

The Celestial Observer

December 2014

Dick Luecke, editor



*Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!*

Gerald Manley Hopkins, "The Starlight Night"



From the President

Happy Holidays and Seasons Greetings, NSAAC members! I hope that all are enjoying this season with friends and family, and that you will receive the nice astro gifts that you have asked for.

New meeting time and format. Beginning in January we will start our meetings half an hour earlier in order to facilitate more member interaction and "entertainment." Here's the new format:

7:30 to 8:00 PM Business meeting (strictly limited to 30 minutes)

8:00 to ~8:10 PM Break for coffee and snacks (volunteers wanted)

~8:10 to ~9:30 PM Entertainment

Entertainment was once part of our meeting routine but that routine has lapsed of late. We aim to change that. Entertainment may consist of an astronomy themed video, a member presentation, an equipment or book review, or, weather permitting, observing.

North Shore Amateur Astronomy Club is a non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

Would you like to be an entertainment provider for a future meeting? Do you have suggestions for topics or speakers? If you do, please contact me.

No special expertise is required. Talk about your favorite eyepiece, a book you've read, or your favorite constellation. It's your call. Make it as casual or detailed and formal as you'd like. John Hobbs shared his favorite astro-images at the December meeting (thanks, John) and I will give a presentation in January on how space telescopes are covering the electromagnetic spectrum from gamma rays to Infrared. So start thinking about what you can share with club members in February or other months.

And if you would like to bring a snack or beverages to upcoming meetings, please let me know. Snacks can be store-bought or homemade. We have coffee covered but water or soda contributions will be greatly appreciated.

Election coordinator wanted. January 2015 begins our annual election cycle of club officers. We are looking for an election coordinator. No heavy lifting is required—just some communication with the membership and submission of a list of candidates at our February meeting. If you are interested in filling this limited but vital role, please contact me or see sections 4 and 5 of the club bylaws. http://nsaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2014_NSAAC_BYLAWS.pdf

Armchair astronomy topics for December

Jupiter is rising before midnight and will rise earlier each night as we progress through December. By month end the giant planet will be peeking above the horizon before 8:00 PM. Jupiter is always a hit because of its size and detail.

I was excited to see the successful launch and splashdown of NASA's Orion capsule (see NASA pic). It will be some time before the United States gets back to a regular schedule of manned spacecraft launches, but this was a great start. If you missed the launch and recovery, catch them on YouTube. You will be impressed.



I hope to see members old and new at upcoming meetings or observing sessions this winter.

Clear Skies! Kevin Hocker, NSAAC President

Next Business/Members Meeting

The Friday, January 2, meeting at Brooks School in North Andover will begin at our **new time**: 7:30 p.m. A scope clinic will begin at 7 p.m. *if* one is requested in advance. See the website for scope clinic requests.

Brooks is east of Hwy 125 and south of Hwy 133. Enter the campus from Great Pond Road at point M on the Google map below and continue to the Science Center parking lot at point B. We'll meet there with our liaison and enter the Science Center. If for any reason the gate at point M is closed, enter the campus at point A on Great Pond Road, drive to the security gate (point C) and indicate that you are with "North Shore Amateur Astronomy Club." Then continue on to the Science Center parking lot (point B).

The campus and meeting location:

<https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=z2g0nAC6lh5w.kFBPV6o9jyl0>

Upcoming NSAAC Activities

Star Parties Finished for the year. A recap of December's star parties can be found below in "Meeting Minutes." Stay tuned for 2015 events.

Collins Observatory Club-sponsored public viewings are held at Salem State University with Dennis Gudzevich at the controls of the 12-inch Meade. The observatory is closed on school holidays and cloudy nights, so check the website, <http://nsaac.org/about-the-club/salem-state-university-collins-observatory/>

Mendel Observatory Merrimack College's observatory is open every Wednesday from dusk until 10 p.m. when the sky is clear, with Kevin Ackert and Fred Sammartino operating the 20-inch scope. Check <http://nsaac.org/about-the-club/merrimack-college-mendel-observatory/> before driving out.

