

Penobscot Valley Star Gazers

An Astronomical Society of Central Maine

<http://www.gazers.org>

June 2008

Dark Sky Over MDI

The next meeting of the PVSG will be on Monday, June 9, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. in room 310 at John Bapst Memorial High School. This month Peter Lord from the Island Astronomy Institute will speak on the Night Sky Survey System being used on Mt. Desert Island to measure the quality of the night sky. He will give a demonstration on how the system operates and the information it produces.

Thanks for last month's program go to Doug for showing us how to clean a Newtonian's mirror.

A Clean Mirror

May 12, 2008



May 2008

The May meeting started at 6:45 PM with 13 members eventually present. Wade opened the meeting and announced that elections would be held first and after the business part of the meeting we would look at and clean the Criterion Telescope he brought in.

There were three positions up for election - Treasurer, Member at Large, and Secretary. As Bill was the only member running for Treasurer he was voted in on a voice vote with all present approving. For Member-at-Large we had two candidates, Dave and Shirley. We were all passed out paper ballots and told to write in one name. Shirley was elected Member-at-Large. We now came to the position of Secretary. We had no declared candidates. No one volunteered at the meeting. Five of the 11 members present had been or were currently Secretary of the club. Several suggestions were offered. One suggestion was to elect someone who wasn't present. Afraid they would not show up to take

notes, someone suggested having several members take turns during the two year term acting as Secretary. Some felt this might be unworkable, as there would be no continuity. It was suggested we might

want to make the term of Secretary be one year and not two years. Another suggestion was to put off until next month electing a Secretary. It was suggested that the Vice-President act as Secretary until one could be found. At that point David arrived. When asked, David said he would be willing to serve as Secretary. He was promptly elected before he could change his mind.

Old business: Wade announced that Peter Lord will be the speaker for

June. He will speak to us about the dark sky survey undertaken by the College of the Atlantic and NASA. The equipment being used is donated by NASA and only available in one other place in the US. Wade gave the Supernova kit that we received from the Deep Sky Network to Doug. At a future date Doug will give a talk to us about the kit. The Secretary's report was accepted as written. The treasurer's report was accepted. Bill reported that he had sent a list of members to the Astronomical League. Members should now be receiving the League's newsletter. Dwight asked that Bill notify the League that they do not need to send him a newsletter as he was already getting one. Bill also reported that he was going to have to order new checks shortly. The club will also have to ask the

On the Schedule

(Items Subject to Change)

PROGRAMS

July: Dale, Big Rocks Hitting Earth
?Summer: Dave, *Just Six Numbers*
?Fall: Alan, Australian Odyssey
?Doug, Night Sky Supernova Toolkit

STAR PARTIES

June 8(rs): Graduation Party, Wade's
August 23: Maine State Star Party, Cobscook Bay State Park, Edmunds, Maine

First date is primary, second is rain date; ? Tentative; (rs) rain or shine; (co) clear only

Election Time



The May elections were here, and official coordinator Carolyn is proud to present the results:

Secretary - David
Treasurer - Bill
Member at Large - Shirley

The Universe On Your Computer

Mr. Astronomy



Have you ever wanted to be able to view the discoveries of the great space observatories and find this all in one place? Would you like to see the views of the cosmos from the Hubble Space Telescope, Spitzer Space Telescope, and Chandra X-ray Observatory? Then how about including all-sky surveys such as the Two Micron All-Sky Survey and the Infrared Astronomical Satellite survey? Put all of this and much more in a convenient free planetarium type computer program from Microsoft and you have the "WorldWide Telescope."

This program is a "Beta" version and may have some problems although I have not found any. It is a very large program and will take over an hour to download on a dial-up connection, but only a few minutes to download with a high speed connection. Navigating is very straight forward with a wheel mouse. It is very much like looking through a very powerful window on the sky with stick figure constellations and visual stars. A cross in the center of the Field of View displays the object currently being passed over and the sky is moved around by clicking and dragging the Field of View and zooming in/out with the wheel. Drag with the center mouse button to rotate or tilt the view. All around the outside of the program page are thumbnails of the objects in the field and once you zoom in on an object different views of that object appear. Zoom out and objects in the Field of View re-appear in the thumbnail views. Double clicking a thumbnail takes you directly to that object and turning the scroll wheel takes you through multiple thumbnails. Right clicking on an object displays more information through what is called the contextual Finder Scope. Menu tabs are opened by clicking the top and clicking the bottom opens sub menus with more information. Do not forget the stars. Right click on them and more information is also displayed.

