



# The Feint Fuzzy

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*The Unofficial Newsletter of the West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers*

*April 2008*

## **From the Editors:**

Can you believe it is already the 1st of April? As we move into spring and warmer viewing weather, we'd like to encourage club members to send us observing reports, articles, pictures, and images. Remember, however, don't believe everything you read!

—Bob & Melissa

## **UPCOMING MEETING:**

**Next meeting: April 5<sup>th</sup>. Because last month's meeting was cancelled due to snow, the potluck and elections have been moved to this meeting. Potluck supper starts at 6:00pm, meeting at 7:00pm, with observing afterwards if it is clear. Visitors are welcome (as always) to join us for the entire evening!**

## **LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH 8TH**

The March meeting of WKAA was canceled because of snow, but that didn't stop Club President Dale Baltimore from imagining just how the meeting would have gone....

*I'd like to call this meeting to order.... It's time to get Sirius about Astronomy Day. If you want a successful event, it is important to planet ahead of time so nothing Mars the celebration. We want well-focused plans—nothing too nebulous. Hopefully by then the Mercury will have risen and it won't be so cold. Jackie's working hard to plan the day and would appreciate you volunteering your services in conjunction with this important event.*

*I'd like to thank all of you who brought food for tonight's potluck dinner. The fried chicken was especially tasty—the meteor the better, I always say!*

*I'd also like to welcome our newest members tonight, the Pegasus-ers, visiting all the way from Aurora, Kentucky. I can see they are both really excited to be here—they either just got a good look through one of the telescopes, orbit into one of Harold's chocolate cakes.*

*We'll have Dave Paessler gibbous the Treasurer's report in just a minute. He's sampling Harold's cake with the Pegasus-ers.*

*We're happy that our vice president, Jim, is feeling better. Gemini are looking forward to seeing you all again here next month. Please comet the usual time.*

*And now, if there is no opposition, let's head out to the observing field. I want to show all of you the 36" Obsession telescope my wife Carol surprised me with last night...*

**"DALE! WAKE UP, HONEY! You've fallen asleep in the recliner again!"**

## **POTLUCK DINNER THIS MONTH!**

The potluck dinner has been rescheduled for the upcoming meeting this Saturday, April 5th, at 6:00pm. Contact Harold Meyers at: hambone10100[[@](mailto:hambone10100@yahoo.com)]yahoo.com if you haven't already signed up to bring something.

**ELECTIONS!**

Annual club officer elections will now be held at the upcoming meeting at 7:00pm on April 5th, following the potluck dinner at 6:00pm. All current officers are seeking reelection. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else, please submit the nominee's name and office to John Holland at yojohn\_ng[[@](mailto:yojohn_ng@newwavecomm.net)]newwavecomm.net

Nominations will be accepted up until the election takes place.

**Club Memberships Now Due:** If you have not paid your dues for 2008, bring them to the next meeting. Club membership is \$25 for an individual or family, which allows one member to earn Observing Club certificates through the Astronomical League. Additional family members who also want to earn certificates can pay an additional \$5. Contact David Paessler if you have questions.

**UPCOMING EVENTS—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

- ★ April 4-6: [Tennessee Spring Star Party](#) at Falls Creek Falls State Park in east central Tennessee, sponsored by the Cumberland Astronomical Society
- ★ May 10: [Astronomy Day](#) at Golden Pond Planetarium. Remember, we need YOUR help!
- ★ May 24: First [Summer Nights](#) program at Golden Pond Planetarium

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**THE NIGHT SKY NATURALIST, by Bob Vickers****NGC 7841 (The Semi-Colon) - Deep Sky Showpiece Galaxy!**

Easily located just 1 degree directly south of Lambda Draconis (also called Giasar), this showpiece galaxy is one of the best kept secrets in the northern skies and really deserves to be *much* better known. Its unusual shape is readily apparent even in 7x35 binoculars and at least some level of detail will be visible in most any size scope. NGC 7841 is a spiral galaxy face-on to our line of sight but unlike most spirals exhibits only one arm which is attached to the western side of its round, bright core and sweeps away nearly 40 minutes to the south. Through my 12.5 inch Dob, the core shows an uneven increase in brightness toward the center and then becomes suddenly brighter with a nearly starlike nucleus. The arm appears somewhat mottled along its length. Much like the Andromeda Galaxy, it has a small nearby satellite elliptical galaxy (NGC 7842) which appears basically round and roughly the same size as the core of NGC 7841. NGC 7842 becomes gradually brighter toward the center and has a starlike nucleus. Together with this round companion just 10 minutes directly to its north, NGC 7841's appearance has earned it the popular name of "The Semi-Colon." Its distance is only 1.8 million light years, but it is probably one of the least well known members of our "local group" of galaxies and is the only other spiral galaxy in this group besides the Milky Way, M31, and M33.

NGC 7841 was the only discovery of Savano Andriatsiferanarivo, a native of Madagascar. Inexplicably missed by both Messier and Herschel, this large, fairly bright, and unusual galaxy was spotted by Andriatsiferanarivo in 1845 through the 71" reflector that he designed and built. This telescope was the largest (and maybe the only) telescope in Madagascar at that time. Andriatsiferanarivo had toiled for thirteen years on his quest to build the largest telescope in the world but had the misfortune of completing it just one day after Lord Rosse, Earl of Parsons, completed his 72" scope which became the world's largest in the spring of

1845. In a fit of rage Andriatsiferanarivo destroyed his own telescope with an ax only hours after his discovery of NGC 7841. Tragically, he was crushed to death when the 71", 1 ½ ton, mirror fell on top of him. As a result, he and his telescope have been virtually forgotten by history.

