



Mingo Creek Park Observatory

The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon

Website: 3ap.org



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

February 2010

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FEBRUARY'S MEETING TOPIC

The AAAP general meeting on Friday, February 5th at the Carnegie Science Center at 7:30 PM will feature Lou Coban, an AAAP Member and employee at the Allegheny Observatory.

From Lou on this presentation: "Allegheny Observatory update: What we're doing, where we're going". Often when people see me arriving/leaving the observatory they all say the same thing, "I thought this place was closed". Nothing could be further from the truth. While it is true that with the retirement of Professor George Gatewood the main astrometry research program has been curtailed, we still use the observatory quite a bit.

Come to the February meeting to see what we've been up to and get a glimpse of all the improvements that have been made in the past decade, see what were currently working on and where we hope to go with this venerable old institution.

GENERAL MEETING DATES

By Craig Lang

Here are the confirmed remaining 2010 - 2010 General Meeting dates:

- March 5th
- April 9th
- May 14th

These dates have been confirmed with the Carnegie Science Center and with the speakers for each respective meeting night.

AAAP ANNIVERSARIES

By Tom Reiland

There are two AAAP anniversaries this year. It was 35 years ago this Spring that I proposed that our club build its own observatory. We put together a committee to work on the project even though there were some of the old timers who thought it would never work. Fortunately, we had the support of Leo Scanlon, Bob Schmidt, Wade Barbin, Glen Winterhalter, Wilma Cherup, George Lindbloom and many other long-time members. It was two years later that we named it after Dr. Nicholas E. Wagman, the former Director of Allegheny Observatory and mentor to the AAAP. We will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the dedication of Wagman Observatory in two and a half years.

It is also 35 years ago this May when former AAAP member, Tom Hoffelder, and I, independently originated the Messier Marathon. We thought it would be a nice observing challenge and never thought that it would become the annual event that amateur astronomers around the world would attempt to complete. Ed Flynn sent the idea into *Sky & Telescope* a couple of years later and Walter Scott Houston mentioned it in one of his columns. Ed is an AAAP member who currently lives in St Louis. As I mentioned a few days ago, this March offers an opportunity to observe 109 out of the 110 Messier objects listed in one night. Ed and I were two of the first four or five amateur astronomers to accomplish this feat in March of 1980. I doubt that I will try it again this year. The weather must be much nicer than it is now; at least forty degrees warmer and no snow in sight.

The night that Ed and I completed the Marathon was not a comfortable one. We were at the club's Greene County site on the hilltop standing in an inch or two of snow in thirty-degree weather and a miserable five to ten mile an hour breeze. There were three

other members with us, but they fell short of the 109. One of them did top 100, but the other two had totals in the 70s and 80s. I've completed the full marathon at least three or four times since then. That's another reason why I'll probably skip it. I might go to Wagman Observatory that weekend to assist those who want to give it a shot.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Mike Meteney

End of the year financial summary

Account Balances:

USX	\$123,332.24	(\$10,000 belongs to Valley View Acct.)
PNC Checking	\$ 2,944.67	
PNC Savings	\$ 5,598.92	
PNC Valley View	\$ 12,761.80	
Total Accounts	\$144,687.63	(+\$3,525.00 from 2008)

Income Summary

50/50	\$ 435.00
Donations	\$ 7,786.85
Fish Bowls	\$ 562.00
Key Fees	\$ 555.00
SSP	\$ 1,500.00
Insurance	\$ 797.90
Interest	\$ 7,239.61
Memberships	\$ 9,794.00
16" Scope	\$ 2,250.00
Sales	\$ 588.00
Total Income	\$31,508.36

Expense Summary

Awards	\$ 195.74
Bank Fees	\$ 29.50
Food	\$ 173.44
Christmas party	\$ 117.94
Raffle prizes	\$ 217.50
Gift	\$ 200.00
Guide Star printing	\$ 2,825.85
Insurance	\$ 3,636.00
Deposit Box	\$ 72.00
Bulk Mail Fees	\$ 585.00
Speakers	\$ 750.00
Hall Rentals	\$ 550.00
Memorial	\$ 96.98
Merchandise	\$ 780.45
Construction	\$ 1,773.54
Supplies	\$ 906.24
New 20' dome	\$ 4,150.00
10" controller	\$ 227.00
10" motors	\$ 1,064.00
Officers expenses	\$ 520.92
Brochures	\$ 99.33
IDA donation	\$ 250.00
Star finders	\$ 799.00
Audit/taxes	\$ 3,045.85
Mingo utilities	
Electric	\$ 463.87
Grass	\$ 400.00
Phone	\$ 550.28
Wagman utilities	
Electric	\$ 172.33
Grass	\$ 600.00
Phone	\$ 647.26
Porta-John	\$ 1,303.26
Security	\$ 258.00
Miscellaneous exp	\$ 522.08
Total Expenses	\$27,983.36

VP COLUMN

By Craig Lang

Upcoming speakers: AccuWeather meteorologists Lisa Beightol and Krissy Pydynowski will be speaking at our March 5th meeting and the AAAP's own Eric Fischer will be presenting his rendering of the 1984 grouping of planets. May's speaker is not confirmed but is only tentative at this time; more information to come later.

Since we had some bad weather postpone and reschedule our January 8th meeting and it was short notice to get quick confirmation of the reschedule date, it became more apparent to me just how important the use of the Twitter service could really be. At the moment the "alert" email service is not up to the moment as far as emails and not everyone in the club is on the Yahoo list, and some just don't even want on that list. The Twitter service seems to fill that gap and handle "last minute" changes. So if you are interested in staying up-to-date in real-time about the general meetings, consider signing up for Twitter and following the user '3apmeetings'. If you need any assistance, contact our Twitter moderator, Mike Markiw, or the IT Chair, Michael Skowron.

I have had a few people accept my invitation for meeting topic and speaker ideas. Two speakers selected are from member suggestions. So please, if you have a topic that you would like to hear about or a specific speaker that you would like to hear from, do let me know.

Now get out there and start wondering...

NASA PLANS MULTIPLE 2010 LAUNCHES

By Kathy DeSantis

NASA plans multiple 2010 missions aimed toward greater understanding of space weather, earth's weather, climate, oceans and solar radiation, a mission to orbit Jupiter, and five space shuttle missions. NASA in February plans launch of solar-powered Juno spacecraft to orbit Jupiter's poles and GOES-P, the latest in a series of meteorological satellites designed to watch for storm development and weather conditions on Earth, a February 3 launch of Solar Dynamics Observatory, the first Space Weather Research Network mission in the Living With a Star, or LWS Program, as well as Space Shuttle Endeavour, STS130.

Other planned space shuttle missions include: March 18 +, STS-131, Space Shuttle Discovery, May 14 +, STS-132, Space Shuttle Atlantis, July 29+, STS - 134, Space Shuttle Endeavor, and September 16+, STS-133, Space Shuttle Discovery. In another 2010 NASA launch Aquarius mission will provide the first-ever global maps of salt concentrations in the ocean surface needed to understand heat transport and storage in the ocean. NASA's October 1 Glory Mission will help increase our understanding of the Earth's energy balance by collecting data on the properties of aerosols and black carbon in the Earth's atmosphere and how the

Sun's irradiance affects the Earth's climate. For more information, visit www.nasa.gov.

GLOBE AT NIGHT DARK SKY AWARENESS

By Kathy DeSantis

GLOBE at Night, GAN, <http://www.globeatnight.org/> is an opportunity for citizen scientists worldwide to monitor light pollution in your own backyard or where you choose to be. The 2010 GAN Campaign runs March 3 through March 16, 2010.

Through GLOBE at Night students, teachers, parents and community members amass data from their local communities worldwide. Together they can explore the concept of light pollution and research the patterns of light pollution across the globe.

Won't you, as members of the AAAP, please join in? Participation is free of cost. Visit the website: <http://www.globeatnight.org/> to learn more.

Basically on one or more nights during the period March 3-16 locate Orion and compare what you see to one of the magnitude charts on the website and record your results online. Immediately you can view your data on the GaN interactive map. The more data points come in from across the Greater Pittsburgh Region the better our local map will be.

Learn more about GLOBE at Night and dark skies through the archived GaN Teleconference Power Points and Teleconference MP3 files, at:

http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/download-view.cfm?Doc_ID=428

These include demonstrations of the optional Unihedron Sky Quality Meters:

<http://unihedron.com/projects/sqm-l/> priced around \$120 - \$140.

Here are links to artwork related to this article

http://www.globeatnight.org/GaN2010postcard_Web.pdf

<http://www.globeatnight.org/GaN2010postcard.pdf>

http://www.globeatnight.org/observe_magnitude.html

http://unihedron.com/projects/sqm-l/sqm-l_front_regular.jpg

THE NEW AND EXPANDED NASA NIGHT SKY NETWORK IS NOW ONLINE!

By Marni Berendsen, Kenneth Frank and Vivian White
Night Sky Network Administrators
Astronomical Society of the Pacific
(415) 337-1100
Night Sky Network: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/>

See it now: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov>

(NOTE: You may need to press your browser's Refresh or Reload Page button to display the website correctly.)

