

Clear Skies at Last

President's Message

I'm writing this while on vacation at the summer home in the Adirondacks. The weather has been great and from what I can tell, the club should have had some good weather for Stellafane. **Larry Lopez** volunteered to start the trip report discussion at the business meeting along with sharing his photos from the solar eclipse he attended in China. **Mike Townsend** will conduct the business meeting on 8/21 during my absence.

With summer winding down, we have finally had some descent nights for observing with several public sky watches being conducted. I am hoping that this sets us up for a nice fall viewing season which just happens to be my favorite part of the year. The cooler temperatures, longer nights, and no bugs make viewing very enjoyable. Speaking of the fall, we will have a fall Messier Marathon again this year. Here is hoping for clear skies for that event. Details to follow in subsequent messages.

The officers had their quarterly meeting back in July and discussed three major areas. We conducted our annual financial review, created a development process to update the Website for the EOC who is the main stakeholder, and discussed my idea of an NHAS awards program. I am writing a vision for the later which will be published separately and will require volunteers from the membership to implement. The results of the financial review will also be published separately and

will be discussed at the September business meeting.

I hope everyone enjoys the rest of their summer and looking forward to more clear skies.

★ Rich DeMidio
NHAS President 2009

Recent Public Sky Watches

Seabrook Public Library, Seabrook, NH 30 July



Paul Winalski presents the summer sky at Seabrook.

I gave an hour long talk on "what's in the sky tonight", followed by an observing session, at the Seabrook NH Public Library. **Joe Derek** and **Ken Charles** also showed up with scopes. The observing site was a boat landing, well away from town lights, and quite dark, although the southern view was marred by the light dome from Boston.

We received this thank you note from Anne Robinson, the Director of the Seabrook Library:

"Please give my most hearty thanks to the NH Astronomical Society volunteers who came out last night to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with us in Seabrook. The event had about 23 people at the lecture, and although I couldn't

count in the dark the attendees at the outside part, there were at least that many and probably more. I was fascinated by all that I saw and I hope we can repeat this program again sometime.

Please thank Paul, Joe and the others who gave so generously of their time and expertise."

★ Paul Winalski

Madison Old Home Week, Madison, NH 5 August

This was NHAS's fourth public sky watch as part of Madison Old Home Week in Madison, NH, and the third to actually take place (last year's sky watch was clouded out). As usual we were on the edge of the baseball diamond, with a good view to the east and south. The field has no artificial lighting and would be very dark (similar to YFOS) were it not for the nearly full Moon. The sky was mostly clear, but there were some thin clouds and a general pervasive haze that carried the moonlight across the entire sky.

NHAS members attending: **Matt Amar, Steve Forbes, Stephen Forbes, Marc Stowbridge, Paul Winalski**. Over the course of the evening we probably had about 50 people take a look through the scopes.

I showed the Moon, Jupiter (three of the Galilean moons visible), Albireo, Mizar, Polaris, 61 Cygni, T Lyrae, M57, M13, and NGC 457.

At about 10 PM we all started keeping our eyes out for an Iridium flare predicted for 10:13 PM. While waiting for the flaring satellite, we saw a couple of other, non-flaring satellites go by on approximately

the predicted directory. Presumably these were other Iridiums. The flare occurred on schedule and where Heavens Above predicted--near the Great Square of Pegasus. It reached the predicted -5 magnitude, comfortably brighter than Venus gets.

One of the International Year of Astronomy Galileo scopes was there, and it was giving a pretty good view of Jupiter.

It's a long drive from Merrimack to Madison, but a pleasant and picturesque one. I hope we do this again next year, preferably without the Moon next time.

★ Paul Winalski

McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center Monthly Sky Watch, 7 August

The MSDC turn out was very good. I think there were at least three softball teams plus about 50 other visitors. I gave a membership form to a person that was thinking of joining, he filled it out and paid right there, yahoo!

We had a staff writer from *Motoring*, Wil Birch, an on-line magazine (www.motoringnortheast.com), attending last night. He was very excited about the Sky Watch as a great New England destination. I will ask him to send me an email when they publish the article.

The Members presenting last night: **Rich DeMidio, Garner Gerry, John Rose, Mike Townsend, Chase McNiss, Bill Steele, Scott McCartney, Ken Charles.**

★ Bill Steele

New Durham NH Public Library Sky Watch, 7 August

New Durham is one of our partners in the Library Telescope Program. They have been holding a Mad Scientist reading program for kids over the summer. Tonight was the culmination of this program, with a Mad Scientist lecture by costumed members of the library staff, followed by a sky watch put on by NHAS. Myself, **Marc Stowbridge, Steve Forbes, and Stephen Forbes** were there with scopes. The

Forbes spent a good deal of time helping a local resident sort out his old classic Celestron 9" Cassegrain.

