

Rochester Skies

A publication of the Rochester Astronomy Club

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #13 1st Quarter 2010

Notes on the Herschel 400

Jay McLaren tells how he completed this observing program from his own yard.

Page 2

First Steps: The Messier List

Luka Bajzer explains how he pursued the Messier Award, and shares an exciting image of M31.

Page 3

Unexpected Surprises of the 2009 NCRAL

Dean Johnson shares his memories of the 2009 North-Central Region of the Astronomical League annual meeting. 2010's is April 16/17 in Bloomington, IL

Page 5

Five Questions With...

A new regular feature of the newsletter where we ask a member of the club five questions. Newsletter Editor Scott Regener is first up.

Page 9

Gallery

Club members share some of their best astrophotos!

Page 10

Holiday Party 2009

The holiday party was a success. Read about it and make plans to attend next year!

Page 11



From the President

Happy New Year Rochester Astronomy Club members! January 1st is the date to hang a new calendar and look forward with hope and anticipation to the next 365 days. Right? Of course; it's the beginning of the New Year! But what is so special about January 1st? Who picked that day? Did the Romans pick January 1 to play their college bowl games back then? Probably not.

Actually, the beginning of the new year in ancient times began more appropriately (I think) with the first crescent moon after the spring equinox. In these early agricultural civilizations it was the time of planting and rebirth. But eventually emperors

with less than perfect calendars kept messing with the date and the beginning of the year migrated to our current January time-frame. In 45 BC, Julius Caesar declared January 1st as the official beginning of the year because that's when the Golden Number equaled the Solar Number. What does that mean? Apparently in the Julian calendar, the Solar Number derives from the relationship between the days of the week and the dates of the year which repeats in cycles of 28 years. The Golden Number originates from the relationship between the moon's phases and the days of the year which repeats itself every 19 years. Julius started this counting from January 1, 45 BC. Really. I still don't know what that means either.

With the Julian Calendar, the Romans celebrated January 1st as the first day of the year for several centuries until the Church in the sixth century viewed this as more of a pagan festival. So for approximately the next thousand years, the Church started the new year on various days

in March. It wasn't until the 1600s that most countries reverted back to January 1 as the first day of the year. Interestingly, although Pope Gregory XIII proposed fixes that corrected several flaws within the Julian Calendar, it took 200 years before the British Parliament and King George II finally adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752. By then, most other European countries had already done so. This calendar defined the year as containing 365 and 97/400ths days and adjusts for the extra fraction of a day the earth orbits the Sun with a very precise formula of leap years. The calendar gradually was adopted by other countries all around the world, with Turkey being the last to convert in 1923.

So we begin our new year on January 1st, which has no agricultural or astronomical significance for really anyone in the world! But we have to start somewhere, so let's get going and have a great year!

- Randy Hemann



The Rochester Astronomy Club is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All contents of the newsletter are copyrighted and cannot be reused or redistributed in any form without express written permission. ©2009



Notes on the Herschel 400

In April, 2003, I added the last of the 110 Messier objects to my observation log. I was about half way through the Caldwell list and needed another list of deep sky objects to find while I waited for the remainder of the Caldwell objects to appear in the sky at a reasonable hour.

The Herschel 400 list filled that need.

This list includes 400 of the over 2500 deep-sky objects observed and cataloged by Sir William Herschel and his sister Caroline in the 18th century. The list includes 231 galaxies, 17 open star clusters, 33 globular clusters, 20 planetary nebulae, two halves of a planetary nebula, and seven diffuse nebulae. All of these objects were within reach from my front or back yard, and most of them *less* challenging than some of the faint ghosts of light in the Caldwell list.

