



# The Eyepiece

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## JANUARY IN DETAIL

### **MONTHLY MEETING**

Our January monthly meeting will be on Wednesday, January 13th from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the Neville Public Museum. This month's talk will be given by Roger Dier and the topic is "Poetry in Astronomy". We hope to see you all there!

### **NEWSTAR MONTHLY MEETING**

The monthly NEWSTAR meeting will be on Wednesday, January 20th. Call Don DeWitt at 920-405-8534 if you are interested in going.

### **CAMP U-NAH-LI-YA WEEKEND**

January 22-24 is our ninth annual Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya Winter Weekend. A complete write up appeared in last month's newsletter. Otherwise, you can contact George McCourt at 468-9296 or Don DeWitt at 405-8534 for more details. A map to camp appears on page 4 of this month's newsletter.

## A LOOK AT OUR PAST

With the holidays and all, December was a rather quiet month for the astronomy club. We did have a good turnout for our holiday party with an attendance of 30 people. Everybody seemed to have a good time socializing with each other. This year's party will be on Saturday, December 11th. Site to be determined. Hope to see you there!

## REVIEW CORNER

by Wayne Kuhn

### **CANON "IS" BINOCULARS**

Recently I had the chance to try out a pair of Canon's new Image Stabilizer binoculars, courtesy of Camera Corner. I had read some of their advertisements and was curious on

### **BOARD MEETING**

We will be having a board meeting on Wednesday, January 27th at 7:00 pm. This time we will meet at Wayne Kuhn's house. The main topics of discussion will be the NCRAL 2001 Convention and Astronomy Day Planning. All club members are welcome and for more information, please call Katrina DeWitt at 405-8534.

## NEW MEMBER WELCOME

### MAT

We had two new people join last month. First, Wayne Disch, 521 Somerset Drive, Green Bay, 54301.

Next we had Jack Davidson, 1460 N. 7th Street Apt. F. Manitowoc, WI 54220.

Welcome to the club Wayne and Jack!

I could easily follow the football as it went from center to quarterback to receiver. And little details like the clothing of the fans in the opposite stand stood out where the non-stabilized image was a blur. The effect gives you the image and feel of watching twin TV sets inside your binoculars! I could go on about how to describe it but it would probably fall short. You need to experience the stabilizing effect to fully appreciate it.

I then tried it out on some stellar objects such as Jupiter, Saturn, M31, and M45. Without stabilization the rings of Saturn were not noticeable and two of the moons of Jupiter could barely be perceived. M31 was dull and jumpy and M45 was a blur of 6-9 bright stars, dancing like sparklers being waved around on the Fourth of July. With the IS system Saturn's rings were more noticeable and all four of Jupiter's moons were visible. M31 could be studied more closely to reveal more of its outer boundaries. The biggest influence was on M45. A handful of jiggling stars were transformed into more than a dozen

how this technology could relate to astronomical observing.

The "IS" binoculars use a "Vari-Angle Prism" that instantly and continuously makes adjustments to maintain a steady image. This is the same technology that has been used effectively in Canon video camcorders, keeping the subject steady even though the camera isn't. There are three sizes available: 10x30, 12x36, and 15x45. Camera Corner loaned me the 12x36 size for several days. My first field test was at the Wisconsin vs Minnesota football game in Madison. The binoculars are battery operated and require a button to be held to activate the IS system. I looked at the players, the opposite stands, nearby buildings, and the planes circling overhead.

Each time I would look without the IS activated, and then with. What a difference! All the jittering usually associated with a 10 or higher power binocular was removed when the Image Stabilizer was activated. Images were steady, crisp and clear, with a slight "floating" effect. At no time could you tell that the prisms were being mechanically adjusted. Detail that was unclear, such as the aircraft's registration numbers became readable.

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\$899.95 for the 12x36, and \$1399.95 for the 15x45. Not something you would buy on impulse! This is only the second year that they have been around and prices have already dropped a little. Look for more reductions as this technology expands and becomes more common.

Several NPMAS members tried my loaner pair out during the break at our November meeting. Everyone had the same reaction: it made more of a difference than expected. 'Better than expected' is a rare and telling comment that all manufacturers would like to hear about their products. All in all, I would highly endorse the Canon IS binoculars for astronomical use to anyone who wants high magnification without a tripod and who can afford it.

## 1998 IN REVIEW

by Katrina DeWitt

I thought it would be interesting to go through some of the club records and dredge up some facts regarding our club and its activities.

To start with, the average attendance at our monthly meetings was 29 people a month. The lowest monthly attendance was June with 20 people and the highest was December with 37. This is not bad considering our club has ballooned to 90 members this year. So that adds up to 33 percent of members attending our meetings.

Also in 1998, we had 23 new members join our club. About 6 people did not renew their memberships so we have gained more than we lost.

Our 1998 calendar of events included seven scheduled Parmentier Observing Weekends and six club sponsored

steady ones, creating a very pleasing view.

Optical images produced by the Canon IS were very good, noticeably better than my \$250 pair of Celestron Pro 10x50's. It also has a unique Doublet Field Flattener which reduces curvature of field.

They are well protected with heavy rubber armor and a hard carrying case. Weight is a little above average but the steady images produced by the IS system seems to not only reduce the strain on your eyes, but your arms as well. The steady images also allow you to discern fainter stars, perhaps as much as two magnitudes fainter. Steady Image = more concentration on subject = more detail.

On the downside, the adjustment range between the oculars was limited. This caused me some discomfort because my eyes are wider apart than average but for most people this would not be an issue. Normal battery life is 90 minutes but can be cut to as little as 5 minutes in temperatures below freezing. The biggest downside is the price. Current pricing at Camera Corner is \$569.95 for the 10x30,

- 3) Astronomy Day 22 club people 250-300 general public
- 4) Club Picnic-35 people
- 5) Public Observing Weekend-15 club people and 150 general public
- 6) C.O.W.-canceled due to inclement weather

Besides our activities, club members attended several events hosted by other clubs. Those included:

- 1) NCRAL Regional Convention-6 people
- 2) W.O.W.-18 people
- 3) Northwoods Starfest-3 people
- 4) Astrofest-25 people

As you can see, not only does our monthly meetings boast a good attendance rate, so does the club sponsored and even a few non-club sponsored activities. The only exception was C.O.W., which unfortunately was rained out.

Other club highlights for 1998 included the 10 club members (and family) that viewed the February total solar eclipse in the Caribbean, the joint field trip to Chicago's Fermi Lab (15 club members) and Shedd Aquarium and the membership voting 18-0 in favor of hosting the 2001 Regional Convention.

Club members also pitched in one weekend to clear a field at Dave Jorgenson's place in Crivitz, creating a new dark sky observing site complete with electricity for the scopes.

The club also put together three movie outings to the local theater to see *Lost in Space*, *Armageddon*, and *Star Trek*

activities including:

- 1) Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya Winter Weekend-22 people.
- 2) Messier Marathon-35 people

*Insurrection!"*

Some activities even generated several awards. The club received an "Honorable Mention" in the National Astronomy Day Award. Several club members received "staff" status at Mt. Parmentier Observatory, and several members received observing awards from the Astronomical League.

As some of the activities and numbers show, our club is very much an active and growing club. The activities and ideas we have for 1999 can only add to the prosperity.