



Volume Number 11, Issue Number 5, May 1999

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## **FROM THE EDITOR**

**By Wayne Kuhn**

One of the best things about our club is being able to share a small part of the hobby with others at our public observing events. Aprils "Public Stargazing Weekend" was no exception with well over 300 people attending. Everyone seemed to have a lot of fun and those 300 plus "astronomers for an hour" will not look at the night sky quite the same way again.

But to really make an impact on the average person just showing them some beautiful object through a telescope is not enough. We have to give them the "whole show". In other words, we need to give them a fact or two about what they are looking at to give it some "scale". They need a frame to complete the picture.

For example, I had my telescope trained on the Moon's Mare Imbrium region which was close to the terminator and showed a lot of detail at 120 power. When the viewer looked into the eyepiece, the conversation would go like this:

"Do you see a large semicircle of mountains?"

"yes"

"Do you see three craters just inside the semicircle?"

"yes"

"The craters are different sizes – do you see the medium sized one with the peak in the middle?" "yes, I see the peak"

"That crater is 40 miles across."

Right then and there, they were hooked. Their level of understanding and satisfaction jumped geometrically. They lingered at the eyepiece three times longer than if they had been told nothing. A couple of more facts about the moon, a couple of questions answered and another satisfied customer walked away happy.

We should try and avoid the "show and go". We have to complete the picture with some little tidbit about size or distance or some other defining characteristic that allows the viewer to understand and learn something. Frame the picture for them. A little preparation before setting up the scope pays big dividends once the line starts to form.

Letting someone see an "awesome" view through your telescope and hearing all the positive comments is one of the greatest compliments you can get. Couple this with the knowledge that you may have actually changed someone's perspective on life and the world around them, and it is one of the most satisfying and fulfilling endeavors any of us can do.

TO COMMENT OR SUBMIT ARTICLES EMAIL ME AT [waylin98@gbonline.com](mailto:waylin98@gbonline.com)

## **WHAT'S UP IN MAY**

## MONTHLY MEETING

This months talk is "Astro-photos" given by our club secretary/treasurer, Don DeWitt. Tom Jorgenson was originally scheduled but could not make it. His talk on "The Sun" will now be Novembers talk. Please join us on Wednesday, May 12 at the Neville Public Museum from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Happy Joe's to follow!

## NEWSTAR MONTHLY MEETING

The Newstar monthly meeting is Wednesday, May 19 at the UW Fox Valley Center. If you are interested in going please call Don DeWitt at 920-405-8534 for more details.

## ASTRONOMY DAY

Our biggest event of the year is this month: Saturday, May 22. The displays will be open from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Wildlife Sanctuary's Nature Center. If the skies are clear we will be observing from 8:30 to 10:30 PM.

We need everyone's help so come on out. See the article on page 4 for more details and put up the enclosed poster where it can be seen (make as many copies as you want).

## NEW MEMBER WELCOME MAT

We had two families join the club in April. The first family is Michelle and Tom Kendall, 1865 Juneberry Drive, Green Bay, WI 54311. Phone 920-406-0354, Email [tkendall@quicknet.com](mailto:tkendall@quicknet.com)

Michelle found the club by picking up one of our fliers during Family Space Night at Christa McAullif School. They have had an interest in Astronomy for several years and feel it is something they can do together as a family with their three kids: Sarah (15), Dan (13), and Sam (9).

Tom has had some experience with star navigation in the Navy. They do not own a scope but have a pair of binoculars. Michelle says they look forward to participating in club events and looking through club member scopes. They have had some previous experience with other clubs in both Iowa and Florida.

The second family is Jim and Dixie Tubbs, 984 Watermolen Avenue, Green Bay, WI 54304. Phone 920-94-4754, Email: [jdtubbsbg@aol.com](mailto:jdtubbsbg@aol.com)

Dixie is 61 and has had an interest in astronomy since she was in high school. She is originally from Sheriton Wyoming and met Jim while going to Colorado College. Jim is 63 and is originally from Seymour. They knew about our club because they are members of the Geology Society that meets at the museum the same night NPMAS does.

Last Summer they replaced a shaky 6" Newtonian with a Meade 8" LX50 SC. They have not had it out much yet but look forward to learning how to use it with some help from club members. That will have to wait until June because they will be gone on a trip to England for most of May.

On behalf of all club members I would like to say "welcome!" to the Kendall and Tubbs families!

## A LOOK BACK AT APRIL

### APRIL MONTHLY MEETING

The April meeting beat last months "record setting" attendance by one for a new high of **42!** Keep up the good work.

Club business started off the night as our club president Katrina DeWitt went over club events past, present, and future. This included some participation from those in attendance. Thus the following was mentioned:

Steve Wicker is three Messier objects away from attaining 75 – the minimum needed for a Messier Certificate.

Katrina DeWitt is one object away from qualifying for the Deep Sky Binocular Certificate. Unfortunately the object she needs has set and will not return to the sky until fall.

Dick Francini is at 82 Messiers and still climbing.

After a short break it was Gary Baier's turn with a talk on Planetary Exploration. He discussed the history of space exploration (what went where), the missions of today, NASA funding, and what's on the drawing board. With his teaching background and personal knowledge, Gary made the topic interesting and easy to digest. Great job, Gary!

## PUBLIC STARGAZING WEEKEND

*By Ray Nancoz*

On April 23 & 24 the club scheduled a public observing night at the Wildlife Sanctuary. It would seem from past events that Public Observing is a term describing cloudy weather. But this latest attempt seems to have broken the tradition and brought us fine clear skies for both scheduled evenings. So, the members turned out to show off the wonders of the night sky to the public.

Regardless of earlier dire weather forecasts for Friday evening the predicted clouds never materialized but the club members did bring out about fifteen scopes. Including the Wicker 12.5, the Mofle 13.1, and an assortment of six to 10 inch reflectors as well as a smattering of refractors. We even had our own growing "Ashtray Alley" with four or five Schmitt Cassegrains all in a line. Of particular interest to the gizmo junkie was the unveiling of Tony Kroes' latest gadget, a low light video camera on his Meade LX200 connected directly to a monitor for group viewing of the target. Ya gotta check this out if you're in the need of a techno fix.

In total, Friday night brought 136 people out for the two scheduled hours. At the gate, Wayne, with his Meade LX50, and Gary, with his simple 4" custom scope, met our guests with quick views of the moon under a street light. The early part of the evening had all scopes trained on the moon or Venus as the only available targets. As the night drew on, and comments of "The MOON again" began to be heard, scopes were slewed to find other objects to add a little variety to the mix. Regrettably, the glare of the first quarter moon limited the selection and brilliance of most other objects. Towards the end Mars had climbed high enough to give it a look see.

On Saturday we prepared to do it all again. This night brought even better weather and a larger crowd. This evening brought 205 of the public out for pretty much the same show as the night before.

Once the time ran out and everything was packed away it was off to pizza for a job well done.

## PUBLIC STARGAZING WEEKEND STATISTICS

*by Katrina DeWitt*

### Total number of people attending:

Friday: 136

Saturday: 205

Grand total 341

### Club members present

Friday: 14 total with 15 telescopes

Saturday: 12 total with 14 telescopes

### How they heard about the event Total

1. School 31
2. Newspaper 16
3. Club Flyers 15
4. Word of Mouth 12
5. Park and Rec Handout 8
6. Museum 5
7. Sanctuary Honker 4
8. Einstein Project 1
9. Girl Scouts (Barlow) 1

## ASTRONOMY DAY MEETING

Our last astronomy day meeting was held at the Wildlife Sanctuary on Wednesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> and included a walk-through to place the display booths. Club members in attendance included Tom Cashman, Ron Parmentier, Gary Baier, George McCourt, Don and Katrina DeWitt, Steve and Sue Wicker, Dick Francini, Ted Kordes and Family, Wayne Kuhn, and Steve Mofle. Tad Theno of the Einstein Project and Space Explorers was also present.

Booth spaces are laid out and the activities are set. All that is needed now are bodies to help out. Please join the fun at Astronomy Day 1999!

## SPACE DAY

*By Ron Parmentier*

On April 17 members of the NPMAS in conjunction with Space Explorers set up displays at the Neville Public Museum's *SPACE DAY* event that ran from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The NPMAS display included information on our club and club activities, along with photos and books on astronomy.

Displays were in the museum lobby area with other activities going on in the classrooms on the ground floor. These activities were the "hands on" type such as making craters in sand and the effects of gravity on different planets. I believe all such learning projects were from the "Einstein Project" which works with schools in the area.

Tad Theno of Space Explorers had set up a finished model of the International Space Station NASA is now assembling, along with model rockets for school groups and several other items. Outside the museum was parked the Space Shuttle Bus, which had computer displays inside dealing with space projects and the like.

Wayne Kuhn was also outside with his 10" Mead SC telescope equipped with a solar filter to show visitors the Sun. They enjoyed the view of a large number of sunspots since the Sun is nearing solar maximum.

All considered, it proved to be a very successful and rewarding experience for those who visited the museum – a very nice PR effort for our club and science.

## ASTRONOMY DAY

**By Katrina DeWitt**

Whew! It's been a lot of hard work. Monthly meetings, soliciting others to join our cause, and just trying to put everything into some logical order.

Now all our efforts will come together on Saturday, May 22. What am I talking about? Astronomy Day of course!

This year is bigger and better than ever. First of all, The Einstein Project and their Space Shuttle Bus, as well as The Space Explorers join us. In addition to this, we will still have our favorite club displays and activities as well as several new ones we thought of for this year.

With the addition of these fine organizations, we now have twice the displays and activities to promote astronomy in all its aspects. What we don't have and really do need are VOLUNTEERS!! I'm asking every club member for their help. Here's why.

The Einstein Project is providing all needed materials and instructions for at least six different hands on activities, with the possibility of more. However, they cannot provide the people to oversee each separate activity. Therefore, we need at least six club members to fill this capacity.

The same holds true for the Space Shuttle Bus. This converted school bus holds twelve computer labs that will be running various astronomy software programs. The club needs to provide two to three people with computer knowledge to "run" the bus and to keep the computers up and running as well. We need to insure that no damage occurs to all this expensive equipment. So if this is to your liking, please volunteer to help out. We really need you.

Although Space Explorers has no specific activities, they are providing several "static" displays. While these do not require to be constantly manned, they do need club members in the area to make sure no one breaks or steals anything. This is an excellent job if you are an individual who wants to be involved, but doesn't want a lot of interaction. Please sign up today.

In addition to all this help on Saturday, we are desperate for volunteers to help set up on Friday, the 21st starting at 7:00pm. The brunt of our work is done during this time and the more help we have, the sooner we can be done and view the occultation of Regulus.

If you're an individual who loves observing, we need your help Saturday night from 8:30 PM to 10:30 PM. To cap off our event, we will be having a public observing night during this time at the Danz Avenue grounds east of the main Sanctuary gate. We need as many telescopes to help out. Public observers can number in the hundreds. The more scopes and volunteers we get, the shorter the lines will be and the more objects we can show.

For those of you with internet access, you can download a copy of the Astronomy Day poster that is suitable for printing by [clicking on this link](#).

A lot has been planned to make this year's Astronomy Day our biggest and best ever. **Now we really need your help.** Sign up at the May 12th club meeting or give me a call at 405-8534. Everyone has something to contribute. Please do your part and help! See you all Friday from 7:00-? and Saturday from 10:00 - 4:00 PM.

## **FROM THE MEMBERS**

### **OPENING WEEKEND AT PARMENTIER OBSERVATORY**

*By Ron Parmentier*

Those in attendance on April 16<sup>th</sup> were rewarded with a fantastic display of the Northern Lights. In all of it's brilliance, approaching the brightness of a first quarter moon.