Find your club on the map:

<http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/club-map.cfm>

UPDATE YOUR PROFILE

Log in and select "My Profile & Preferences" from the second column of the Member Home page to set up your Profile and contact preferences. See the "Member Help" at the bottom of the second column for more details.

SAMPLE EVENTS

Any events your club designated as Sample Events will show on the Network Public Calendar:

<http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/event-calendar.cfm>

All other logged events will show on your own Club Calendar. Only new events you enter after today will have all features like time of sunset, sky map, and directions.

DISCOVER MORE: What can your club can do on the Night Sky Network NOW?

Watch the video at: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/about.cfm>

Find out more about the new NSN features! Use the PowerPoint and script here:

http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/club/download-view.cfm?Doc_ID=425

Log in now: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/login.cfm>

And take advantage of all the new online services. Enjoy!

DARK SKY FESTIVAL

The 7th Annual Dark Sky Festival at Harmony is right around the corner. This year's event is planned for April 17th, 2010. If you missed last year's event, we had over 4,500 people in attendance. We are putting a call out to all astronomers that are interested in attending this event. In addition to the public event that will have a variety of speakers, education exhibits, and more, we are also going to be offering some more in depth "Astronomer Only" presentations. We are also providing free camping in one of the darkest areas of Central Florida for registered astronomers.

Please visit <http://www.darkskyfestival.com> for more information on this event.

IMPORTANT DATES

February 2—Saturn 8° north of Moon
February 5—Last quarter Moon 6:48 p.m.
February 5—Carnegie Science Center Meeting
February 7—Antares 1.1° south of Moon
February 12—Mercury 2° south of Moon
 Moon at apogee
February 13—New Moon 9:51 p.m.
February 14—Neptune in conjunction with Sun
February 16—Uranus 6° south of Moon
February 20—Winterfest
February 21—First quarter Moon 7:42 p.m.
February 26—Mars 5° north of Moon
February 27—Moon at perigee
February 28—Full Moon 11:38 a.m.
 Jupiter in conjunction with Sun



Jupiter



Mercury



Neptune

February 2010 monthly sky summary—Jupiter quickly disappears in the sun's glare this month. Saturn rises around 10 p.m. local time at mid-month, heading toward opposition next month. The waning gibbous Moon is nearby on the morning of the 2nd. Mars, just past opposition, is very bright all night long as it travels very high overhead—the highest it will be all year. Look for a waxing gibbous Moon below it on the 25th. Venus and Mercury are close to the Sun and difficult to see this month.

March 2—Saturn 8° north of Moon
March 5—Carnegie Science Center Meeting
March 3-16—Globe at Night
March 7—Last quarter Moon 10:42 a.m.
March 11—Mars appears stationary
March 12—Moon at apogee
March 13—Neptune 4° south of Moon
March 14—Mercury in superior conjunction
March 15—New Moon 5:01 p.m.
March 17—Uranus in conjunction with Sun
 Venus 7° south of Moon
March 19-21—PSO Planets
March 20—Spring Equinox 1:32 p.m.
March 21—Saturn at opposition
March 23—First quarter Moon 7:00 a.m.
March 25—Mars 5° north of Moon
March 28—Moon at perigee
March 29—Full Moon 10:25 p.m.
 Saturn 8° north of Moon



Mars



Saturn



Uranus



Venus

March 2010 monthly sky summary—Mars and Saturn are the planets to watch this month. Mars still shines brightly and is very high in the south at sunset. A waxing gibbous Moon is nearby on the 24th. Saturn reaches opposition on the 21st, and appears high in the south at midnight. A waxing gibbous Moon is nearby on the 28th. Jupiter, Mercury and Venus are all close to the Sun this month, with Venus emerging from the Sun's glare in the west at sunset at month's end.

Taken from *the year in SPACE* desk calendar for 2010. Photos courtesy of NASA.

Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

Founded June 9, 1929 by

Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon

2009-2010 Executive Officers:

- President: **Edward Moss**
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- Vice President: **Craig Lang**
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membershipsecretary@3ap.org
- Guide Star Editors: **Bill & Maureen Moutz**
gseditor@3ap.org

AAAP Member Dues*:

AAAP Dues:	\$24.00
Student Membership (K-12 & full time college student):	\$16.00
Family Membership	\$40.00

***Basic Procedure for Paying Dues:**

1. Make check payable to "AAAP Inc."
2. Send check to Michael Meteney, Treasurer, 1070 Sugar Run Road; Venetia, PA 15367-1514



Please submit any articles for the Guide Star to the Guide Star Editors at gseditor@3ap.org by the 20th of each month.

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