Volunteers Needed To:

Assist Brewster LaMacchia with star parties and presentations. Contact: starparty@nsaac.org

Help out at Merrimack College Observatory on Wednesday evenings. Contact: Kevin Ackert at treasurer@nsaac.org

Take responsibility for snacks/drinks at monthly meetings. Perhaps 2-3 members could divide up the year. Contact: president@nsaac.org

Help Ed Burke with the website. Contact: webmaster@nsaac.org

Worth Watching

From the Editor: I recently chanced upon the “Silicon Valley Astronomy Lectures,” which can be viewed on YouTube. Every one of the four I’ve watched has been top notch: well-presented, entertaining, and comprehensible to non-experts like me. Series speakers are drawn from the top talent at NASA’s Ames Research Center, the SETI Institute, UC Berkeley, and Columbia among others. Here is a partial list of available lectures:

- Exploding Stars, and how undergrad and grad students are using the 36” Lick refractor to detect them.
- Brown Dwarfs and Free Floating Planets: When you are just too small to be a star
- The Ultimate Fate of the Solar System
- Lifting the Cosmic Veil: Highlights from a decade of the Spitzer Space Telescope
- Catching Shadows: Kepler’s search for new worlds
- The Dawn of Creation: The first two billion years
- Saturn’s Moon Titan: A world of rivers, lakes and possibly even life
- The Copernicus Complex: Are we special?
- Saturn's Restless Rings: Results from the Cassini mission

The series began in 1999 at Foothills College, which has hosted six lectures each year since then. The sponsors are the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the SETI Institute, NASA’s Ames Research Center, and the Foothill College Astronomy Program.

Lectures can also be downloaded from Apple’s I-Tunes Store without charge to your desktop or mobile device (though you’ll miss the speakers’ PowerPoint slides and videos). Just go to I-Tunes and search for “the Silicon Valley Astronomy Lectures Podcasts.”

Glenn Chaple’s Sky Object of the Month

Glenn’s special object for December is the variable double star Eta Cassiopeiae, or “Achird.” Being a 3.45 magnitude star within the great “W” of Cassiopeia, it is easy to locate. And with its 7.5 magnitude companion just 13.3” away, separating them should be fairly easy. The contrasting colors of this pair make viewing a special treat.

Read Glenn’s article and view his star chart on the Club website (nsaac.org).

Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting: December 5, 2014

President Hocker called the December Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:07 PM. There were seven members present plus two Board members. There was a quorum. Meeting was official.

Secretary Minutes of the November Business meeting were approved by acclamation.

Treasurer No report.

Membership There are currently 101 members in good standing.

Early Meeting Announcements Open forum on the agenda after New Business

Committee Reports

Merrimack College: No report.

Salem State University Dennis Gudzevich opened the observatory on 3 November with 20 guests and on 10 November 10 with 15 visitors.

News, Correspondence, and Upcoming Activities: The club received a request from the Atmobs about Grace and Bud Miller, who are members of our club. Bud has a serious illness and needs a special spiral stair lift and there are requests for donations. If members wish to donate, contact Kevin Hocker for information. Dennis Gudzevich has received a request for information about the history of Collins Observatory.

Star Party Committee: Bancroft and Sanborn Elementary star parties were both clouded out and will most likely be re scheduled in the spring. The North Reading Library event on 18 November was attended by about 30 kids and parents; cold weather that night (and the younger age of the kids than the prior year) made for a shorter event.

Due to the full moon and holiday schedules this fall there weren't many possibilities for dates, and the weather cancelled over half of those. Hopefully, this spring will work out better. Thanks to all who helped out this fall. Brewster LaMacchia will be working on an email announcement, after Christmas, to interested schools/organizations for this spring.

Other: Hamilton Wenham library is looking for some sort of astronomy/telescope display for two weeks this month. So far Brewster has been unable to come up with anything. Perhaps as a long-term project the club could develop materials that could be loaned to library groups: old or "broken" telescopes, mirror blanks, etc. Let Brewster know if you have any ideas.

Telescope Clinic: No activity.

YAP Program: Discussion of whether we want to continue the YAP program, and how, was tabled.

Old Business

The club continues to need additional volunteers to do star party presentations. Anyone is interested should contact Brewster LaMacchia.

Also, more volunteers are needed for the operation of the telescope at Merrimack College. If interested, contact either Kevin Ackert or Fred Sammartino.

New Business

The Board has new meeting ideas. The club needs to get back to having good entertainment for the business meetings and, hopefully, greater member attendance. People do not like long business meeting. So the board is proposing to start the business meeting at 7:30 PM and limit the meeting to ½ hour until 8:00 PM. Then break for 10-15 minutes for refreshments, followed by a formal presentation, swap table, book review or any other topic. This will continue to be discussed at future meetings.

Entertainment

Entertainment for the evening was a presentation by John Hobbs of his favorite astro-images followed by two videos of the latest launch of the Orion spacecraft provided by Kevin Hocker.

Next Board Meeting

The May Board meeting date will be Friday 15 Nov 15 at 7:30 PM at Village Restaurant in Georgetown.

Meeting adjourned 8:35 PM.

Respectively submitted by John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC