in the parking lot or out back.

Harrington Beach September 14

Reported by *Dan Bert*

New member training took place before the viewing night. Skies cleared for viewing of Venus early on along with first quarter moon, ring nebula, Alberio and other objects viewed later on thru openings in the gathering clouds. Approx. 50 people came to look thru the scopes.

Pike Lake State Forest September 14

Reported by *Charlotte DuPree*

This was a disappointing night. It started out mostly cloudy, and we only had one family stop by to see the scopes. By the time the moon came up we had a hazy sky. One couple, that lived in walking distance, drove in late. As the sky cleared, they had a personal tour of the moon with Al. Thanks to Rick D. for bringing his new scope. We were camping at Pike Lake for the weekend, so we took the Friday night hike. It started out with smore's at a campfire. The hike was to the top of the Lee observation tower. Lisa, the naturalist, recog-

nized Gene. She asked him if we could give a constellation tour when we reached the top. He told her he had to get his helper, the green laser pointer. Drew and Rob, park rangers, were very grateful to us, the next day, for joining the hike.

After Summer Hike HB September 21

Reported by *Dan Bert*

PVN for after summer hike: Clouds held fast hindering any views this evening although a dozen hikers stopped by to peek in the observatory and grab some literature. Dan, Kevin and Jeff later embarked on the hike themselves as business was slow to check out the festivities. On the way back from the hike the summer triangle was briefly spotted overhead.

Small Scope Party September 28

Reported by *Charlotte DuPree*

Despite Clouds and rain, ten members showed up at Harrington for this event. Food and stories were shared in the observatory, with the event ending around 10:30 p.m.

“NCSF Annual Banquet”

Date Change Notice

Our **NCSF Annual Banquet** has traditionally been scheduled for the first Thursday in February, replacing our February General meeting. This past year it was cancelled due to inclement weather, (SNOW!) This is not the first time Winter weather has interfered.

As a result, the Board has voted to change the Banquet date to: **The First Thursday in March**, replacing the March General Meeting.

RELATED INFO

Leaders for Public Viewing

October 3

LaLawrann

Gene DuPree, Rick Dusenbery

October 4

LaLawrann

Rick & Mickey Kazmierski

October 4

Harrington Beach

Gene & Charlotte DuPree

October 5

Harrington Beach

Leaders Needed

October 5

Pike Lake

Gene & Charlotte DuPree

October 12

LaLawrann

Jeff Setzer



October 19

Haunted Hike

Harrington Beach

Gene and Charlotte DuPree

October 25

The Great Pumpkin

Bayshore Towne Center

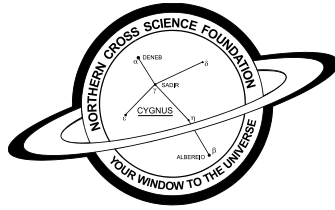
Jeff Setzer

Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory

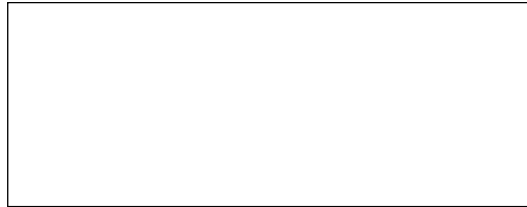


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Robert Sedgewick Designer of HB Telescope



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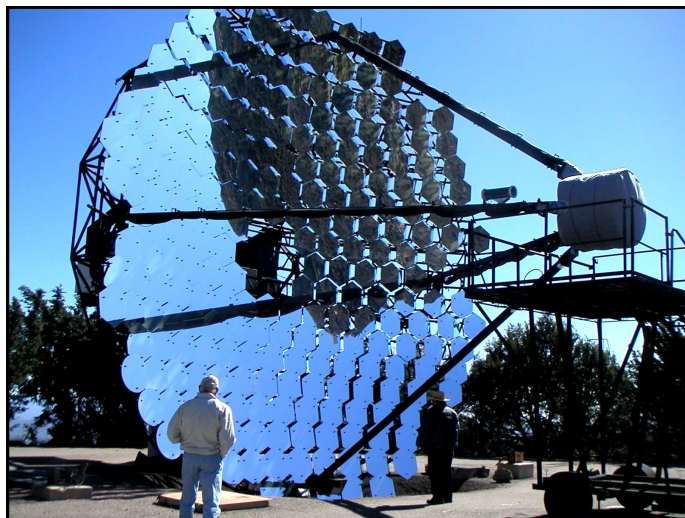
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Continued from Pg 3

"The 10-Meter Gamma Ray Telescope"

(October Main Program Topic)



NCSF Observatory Director's Report:

By Dan Bert

News: A new set of Meade HD-60 eyepieces have arrived and are now available for use at the observatory. Try them out next time you are viewing with the Panaruskys or an auxiliary scope.

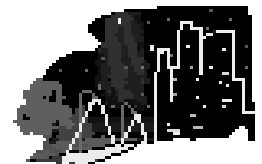


SPECTRUM

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The NCSF supports the International Dark sky association.



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

<http://www.ncsf.info>

Monthly Meeting Information

7:00 p.m. Astronomy 101
7:30 Main Program
Unitarian Church North
13800 N. Port Wash. Rd.
Mequon, WI 53097