In addition to all this and more, there are also numerous guided tours of various astronomy subjects with narration, text, music, and graphics. There is also the ability for anyone including school children and the general public to create their own tours. Download and enjoy the many aspects of this new astronomy program. The WorldWide Telescope is now available at: worldwidetelescope.org.

Mr. Astronomy

League about their insurance to see if we can tag on to that and drop our current policy. Wade reported that he, Dave and Scott attended a star party at the Wagner School in Winterport. There were about 7 students and 4 or 5 adults present. Wade was able to use items from a Deep Sky Network kit at the star party. The Sun Fest Party was brought up. Wade reported that he had received no comments on it. Scott said he might be able to host it but would have to check and would get back to us. There was a little discussion on the club helping to sponsor an Astronomy Day in the fall at the University of Maine. More discussion to come at our July meeting on this topic. Dick spoke and passed around a book on how the size of the aperture of a telescope affects resolution.

New Business: Wade reminded us of the new Deep Sky Network kit we had received. The Star Party scheduled for Brooks has been put off until the fall. Wade hopes to get Neil Comins to speak to the club, probably on misconceptions about astronomy. Wade reported that a gentleman in Newburgh has written an

astronomy program and that he would try and get him to speak to us in the fall. Dale said he would be willing to talk in July about an article in *Atlantic Monthly* magazine about the dangers of Earth being hit by an object from space. Wade reported that several people had inquired about becoming members of the club. The Christmas/Holiday party will probably take place during the first week of December.

Wade now brought out his Criterion telescope. Doug took the mirror out and explained how he was going to clean it. We went with Doug over to the Chemistry lab, and he showed us how, with the equipment he had available, to clean the mirror. When he was done the mirror looked much better and was re-installed back into the telescope.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Future Meetings: July 14th Dale will speak about an article from *Atlantic Monthly* about the chances of a space rock hitting Earth in the next century.

To be determined - Dave will speak on 6 numbers;

Doug will speak on the Supernova Deep Sky Network kit.

Future dates are filling slowly, reserve or be assigned a topic.

As I sat on my hands when asked for any volunteers to be Secretary of the club, the position of Secretary was still an enjoyable job. While it usually takes me about an hour and a half to type up my notes it is a

unique experience. Thanks for letting me serve you for the past two years. Best of luck to David.

Ralph

E-mail Excerpts

Club news sent by e-mail since the last meeting
Simply for the record and for those for whom we have no e-mail addresses

Maine State Star Party

Sorry for the short notice. Our Downeast Event this year will be on Saturday August 23d. at Cobscook Bay State Park in Edmunds, Maine. Cost will be \$3 per person for camping cost for the one night. If you can attend, please let me know and we will add you to our list. You can pay upon arrival. The event will be a one day one night camp-out. Info at www.downeastaa.com. Thanks, Charlie Sawyer

Picture This

Hello All, While reading yesterday's BDN I noticed a small article about scientists witnessing the very beginning of a supernova explosion.

On Jan 9, 2008, while observing SN2007uy in galaxy NGC2770, using the Swift x-ray Space Telescope, scientists Alicia Soderberg and Edo Berger noticed a 5-minute outburst coming from a location other than where SN2007uy was sitting - they were witnessing the very beginning of another SN explosion in the same galaxy - SN2008D - Talk about be-

ing extremely lucky!! Also, both SNe events turned out to be type 1b - collapses of single very massive stars. Type 1b SNe are very rare. What are the chances ??

Anyway, after reading the article I realized that I had a snapshot of NGC2770 taken in the course of my SN patrol on February 17, 2008. I thought that it would be interesting to share this image with club members. The attached image (35 sec exp) was taken with the Meade 16" Schmidt-Cassegrain and contains both SNe. Bright moonlight that evening made the image a little noisy. Doug

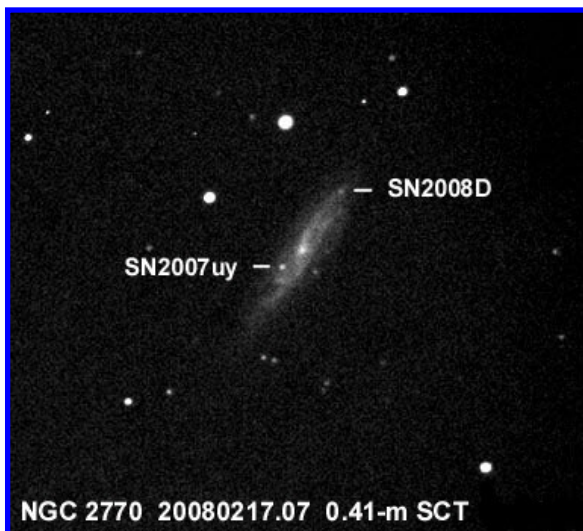
Eyeing Eyepieces

Hi everyone, I am contemplating purchasing a new eyepiece for my 8" SCT. I currently have a 20mm Plossel and a 2x barlow. I have been looking at some "planetary" eyepieces. I saw a review in the June '08 "Sky and Telescope" for some reasonably priced eyepieces from SmartAstronomy.com (<http://yhst-1469288697390.stores.yahoo.net/112pley.html>). I was looking at the 12.5mm. Price was good and with my barlow it places me to either side of my 20mm for power.

