



and Messier Marathon Time

Newsletter of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society

Vol. 2006 No. 3

"All the news that fits in print"

March 2006

"Public Observing"

President's Message

At our meeting tonight, **Ed Ting** is giving a talk on "mini-messier" marathons based on an article he did for one of the magazines.



Ed Ting - Photo by Chase McNiss

* Matthew Marulla
NHAS President 2006

Highlights for this Month

Larry Lopez outlines the plan for the Messier Marathon on [Page 2](#) **Gardner Gerry** reports on Astrophotography happenings the past month on [Page 2](#) Several NHAS members reported a possible fireball sighting. Read about it on [Page 4](#)

* Rich DeMidio
NHAS Secretary 2006

Public Observing

*Editor's Note: We are starting to get back into the swing of things regarding public observing. Here is a recent report. A very healthy crowd of NHAS members showed up in the parking lot of the **Milford Middle School** (not a bad observing site, once they doused the sodium floodlights) for this sky watch. Unfortunately, from the public attendance standpoint, it was a total failure--only a few of the projected 200+ people showed up. Attendance was boosted to 20 or so because there*

was a Cub Scout meeting that same evening, and some of them showed up. More's the pity, because skies were very clear, dry, and dark, and for a while in the early evening there was absolutely glorious seeing conditions. We're talking all six stars in the Trapezium clearly visible at 52x in Mr. T and a breathtaking view of the nebulosity. Rigel showing a minuscule Airy disk with four textbook tack-sharp diffraction spikes (diffraction ring lost in the light pollution), and its companion trivially visible between the spikes. Saturn sharp as you could wish in the 5mm Radian (330X), with spectacular 3-D effect on the planet itself, bands very plainly visible, Cassini's Division razor-sharp, and only the unavoidable light pollution preventing equally plain view of the crepe ring. This is the best view I've had of Saturn in this opposition cycle. A bunch of other doubles that usually give me trouble were a piece of cake. The 85mm TeleVue had a very nice view of Saturn nestled beside the Beehive Cluster in Cancer. Once I realized that the Sphinx mount's problem was just a failure of the display and not the control computer, I was able to blindly enter the correct sequence of keystrokes to get the clock drive tracking properly. It's a shame that more of the public didn't show up, but those who were there got to see more than the usual assembly-line views of easy objects that we usually end up showing to a large crowd. I also showed off the Pleiades, M35, M37, Sigma Orionis and the nearby Struve 751 triple (all 7 present and accounted for, sir!), M81 and M82, NCG 457, R Leporis, and WZ Cassiopeiae (a fine extreme-red, extreme-blue double consisting of a carbon star and a A0-

class blue-white star). The spectacular seeing conditions in the early evening were unfortunately too good to last, and seeing got progressively muddier as the evening went on. But this is one time that I was glad the Clear Sky Clock was wrong--it predicted obscured transparency starting at 7:00 PM, which fortunately didn't happen. For those who were there to witness the failure of the Star Book component of the TV 85's Sphinx Mount, it apparently is NOT a temperature effect, nor is it a power supply problem. I called up Vixen North America and explained the problem, and we agreed I should send it back to them for warranty service. The problem turned out to be an internal ribbon cable connecting the computer controller to its display that had gradually worked itself loose. It's now plugged back in, with a dab of glue added to insure it doesn't come loose again. Vixen also upgraded the software to the latest version, and installed the software key to enable the auto-guider feature. I now have the Star Book back, working better than new. This night was also my first viewing of a minimum of Algol. Small wonder the ancients called this the Demon Star. It usually almost rivals Mirfak, but was having trouble keeping up with its nearby 3rd mag companions this evening. Well, *I* had fun, even if the public didn't show up

* Paul Winalski

Messier Marathon Time

Each fall the salmon swim upstream to spawn and continue the perpetuation of the species. The bears anxiously waiting on their annual fishing trip; stocking up for their long winter hibernation. In the spring, the birds are active and nature comes to life. This is also the time where we humans start our annual ritual in our quest to Mount New Boston and the Lopez Estate. The reason of course is just as salmon instinctively know to swim upstream, we all know that this is the time to pack and drive to our location to partake in that one event per year that we all enjoy, the Messier Marathon. Throughout the year, people plan, practice, and anxiously wait that important day. Usually, starting the monitoring of the weather for New Boston a week in advance. *BTW, the current forecast is for clouds both days at the moment.* Food will also be important so now is the time to start planning as well. Yours truly already has one full batch of dried beef ready to go. Another is currently drying and will be ready tomorrow. On deck, another batch already processed and being marinated overnight to be put on the drier tomorrow afternoon. When all is done, Jean will take it all for safe keeping since she knows that it might not make it to the event otherwise ☺ After all, the risk is too high to run out for I do not want to face the wrath of the club members ☺ This makes me of reflect on last year and just how much Larry enjoys the dried beef.



