

First Night in Portsmouth

President's Message

We meet members of the general public during our sky watches and most of us can now handle most of the questions they ask us. More rarely we meet journalists who want to interview us for a story. The two audiences have very different questions and I have found that I'm less prepared for the questions that the journalists ask me.

The easy ones are questions about why you like astronomy, how much a telescope costs, what's up in the sky or what you think about Pluto as a planet. The hard ones are those likely to become the "hook" for the story the reporter will eventually write.

I therefore suggest that in a spare moment you consider what your answer would be to questions like "Why should the government fund space exploration?", "What is the goal of the NHAS?", "What do you want people to take away from a sky watch?"

From our point of view, what do we want the reporter to take away from an interview? I suggest that at a minimum we want to get four points across:

1. That NHAS is a club of people who like astronomy; anyone can join!
2. That our goal is public outreach via presentations and sky watches;
3. That we have a web site where people can see our schedule and request sky watches;
4. That there's no charge for a sky watch.

We've had a good bit of press coverage recently, and it's been helpful. Let's keep up the good work!

✧ John Bishop
NHAS President 2012

Highlights for This Month

Despite generally bad observing weather, we did hold successful outreach events this month at the Rey Center and Alton Central School. And although we were clouded out at Salem High School, we got excellent press coverage in the *New Hampshire Sunday News*. We've had several membership, sky watch, and LTP requests from the publicity.

Our seacoast sidewalk astronomers were out for First Night in Portsmouth, and the event was a big success.

✧ Paul Winalski
NHAS Secretary 2012

2012 Election Results

Our 2012 officers and directors are:

President: John Bishop
Vice President: David Gilmore
Secretary: Paul Winalski
Treasurer: Ken Charles

Board of Directors:
Gardner Gerry (chairman)
Jean Buckley
Ted Blank

Our thanks to the outgoing Board chairman, **John Rose**, for a job well done during his three-year term.

✧ Paul Winalski

Thank You from Maple Wood School

"The students and teachers of Mr. Mommsen's class & Mr. Carey's class of Maple Wood School in Somersworth, NH would like to extend our extreme appreciation and gratitude to you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to join us for our astronomy night in December. Your time, expertise, enthusiasm, and your telescope greatly helped us to see and understand space in a way that we are not able to do inside the classroom! It is greatly appreciated!"

✧ Paul Winalski

Rey Center Sky Watch, Waterville Valley NH, 17 December

My son and I and Jim VanGyzen from the Rey Center hosted 34 (!) people who wanted to see the sky, an impressive number for the single digit wind chills.

The sky cleared by 6 PM. While the club only gets in some of our nights at the Rey Center due to weather, I've really lucked out and have had clear skies for both of my nights.

We're going to get a new member from Goffstown, **Bob St. Pierre**, who was up in Waterville.

With people rotating and new people coming, we showed mostly a half dozen objects including Jupiter, M31, the Double Cluster, Albireo, M42, and Polaris. As you know, these are easy things to find and that helps when it's cold! The sky was

probably a bit hazy as the seeing was as good as I've seen on a cold night. Rigel was widely split, despite its being low in the sky. Jupiter looked good, too. There wasn't a hint of the Flame Nebula though.

Kim Votta showed up toward the end. I hadn't met her before. All agreed to call it a night at 8:45 PM.

✧ Andy Jaffe

Alton Central School Sky Watch, Alton NH, 22 December

The sky watch took place as planned. Weather conditions were iffy. Most weather sites were predicting partly cloudy skies. The Clear Sky Chart concurred and showed below average transparency, which in my experience can mean anything from background haze to opaque low clouds. When I arrived in Alton the only object visible was Jupiter, and that was showing through thick haze. Fortunately, by the time the indoor talk was over the sky was clearing up. It got quite clear for an hour or so, but by 9 PM the sky had clouded over completely and I packed up.

Derek Pappaceno had arranged with the school and the town authorities to have all of the lights turned off around the school playground and that gave us a very dark site with excellent horizon visibility and easy access for astronomers' cars. I set up on the edge of the basketball court. There was only one floodlight on the school building in the distance spoiling complete darkness, and it was only a minor annoyance. Derek said he will see about getting that one turned off, too, next time.

We had a big crowd--about 100 people. The students were 5th graders and quite knowledgeable about Astronomy. Unfortunately I was the only one from NHAS who was there. I set up the TeleVue 85mm to view the Pleiades at 18X and pointed Mr. T. at Jupiter. Derek was operating a 4" reflector that the school has. Everyone was very

patient and the lines were orderly. The background haze meant that there was no point in showing a high power view of Jupiter, so I used the 35mm Panoptic (48X) so that all four Galilean moons were in the view. The only details on the planet were the north and south equatorial bands. There were still lots of "wow"s from the crowd, only a few of whom had ever looked through a telescope before. M45 was also a big hit and, once the haze cleared up some, was showing very well. It was nearly 8:30 before everyone had seen Jupiter and I could point to another object. I chose M42 since Orion was fully over the trees by then.

Unfortunately that's when the clouds came in and ended the session.

✧ Paul Winalski

First Night Sidewalk Astronomy, Portsmouth NH, 31 December



Fog socked us in most of the evening (Ed Ting photo)

Happy New Year to all! The first NHAS appearance at First Night, according to Pro Portsmouth Director Barbara Massar and WMUR News Anchor Jennifer Gannon, seemed to be the most popular activity of the evening.

Hundreds of visitors to First Night Portsmouth stood in line at club scopes to get a view of the moon, Jupiter and other targets that became visible when the fog finally cleared.



Crowds mob the NHAS observing area when skies clear enough for a view of the Moon and Jupiter (Tom Cocchiaro photo)

Special thanks to **Gardner Gerry, Ed Ting, Mike Townsend, Tim Printy, Shane Cross, and Herb Bubert** who kept faith in the Clear Sky Chart and arrived to set up at 3 PM despite the "socked in" conditions. Clouds and fog thinned enough early in the evening to provide a two-hour window to the moon and Jupiter—and eventually cleared out after 10 PM for relative unhindered views of the sky. Gardner eventually turned his scope to the Pleiades to add more variety to the evening's astronomical offerings.



Gardner Gerry, Ed Ting, and Mike Townsend during a break in the action (Tom Cocchiaro photo)

We also set up a tent and table full of brochures which went very quickly. Several dozen people who stopped by also expressed interest in becoming NHAS members.



Looking through a Celestron C5 (Ed Ting photo)

After the midnight countdown, Barbara Massar came over to Gardner and me to invite us back for next year's celebration—and to do encore appearances at Pro Portsmouth's Children's Day (first Sunday in May), Market Square Day (second Saturday in June) and possibly several "Summer in the Street" events through July.

✧ Tom Cocchiaro



Tim Printy explains Jupiter to First Night revelers (Tom Cocchiaro photo)

I want to thank **Ted Blank** for luring me to the public sky watch in Portsmouth's busy Market Square on Friday night. First time I've done this. It was a lot of fun, and I recommend the experience to anyone who's thought about it but hasn't yet tried it.



Gardner talks with a guest about telescope basics (Tom Cocchiaro photo)

Nothing tops watching a small boy peer into the eyepiece of a modest 6" Orion Dob (Ted's, actually) and shriek to his family, "I just saw Jupiter!! I Just saw Jupiter," to be repeated maybe another ten times until his parents and little brother did so as well. Clearly the thrill of his (still short) lifetime.



Mike with visitors to the NHAS observing area (Tom Cocchiaro photo)

Throng of nicely dressed mostly (but not entirely) young people were out on a mild, clear January evening, with Jupiter and its four moons, our quarter Moon and Venus on offer despite the bright streetlights (M 42 was a challenge, but visible.)



Tim and his wife setting up equipment (Tom Cocchiaro photo)

In the course of nearly four hours (adjusting the aim of the Dob every 45 seconds or so), I must have shown Jupiter and its moons to at least 100 people. My post was one of five scopes out there that might, so, even considering that many people went from one scope to another, the total viewership was probably several hundred. Many viewers had some knowledge of what they were looking at—as in, "Which of those moons has the ocean on it?"—and all seemed genuinely appreciative that someone, namely NHAS, would organize this effort.

Me too.

✧ Bob Gillette

This event and that boy yelling "I saw Jupiter" is the exact reason we joined, well **Drew** joined, NHAS in December.

✧ Gabrielle Goodwin

Salem High School Physics Day, Salem NH, 5 January

About 15 people showed up for this event. Unfortunately the sky watch portion was clouded out, so I gave an extended indoor presentation and demonstrated the field assembly and collimation of a truss-tube dob. It's too bad, because our setup location was the courtyard behind the school library, which is closed in and shielded from outdoor lighting by the school buildings (they got the janitor to turn off the classroom lights surrounding the courtyard).

Barbara Taormina from the Manchester *Union Leader* was there and interviewed both me and **Herb Bubert**. A very prominent article, with some of Herb's spectacular images, appeared on the first page of the Lifestyles section of the 15 January issue of the *Sunday News*.

✧ Paul Winalski

Loaner Scope Update

NHAS has Dobsonian mounted Newtonian reflectors for loan to members. These come with an accessory case including eyepieces, moon map, planisphere, red flashlight, and Richard Berry's Discover the Stars. They are available on two months loan.

If you wish to borrow one of these scopes, contact the Chair of the Board of Directors (Gardner Gerry).

Scopes presently in the program:

Orion XT6
10" Coulter Compact

✧ John Rose

Library Telescopes in Kalamazoo

"Hi Marc,

"I wanted to give you a little update on the Kalamazoo Astronomical Society's progress on the Library

Telescope Program. First and foremost, I wanted to thank you for all the guidance you've given us in starting this program. We only hope that it takes off here as well as it has in New Hampshire.

"One regret from here in Michigan, I wish we had the dark skies here that you do:) That said, we'll accomplish what we can. Your club has a beautiful program, and has offered it to any club that is willing. The program is made easy, since all documentation and steps needed are on your website. What a gift!

"The program has been presented and accepted by our board, and is awaiting the finishing touches on the proposal to our first library. Our board has agreed upon the purchasing of two telescopes, which will be placed in separate libraries. The board loved the idea, and some of the board members signed up on the spot to either help out or become foster parents! It was great!

"Personally, finding out about the program and working on proposals has been an absolute joy! The potential for this is truly exciting, which makes the entire process so much fun. When you're doing what you love, you don't work a day in your life!

"Our plan is to approach each library with our proposal within the next two weeks, followed by the purchasing and modifying of the telescopes. All it will depend on is which libraries accept, which is hopefully all of them! I appreciate your time, and wish you continued success on your library program as well!

"Sincerely,
Mike Cook
Kalamazoo Astronomical Society
Michigan"

"12/31/2011

'Finally the first presentation is upon us! This week we'll have the start of the Library Telescope Program. It will be great to finally get it off the ground! Wish us luck, and we'll keep you posted.

Craig from OPT helped us out with a very good discount on what we'll order from him, and it was nice to

talk with him. It will be a joy to work with him, hopefully for a long time".

✳ Marc Stowbridge

NHAS December 2011 Business Meeting

The December business meeting was held at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center on 16 December 2011, our President, **John Bishop**, presiding.

President's Report

My end of term report:

- *Ad hoc* finding of speakers worked better than I had feared.
- We made less progress on the loaner scope program than I had hoped.
- There is an obvious need for more members to become involved (or we must lighten the load on the current involved members).
- We finally got an online asset list.
- The Library Telescope Program is a big success!!

Board of Directors

Our Chairman, **John Rose**, was not present, but he reported to John Bishop that the club finances are doing well. He shares John B.'s concern that we only have a small group of active members and ex-officers involved in most of our activities.

Educational Outreach

Matt Amar reports that he will be coordinating the Rey Center events. We have committed to another six months. We have primary astronomers for the first four months. The emphasis now is on getting out the word on these events in the Waterville Valley area.

We are seeking volunteers to help with coordinating our participation in AeroSpaceFest and NEFAF in 2012.

Marc Stowbridge and **Rich Schueller** will be coordinating the Library Telescope Program going forward. The inventory and accounting of the scopes donated by Oceanside Photo and Telescope (OPT) has been completed;

distribution of the scopes is in progress. We need coordination help for a LTP presence at 2012 NEAF.

Pubic Observing

Paul Winalski reports several successful sky watches were held in the past month, in particular, the Winter Holiday Stroll in Nashua. Coming up, we will be participating in the First Night celebrations in Portsmouth. A big turnout is expected for that event.

Membership

Bill Steele reports that "Astro 101: Introduction to YFOS" is scheduled for next Friday.

Let Bill know if you have a workshop you would like to present.

Astrophotography

Gardner Gerry asks that we visit the "Pictures" forum on the NHAS website to see the latest images taken by club members. Lately it has been dominated by planetary and lunar imaging. **Ed Ting**, **Herb Bubert**, and Gardner had a brief meeting on 19 November to discuss Registax techniques.

There will be a formal AP committee meeting on Lunar and Planetary Imaging sometime in early 2012.

Gardner then presented several of the recent spectacular images:

A Jupiter sequence by Herb Rich Schueller's image of Langrenus crater (120 km across)
Ed Ting's image of Copernicus crater

Gardner's lunar mosaic

Miscellaneous Business

We need guest speakers for all of 2012. Contact John Bishop if you have a prospective speaker.

