



The Faint Fuzzy

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The Official Newsletter of the West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers *February 2008*

From the Editors:

Happy Groundhog Day! The annual FYBO star party, officer elections, and Astronomy Day are coming up soon. We want to encourage all club members to participate in these events. Let's hope for clear skies in 2008!

UPCOMING MEETING:
Next meeting: Feb. 2nd, at 7:00pm. If it is clear, we'll observe afterwards!

—Bob & Melissa

Last Meeting Highlights: January 5th

There were 9 people in attendance, including newcomer Vyron Mitchell, publisher of the *Cadiz Record*, the weekly newspaper for Cadiz, KY. Vyron and his wife, Cynthia, have subsequently joined the club. (Welcome to the Mitchells!)

TREASURER/ALCOR REPORT

David Paessler presented ALCOR certificates and pins to Bob and Melissa Vickers for completing the Binocular Messier program. Vyron took pictures and wrote an article for the *Record*. (Thanks, Vyron.) Harold Meyers was not present to receive his Messier Honorary Certificate.

David also reported that the club's treasury is doing well, and that there are still a few Twin Lakes Star Party shirts available (\$15 each), as well as some club polo shirts. Contact David if you are interested.

Library Additions

Carol Baltimore brought the two new AL Guides (*Planetary Nebulae*, and *Galaxy Groups and Clusters*) and placed them in the library for use by club members.

March Meeting

Election of officers will take place at the March meeting, following the annual potluck dinner. Please plan to attend this meeting so that your vote may be counted. Carol Baltimore will coordinate the dinner. Let her know what dish you plan to bring. Club membership renewals are due at this meeting as well.

Goals for 2008

Club President Dale Baltimore led a discussion of club goals for the upcoming year. He raised questions about the number of outreach programs the club presented in 2007—Did we do enough? Are we trying to do too many?

Club members discussed the importance of the outreach work that we do, as well as the need to make sure we don't overcommit or spread ourselves too thin. After the success of

the boy scout night last November, we already have interest from another troop to do a similar event. As word gets out that the club provides this service—and does a good job at it—we may get requests to do even more. Members enjoy doing the outreach, but because the members are spread over a large geographic area, it can be difficult to get enough people to attend outreach events. More thought and discussion is needed.

Another topic of discussion was how to bring in more members to the club, as well as how to encourage more participation from a larger percentage of members. It was suggested that more publicity could help build the club. Carol Baltimore has volunteered to update the trifold brochure for use at club events and to leave in the Planetarium Visitor Center. Please be thinking about membership ideas to discuss at the next few meetings.

Website Updates

John Holland has been updating the WKAA website. He has uploaded back issues of the *Faint Fuzzy* and is still looking for some of the early issues dating prior to 1999. If you have any hard copies of these newsletters, please let John know.

Be sure to check out our club website frequently to see what has been added. One of the newer items John has uploaded is a moon phase calendar. See the calendar at:

<http://www.wkaa.net/article.php?articleid=87&cat=GA&ret=index.php>

The meeting was adjourned. Once again, cloudy nights prevented observing.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FYBO 2008!

The annual attempt to observe faint fuzzies while shivering uncontrollably at the eyepiece of your telescope, aka the "Freeze Your Butt Off" winter star party, is scheduled for the nights of February 8 & 9 at Pennyrile State Park, weather permitting. This is WKAA's astronomical equivalent of the Polar Bear Club. It is an informal gathering of the most dedicated observers. So grab your longjohns, "Hot Hands," heavy winter parkas, and head to Pennyrile. Survivors, please plan on giving a full report to those of us who will be sleeping in warm homes and warm beds those nights.

If the weather is questionable, check the website. A go/no-go decision will be posted by noon on Friday, February 8.