We saw a coronal arc stretching from the Eastern horizon, through the zenith, and down to the Western horizon. To me it was reminiscent of the Veil Nebula, 150 degrees in length. At the same time it looked like a belt on Jupiter with fast moving waves (like zebra stripes) circulating the clouds around the Great Red Spot.

The shape changed and soon we saw what to me matches the breakup of the Shoemaker-Levy comet before it hit Jupiter, tails included. It also took the shape of the Hale-Bopp comet with a head of 2 degrees and a 60 degree multiple tail. Later the aurora took the classical "curtain" shape with pulsating waves at the zenith.

Some red could be seen in the aurora and at times it was so bright you could see color in the objects around us (cars, telephone poles, etc.). We watched the display for three hours until midnight. Needless to say, we gave up on the deep-sky observing with our telescopes.

But I did look at the near sky, namely Mars with the 6" Astrophysics refractor at 281x. Others and I were pleased to see dark areas in the Southern Hemisphere on the left side of the disk (strait through viewing without a star diagonal). We also saw a very distinct bulge on the right side of Mars, which looked very much like a cloud in the equatorial region moving into view.

Those in attendance included Wayne Kuhn, George McCourt, Dan Sheber, Dan Ankeney (with two friends), Gary Baier, and myself. Everyone was inspired by this wonderful event.

### **ANATOMY OF AN AMATEUR ASTRONOMER**

*By Steve Wicker*

I became interested in astronomy when I was about 10 years old. I had a teacher that sparked my interest in the subject and I did very well in the astronomy part of our science book. That year my parents gave me my first telescope, a 60 mm refractor.

My 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher helped me find my first object, Jupiter, and every night it was out I would draw a sketch of it and the position of the moons. I sure wish I had those drawings but they were lost over the years.

Then as I grew older into my teens I lost interest. I thought all I could see was Jupiter and the Moon through my little scope, which was as big as you could get without spending lots of money. I still loved the night sky but further exploration seemed beyond my means.

Time passed and before I knew it, I was married and had two daughters. One day one of them brought home some home work that involved astronomy, which of course brought back a lot of memories. After helping her with her work we decided to dust off my old telescope but, alas, the optics were in pretty bad shape.

When my birthday rolled around my wife bought me a new 60 mm refractor. We also joined the NPMAS, met lots of nice people and made new friends. In the few years we have been in the club we have gone to many star parties, our favorite being the Winter Star Party in the Florida Keys.

As my interest grew again, so did my telescope. The 60 mm was replaced by an 8" Dobsonian, a real upgrade. Then I got the bug to build my own scope. I love to build things out of wood so this seemed like the perfect project. With a lot of work, help from my good friend George McCourt, and support from my family, I am now the proud owner of a hand-crafted 12.5" Dobsonian telescope.

One of the best feelings I've ever had came when we tested the new scope for the first time on a double star. The image was sharp and split the pair easily. I was so excited I was jumping up and down, just like a little kid! What's next? Well I think I'm going to settle down and try to see all I can through the new scope. Maybe work on the Hershels or just go back to some of my favorite objects. But most of all enjoy the night sky with friends and family.

WANTED: ITEMS FOR SALE TO BE LISTED IN "THE LOCAL M

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## **CONSTELLATION OF THE MONTH**

**By Steve Wicker**

Leo, one of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, is recognized by its backwards question mark asterism, better known as "the sickle". In the month of May it will be high in the sky, perfect for logging all the galaxies within its boundaries.

Eleven of these galaxies are between magnitude 8.9 (NGC 2903 & 3521) and magnitude 10.0 (NGC 3384 & 3607). There are five Messier objects (M66, M96, M105, M65, M95) all within reach of a 60 mm telescope.

Galaxies are best observed at a dark site during a new moon or very close to it. So if your planning on going to your favorite dark sky site, grab a friend or two and see how many of these eleven you can find.

Good luck, have fun and clear skies!

Web-editor's note, the map accompanying this article was not available at the time of sending to the server. If you would like a copy, you may pick it up at the club meeting. Thanks!