

WKAA Newsletter March 2002

West Kentucky Amateur Astronomers

NEXT MEETING / POTLUCK / OFFICER ELECTION / MESSIER MARATHON / WHEW

The next club meeting will be an EVENTFUL ONE! Saturday March 16 at the G.P. Observatory from 5:00 - 5:45 PM will be the Potluck Dinner. The club will furnish the meat (ham and maybe chicken), drinks, and weapons for consumption. *Everyone please bring a covered dish if you can.* From 5:45 - 6:30 PM will be the Club Meeting and Officer Election. Those wishing to observe immediately after the meeting had better arrive by 4:30 or so to allow time for scope setup before the meal.

The sun sets at about 6:00, which means those wanting to participate in the Messier Marathon will need to be ready to do some sky searching by about 6:30. There are a few M-Objects that will disappear soon after that. This particular Marathon was brought about by James Parker, who is also a member of the Clarksville Astronomy Club, and suggested that our clubs participate together. We have been looking for ways that both clubs could be more involved. Our thanks to James and the Clarksville bunch.

This Marathon is strictly for fun and there will be no awards, however, it will sharpen your starhopping skills. For those who aren't sure just what a Messier Marathon is; It is not a race against each other, but a race against time. There are 110 Messier Objects scattered abroad, some in clumps, and some far apart, and this time of year, when the sun is in proper perspective, it is possible to view ALL M-Objects in a single night. You and a partner must find as many of the objects as you can during the course of the night, using any type of telescope or binoculars. The handicap is that you're not allowed to use any type of setting circles, computer, Goto drives, etc. (Turn the motor drives, computers off!) You can, however, use star charts and any visual-aid finders like Telrads, Rigel Quickfinders, or finder scopes. Some participants will pack it up after half a night of finding... And others might hang with it till' sun up. I know Ross, David and Tim are planning on camping in their vans once they're done. The main theme is: HAVE FUN, STAY WARM, FELLOWSHIP and LEARN about how to bounce around the sky quickly to find objects. If you want to know more, or even how to be well-prepared for this event go to <http://hometown.aol.com/billferris/marathon.html> I'm understanding that viewing these objects during a marathon cannot count toward any certificate from the Astronomical League. Those have to be achieved during non-marathon sessions.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES will be due at this meeting (\$15 single or family) Make checks payable to WKAA. Those who can't pay at this meeting will have to paint the Observatory! <grin> Seriously though, the club needs your dues to defray the costs of things like web-hosting, mailing supplies, clubhouse/observatory/equipment maintenance, etc. (Annual web-hosting fees alone takes the dues from 14 members just to cover it) Some members have already paid their dues at last meeting. (thanks)

Don't forget what your membership gets you (For less than the cost of a meal for two at Cracker Barrel): a) Access to Golden Pond Observatory, b) Free admission to the Twin Lakes Star Party, c) Membership in the Astronomical League, d) Subscription to the Reflector Magazine, e) Discounts on Sky & Telescope and Astronomy Magazine, f) Free admission to Golden Pond

Planetarium, g) you@wkaa.net email address (only 50 allowed), h) 2 MB webspace for personal webpage, i) Usage of club scopes and equipment.

LAST MEETING

The February club meeting was held on the 9th, and all the forecasts for that evening indicated clouds and rain. Guess what? Not! Some of us didn't bring our scopes. But...There were plenty of scopes there. This either means that certain members: a)have better forecasting resources. b)don't pay attention to the forecasts, or c)are very optimistic. Nevertheless, we had quite a bit of viewing time before the clouds finally did arrive later on.

The main topics discussed at the meeting were:

Since the trees on the East side of the observing field are being thinned out, we are gaining a lot of sky, but this now creates more of a light hazard from the Administration Office, so we will probably have to consider a permanent light block such as a wooden fence, with the permission of the Forestry Service of course. We will probably want some "Headlights Out" signs posted on either the fence or near the rear driveway. We also feel like we should post a sign on the Observatory, stating what the facility actually is, as well as a point of contact for the Club.

Ross mentioned the need for a new officer's position in the near future, which is Special Events Coordinator.

Several members thought it would be a good idea to get more involved with the general public, i.e. starting some sort of Sidewalk Astronomy programs.

A good overview of Sidewalk Astronomy is at

<http://www.eccentrix.com/personal/sammy/coffeeshop.html>

Warren has brought some documents and old newsletters that will allow us to piece together a club history to post on our website. Jim Ingle has offered to re-key some of the data which is in various documents and printed forms.

Arnold Newnum has donated four large commercial casters to replace the small ones on the big Dob. This, along with a few other improvements will make this a great scope for meeting nights and public viewing.

We're still hashing around ideas on annual Club ID cards for paid members for free access to the Planetarium. Gary Andrews mentioned having the equipment to create ID's. We probably should make up some samples to view. We'll discuss this more later on.

This year we'll probably have an on-line Star Party Registration Form on our website that will be fill-in-the-blank-and-submit, but we'll not attempt any type of on-line payments.

NOTES

Just a reminder that the Planetarium is now open for the 2002 season with a new show, "Images of the Infinite" about the Hubble Telescope from the beginning to date. I got to see it on March 3 with Don Partain at the helm, and it's a pretty good show.

ASTRONOMY DAY APRIL 20, 2002

A tentative schedule has been posted for the activities and events for this day. Remember, this day is entirely devoted to the public. Plan on being there if you can. It would be great to have two or three solar scopes setup behind the Gift Shop. Plan on answering all types of questions from young and old alike. This is a great opportunity for you to share your knowledge, experiences, and love of the sky with others.

ACTIVITIES LIST: Planetarium Shows, Telescope Exhibits, Observatory Tours, and Solar Observing through the Daystar H-Alpha filter.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- 10:00 Activities Begin / First Planetarium Show
- 11:00 Planetarium Show
- 12:00 "Getting Started in Astronomy" - Planetarium
- 1:00 Planetarium Show
- 2:00 Planetarium Show
- 3:00 Planetarium Show
- 4:00 Activities End at the Visitor's Center

Happy Skies,
John Holland