For more information, see:

<http://www.wkaa.net/article.php?articleid=28&cat=SE&ret=index.php>

ASTRONOMY DAY 2008

Mark your calendar: May10 is the annual Astronomy Day celebration at Golden Pond Planetarium. We need your help to make this day a success again this year. We especially need someone to coordinate this important club event, More information will be coming in future issues, and check the website for updates:

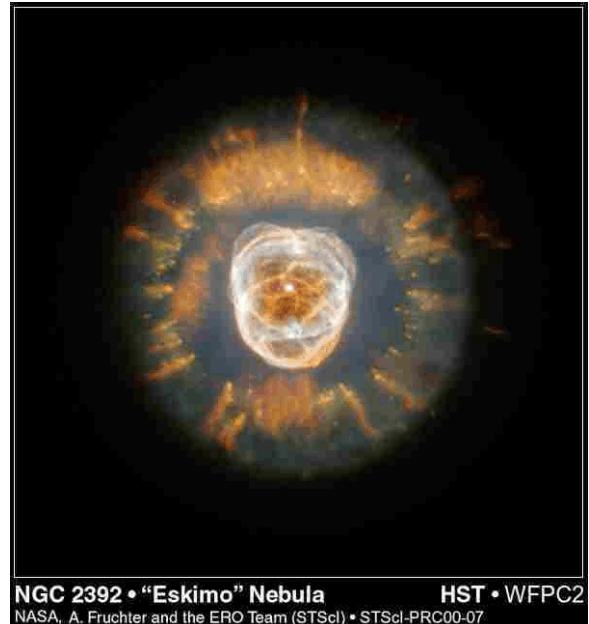
<http://www.wkaa.net/article.php?articleid=37&cat=SE&ret=index.php>

The Night Sky Naturalist, by Bob Vickers

The Eskimo Nebula

Planetary nebulae have been described as the flowers and butterflies of space. Some of the Hubble photographs of these objects really do look like blossoming flowers with multilayered petals or like the colorful spreading wings of a butterfly.

Others, like the Eskimo Nebula take on a different appearance. Also called the Clown Face Nebula, photographs show that the central part of this object looks a little like a distorted face, while an outer nebulous ring takes on the appearance of a fringed hood. Robert Burnham, Jr., in his venerable guide, *Burnham's Celestial Handbook*, says that "...the whole nebula irresistibly suggests the classic and unforgettable features of W.C. Fields." While it takes larger apertures to actually see the facial features, smaller aperture scopes reveal a beautiful and bright planetary.



Discovered by Sir William Herschel in 1787, The Eskimo Nebula (NGC 2392 or Caldwell 39) lies about halfway between Kappa and Lambda Geminorum. It appears as a very faint and fuzzy ninth magnitude star through binoculars.

The nebula is a small but bright planetary measuring 47.9" x 43.0" and has an overall visual magnitude of 9.2. Its central star shines at magnitude 10.4. An 8.5 magnitude star lies 1.5' north of the nebula and a 12th magnitude star lies 1' to its northwest. Distances to planetaries are still uncertain but The Eskimo Nebula appears to be in the neighborhood of 4500 light years away.

Without a UHC filter and at low power, this planetary is a bit like NGC 6826 (The Blinking Nebula) in that averted vision tends to bring out the nebula, while staring at the central star causes the nebula to fade.

The following is an excerpt from my Caldwell notebook:

24th of March, 2003 – 12.5" scope @ 180x w/skyglow broadband filter - A fine, bright planetary. Central star is clearly visible in a bright core. A dim outer ring of nebulosity is separated from the core by a darker ring between.

The Eskimo Nebula is also one of the Herschel 400's. Here is an excerpt from that notebook:

22nd of December, 2005 – 12.5" scope @ 242x w/ UHC filter - A beautiful and bright PN! Blue-gray in color. Central star easily visible. Core is a not quite circular bright disk becoming slightly brighter toward the center. Surrounded by a dark ring and then a dimmer halo visible w/ averted vision. The inner disk is mottled.

I could not see actual "facial features" with my scope during either these or subsequent observations, only mottling in the core. But a larger aperture scope should bring out more of the markings. I would like to know what you can see of the "face" and what apertures and filters you used. Email me at [cosmosbob\[@\]hotmail.com](mailto:cosmosbob[@]hotmail.com).

News Flash! Moon to Disappear after Venus/Jupiter Tryst!

