

# WKAA Newsletter February 2002

*West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers*

## NEXT MEETING

The next club meeting will be Saturday Feb 9 at 7:00 PM at the G.P. Observatory. Hope to see ya' there.

## NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome our newest members, who joined in January; Arnold Newnum of Crofton KY, Gary Andrews & Jan Sackman of Dover TN, Rodney Mayes of Central City KY, and Steve Brodsky of Benton KY.

## LAST MEETING

The January 2001 Club Meeting was held on the 12th. It was about 28°-30°, soggy, and the skies were clear with just an occasional puffy breeze. It proceeded to get even clearer as midnight approached. Alan and David were able to just make out the Horsehead Nebula in Alan's 10" with a Hydrogen-Beta filter, a feat which is virtually unheard of for this region with that size scope. We made plenty of coffee and Ross' kids brought cookies to share. As we all huddled in the warmroom, Alan called the meeting to order.

*The issues discussed at the meeting were:*

A) Clubhouse/Observatory maintenance, including (a) Getting several volunteer members together in the Spring to repaint the interior walls and ceiling (a different color). (b) Putting up wall cabinets in the warmroom. (c) Getting a focuser for the big Dob that has sufficient travel, and possibly putting larger casters on it to make it easier to get in and out. (d) Modifying the length of the solar refractor so a diagonal eyepiece adapter will work on it. This will prevent people from looking like they're playing "Twister" as they observe. (e) We are studying the possibility of raising the dome scope in height, to allow viewing closer to the horizon, without the bottom of the dome window obstructing the view. This would be a major project though, requiring much thought.

B) We are going to try a new approach to club dues from new members joining between the October Star Party and March. Instead of paying for only the remainder of the year, pay for the following year as well. Tim Camden made the suggestion and all agreed to give it a try.

C) It has been mentioned by several S.P. attendees that it would be nice to run planetarium shows during Saturday morning of the Star Party. We sometimes take our planetarium for granted, not realizing that probably half or more of the S.P. attendees do not have a planetarium within close vicinity.

D) Someone suggested that since the club is growing, we should issue ID cards annually to paid members, in order to have free access to the planetarium.

E) Also mentioned was that a web-based newsgroup would be nice to allow members to post messages and stay in touch, since the WKAA Biglist is just for officers to post news and messages on. As I mentioned in a prior email, Ross has taken the liberty of getting a newsgroup established for us.

F) Officer Elections will take place at the March 16th meeting. We are presently taking nominations for all positions. Please submit any nominations you have to one of the officers, either in person, via phone or email. The method of voting will be determined by the number of nominations for each position. Ross also mentioned the possibility of adding at least one new position. Learn more about these issues at Saturday's meeting.

G) A few other members are interested in going to Mid-South Stargaze in Mississippi April 10-13  
<http://rainwater.astronomers.org/stargaze/>

### THIS MONTH'S ARTICLE

#### An Observing Tip:

Winter observing seems to create a no-win situation more often than not. If it's not the weather being cloudy or too cold, it's the fogging eyepieces. Since we can't control the weather, there is a way we can get a hold on fogging eyepieces.

The most transparent skies of the year occur during the winter months because there is no heat or high humidity haze patterns. Not only do we lose the haze, humidity, and mosquitoes, we also lose the natural light block of leaves.

The first set up of the winter season usually begins with a few choice words concerning the neighbors insecurity light and then out comes the towel to drape over the head and eyepiece. But wait! The Orion Nebula looks really weird. You back away from the eyepiece, turn on the red light.....CRAP!, eyepiece is fogged up. You either wave the towel to clear the eyepiece or you simply drag out another eyepiece that isn't fogged.....yet.

Ah, you try something different this time though. You take a deep breathe and hold it, then go back to the eyepiece with towel following. Hey! What happened to the faint E & F stars of the Trapezium? They were there the last time..... Believe it or not, when you hold your breathe for any length of time, the ability for your eyes to discern faint objects diminish quite quickly. Why you ask? Your eyes rely on oxygen to work properly. When you hold your breathe for an extended period of time your eyes become less sensitive to low light.

So, how do we solve this problem? Simple. Go to Wally-World, K-Mart, or some other store that sells swimming items and pick a snorkel tube. I know, sounds crazy, but it works. This simple "tailpipe" allows you to observe in the complete darkness of your towel, you can breathe normal, and no more fogging eyepieces. The Orion Nebula never looked so good.....

Can't find a snorkel tube? You can fashion a homemade one out of a piece 3/4 CPVC, a couple of 45\* couplers, and then you are good to go! But the commercial ones are more comfortable and are easier to keep in your mouth. Don't worry about what the neighbors think. They already think you are crazy anyway for wanting to sit out in the cold and looking through your scope.

Want another tip? Observe with both eyes open. It's hard to squint for an extended period of time. Your dominant eye starts to suffer from the muscles trying hard to keep the lids open. While you are at W-World, go to the Pharmacy section and find a \$1.96 eye patch in the section where they sell the eye goodies. It is a really good addition to your observing accessory list. Use the pipe and the patch for the maximum observing capabilities.

Oh, when you are using your customized exhaust system, don't breathe through your nose..... Try these little tricks the next time you get the scope out. I think you find that your observing abilities will improve noticeably.

-Ross Workman-

#### CLUB OFFICERS

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#### NOTES

--We are developing an online star party registration form that can be submitted online, instead of having to print and mail in.

--Don't forget the occultation of Saturn on Wednesday Feb 20.

Happy Skies,  
John Holland