



## Comet Lulin



**Rich DeMidio, 2009 NHAS President (Gardner Gerry photo)**

### President's Message

It was nine years ago when I walked through these very same doors to attend my first NHAS meeting. After two decades of absence, I finally decided that it was time to get back into the hobby I enjoyed as a child. Walking into Christa McAuliffe Planetarium, I was overwhelmed at the number of people in attendance. I wondered if I would fit in? It was obvious that everyone here knew a lot more about Astronomy than I. What if I could not contribute? Contribution is the word I wish to speak about. It comes in many forms and everyone has the ability. I like to describe our organization as having a high bandwidth of contributing members, from formal educators to people just starting out. But the one thing common to all is the ability to contribute; contribute to a level that each member is comfortable with. No contribution is too small and all are of value. Providing an environment where members feel comfortable to contribute while showcasing our members' talents internally or to the public falls

directly onto me. It is the most important task I will focus on. I want to thank **Gardner Gerry** for two outstanding years of service as President to NHAS. Under his leadership, NHAS accomplished many objectives. Thanks also to outgoing treasurer **Chase McNiss** for handling the toughest job in the organization. I also want to acknowledge **Nils Wygant** for his contributions to the NHAS Board of Directors. Finally, I have the privilege to continue to work with two officers serving another term: VP **Mike Townsend** and Secretary **Paul Winalski**. Continuity is an important thing and I will rely upon them both.

This year will be a very exciting one for NHAS. We are embarking on major efforts, most notably, our Educational Outreach initiative. More details upcoming as the group solidifies their plans. 2009 being the International Year of Astronomy brings focus to our organization. NHAS will participate in several events in celebration during the year. It's an exciting time and I am looking forward to participating and working with everyone. Clear Skies.

★ Rich DeMidio  
NHAS President 2009

### Highlights for this Month

NHAS wishes to congratulate the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center (nee Christa McAuliffe Planetarium) on the opening of their new building.

Read about the 2009 NHAS election results.

Comet Lulin passes close by the Earth (for a comet) and presents us with good observing opportunities in February and March.

We have successfully placed the first telescope in our Library Telescope Project.

It's Messier Marathon time again, and NHAS is celebrating.

A Dark Sky Bill is pending before the New Hampshire legislature.

★ Paul Winalski  
NHAS Secretary 2009

### McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center Dedication

Our friends and partners the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium will be opening their new building on March 6. In recognition of its expanded mission, the Planetarium is changing its name to the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center. NHAS members are cordially invited. The new building opens to the public at 4:00 PM. Of course, we will be holding our monthly public sky watch that same evening.

★ Paul Winalski

### NHAS 2009 Elections

The election of 2009 officers for NHAS, postponed from the cancelled December 2008 Business Meeting, took place at the January 2009 Business Meeting. There were no further nominations, all candidates ran unopposed, and all were elected unanimously.

The newly elected 2009 NHAS officers and director are:

President: Rich DeMidio  
 Vice President: Mike Townsend  
 Secretary: Paul Winalski  
 Treasurer: Ken Charles  
 Director: John Rose

All will serve a one-year term except for Director **John Rose**, who serves for three years and joins existing directors **John Bishop** and **Mike O'Shaughnessy** (Chairman of the Board of Directors).

★ Paul Winalski

## Membership and Astro 101/201

We have three new members since the January newsletter:

**Craig Cushing**, Concord NH  
**Jonathan Narducci**, Merrimack NH

**Cindy Janiak**, Merrimack NH

There have been no requests for Astro 101 or 201 presentations. A list of topics is in the "Resources" area on the NHAS website. Contact Alan if you are interested in any of these. He will find a speaker and schedule the presentation if two or more members are interested.

★ Alan Shirey

## Educational Outreach

The Educational Outreach Committee (EOC) had a meeting January 30, 2009 at the Ralph Pill building in Concord.

Attending were: Co-Chairs, **Matt Amar** and **Rich Schueller**, **Chase McNiss**, **Marc Stowbridge**, **Peter Kelly**, **Ted Blank**, and **Tom Cocchiaro**. Emailed "regrets": **Al Navarro**.

Discussions:

The final draft of the brochure is ready for EOC review via email; Chase is to coordinate with **Matt Ota** in getting this out for review.

Website additions are being developed. First on the docket is adding a Sky Watch request page which will have a form to enter information on the event. This information when submitted will be forwarded to Marc Stowbridge who will then set up the Sky Watch. Additionally, a quick link will need

to be added to the NHAS website main page. Discussions on how this link will be added are ongoing.