Just before sunrise on February 1st, the planets Jupiter and Venus come within 0.6 degrees of each other. This is the closest the two brightest planets come between 2004 and 2014. The Moon (slow to catch on) disappears in a jealous huff on the evening of the 20th, but returns later that evening. (7:05pm-11:45pm CST, including 52 minutes of totality.) "It's just a phase I'm going through. . . ."

"Blue Moon of Kentucky" by Bill Monroe (1947)

<i>Blue moon of Kentucky keep on shining,</i>	<i>It was on a moonlight night, the stars were shining bright;</i>
<i>Shine on the one that's gone and proved untrue;</i>	<i>When they whispered from on high, your lover said good-bye,</i>
<i>Blue moon of Kentucky keep on shining,</i>	<i>Blue moon of Kentucky keep on shining,</i>
<i>Shine on the one that's gone and left me blue,</i>	<i>Shine on the one that's gone and said good-bye,</i>

Observing By the Numbers, by Melissa Vickers

If you've ever been inside the Observatory at the Golden Pond Planetarium, whether for a meeting or a cup of hot coffee to stave off sleep or frostbite, you've no doubt seen our wall of plaques. These 52 plaques represent in a very tangible way the heart of the West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers: a passion for observing the night sky. Some club members have chosen to document their nighttime deep sky excursions by working on the various Observing Club certificates offered by the Astronomical League. The AL website has descriptions of the certificates and what is required to earn each one, and they range from those designed for beginners to those for the serious astronomer. There are even certificates designed with the more light-polluted areas in mind. Some require nothing more than a pair of binoculars, while other lists challenge even those with the bigger scopes. Earn enough of them (10), and you get the coveted "Master Observer" Award. WKAA has two Master Observers—David Paessler and Michael Cohen.

I recently added my name to the growing list of club members with certificates on the wall. Mine is for the "Binocular Messiers," and required finding and documenting at least 50 of the Messiers. Bob and I chose to do this list together, and had a good time, despite my obvious "directionally challenged" mind. . . . ("Oh—THAT right hand. . . .")

I spent some time after the last meeting recording some statistics about the club's combined efforts. Those stats are in the box on the next page. It's pretty impressive, especially for a relatively small club in a rural area!

The statistics are a little misleading, however. They only represent the club members who opted to officially record their night sky observations in a methodical way. It doesn't begin to touch the numbers of faint fuzzies that our dedicated club members have actually seen and enjoyed. There are free spirits who don't do lists and instead prefer the serendipitous approach of "freestyle" observing. Working on AL certificates is not required by any means. It is up to you whether you wish to tackle one, 10 or more, or none at all.

Those certificates also represent another of WKAA's strengths: a willingness to share the knowledge of the night sky. Ask any of the club members to help you find an interesting object, and you'll get an enthusiastic response.

If you'd like to learn more about the AL Observing Clubs, contact our AL Cor Representative, David Paessler, or go to: <http://www.astroleague.org/observing.html> .

WKAA's Astronomical League Observing Club Certificates

- ★ **52:** Total number of certificates
- ★ **15:** Number of different types of certificates
- ★ **11:** Number of club members with certificates
- ★ **7570:** Total number of observations made and recorded in earning these certificates! (There is some overlap of objects on the lists.)
- ★ **9/13/76:** The date of the earliest certificate on the wall.
- ★ **10/25/07:** The date of the latest certificates on the wall.

Certificate Specifics:

Name of Certificate	No. of Required Observations	No. of Club Members Who Have Earned It
Binocular Messier	50	7
Messier	70	1
Messier Honorary	110	9
Lunar	100	8
Urban	100	3
Sunspotter	25	1
Planetary	25	1
Deep Sky Binocular	60	3
Caldwell	70	4
Herschel I	400	3
Herschel II	400	1
Double Star	100	6
Globular Cluster	50	2
Arp Peculiar Galaxies	100	1
Master Observer	(10 Certificates)	2

We're making room for more certificates, so you could be next!

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.

CLUB OFFICERS

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