We set up in the parking lot for the Post Office, opposite the Library, where there was considerably less interference from artificial lighting. We were told later on that a ballpark a short drive away might have been even better. Something to keep in mind for next time.

The skies were very clear and dark. Unfortunately, most of the attendees had small children and left before it got decently dark. We were able to show them nice views of Jupiter. The Library scope was there for the sky watch, and I kept it on Jupiter all night. Those who did stay got to see a lot of the wonders of the summer night sky.

We got this note of appreciation from Cathy Prosody at the Library:

"Thanks so much for your participation at our celebration. There will be a nice write-up in the paper, so people in New Durham know Society members came with super equipment and expertise. It's really too bad so many of the parents took the kids home early, but I can't imagine the evening didn't touch several of those children. Please convey our heartiest thanks to your friends who helped us so much. And maybe we'll see you all again in the fall!"

Marc Stowbridge debuted what I think is an absolutely brilliant idea. He put together a fake Newtonian telescope out of PVC plumbing pipe, with the solicitation on its side to donate to the NHAS.



We just set it up on the field without any mention to the public. At the end of the evening, it had several dollar bills stuffed in it.

★ Paul Winalski

Boy Scout Sky Watch, Holman Stadium, Nashua NH 14 August

After the Nashua Defenders semi-pro baseball game was over with, a group of Scouts held an overnight camping expedition in Holman Stadium. They asked us to conduct a sky watch for them.

With the floodlights extinguished, Holman Stadium is perhaps the darkest spot in Nashua. For urban conditions, darkness was surprisingly good. The NHAS attendees, **Matt Amar, Ken Charles, Peter Kelly, Jim Robidoux, Bill Steele, Marc Stowbridge, Paul Winalski**, showed off Jupiter, double stars, and various of the brighter summer deep-sky objects. Some of the scoutmasters lingered on to view deep-sky treasures well after the boys had been put to bed.

★ Paul Winalski

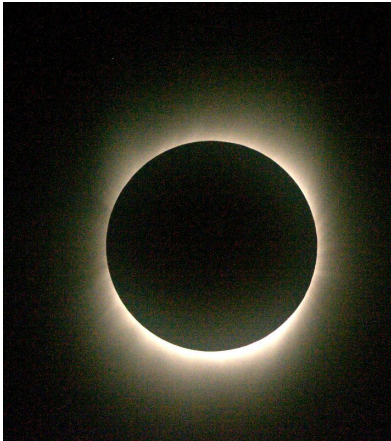
Fall Messier Marathon

Starting at 6:00 PM on Friday, 18 September and continuing to the morning of Saturday 19 November, NHAS will hold its fall Messier Marathon event for club members and guests. In mid-northern latitudes, at or near the Vernal Equinox, it is possible to observe all 110 of the deep-sky objects in the Messier catalogue in one evening, literally from dusk to dawn. Doing so is called "running the Messier Marathon". NHAS traditionally holds such an event in March or April at the **Lopez** house.

While all 110 can't be bagged in the fall, September holds nearly as good an opportunity to view a large number of Messier objects. NHAS member **Scott Wickett** has opened his home in Lyndenborough to us for this major club social event. Come and join the very informal competition to see how many Messier objects you can find from dusk to dawn. If you've never seen a Messier object before, this is a great time to learn where and what they are. Or come just to socialize even if you don't have (or want to bring) a scope. This should be a really fun evening for everyone.

Total Solar Eclipse, China

Larry and Linda Lopez traveled to China to view the total solar eclipse.



You can see this and other wonderful photos of their trip at <http://www.mv.com/users/lopez/2009/ChinaEclipse/>.

NHAS July 2009 Business Meeting

Board of Directors Report

John Bishop reported that the Board approved the request to loan NHAS's 8" SCT for a static display at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center.

Public Observing

Marc Stowbridge reports that Wednesday 22 July is the scheduled date for the Goffstown Library public sky watch, one of our longest running annual public events. Be sure to bring mosquito repellent!

Marc held a daytime presentation on Tuesday 14 July for some Cub Scouts. They got to look through a telescope at distant objects.

There are a couple of sky watch events scheduled for the middle of August.

There may be a sky watch at the Seabrook Library circa 30 July.

New Durham Public Library got their telescope the other day, the sixth in the program.

Moultonbrorogh library still has their display of their telescope and various astronomy books.