Telescopes for Libraries project update: Marc Stowbridge reported the pilot in Tamworth is a huge success. The scope is out constantly and has a waiting list of people ready to use it. Moultonborough is asking for a similar asset and is proposing paying for it with their funds. The request to Marc is to provide instruction in its use.

Astronomy Day: Chase provided an update. To date two volunteers have come forward to assist Chase. This is definitely a place for any member to lend a hand. Experience in this area is not required, so raise your hand if you're interested.

International Year of Astronomy 2009: Al Navarro suggested participation in 365 days of podcast. Tom Cocchiaro will be following up and assist with processing.

The EOC is trying to develop a Presentation Library/Data Center. Rich Schueller will be taking the lead on this and will solicit input from the membership. We are looking for presentation materials, outlines, and discussions that have been used at Sky Watches that can facilitate future programs. Rich has already posted requests in the Help and Astrophoto forums for images. These will also be used for Astronomy Day as posters.

Also discussed were ways to contact the media with PR for NHAS Skywatches and Astronomy Day. The intent is to gain more heads up to our public presentations. Tom C. knows Laura Knoy and will "feel out" the possibility of a follow up show from the one broadcast in January. The working title of this is "Amateur Astronomy in New Hampshire".

With all the activities being investigated, we can certainly use a hand from anyone who has a free moment or two so please lend a hand when you can.

Next meetings of the EOC are Fridays Feb. 13 and March 13.

★ Rich Schueller

## Library Telescope Project

Telescopes are, it seems a New Hampshire tradition. In the poem "The Star Splitter", Robert Frost wrote the words he attributed to a "retired" farmer, Brad McLaughlin:

*"The best thing that we're put here for's to see;  
 The strongest thing that's given us to see with's  
 a telescope. Someone in every town  
 seems to me owes it to the town to keep one.  
 In Littleton it may as well be me."*

The New Hampshire Astronomical Society, and particularly its Educational Outreach Committee, has approved a proposal to facilitate placing a telescope and educational material to selected libraries in New Hampshire. Our goal is to help foster scientific literacy and to stimulate the interest in astronomy. We are particularly interested in having children use the telescope, with appropriate adult supervision. By placing the telescope in local libraries instead of schools, it can be put into circulation like a book. Along with the equipment would come a local Club member who will periodically clean and adjust the telescope, and act as a local astronomical resource to the library patrons.

We are a relatively small club, fairly long on enthusiasm and short of funds. We are planning to present a few libraries with outright gifts each year, starting with libraries that have shown an interest by hosting sky watches. So far, the funding for this project has come from the general Club budget. If the Project continues to be well received, we will need to develop some other options for funding. First, some libraries may be able to fund their own telescope. In the later case, the NHAS will help in the ordering and maintenance of the telescope if there is an available Club member to do so. If there is not a member in the area, it seems reasonable that the library staff could be instructed on the "care & feeding" of the

equipment. We may also see if there are any matching funds available from the towns, library patrons, schools and local businesses. We will likely depend upon the librarians to help us identify such donors. Thirdly, The Educational Outreach Committee has suggested we take up a collection from the Club members to add to a special fund for the Project. We have already received donations of equipment that will be used to supplement the packages bought commercially. We are in particular need of 25 or 26 mm eyepieces, lunar filters and short 2X Barlow lenses.

The first library to receive a telescope is the Cook Memorial Library in Tamworth, NH. I am sure they would be willing to share information about their experiences with the telescope project. <http://tamworthlibrary.org/> (scroll their down web site a bit to see the article)



### Orion StarBlast 4.5" Reflector

The NHAS has selected the "StarBlast 4.5 inch Astronomical Telescope" for the libraries, along with eyepieces and supportive material. The Club will also provide a simplified set of instructions. The telescope is easy to use and robust. There is nothing to assemble (and no batteries required!). It has a wooden base, not the usual spindly tripod legs. The telescope is of manageable size, but has a relatively large optical tube. This means that the Moon and planets would show far more detail than one could see with the common "beginners" telescope. This is a quality instrument, recently

reviewed by a number of astronomical publications and found quite worthy. If the telescope were broken, the Club would try to fix it or replace it, as funding allowed. The Library would not be held responsible by the Club.

Further, the Club suggests that the librarian or the teachers at the local schools identify a youngster, likely 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, who would be interested in becoming an apprentice astronomer. This child would learn about astronomy and using a telescope; act as a liaison to the local schools. They could easily learn to care for and use the telescope. When this child left the school, they would be replaced with a like-minded student who would then carry on the tradition.

★ Marc Stowbridge

### Recent Public Sky Watches

NHAS recently held two public sky watches, one at the Alton Central School (4 February)—and for once the weather cooperated and we were able to hold our scheduled "first Friday of the month" sky watch at Christa McAuliffe Planetarium.

The Alton event was rescheduled due to poor weather, and that, along with the bitter cold, probably accounted for attendance only about a third of what had been expected.

**Paul Winalski** gave an indoor presentation on "what's up in tonight's sky", after which the attendees hit the observing field. NHAS members **Tim Mauro**, **Steve** and **Stephen Forbes**, **Marc Stowbridge**, **Matt Amar**, **Bill Steele**, and **John Bishop** showed off various night sky delights. A good, but very cold, time was had by all. The organizers are considering having us back in the spring. Did I mention it was very *cold*?

Two days later at the Planetarium, Paul Winalski, Steve and Stephen Forbes, Marc Stowbridge, **Ted Blank**, **Scott McCartney**, **Mike Townsend**, **John Rose**, John Bishop, **David Gilmore**, and **Ken Charles** all helped show off Saturn, the Orion Nebula, Schröter's Valley

on the Moon, and other sky wonders. Sky conditions were not ideal, but they were not a total wash-out as has all too often been the case on the first Friday of the month lately.

★ Paul Winalski

### Astro Photons

The intrepid NHAS imaging corps continue to work in producing wonderful images. Please feel free to visit the NHAS pictures forum to see the latest postings.

★ Gardner Gerry

### YFOS in the Winter

The big heater in the warming hut sometimes doesn't seem to want to start up when it is cold. If this happens while you are there, please log the event in the logbook on the table in the warming hut. This will inform the CCABW (Chief Cook and Bottle Washer) of the problem. Or, contact the CCABW. He has his little ways to bring up the main heater.

The Officers and Board encourage all members to log their YFOS visits in the logbook. It helps us keep track of how often the site is being used.

★ Larry Lopez

### Comet 2007/N3 Lulin



#### 2007/N3 Lulin on February 17 (John Buonomo image)

This comet was first discovered in 2007 on images taken at the Lulin Observatory in Russia. It is in a parabolic trajectory around the Sun, which means that it will leave the Solar System never to return. Its path is very close to the ecliptic plane. The comet has passed perihelion and is now moving outwards. It will be at its brightest (about 5<sup>th</sup> magnitude) in late

February as it passes the Earth only about 30 million miles away.

The comet will be providing several interesting imaging opportunities as it passes close to several interesting objects on its apparent journey through the Zodiac:

On 23 February Lulin will pass just south of Saturn in Leo.

At 6:00 PM on 27 February, the comet will pass one degree south of Regulus in Leo.

At 9:00 PM on 5 March, it will be two degrees southeast of M44 (the Beehive Cluster) in Cancer.

At 9:00 PM on 14 March, Comet Lulin will be only 1/2 a degree away from NGC 2392 (the Eskimo planetary nebula) in Gemini.

Get your cameras ready, and be sure to post your Lulin images on the NHAS website.

★ Paul Winalski

## Lulin Observing Reports

**16 February:** I kept thinking I'd have to wait until just before sunrise to view it until I checked it out in Starry Night and saw it would be rising around 11:30 p.m. Decided to drive out to Wallis Sands Beach in Rye to give it a look around 12:30 AM. By that time it was pretty high in the sky out over the Atlantic.

I probably spent about 40 minutes viewing—and letting my eyes get accustomed to the dark—a hard thing to do when you've been sitting in front of a Mac 30-inch LCD monitor all night. I think it was just a little hazy on the Seacoast but I had no problem finding Lulin at about the 10 o'clock position to the left of Spica. It was well defined and reminded me of a big daddy version of M31. I spotted it easily with my 15x70 Oberwerk Ultras and then observed it through my Celestron C5 Cat (was using the Celestron 12mm plossl that came with it and my new Baader Hyperion 8-24 zoom which turned out to be surprisingly sharp). I saw what looked like a faint star cluster with a bright dot in the middle and what looked like a tail

pointing down to five o'clock on one side and up to 11 o'clock on the other. (the bow shock thing that looks like a tail in the front that everyone's been talking about). Lucky I got out when I did as a bright quarter moon rose just after 1 AM. It started out pretty deep orange but it wasn't long before it brightened up the sky.

★ Tom Cocchiari

**18 February:** I just got inside from a brief observation of Lulin with my Canon 15x50IS binoculars. I last looked at it on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 11 days ago. It has significantly changed size, it is much larger now. It has also move quite a distance. It was near Zebenelgenubi in Libra then, now it has gone past Spica in Virgo.

I thought I saw a hint of a tail but that was most likely just wishful thinking, it did seem asymmetrical at least, which it didn't before. I tried to see if it was naked eye visible, and although there was a glow in the right spot, that was most likely  $\theta$  Virginis; at 4.45 magnitude that is certainly naked eye visible at my house. I've actually gone down to 5 and 5.5 before. There did seem to be somewhat of a haze in the sky, not much, just a hint.

I compared the comet to M3, it is much larger than M3, easily 3 times larger or more. I actually had a hard time finding M3 since it was so high in the sky and I didn't have my chair out so I was standing. That was uncomfortable.

★ Paul Cezanne

## NH Dark Sky Bill

Thanks to the efforts and concerns of NHAS member **Robert Gillette**, the officers of the NHAS have been made aware of an Outdoor Lighting bill (House bill 585-FN) that has been introduced to the New Hampshire legislature.

As amateur astronomers the officers of the NHAS have great interest in this bill but we also have concerns regarding how we as officers and members of a non-profit educational organization are perceived in supporting such a bill.

First off lets us make it very clear that as a non-profit organization the officers and members of the NHAS **cannot** take part in lobbying or supporting this bill as representatives of the NHAS. It is a long standing guideline established by the original founders of the NHAS and it has been revisited by legal professionals through the years and found to be a sound policy. It is perceived that our non-profit status could possibly be at risk by such actions and this is something we do not want to risk.

This does not mean that, as an amateur astronomer or environmentalist living in the State of New Hampshire, you cannot become active regarding this bill. By all means if you have an interest, then do what you feel regarding the bill. ***Please just don't do it as a representative of the NHAS.***

There has been discussion in the past that we may be overreacting to this topic but instead of getting into a long drawn out-debate, the officers would like to keep the matter as simple as possible and choose to continue our conservative approach to all political matters in this way.

For anybody out there interested in what the NH legislation is up to these days, here is a link to the website showing the latest bills being introduced and their current status. In the case of this matter it is House Bill 585-FN that might pique your interest.

<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/house/committees/HouseBillsInCommittee.aspx?code=H24>

A hearing on the bill is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3 at 10:00 in Room 304, Legislative Office Building, Concord (across the street from the State House.)

★ Chase McNiss, Paul Winalski

## 2009 Messier Marathon

Each year, around the time of the vernal equinox in mid March, the Sun is so positioned in the sky that it is possible from mid-Northern latitudes to view all 110 of the deep-sky objects in the Messier catalogue

in a single dusk-to-dawn observing session. Attempting this feat is called running the Messier Marathon.

NHAS's traditional annual Messier Marathon observing session will take place the evening of Friday, 27 March. **Larry and Linda Lopez** have graciously offered to host the event at their home in New Boston. Come to see how many Messier objects you can find, or come to do other observing, or just come to socialize. Plan to show up early or mid-afternoon to get a good spot on the observing field.

Starting at 10:00 AM on Saturday, 21 March is the pre-Marathon snow removal, where we pitch in to help Larry clear the observing field.

In lieu of a guest speaker at the March NHAS Business Meeting, there will be a group presentation and discussion of Messier Marathon preparation: where to find observing order lists and star charts; observing tips for different types of scopes, etc.

★ Paul Winalski

## NHAS January 2009 Business Meeting

### ATM

**Larry Lopez** reports that new member **Carl Walker** has a mirror to grind.

### YFOS

**Larry Lopez** reports that he needs to talk to the plow guy about plowing of the observing area.

### Membership

**Alan Shirey** reported that there are four new members. He is looking for suggestions for Astro 101/201 courses for this year.

### Astrophotography

**Gardner Gerry** reports that the usual crowd are still making images. The next virtual (Internet-based) meeting will have **John Buonomo** presenting techniques for combining H-alpha and white light.

### Radio Astronomy

No report.

### Public Observing

**Marc Stowbridge** reports that the first lending telescope has been donated to the Tamworth Public Library. Goffstown is a likely candidate for extending the program.

### Educational Outreach

**Rich Schueller** and **Matt Amar** report that **Matt Ota** has been in touch with a science teacher at Hanover High School to discuss our participation in their Astronomy unit.

### Webmaster

No report.

### Book of the Month

**Matthew Ota** gave a detailed presentation on The Backyard Astronomer's Guide by Terence Dickinson and Alan Dyer, from Firefly Books. Topics covered include a description of what amateur astronomy is; binoculars; telescopes; eyepieces and accessories; observing conditions and light pollution; observing the Moon, Sun, comets, planets, and the deep sky; digital astrophotography, and high-tech Astronomy.