In the first few years, as my observations slowly grew, the blank spots on my list seemed to go on and on. There were some pretty big gaps in my list that corresponded to Leo and Virgo, up in late winter and early spring evenings. About a year ago, as the number of observations remaining finally dropped below 100, things seemed to speed up. From March through May, in six dark nights with

cooperating weather, my list grew by 79 objects. By June, 2009 I was down to the last four, perhaps the most difficult - not because they were difficult to see, but because they were too close to the sun when I realized that I needed them to complete the



Jay McLaren receives his much-anticipated Herschel 400 Award

list! At last, on August 30, 2009 after getting up at 3:30 am, when Orion was high enough above the eastern horizon to see its shape clearly, I found NGC 1788, a somewhat obscure diffuse nebula, and recorded it as the 400th Herschel object on my log.

I viewed all of these objects through two telescopes, initially a 10" Meade Dobsonian, and more recently a 12" Orion XT-12 Dobsonian. Most observations were from my front or back yard, about 8 miles southwest of downtown Rochester. I am fortunate to have a dark enough sky to

sometimes see 5th magnitude stars without optical assistance from the north through east to southwest. My Orion XT-12 has an electronic object locator, but I did not use it to find any of these objects. I prefer star-hopping, and the best tools for this method

were a good star chart (Sky Atlas 2000) and a 50-mm non-inverting finder scope. I could usually put the object in the eye piece by matching the star pattern in the finder to the star pattern around the target on the sky atlas. This method was simple and provided a great appreciation of where these objects are in the sky and what lies around them. I found Steve O'Meara's recent

book, "Herschel 400 Observing Guide" (Cambridge University Press, 2007) to be a great help in identifying some of the fainter galaxies that are not near any bright foreground stars.

I don't necessarily have a favorite object – all have their own challenges and unique characteristics. Some appear as a subtle puff of light, and some rival Messier objects. Many are simply beautiful. Some of the faint galaxies were challenging, particularly those without a bright core and those that required averted vision. Finding each was rewarding.

continued, page 3...

Observing the Herschel 400 is well worth the time. Moving from object to object on a structured list is much more efficient than taking random walks through the night sky. Many of these objects are challenging, but are well within the reach of a high-quality telescope under a reasonably dark sky. Your observation skills will increase greatly after studying and describing each of these in your log. It felt good to finally say "I made it through the last of the 400."



Which list will I start next? I have always enjoyed finding deep-sky objects - nebulae, galaxies, and open and globular clusters. Several other observing programs would fill the need for an organized list. The Astronomical League offers the Open Cluster list, Globular Cluster list, and the Planetary Nebula list, to name a few. I may also consider their binocular Messier, Double Stars, or Lunar programs. So many heavenly objects, so little time. I know! My next observing list will be....

- Jay McLaren

First Steps: The Messier List

A Rochester Astronomy Club member received yet another award: Luka Bajzer earned the Messier award this quarter. Luka joined the RAC this year and has already proved to be an avid and enthusiastic observer.

What made you decide to pursue the Messier award?

When I started in astronomy, I got binoculars first. I also got Terence Dickinson's book "Nightwatch". It had some very simple star maps that were quite helpful. Most of the binocular objects were Messiers, so I tried to find them. After I got my telescope, I was interested in seeing them again. Sadly there's no warning that M33 is really really hard to see from the city. And considering how much 15x70 binoculars can see, I

was pretty sure that an 8 inch scope should be able to see anything in that book, and without going to a darker site. I was very wrong, but I



was hooked. And so I continued looking for targets in the book. At some point I got the idea that it

would be a good idea to see all the Messiers because they have a good representative sample of most categories of objects, and some of the showpieces of each type. I would definitely credit Dean's infectious enthusiasm with getting me to continue this.

Which was your favorite object?

My overall favorite object is M42. The Orion Nebula is a fantastic target, in both binoculars and a scope. It has lots of detail and shows even more with a narrowband filter. It is bright enough to be a pleasure at almost any magnification. It has the trapezium as a multi-star challenge in the center. There are also quite a few pretty sights right around it, and yet it's so completely unique in appearance that makes it hard to confuse with anything else.

The Messier award requires star-hopping. Which target did you think was hardest to find?

