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THE NHAS OBSERVER

Newsletter of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society



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"All the news that fits"

July 2000

STV, the Latest in CCD Imaging

This month we will have a talk presented by **David Speltz** about the newest product from those clever folks at SBIG. It's the STV, which allows you to image in the field without the use of a laptop computer. It will also do video, measure magnitudes, double star separations, and much more. [And all along I thought STV was what you plugged the S-video cable from the VCR into – MAF]

President's Message

We will be changing the way you receive the NHAS Observer over the next few months. As many of you know, the increased size of the membership has started to put a burden, financially and otherwise, on the officers, to bring you this newsletter on a timely basis.

We are going to bring about these changes in phases so that the transition is not too abrupt. The first phase is already complete. **Mike Stebbins** handed over the publisher's duty to **Joe Malinowski** last month. The officers thank Mike for being such a good sport in publishing the newsletter at his home these past few years. Joe has access to a high speed collating copier, which should ease the burden somewhat. Be sure and thank Joe for taking time out of his month to do this for us.

In the second phase, the officers will be beta-testing the e-mail newsletter to make sure the system works (that is, we will take ourselves off the mailing list first). At about the same time, we will start posting the newsletter on the club web site, so that the membership can start getting used to web-based access to the Observer.

This step will also allow access to past issues in case you are missing a copy. It might also free us up to do more features, and perhaps more photos, including ones in color. At this point, it looks as though Adobe 4.0 will be

required, although we may consider a Word document version as well.

As soon as this step is complete, we will start asking for volunteers to take an e-mail newsletter. By the end of the year, all NHAS members will be required to take the newsletter via e-mail, unless otherwise requested.

As of the present writing, glancing through the club roster, I note that out of 160 members, only 18 of you do not have e-mail. We are not expecting 100% participation, but if we can get the number of printed newsletters down to a minimum, it will lift a huge burden off the publisher.

We thank you in advance, and apologize for any inconvenience through this transition period.

★ Ed Ting

Public Observing Highlights

The Public Observing Committee was quiet this month. With schools out for the summer, and the late sunsets, not many groups have asked for skywatches.

Those of you who are asking for more skywatches, be patient. Starting in September, they will start picking up again.

★ Ed Ting

Web Links

With regard to the web survey, I really appreciate the feedback. It is very constructive. From this data, it can be determined that the Meeting Events, Event Dates, and Links are the most used parts of the web site, so we won't fix what isn't broken. Also, our audience is largely between the ages of 41-55, so we'll probably keep the punk rock graphics off the pages <grin>.

All of this data is great because it gives the Web Committee a basis for redesigning dull web pages without changing pages that are very useful.

Most of all, I appreciate your comments and excellent suggestions! Look for changes before the year 2001!

★ Barbara O'Connell

NHAS Members on the Air

John Pappas on the Radio

We have another media star within NHAS. Club member **John Pappas** was a guest on New Hampshire Public Radio's "The Exchange" on June 26.

He fielded all sorts of questions from callers to the program, from the "philosophy" of Goto-style telescopes, to mysterious lights appearing from the front of an airplane.

Way to go, John!

Ed Ting and Chase McNiss Visit WHDH TV in Boston

Chase and I visited Channel 7 meteorologist **Todd Gross** on June 21st. The stated purpose was to pick up a review sample of the new TeleVue TV102 apochromatic refractor, but we ended up talking to Todd about all manner of topics, from the weather to airline-portable telescopes.

We stayed through the noon hour and watched Todd do a live weather forecast in the studio, giving us a glance into the magic of television. Thanks, Todd!

The telescope is marvelous, by the way.

★ Ed Ting

Feature Story

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Astronomy Day Memories

Here are some photos that have become available since last issue. More photos are trickling in, so next month's issue may have space for a few more.



Roger Greenwood and Jeff Carter doing solar observing big time



Ed Dougherty explaining the mirror grinding exhibit to friends



Mike Stebbins at the NHAS table

Thanks to **Bert Bingel** for providing the above photos.



Steve Brady tells visitors about asteroid hunting



By afternoon, jackets were in use outdoors

Thanks to **Bob Sletten** for sending the above photos.

ATM True Grit

On Sunday July 9 the ATM group met for some mirror grinding. We hoped to move onto the next grit soon. [I prefer drip grind myself - MAF]

Since Stellafane occurs the same weekend as the usual ATM meeting, there may be a virtual ATM meeting at Stellafane instead.

★ Larry Lopez

Photography in Focus

The NHAS Photo Committee met last month, June 23 at YFOS. There were over half a dozen members in attendance and the business part of the meeting was held outside the warming hut, despite the mosquitoes.

Our equipment discussion centered around the equipment that was brought by those planning to do some astrophotography. Unfortunately there was a very heavy dew that night and many of us were dewed over before it even got dark enough to start imaging.

The next meeting of the NHAS Photo Committee is scheduled for July 21 at 7:30 pm. Like last month, the meeting will be held at the warming hut of YFOS

and, weather permitting, we will attempt some astrophotography after the business meeting. This time I plan to bring my dew heaters to keep my optics clear! All NHAS members are invited. Hope to see you there.

★ Chase McNiss

YFOS

On Saturday June 17 work started before 9AM. It was a long hot day with one very hard rain which helped quite a bit with the heat.

The steel rails were placed on the wood rails, the trusses were mounted to the wheels. We closed up shop at 8:15 pm.

Joel and Larry fabricated the steel rails.

The following people greatly helped: **Joe Derek, Larry Lopez, Chase McNiss, Renato L. Salvador, Bob Sletten, John McLean, Mike Stebbins, Brian Icaza and family, Joel Harris, Paul Norris.**

On July 8, as the *Observer* went to press, we tried out the wheels and rails and covered the observatory with tarps.