2012 Election

Nominations made in November:

President:	John Bishop
Vice President:	David Gilmore
Secretary:	Paul Winalski
Treasurer:	Ken Charles
Director:	Ted Blank

There were no further nominations.

A motion to accept the election of the slate of unopposed nominees was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Scope of the Month

Ed Ting presented a Takahashi FS-60C (SV) 60mm f/5.9 flourite apochromatic refractor. It has confusing setup accessories, but it gives tremendous images for a 2.4" scope.

Book of the Month

Ted Blank presented a book showing Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) views of the Apollo sites.

Evening Presentation

In lieu of an evening presentation, the club enjoyed a fine pot luck supper, and even better company.

The Bottom Line

Starting Balance:	\$12744.55
Deposits/Credits:	
Membership:	360.00
Donations:	174.00
Bank interest:	1.14
Calendar sales:	21.00
Total :	556.14
Accounts/Paid:	
Rackspace Cloud:	22.71
Cynric Co. (plowing):	119.35
Total:	142.06
Net Account Balance:	\$13158.63
Petty cash drawer:	\$100.00
Cash Balance:	\$13258.63

EOC Share: **5789.43**

Membership: 90

New Members:

Peter Smith, Milford NH

Geraldine Smith, Milford NH

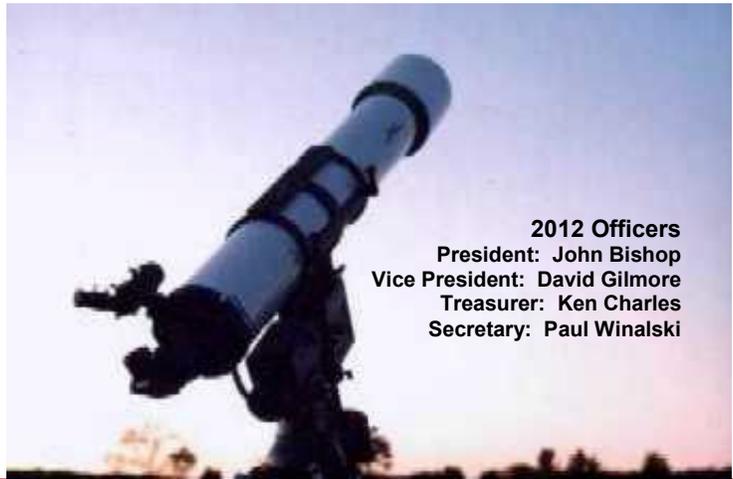
Michelle Thomas, Wilmington NH

David Rickey, Bath NH

Donations:

Luanne Pigeon	20.00
Portsmouth Skywatch	104.00
David Riceky	10.00 EOC
Peter Smith	40.00 LTP

* Ken Charles
NHAS Treasurer 2012



2012 Officers
President: John Bishop
Vice President: David Gilmore
Treasurer: Ken Charles
Secretary: Paul Winalski

DEADLINE February 2012 Issue: 5 PM February 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

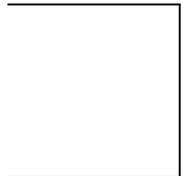
Use our web site:

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

This month's contributors:

John Bishop, Andy Jaffe, Tom Cocchiaro, Ed Ting, Bob Gillette, Gabrielle Goodwin, John Rose, Marc Stowbridge, Ken Charles

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



NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
Dunbarton Public Library Sky Watch	February 7	6:00 PM	Dunbarton Public Library, Dunbarton NH
Educational Outreach Committee Meeting	February 9	6:30 PM	Manchester City Library, Manchester NH
Gilmanton School Sky Watch	February 10	6:00 PM	Gilmanton School, Gilmanton NH
Bedford High School Sky Watch	February 16	6:00 PM	Benedictine Park, Bedford NH
NHAS Business Meeting	February 17	7:30 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
North Hampton School Sky Watch	February 21	6:30 PM	North Hampton School, North Hampton NH
Antrim Elementary School Sky Watch	February 23	6:30 PM	10 School Street, Antrim NH
Coffee House Night	February 24	5:00 PM	YFOS
Astro 101 Workshop: YFOS Orientation	February 24	6:30 PM	YFOS
Astro 201 Workshop: Carbon Stars	February 24	7:30 PM	YFOS
Discovery Center Sky Watch	March 2	7:00 PM	McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord NH
Sidewalk Astronomy	March 3	6:00 PM	Market Square, Portsmouth NH