I think I had the most star-hopping trouble with M52 and M50. Both are in very rich starfields. I had lots of trouble with other things, but the star-hopping wasn't the problem. I didn't know what M1 looked like. I couldn't see M101 several times, because it has low surface brightness, and I didn't know what to look for, and there was too much light pollution. Same with M33. In the beginning it was hard to know sometimes exactly what things were supposed to look like.

What was the most objects you found in a single night?

I think finding 11 objects was my best night. I printed out finder charts and planned the star hops well beforehand. The 11 were Messiers: 63, 97, 101, 103, 106, 108, 109, 95, 96, 58 and 60. I know I saw M105 that night too, but I didn't add enough labels to that chart to be sure which one it was.

What advice would you give to someone starting out on this program?

The hardest thing in the beginning is knowing what something looks like, or what you are looking for. That is mostly a

with low surface brightness will be washed out very easily. This is especially true of galaxies. Anything that you can't find when

you first try, you should look for at a darker site and wait until it reaches the meridian. That makes an enormous difference around here. Many of the open clusters are quite easy, and make a good beginning. The trickiest part can be that some are in rich starfields. M29 is maybe the worst, and actually is easier to find with some light pollution. Otherwise, in very dark skies it looks like a statistical anomaly in a sea of stars.

A good atlas is also very important. For many Messiers the Pocket Sky Atlas is often great, being small, handy and cheap. But

for objects in the Virgo galactic cluster, I used printed out charts from Cartes du Ciel, a free program. Its nice to have charts with as much detail as you need, with stars deeper than any printed atlas. But, an atlas doesn't run out of batteries, break when dropped, or short circuit from dew(though dew can, of course, damage pages).

Congratulations Luka!



Luka took this picture of M31, M32 and M110 using a Canon XS through a Celestron ED80 refractor at Keller WMA.

problem with nebulae. They look very different from the pictures we often see. It is helpful to ask other people, either with you, or later online.

Also getting to dark skies is very important, because anything





Unexpected Surprises of the 2009 NCRAL

One of the coolest things you get to do if you belong to an astronomy club, especially one that is affiliated with the Astronomical League, is to go to an astronomy conference.

Each year the Rochester Astronomy Club offers its members a chance to go to the NCRAL conference hosted by an astronomy club somewhere in our region. Each conference is a little different, with different locations, speakers, and activities but they all share one thing in common: they're all fun. This year's trip to Cedar Rapids, Iowa was no exception.

NCRAL stands for North Central Region of the Astronomical League. This region is comprised of six states, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois. It has roughly 35 to 40 member clubs, the number changing every year due to clubs dropping out or joining. To host an NCRAL convention is a big event for a club, committing its members years in advance to finding a meeting site, lining up speakers, door prizes, activities, etc. No two clubs are alike, but they all do a pretty good job.

The Cedar Valley Astronomers were the hosts for this

year's conference and on the trip down we had a great time talking about what was in store for us. I drove and had the good fortune of having Kirk Severson, our club vice president and Luka Bajzer a fairly new person to our club traveling with me. "Capt. Kirk" has been with the RAC for quite a while and is widely traveled, with interests in photography, birding, and sailing among other things. Luka is an energetic young man who is fairly new to astronomy, but his prowess as an observer is simply astounding for one so new to the hobby. Both of these great

guys program computers for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

The Clarion Hotel in Cedar Rapids, Iowa was the site of the convention. It is a very nice facility, and registration for our rooms and the convention went smoothly. Promptly at 3 p.m. we headed out for the Radio Telescope at North Liberty, Iowa. Directions were flawless and we found the site and encountered our first surprise.

The driveway to the scope reminded me of a bad gravel driveway or a very good logging road. I parked my van in the brush and we hoofed it the last 150 yards to the telescope.