Educational Outreach

Rich Schueller reported that 7-9 people attended the EOC meeting on 10 July.

There was much discussion of the website. EOC is looking into setting up a development area for new capabilities. The committee plans to have a report on website renovation for the membership by the next business meeting.

Matt Amar has set up a NHAS display at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center. An 8" SCT will be on display and there will be a cut-away dobsonian set up there. Matt is looking for ideas and contributions to the MSDC display.

We are looking for caretakers for Library Program telescopes. It takes about ten minutes once a month or so to check over the scope.

We are looking at the possibility of a once a month sidewalk astronomy event. There will be an International Year of Astronomy sidewalk event in Portsmouth in the fall.

Ted Blank showed his light pollution demonstration. This was developed by Joan Chamberland. It shows how shielded light gives both more light to pedestrians and less light pollution.

Membership

Bill Steele reported that there were two new members (Walter and Rick—didn't catch the last names) at the meeting.

YFOS orientation and Gemini mount workshops are planned for August.

Bill is looking for volunteers to present Astro 101/201 workshops.

We are looking for a venue other than YFOS for Astro 101/201. Maybe we open the workshops to the public?

John Bishop suggested that we start work on a post-Christmas "how to work your new telescope" workshop.

Chase McNiss said we should set up a EOC subcommittee to develop a "what to look for when buying a scope" public talk.

ATM

No report as **Larry Lopez** is in China viewing the total solar eclipse.

YFOS

Ken Charles reported that the ground is solid despite all the rain. The mystery sheep have chewed on the grass. There are lots of mosquitoes. The warming hut was clean.

Astrophotography

Gardner Gerry presented some slides of recent member astro images, including some prominence photos from Market Square Day. He also presented a brochure on a commercially available cooling box for DSLRs that drops a camera to -20° to -25° C.

Webmaster

No report.

Book of the Month

Ken Charles presented a couple of field booklets. One shows the Messier catalog, double stars, and overlooked objects. It is by Brent Wilson, published by Sky Spot. The other is a set of Telrad finder charts for the "Best 300 Objects in the Sky", published by John R. Dubchek in 2005.

Miscellaneous Business

Please contact Rich DeMidio if you have ideas for future guest speakers at NHAS business meetings.

The Q3 officer's meeting will take place on 25 July. Topics will be the annual financial review, operational effectiveness for the EOC, and website maintenance.

Open Forum

Bill Steele reminded everyone that Stellafane is coming up August 13-16. Could we get a write-up on it in the forums area on the website?

Chase McNiss pointed out that if we are to bring the NHAS canopy, we need to start planning it now.

NASA update: This is the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission that first landed a man on the Moon. Original high resolution video of the Moon landing was found a Parke Observatory in Australia. This is slow scan TV

tapes. The restoration project for this video is expected to be done in September. The space shuttle is up with the ISS.

Evening Program

Paul Winalski gave a presentation on his observing trip to New South Wales, Australia (the Deepest South Texas Sky Safari).

★ Paul Winalski

The Bottom Line

Dave Weaver donated \$100 towards the purchase of the Lunt solar telescope.

Starting Balance:	\$5304.98
Deposits/Credits:	
Membership:	22.50
Donations:	70.00
Sake of coffee mugs:	65.00
Pro Portsmouth refund:	75.00
Total :	232.50
Accounts/Paid:	
Insurance:	75.68
Total:	75.68
Net Account Balance:	\$5761.71
Petty cash drawer:	\$100.00
Cash Balance:	\$5861.71

Membership: 127

★ Ken Charles



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

DEADLINE September 2009 Issue: 5 PM September 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:

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 P.O. Box 5823
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 Attn: Treasurer

Send E-mail to:

info@nhastro.com

Use our web site:

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

This month's contributors:

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NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
NHAS Business Meeting	August 21	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Dunstable Public Library Sky Watch	August 26	7:00 PM	Dunstable Town Common, Dunstable NH
Coffee House Night	August 28	7:00 PM	YFOS
Educational Outreach Ctte. Meeting	September 3	6:30 PM	Ralph Pill Building, Concord NH
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	September 4	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
NHAS Business Meeting	September 11	7:30 PM	St. Anselm College, Manchester NH
Westford Girl Scout Sky Watch	September 12	7:00 PM	Westford Girl Scout Encampment, Pelham NH
Coffee House Night	September 18	5:00 PM	YFOS
Fall Messier Marathon	September 18-19	6:00 PM	Scot Wickett's, Lyndeborough NH
Discovery Center Public Sky Watch	October 2	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
NHAS Business Meeting	October 16	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Coffee House Night	October 23	5:00 PM	YFOS