

THE NHAS OBSERVER

Newsletter of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society



Volume 2001 No. 1

"All the news that fits in print"

January 2001

MAYAN AND AZTEC CALENDARS

R. P. Hale, Featured Speaker

In Caxtolcuaúhtli Xiouhpuohuálli ("Of The Eagle-Bowl and the Count of Days")



R. P. Hale will present a talk on the Mayan Calendar Reckoning and the Aztec Calendar-Round at the Jan. 12 NHAS meeting.

Nearly two thousand years before the European invasion, the Olmec and Mayan cultures of Mesoamerica devised the most accurate calendar ever made, the Long Count, based on careful naked-eye astronomical observation of the Sun, Moon, and Venus.

The uniqueness of their reckoning is that this calendar was built from a series of interlocking wheels-within-wheels. The Aztec Calendar Round, a large stone carving that is now in the National Museum of Mexico, represents the later Náhuatl view of the mechanism of the universe. The Aztec reckoning, even though directly derived from the Mayan counting, is not nearly as accurate as its predecessor.

R. P. Hale's talk will begin with a recitation of part of the Aztec Náhuatl ceremonial invocation for the Stone's installation in 1478. R.P. will then explore some of the history and astronomical bases of these calendars, which are still in ceremonial use in parts of Mexico and Central America.

Hale, himself a direct descendant of one of the Aztec tlalcetanálli groups, is currently involved in intensive research in Mexican archives in his studies on pre- and post-Invasion music and culture, in addition to his interests in observational astronomy and art, calligraphy and music, and harpsichord making.

President's Message

Happy 3rd Millennium to all!

As the president elect I would like to first thank Ed Ting for his fine stewardship of the club over the past year. During his tenure we brought the observatory to near completion and the membership grew to record numbers.

Many of you may not be aware that Ed also functioned as our public observing coordinator (and is thankfully staying on in that role). In that position he frequently visited schools educating them about astronomy and has been one of our more active members in public observing. Please take a moment the next time you see him to thank him for all his efforts.

As we begin the year 2001 our organization has grown to well over 100 members. Like most volunteer organizations we face a few challenges.

One is that while public interest in astronomy is on the increase, fueled by images from the Hubble telescope, CCD astronomy and the Internet, participation in public events, with a few exceptions, is on the decrease.

So let's take advantage of the opportunity that is available to us. Whether you have a telescope, a pair of binoculars or can point out a few constellations, come out and help us share with our neighbors in NH the wonders of the night sky.

★ John Pappas

Public Observing Highlights

Your Public Observing Coordinator has been under the weather these past few weeks. Luckily, the holidays intervened and NHAS has been relatively inactive in late December and early January. A CMP skywatch on Jan. 5 was called off due to clouds.

Our public skywatches pick up again later this month. On Jan. 18th we'll be at the Conservation Center in Concord, on the 23rd we'll be at Washington St. Elementary, and on the 31st we have a skywatch at East Derry Memorial School.

Mike Pelletier reports one other skywatch in Nashua at Ledge St. School on Thursday, Jan. 18 at 6:30 p.m., off the Simon St. exit. Call him for details at 867-8557 or email mikpel@hotmail.com

★ Ed Ting

Feature Story

Election 2001 Results.....Page 2

Photography in Focus

Joe Malinowski will be taking over as committee chair. Joe brings a wide range of skill and enthusiasm to the group, so join me in thanking Joe for his continued commitment to NHAS.

★ Chase McNiss

Well I hope everyone had a great Holiday Season! This month starts another year for the Photo Committee and I will try to fill the shoes of our former chairman, **Chase McNiss**.

I would like to thank Chase for having chaired the committee and being an excellent mentor to all the members of the committee.

Our first meeting of the year will be on January 19 at 7:30 pm at the Whipple Free Public Library in New Boston. If anyone has any new images, film or CCD, please bring them along and share them with the group.

Also, Chase will bring in his AstroVid 1000 Video Camera, which we will hook up to my ETX-125EC for a demonstration. We will setup the telescope and camera on the library patio and remotely operate the setup from the comfort of the library.

★ Joe Malinowski

YFOS Observatory

The observatory has not had much use this past month. **Jim Young**, bless his soul, has plowed the driveway for us.

★ Larry Lopez

Donations

It looks like it's been a slow month for donations, but NHAS wishes to thank the following new member for his donations. Your financial support is greatly appreciated.

Justin Zabilansky – \$5.00

The Bottom Line

The club account balance as of Jan. 8 is \$7,293. Most recent transactions have been for memberships.

Our current enrollment is 116 members so far.