Coming out from behind a screen of trees, we looked up to see a giant 82 ft. dish on a mount as big as the Spring Grove water tower. There were two buildings nearby, one metal and one cinder block, on a site that was nicely mowed and surrounded by a chain link fence. There were about fifty astronomers there, and as we gaped at this behemoth, it started to move and swing around to different parts of the sky! It would swing around to one location, and no more than five minutes later, move to a different one for a few minutes. We stood there chatting excitedly while people guessed what part of the sky the radio telescope was looking at. We took lots of pictures and after about 20 minutes, a technician named Gene showed up and told us a good bit about the telescope.

This radio telescope is one of ten in the world, each one being exactly alike. From the U.S. Virgin Islands to New England, Iowa, Texas, several locations in the western United States and finally Hawaii, they all form a Very Large Array and they all look at exactly the same thing at

the same time. The Very Large Array is controlled from one location in Sirocco, New Mexico, and whenever one telescope shifts by as little as two millimeters due to earthquakes or plate tectonic movement, the whole system has to be re-calibrated. We were lucky enough to show up at just such a time.

The radio telescope is so perfectly balanced that it only needs four 12 horsepower electric motors to move it and is mounted on a circular



rail. The dish is equipped with two anemometers that measure wind speed. Whenever the wind reaches 55 m.p.h. the telescope locks down. Gene took us in groups inside the control building where we saw lots of computers, an atomic clock and other high tech gear. The Very Large Array can look back to half a million years after the Big Bang and gets its funding from the National Science Foundation. Each one of the ten scopes costs 50 million dollars. Very impressive.

Gene looks like a likeable old hippie and it only takes him and one other guy to do everything from mowing the lawn, to greasing the telescope and replacing parts. If there is something they can't do, the NSF flies in a troubleshooter from someplace else in the country. The site is surrounded by prairie, woods and wetlands and is just beautiful. Gene has a very cool job.

After getting out of the control building, it was on to Optical Mechanics Incorporated. So more driving, more animated conversation and more navigating. Once again, the directions were perfect and we found ourselves in a small industrial park on the edge of a suburb near Iowa City.

OMI is a neat clean metal building comprised of four large rooms or "bays" all connected and each with a huge garage door providing access from the outside to bring in or take out big ticket items. And they have some BIG stuff in there. I wandered from bay to bay checking out one expensive piece of equipment after another. James Mulherrin and another gentleman were giving guided tours of the factory and its operation, but since we couldn't all get into the control room at the Radio Telescope, people got to OMI at different times, so it was kind of like walking in to a theatre when the movie has already started.

I'm not a telescope maker or a high-tech guy anyway, but I do know what big beautiful mirrors are for and they had them laying around all over the place in there. I walked around staring at all that beautiful aluminum-covered glass and tried hard not to get any drool on them. The piece de resistance was going into the last bay to see a 30" OMI Dobsonian fully

assembled and rising eighteen feet into the air. WOW! Our RAC club president Randy Heman walked in shortly thereafter and we spent a few minutes marveling at it. Then we posed for a picture in front of it and Randy said, "The future of the RAC." A guy can always dream can't he? Somebody out there must have an extra 30 grand lying around!

OMI, like the Radio Telescope, would be another very cool job. They employ nine full-time people with two or three part-timers. If they ever need someone to help field test their telescopes, I'm available.

By now people were getting hungry, so it was on to Palisades-Dows Preserve, where the Cedar Valley Astronomers have their observatory where we found our third surprise of the day.

The club has its observatory on county land and has an agreement worked out with them for its use. When we pulled in, I wasn't quite prepared for what I saw. There were **three** nice domes, plus a roll-off roof for another observatory and concrete pads with electricity for a half-dozen club members to set up their own gear. The observatory is separated from the parking lot by a well maintained grass-covered berm that keeps stray light from the vehicles from interfering with the scopes. Nice!