One final curious feature of this galaxy is its mottled core, caused by huge dust clouds surrounding its nucleus. With my 12.5 inch reflector, using a magnification of 1440x, stacked UHC, OIII, H Beta, and Skyglow filters, plus a generous amount of averted imagination, I can just make out the smiley-face pattern in the core of the galaxy. If you have difficulty seeing this pattern try a couple of glasses of wine before observing (that always works for me!). If you avert your vision slightly from the face, the left eye seems to wink at you....

In an effort to recognize the scientific contribution of Savano Andriatsiferanarivo, well-known amateur astronomer Hubert Nosuch has entered NGC 7841 as object number 99 in his listing of the Nosuch 100. Personally, I feel that we all owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Nosuch for this magnanimous gesture.

I would **love** to hear about your observations of this almost entirely overlooked "faint fuzzy." Email me at cosmosbob[[@](mailto:cosmosbob@hotmail.com)]hotmail.com.



### **OBSERVING (!) REPORT, by Vyron Mitchell \* \* \* \* \***

On Friday, March 6, I was sort of bored so I grabbed a new scope that I had put together and took it out on the back deck. It worked great! After I got it aligned, I found the "Kentucky Snow Nebula," which I rarely have seen. It was beautiful and awe inspiring. The scope was filled with a white that was almost as bright as a full moon. As an extra bonus, I was able to detect literally thousands of the Snow Nebula's moons and it's true what they say about them: each is different. I looked for quite a while and I never found any two of the moons that were identical although they all looked similar. I'm sure that some of them are, but my eyes are not yet trained well enough to match them. I'm wondering if The Astronomical League offers a certificate for witnessing a Snow Nebula?

### **ASTRONOMEDIA**

#### **Retro Encabulator**

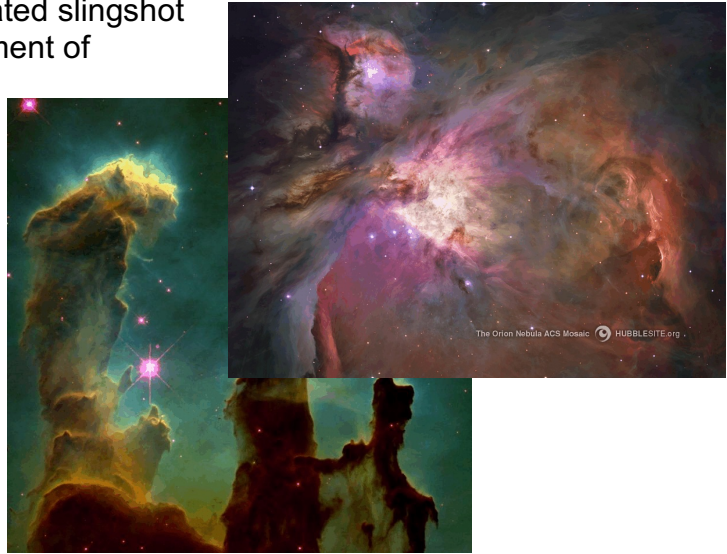
For the latest technological innovation guaranteed to enhance your observing experience, check out this video of Rockwell's new electronic wonder: the [Retro Encabulator](#).

We expect to see the Encabulator in *Sky & Telescope's* next "Hot New Astronomy Products" article.

#### **Announcing a Possible New NASA Initiative: SPREADSS**

NASA has been petitioned by a worldwide coalition of deep sky observers to establish a new extremely long-term initiative: the Space Project to Rearrange, Economize And Distribute Star Systems (SPREADSS). It has long been noted that such astronomical entities as clusters, galaxies, and other intriguing night sky objects are scattered haphazardly throughout the universe. In addition, too many of them are visible only either during daylight

hours or during cold winter nights, making comfortable viewing a challenge. By using a sophisticated slingshot approach, combined with judicious placement of available black holes, the coalition proposes to gradually shift the most interesting objects to positions that would allow observers to work more comfortably and efficiently. Said one deep sky observer, "It is kind of ironic that some of the best nebulae are only visible during the winter when it is too cold to get out to view!" He suggests that traditional winter nebulae such as the Orion Nebula, Horse Head Nebula, and Rosetta should all be moved into the Sagittarius region. Even though this region already contains a number of interesting objects for study, by adding a few more, it would mean that night sky viewers could just point their scopes at one region of the sky and not have to move around as much.



Funding for this venture could become a challenge in the months and years to come, but the group is confident that given the relative importance of this project, that the money will be there when needed. For more information, click on <http://www.SPREADSS/AprilFool>

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## **CLUB RESOURCES**

### **Loaner Scopes/Imager**

The club has two Dobsonians (6", 8") and a Meade Deep Sky Imager available for club members to borrow. Anyone who has been a club member for six months, completes a training/safety session, and signs a written agreement may borrow one of the scopes or the imager.

### **Library**

The club has several books and magazines available to members for reference or checkout. Take a look and see what we have at the next club meeting.

### **Magazine Discounts**

Club members who subscribe to *Sky & Telescope* or *Astronomy* magazines through the club receive a discount! Annually you can save \$10 on *Sky & Telescope* and \$9 on *Astronomy*. Contact David Paessler for more information.

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**CLUB OFFICERS**

**President:** Dale Baltimore—Paducah, KY; 270-554-6603; w.daleb[[@](mailto:w.daleb@comcast.net)]comcast.net

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