★ Jim Warenda

Elections for 2001

It's official and we have a new slate of officers. All positions except Secretary were filled by different members. The NHAS Election Transition Coordinator (NHASETC) Bob Sletten provided these candid (?) photos of the outgoing and incoming team.

Note the providential alignment of the planets behind these officers.



Outgoing (L to R): Ed Ting, Joel Harris, Barbara O'Connell, Michael Frascinella, Mike Stebbins



Incoming (L to R): Joel Harris, John Pappas, Michael Frascinella, Barbara O'Connell, Jim Warenda

Photo of the Month



Stellphane 2000

Photo taken Friday Night
Nikon F, 28mm/f2.8, 11hour Exposure
Fuji Provia, 1600 ASA

As a new feature, I encourage members to contact me about photos they have taken so I can submit them to our editor under this new topic heading. It would also be something we might make publicly accessible via the members' photo page on the NHAS web site.

★ Joe Malinowski

Looking Back at Last Month

Opening Remarks. Ed Ting welcomed us to the last meeting of 2000.

Book of the Month. Larry Lopez brought *The Deep Sky* by Phil Harrington.

Scope of the Month. Mike Townsend brought an exotic Takahashi CN-212, a Newtonian-Cassegrain scope that was a two-way scope with a parabolic primary. The secondary featured an interchangeable mirror (convex or flat diagonal). One problem it had was a slight image shift when focussing. Other difficulties included collimating and focussing between modes. Cost new was about \$4600. (This model was used.)

Joe Derek brought in his award-winning wooden scope, which was too big to bring into the meeting room. **Mike Pelletier** still has the club scope.

Jim McCarthy brought copies of the *2001 Observer's Handbook* for those who had ordered them.

Committees. ATMs: Shut down for the winter. Ed Dougherty has been working on mirror-testing equipment which is almost ready. He also hoped to have a technique developed for testing the degree of polishing on a mirror.

Photo Comm: Chase McNiss said they were done for the year. The next meeting would be on Jan. 19 **Joe Malinowski's** leadership.

Observatory. Larry, the new YFOS Site Coordinator, installed a breaker panel in the observatory.

Public Observing. Ed Ting reviewed past skywatches. He received a pile of humorous thank you cards from the kids at Reed's Ferry School in Merrimack, which he passed around. **Bob Sletten** showed us the big thank you poster he got from the kids at the Bow Memorial School. A few small skywatches were to be scheduled.

Treasury. Mike Stebbins noted the year-end report in the Dec. newsletter and said membership was at 108.

Nominations. After additional nominations were floated and popped, the ballot for 2001 was as follows:

President – **John Pappas**

Vice President – **Joe I Harris**

Secretary – **Michael Frascinella**

Treasurer – **Jim Warenda**

Board (3 years) – **Barbara O'Connell, Jeff Carter**

After each nominee was cajoled to make a statement, paper ballots were given out and the board members counted the ballots. Ed projected the ballot onto the dome and someone asked if they could climb up and punch it out.

Results: all candidates were elected.

Barbara O'Connell won the contest for Board member. Ed Ting performed his final duty by adjourning the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Evening Program. We held our December Social Time and everyone enjoyed each other's company. Some dear soul went to the trouble of bringing in a plate of spicy chicken wings.

★ Michael Frascinella

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

How to Join N.H.A.S.

Write to us:

NHAS
PO Box 1001
Manchester, NH 03105-1001
Attn: Treasurer

Send Email to:

Treasurer@nhastro.com

Use our web site:

<http://www.nhastro.com/>

2001 Officers (one last time)

President:: John Pappas President@nhastro.com

Vice Pres.: Joel Harris VP@nhastro.com

Treasurer: Jim Warenda Treasurer@nhastro.com

Secretary: Michael Frascinella Secretary@nhastro.com

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Ancient Calendars, Jan. 12, St. Anselm

Event	Date	Time	Location
Jan. Club Meeting	Jan. 12	7:30 pm	St. Anselm's College, Goffstown, NH
Skywatch	Jan. 18	7:30 pm	Conservation Center, Concord, NH
Skywatch	Jan. 23	7:30 pm	Washington St. Elementary School
Freeze Your Buns Off	Jan. 26	dusk	YFOS, Hillsborough, NH
Skywatch	Jan. 31	7:30 pm	East Derry Memorial School
CMP Skywatch	Feb. 2	7:30 pm	Planetarium, Concord, NH
Feb. Club Meeting	Feb. 9	7:30 pm	Planetarium, Concord, NH
YFOS Coffee House	Feb. 23	dusk	YFOS, Hillsborough, NH