Even nicer was the inside of the building where they served us supper. Spacious rooms abounded, complete with NASA TV and a first-rate computer Powerpoint system with sound. Astronomy photographs adorned the walls, meteorite samples were on display, the bathrooms and

kitchen were spotless and everything pointed to a first-class facility run by a talented and dedicated organization. It was very impressive. But for the lack of nearby lodging, the NCRAL meeting could have been held right there.

The talks that night after supper were very well done. Dave Oesper, whom I've met a few times before, gave talks on CCD Photometry Basics and astronomical communities, Norma Cutsforth gave a reading from her book, "Keeping Starwatch" which I bought a copy of, but by far the most interesting and unusual talk of the whole weekend was given by Joseph Keller, an optometrist who has a degree in mathematics from Harvard University.

His talk was titled "Evidence for the Location and Properties of Percival Lowell's Planet X". He



talked of the history of the search for Planet X and showed images from different sky surveys that he claims give strong evidence for a 1/20th to 1/40th solar mass planet at 50 to 60 AU from the Sun! He named this Planet X "Barbarossa" and says that both the ancient Maya and Egyptians had knowledge of this object even though it has to be magnitude 19 or fainter!

Mr. Keller did not strike me as a wacko. He looks and dresses like a high school principal from the 1960's and his presentation was flawless in language and flow. But this is the first time I've ever heard a live talk by someone that reminded me of the more hard-to-believe programs you'll see on the History Channel. I'm not going to hold my breath, but if Planet X is out there, I hope he finds that sucker.

Little did I know that I would find something that has eluded me for years that night. After the talks were done, we were invited to look through some of the telescopes of the observatory. Unlike other NCRAL conventions, this one was held on a first quarter Moon.

Usually they are held on a Full Moon weekend so as not to interfere with peoples observing runs, but since the Cedar Astronomers had this nice facility, this made sense.

Saturn was the first object that the folks wanted to see and that dome quickly filled up. I was working on my Lunar II observations at the time, so I got another of the Cedar guys to open up a dome with a Celestron 16" SCT in it. We got that dialed in on the Moon and every Lunar Lover knows the first quarter terminator never disappoints. There was Valles Alpes, or Alpine Valley carving a 180 km scar across the lunar surface. Craters Cassini, Aristillus, Autolycus pointed the way to the Appenine Mts. I kept working my way down the terminator when lo and behold, I found something that I had read and heard about, but never seen: there was an 'X' on the terminator! I was looking at Purbach's Cross! I remember seeing the first quarter

Moon while staring up at the Radio Telescope and thinking idly “I wonder if we’ll have a chance at Purbach’s Cross tonight?”, but had completely forgotten about that until now. I called to the other astronomers in the dome and quite a few had heard about it and had never seen it either. It was a very exciting moment. Some astronomers had a hard time picking it out until one of the conventioners said, “It’s not a letter X, it looks more like an X chromosome.” A very apt description. I had read about it in *Sky&Telescope* and knew that it was a very fleeting apparition. Sure enough, it was starting to degrade after only two hours. But what a thrill!

As amazing as the day had been so far, we still weren’t through. President Randy still had one more unexpected surprise for us. Now our night navigation skills came into play and we headed back toward Cedar Rapids to a nice new neighborhood not far from our hotel. We arrived at the home of Randy’s sister Lana and her husband Scott Sellner. Their lovely home is complete with a well stocked bar in the basement, a first rate sound system playing a great selection of classic rock and a huge computer-controlled plasma screen on the wall.

Choice wines, expensive liquors and two different kinds of tap beers were also accompanied by select bottled beer in the refrigerator. Heck, they even had “Navy” (Light) beers for those worried about their waistlines! It was enough to warm an old Marine’s heart. I settled for sampling a few of the real beers while Randy and his brother-in-law Scott worked with the computer and got it to bring up all the digital pictures that had been taken that day. We were able

to review our whole day right there! Scott and Lana were very gracious hosts. What a wonderful windup to a terrific day!