Aerial Photo by Bob Sletten

[No, this is not war-torn Bosnia, this is the YFOS site - MAF]

★ Larry Lopez

Donations

NHAS thanks the following people and businesses for their contributions to the club:

Rhonda Lambert - \$50

Gary Sanchez - \$15 (new member)

We also salute the volunteers who have been giving of their time and talent this year to the effort to complete the new YFOS Observatory.

The Bottom Line

Cash on hand was \$5925 and we now have 160 members. Major transactions this last month included \$212 for observatory hardware and \$45 to clean the YFOS porta-potty. A few Astronomy Day tee shirts remain; they will be on sale at the business meeting for \$8 each.

★ Mike Stebbins

Summer Solstice Event

CMP and Audubon gave a presentation at the Silk farm facility from 7:30 - 9:00 pm. Lots of good hype was given about observing. Between 70 -90 people attended with lots of young kids. This event ended at 9:00 and observing began immediately afterwards.

Remembering that this was the longest day of the year, darkness happened around 10:00. So, we had a line of people at the scopes with 2 stars to look at, Arcturus and Vega. It was warm and a little muggy, perfect weather for mosquitoes. Most people were in short sleeves, sandals, shorts, you get the picture.

We had 3 telescopes and a set of binoculars on a "Derek" mount. In attendance were **Joe Derek** and his wife **Bonnie**, **John Pappas** and his wife **Carlene** and children, and me with most of my family. So even after all the people left we still had fun.

As twilight ended and the high thin clouds moved away, we had some good observing for a while. Tall pine trees surround the Audubon so we didn't have much of the sky to look at. Joe's 12-in. home built mount was there, very impressive, a must see. John had his 7-in. dob there. Bonnie ran the binoculars and I had my 8-in. SCT. The people were friendly and fairly well behaved around the telescopes. Unfortunately they didn't get to see much. People with young kids or exposed skin didn't stay long.

As we started to get our sky bearings (and more stars came out) we picked out a few objects for the stragglers to see (M13, Albireo, Dumbell, etc.), but most people were gone by then. Mal from CMP stayed late as well as some of the Audubon staff.

★ Bob Sletten

Looking Back at Last Month

Opening Remarks. Ed Ting welcomed the first-time visitors.

CMP Events. **Michael Neece** said he was leaving for Hawaii to study Physics. Ed Ting would be giving a talk on buying a telescope. He thanked **Mike Stebbins** for publishing the newsletter these many moons and introduced **Joe Malinowski** as new publisher. He also spoke of plans to transition to an e-mail newsletter over the next few months.

Scope of the Month. **Mike Townsend** discussed a 4-in. rich field refractor, 500 mm f/5 made by Sinta—acquired at the Suffern, NY convention. It had some astigmatism, was good at low powers, and. **John Philbrook** brought a 10-in. one-power telescope (a black tube) that he claimed increased visibility by a whole magnitude. **Michael Frascinella** retrieved the club scope.

Committees. **ATMs:** **Ed Dougherty** commended **Larry Lopez** for going beyond the call of duty. Larry and **Joel Harris** were absent because they were welding the rails for the observatory roof. Ed then showed a video of the ATM crew working on their mirrors. It was a cross between "ATMs Funniest Home Videos" and "The Karate Grit." **Photo Comm:** **Chase McNiss** noted that the June 23rd meeting would be at YFOS.

YFOS. On June 17, the rails were to be installed on the building's top walls, and grass mowing and cleaning the warming room were planned.

Astronomy Day. **Chase McNiss** summed it up as a good day despite the weather. He thanked all the volunteers who helped make his job easier. He also wrote a "Guide to Managing an Astronomy Day" for future coordinators.

Public Observing.

Ed Ting reviewed the month's past events. The next big event would be Stellafane on July 28-29.

Treasury. Mike Stebbins reported that about \$3000 had been spent on YFOS. Astronomy Day shirts were still available.

Evening Program. Ed Ting presented "Using a Laser Collimator". He stressed that people have been collimating scopes without these units for centuries so we didn't need to run out and spend nearly \$300 for one. Their major benefit is that they let you collimate a reflector scope really fast.

He discussed the steps to follow and demonstrated them with the club scope.

1. Square on the focuser
2. Place the secondary
3. Tilt the secondary
4. Tilt the primary
5. Repeat steps 1-4 if needed

A Q&A session ended the talk.

★ Michael Frascinella

The Heavens Declare

I recently received a note from **Doug Avery** that there is an observatory at UNH Durham operated by **Chris Siren**. The dome houses 8-in. and 14-in. Schmidt-Cassegrain scopes. The web page does not say exactly when it is open to the public, but it would be a good place to stop on your way back from Dover and test that new equipment you got at River's Camera Shop. Go to <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cbsiren/observatory.html> for details.

★ Michael Frascinella

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E-mail articles to Editor. Call to schedule late submissions.

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Latest in CCDs, July 14, St. Anselm's

Event	Date	Time	Location
July Club Meeting	July 14	7:30 PM	St. Anselm's College, Goffstown, NH
Photo Comm.	July 21	7:30 PM	YFOS, Hillsborough, NH
ATM Comm.	July 28-29		Stellafane (instead of New Boston)
NHAS at Stellafane	July 28-29	weekend	Breezy Hill, Springfield, VT (instead of the Coffee House)
CMP Skywatch	Aug. 4	9 PM	Planetarium, Concord, NH
Aug Club Meeting	Aug. 11	7:30 PM	Planetarium, Concord, NH