The other choice (as always looking for a deal) was a Celestron X-Cel from [telescopes.com](http://www.telescopes.com) (<http://www.telescopes.com/telescope-accessories/eyepieces/celestronxcelseries114incheyepieces.cfm>). I was looking at the 8mm (with the barlow that would provide me with 500x mag, which I believe is a little too much for most skies, but I could be wrong).

I was wondering if any of you have any comments or suggestions. I am looking for price as well as a reasonably performing eyepiece for planetary as well as some deep sky objects. Eye relief and field of view are important, but I will live with what I can get. Thanks and happy skies, David,

Dave, Wade, Scott and Peter, Thanks for all the helpful information and sites. I think I am leaning towards a 14 or 15mm Plossel or Super Plossel.



Plossel is well within my budget and probably within my skill level. I have read some things about some Barlow lenses not being compatible or not performing well with certain eyepieces. I have a Celestron Barlow 2X. Is that something to be concerned about?

Also, I haven't been giving much thought to a wide field, low power eyepiece. But with all the reading I have been doing I think maybe that is something to consider. I have a 20mm Celestron Plossel with a 50 degree FOV. Is it truly a different, much more marvelous view ... say of the North American Nebula ... with a 32mm Tele Vue Plossel? I suppose that I should just be patient and wait for another opportunity to finally get to a star party with the group and check out other views.

Before I go, I went out to Nealey's Corner Sunday. Where in the general area is the Dark Sky site for the group? Is there someone to get a hold of if I wanted to go there some evening? Or is that possible? Thanks for all your help. David

Graduation Party

Hi all, I realize this is not the usual astronomical info, but Dana and I would like all who are able and would like to attend. Thanks, Wade:

Hello Everyone, Well, I'm no longer going 90 mph on a slow day and it just occurred to me this weekend that my daughter is graduating from high school on Sunday! I can't believe it. If you are available, we would love to have you help us celebrate. We are planning a BBQ on Sunday, June 8, at our home from 4:00 onward. If it rains, we will be inside. No need to bring anything, just let us know if you can make it. Take care, Dana

Shuttle Sightings

The challenger center just sent this to me. Good luck tonight!!!! Dave:

See the International Space Station pass over Maine! The ISS will be orbiting over our area June 2, June 3, June 4, and June 7. Weather depending, the optimal nights for viewing are the 2nd and the 4th. Use bin-

oculars and you will be able to see the shuttle docked at the ISS!

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|-----|---------------------|----------------------|
| 6/2 | 10:28:34 - 10:30:57 | look West North West |
| 6/3 | 9:15:42 - 9:18:01 | look West North West |
| 6/4 | 9:37:48 - 9:40:11 | look West North West |
| 6/7 | 9:09:16 - 9:11:45 | look West |

Thanks, Dave, Saturday I went over to Kennedy Space Center with a guy from work and a couple other people and we watched the Space Shuttle Launch into space! What an awesome experience! Unfortunately, we couldn't get as close as I would have liked - post 911! But we were about 5 or 6 miles from the launch site from what I could gather. I took lots of pictures - just kept snapping - so am anxious to see if they come out - have to finish the film and take them in tomorrow. It was a beautiful day - standing on the grass looking across the water and seeing the billowing white mass rise when the shuttle started and then the tremendous flames shooting out as it slowly rose into the atmosphere! What A Sight! And yes, I know millions probably watched it on t.v. and saw an even closer-up picture, but that still doesn't compare to BEING there with the huge throng of people, to hear them cheering and to feel the hot sun beating down and the cooling breeze and just being part of it all! Well, that's one of my dreams that became reality!

Some Saturday I want to go back for a complete tour and also go through the Museum - couldn't really do that as I wasn't driving my car. But at least I know how to get there on my own now and it only took us about 3 hours, and that's with all the heavy traffic toward the final leg of the route.

Hope all is going well there and that Ann is doing very well. Doesn't look like I'm getting up to Maine this year but sure hope to next year. Guess that depends on the price of gas AND airline tickets by then! Clear skies to everyone! Audrey