The following day was the convention at the Clarion Hotel. The usual welcoming remarks and announcements were followed by the three morning speakers. Dr. Robert Mutel (Professor of Astronomy at the U of Iowa) spoke on the Rigel Project, a remote-controlled 14.5” telescope in Arizona but controlled from Iowa. Dr. Curt Struck, Professor of Astronomy at Iowa State, gave a talk on galaxy collisions and evolution. Barry Beaman gave a presentation on a possible Variable Star Observing Club for the Astronomical League. They were all excellent. I would dearly love to see the VSO club come into reality.

This was followed by the usual group photo and lunch which gave everyone a chance to check out the local restaurants and stretch their legs.

After lunch Dr. Robert Grinnell of Grinnell College talked about education, research and outreach in astronomy. His talk included one very interesting point: of the 40 people that attain a Ph.D in astronomy every year, only about 20 find full time employment. Grinnell College grads, however, have a very high percentage of finding work.

James Mulherrin from OMI was next up and he had a great talk, explaining how they can custom-make telescopes as large as 48”. He showed slides of the one built for Jimmy Lowery in Texas and showed them getting the truck with the telescope up an insanely difficult road to his observatory. Jimmy likes to be the first person to see different objects and is a die hard “AINTNO” aficionado. James is currently

working on another 48” scope that will find a home in South Korea, but told the group that he could offer a one day deal on it for “only” \$325,000. Hmmm, I wonder what my lovely wife Betty would have said if I’d have brought the checkbook?

Dr. Thomas Hockey of the Univ. of Iowa gave the most humorous talk of the day – “Is Pluto a Planet?” and proceeded to give 20 reasons on why it is and isn’t. This is a controversy that will not go away and it is a sure bet that the International Astronomical Union will once again have to take up the subject.

The talks for the afternoon were done and the NCRAL now had its business meeting which is why one of these conventions has to take place every year. Election of Officers, Treasurers Report, Old Business, New Business and making sure that member clubs are lined up to host a convention in the future. Our Rochester Astronomy Club is due to host the NCRAL in 2013.

The final event of the day was the banquet, a very nice affair with linen tablecloths, excellent food and a final presentation. Dr. William Kuth of the Univ. of Iowa gave us a preview on what to expect on exploration in the outer solar system. He talked about the length of time it takes to prepare and execute a major mission like Cassini: 20 years (or more!) from the awarding of the funding, to planning, building, launch, travel time and operations at final destination.

The next really big mission will be the JIMO mission to Jupiter and its moons. Dr. Kuth reminded us that when people complain about all that money going “off planet”, that it really stays on Earth in the form of

jobs in industry and higher education. The amount of knowledge that we get from these missions is well worth every penny.

After the banquet, we said goodbyes to members of other clubs we know and retreated to our club

secretary's room. Rebecca Bomgaars ("Starbie") had a great line up of hors d'oeuvres and I contributed my favorite, a 30-pack of Schmidt beer and about ten of us talked of the weekend's events and brainstormed for NCRAL 2013.

The next day as we drove home I kept thinking of all the unexpectedly wonderful things we had experienced. Astronomy always seems to have a way of making you come back for more. It was a glorious weekend for astronomy.

- Dean Johnson

Five Questions With:

Scott Regener

Here begins what will hopefully become a regular feature of the newsletter: a brief conversation with one of the officers or members of the club to help us all get to know each other a little better.

Our first subject is none other than Scott Regener, the editor of this newsletter since the 4th quarter of 2009. I will now begin to interview myself...

1. What got you interested in Astronomy?

I don't really remember when I wasn't interested in astronomy. As a youth, I subscribed to Astronomy magazine and read it cover-to-cover every month. Without a club or other support, however, I found myself almost exclusively deposited in my armchair rather than out under the stars due to the mistaken belief that there was nothing to be seen without a telescope.

2. What objects are you most passionate about observing?

I'm really rather stuck on deep sky objects like galaxies, nebulae and globular clusters, with the last being my favorite. However, since almost all of my observing is done within the heart of the Rochester skyglow, I've branched out into double stars and planetary work - objects that do not suffer badly from light pollution.