**Ken Charles** presented the Alex Philipenko lecture on Astronomy, which is a video journey through the Milky Way galaxy.

### Scope of the Month

**John Bishop** presented his Stellarvue 90mm f/7 Raptor refractor. This has a carbon fiber tube and is an O'Hara glass element APO. It comes standard with a 1 ¼" diagonal, red dot finder, and sliding and turning dew shield.

### Miscellaneous Business

None.

### 2009 Officer Nominations and Election

See report elsewhere in this Newsletter.

### Evening Program

Club social event.

★ Paul Winalski

## The Bottom Line

**Starting Balance:** \$6151.94

### Deposits/Credits:

Membership:	195.00
Donations:	285.00
Calendar sales:	42.00
Grant fund balance:	809.70
Miscellaneous:	10.00
Total :	1341.70

### Accounts/Paid:

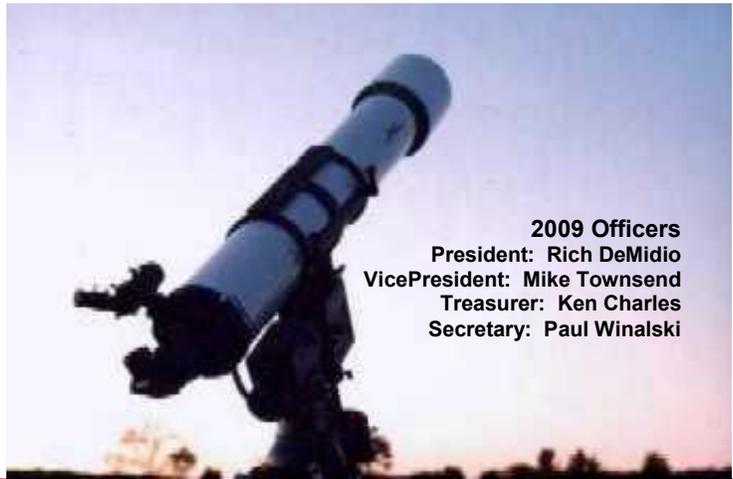
Plowing:	440.00
P.O. Box (annual):	132.00
Solar telescope:	1193.00
Total:	1765.00
<b>Net Account Balance:</b>	<b>\$5728.64</b>
<b>Petty cash drawer:</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>
<b>Cash Balance:</b>	<b>\$5828.94</b>

**2008 Membership:** 100

**Balance of Grant Funds** \$0.00

The remaining \$809.70 grant money we received from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation was used to partly pay for a Lunt solar telescope for use in educational outreach.

★ Ken Charles



**2009 Officers**  
 President: Rich DeMidio  
 VicePresident: Mike Townsend  
 Treasurer: Ken Charles  
 Secretary: Paul Winalski

**DEADLINE March 2009 Issue: 5 PM March 13**

E-mail articles to the Editor.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS** – Notify the Treasurer of changes to postal or e-mail address.

**How to Join N.H.A.S.**

**Write to us:**

NHAS  
 P.O. Box 5823  
 Manchester, NH 03108-5823  
 Attn: Treasurer

**Send E-mail to:**

[info@nhastro.com](mailto:info@nhastro.com)

**Use our web site:**

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

**This month's contributors:**

Rich DeMidio, Alan Shirey, Rich Schueller, Marc Stowbridge, Gardner Gerry, Larry Lopez, John Buonomo, Tom Cocchiaro, Paul Cezanne, Chase McNiss, Ken Charles

**New Hampshire Astronomical Society**  
**P.O. Box 5823**  
**Manchester, NH 03108-5823**



**NHAS Upcoming Events**

Event	Date	Time	Location
Discovery Center Dedication	March 6	4:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	March 6	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Educational Outreach Committee	March 13	6:30 PM	Ralph Pill Building, Concord NH
NHAS Business Meeting	March 20	7:30 PM	St. Anselm College, Goffstown NH
Messier Marathon Snow Removal	March 21	10:00 AM	Lopez residence, New Boston NH
Messier Marathon	March 27	3:00 PM	Lopez residence, New Boston NH
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	April 3	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Public Sky Watch	April 14	7:00 PM	New Searles Elementary School, Nashua NH
NHAS Business Meeting	April 17	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Public Sky Watch	April 20	7:00 PM	Moultonborough Public Libarry, Moultonborough NH
Coffee House Night	April 24	5:00 PM	YFOS