3. What equipment do you currently use?

My workhorse telescope is an Orion 10" Intelliscope that I bought used off of Astromart for \$575. I always lug a pair of binoculars, my Oberwerk 11x56s, for quick scans of the sky.

4. What is the best part of the Rochester Astronomy Club?

Honestly, the best part of it for me is that it is there. For too much of my time in astronomy, I was going it alone. I went through a lot of telescopes and a lot of false starts with the hobby simply because I didn't have any support beyond the Internet and what I could find in books and magazines. Those things are

important to me, but without a group of fellow astronomers, I suspect my interest would not survive the headaches and roadblocks that make this a most challenging hobby.

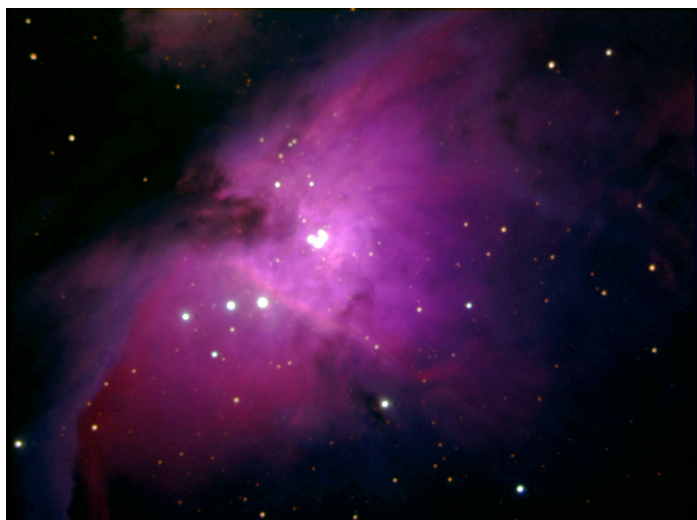
5. What's your day job?

I work seven days a week, 365 days a year, 24x7. No, seriously! I'm a stay-at-home dad with two great boys, ages 4.5 and 1.5 and they keep me hopping! I have an Orion XT4.5 should either of them decide to take up the hobby. I beam with pride when my youngest son points at the Moon and says, "Moon" with excitement. And while most people walking the planet haven't seen Mercury, my 4.5-year-old has!



Gallery

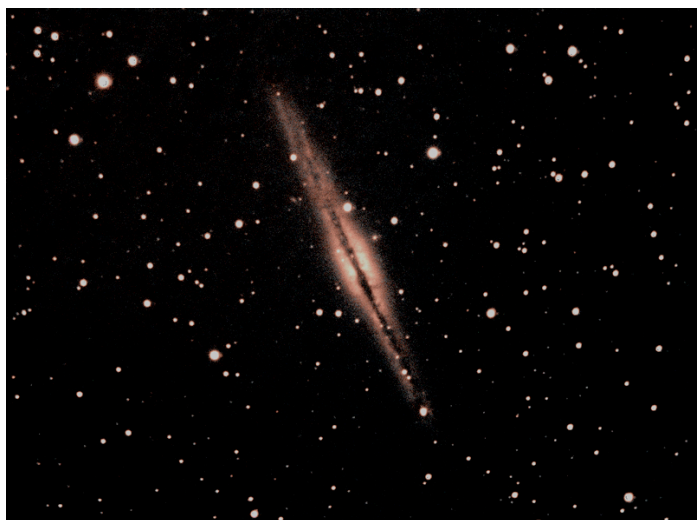
Here are some of the Rochester Astronomy Club members' best shots!



Meade DSI Pro III on a Meade 10" LX200GPS. Ten 120-second luminance frames with a nebula filter, and 6x60 second R, G, & B frames. - John Preston

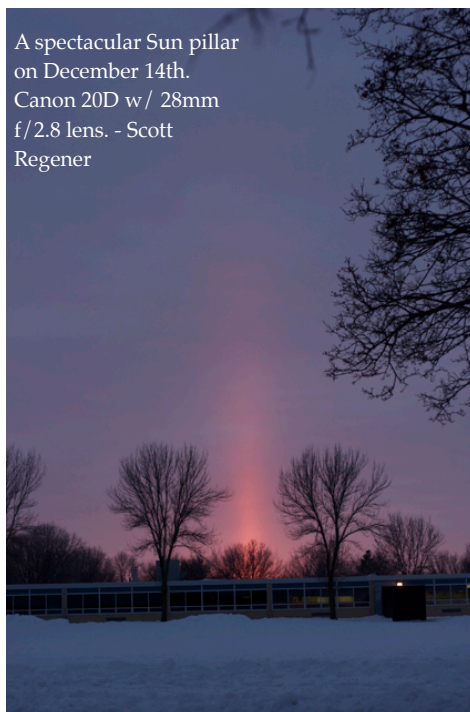


Canon G10, ISO400 f/2.8 15sec, telescope painted with light from red LED. - Roger Southwick



NGC891 was shot at 180 seconds for each L, R, G & B. Used only 5-6 frames from each color channel. - John Preston

A spectacular Sun pillar
on December 14th.
Canon 20D w/ 28mm
f/2.8 lens. - Scott
Regener





RAC Holiday Party 2009

For the third straight year, the Rochester Astronomy Club Holiday party hit the blizzard lottery, this year quite literally as a major winter storm hit on the second Tuesday of December. A week later, on December 15th, the party went off as planned. The clear skies must have tempted some to stay home with telescopes or binoculars, yet many decided to use their discretion and stay indoors with temperatures hovering near 0 degrees F.

Food, beverages, and conversations flowed easily, as many consumed the wontons from a pan that made the rounds numerous times throughout the evening.



Newly-elected secretary
Brandon Wymann

A television displayed astronomy-related programming as

people gathered to discuss the latest news and gear acquisitions.

President Randy Hemann started the formal meeting off asking for input regarding the current schedule and format that the club has used for many years. No dissenters raised their voices and the once-a-month, second-Tuesday schedule remained in effect.

Rebecca Bomgaars, Treasury and acting Secretary, described her efforts to form a junior astronomy club. Concerns ranged from the possible number of students to the need for materials to be self-contained for each meeting, allowing new members to join “midstream.” A Celestron “Firstscope” was awarded to Rebecca for the junior astronomy club’s use. Other prizes were distributed as well.

Elections were held, with all existing positions retained with the exception of secretary. Brandon Wymann was nominated and



Star Party Coordinators Dean Johnson (south) and Luka Bajzer (north.)

graciously accepted the unanimous vote.

Appointed positions mostly remained intact, with a few exceptions. Dean Johnson continues as the southern star party coordinator, with Luka joining the team for handling Rochester events. Kirk Severson, VP, is acting as the Night Sky Network coordinator and needs an assistant. There is also a new position available for a publicity coordinator to get the word out about club events.

-Scott Regener

Rochester Skies

Upcoming Events

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------|
| January 12 | - | Monthly Meeting @ RCTC, Night Sky Network Demonstration |
| January 15/16 | - | Dark Sky Weekend at Eagle Bluff*s |
| February 9 | - | Monthly Meeting @ RCTC |
| February 12/13 | - | Dark Sky Weekend at Eagle Bluff* |
| March 9 | - | Monthly Meeting @ RCTC |
| March 12/13 | - | Messier Marathon at Eagle Bluff* |
| April 9/10 | - | Dark Sky Weekend at Eagle Bluff* |
| April 13 | - | Monthly Meeting @ RCTC |
| April 16/17 | - | NCRAL 2010 at Bloomington/Normal IL |

* Events subject to change due to weather. Check Rochesterskies.org for updates

Rochester, MN 55903-0513

P.O. Box 513