Of course, we also have Linda's wonderful stew and the countless other dishes that everyone brings. We all enjoy counting the faint little fuzzies, eating, and conversing. The feeling of camaraderie in being together is the best part of course and makes this something to look forward to every year. For everyone's convenience, I am

also posting Larry's email describing the rules of engagement. ***From Larry Lopez*** Please feel free to come and observe star or the observers of stars. We have been doing this for 11 years now and pretty much have an idea of how to do it. This is an observing party. This is not a party. If you are worried about getting too tired to drive home, no worries, we have lots of couches. And couch potatoes. Absolutely no white lights allowed. Any white light found will be frequency decimated until it is into the infrared. If you are leaving early (that is, if you are leaving before sunrise) you MUST park downhill so that you can leave without annoying everyone. More stupid rules will be forthcoming when we discover exactly what phase the driveway will be in during the marathon. Often there is a phase change during the marathon. it is mud season you know.



Photo by Rich DeMidio

1200' of driveway, by the way. all up hill. Both ways. thanks to Max E. If you come late and you are worried about causing a riot then park on the street and walk up. You must be able to find at least one messier object. You must log your name and how many objects you observed for posterity. This includes all visitors including children. If you are totally lost just ask anyone to point you at Orion or the The Pleiades M45: Stars and nebulae. <http://www.seds.org/messier/more/m045_tab.html> To do this seriously you need to have been working on it all year round. Go a google search on "Messier Marathon" for more information. No adults who act like children allowed, except me, of course. You might want to drive your winter car just in case we lose the road to mud or snow. We have never had a Messier Marathon where we didn't have to shovel snow, so ... if you really need wireless wan access we can provide it.

* Rich DeMidio

Astro Photons

Editor's Note: Welcome Gardner Gerry as the new Astrophotography chairperson and thanks to Chase McNiss for helping over the years. Please remember to visit the Astrophotography forum on the NHAS Web Site for more pictures and discussion



Gardner Gerry – Photo by Chase McNiss

The next Astrophotography Committee meeting will be on Saturday 3/18 at 3pm at the Nashua Public Library. We will be meeting in the East Wing. Plans are to show and discuss images we took at last month's meeting at YFOS. The meetings are open for anyone to attend.



Photo by Chase McNiss

Last month, the weather was good so the group decided to meet at YFOS focusing on using the Titan mount.



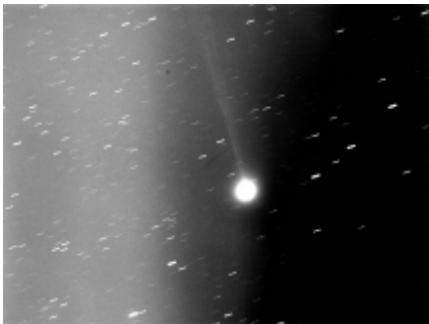
Photo by Chase McNiss

Can you name the Scopes? We also had some great pictures taken since the last meeting. Here are a few of them. BTW, some were taken at YFOS with the Titan. ***From Herb Bubert*** On Saturday, February 25th, Some of us braved the wind and cold to go to YFOS for our coffee house. I had my 11" Starmaster in the truck but never set it up. Instead I mounted my Orion ED80 on the Titan. The good thing about the Titan with the ED80 is the wind doesn't seem to bother it very much. I took about 1 hour's worth of exposures of the Rosette, which I still need to work on. I also shot M37, M36, M38 & M35 but forgot to lower my ISO setting from the ISO 1600 I was using for the Rosette.



Photo by Herb Bubert

It will be interesting to see how those shots come out after processing. I took six 5min exposures of M81 & M82 (show above) at ISO 1600 and stacked them. I believe the smaller galaxy to the right is NGC3077. ***From Dave Weaver*** Posmanski 03/06/2006 450 sec shot through the trees, FS-102 @ prime, ST-2000XM, Schuler luminence filter in FLI CFW-1



Forgive the gradient; it is actually from shooting through a tree! (If I had made it to YFOS, I wouldn't have had that problem!) I shot this with my FS-102 at prime focus with my ST-2000XM. It is a single 450 sec luminance image with darks, flats, bias calibration in MaxIm DL. No other processing other than a medium stretch. I had a Losmandy tandem mount on my EM-

200 with a C102 4" achromatic refractor and Meade DSI providing guiding on the head of the comet. I have great views to the south & west, but unfortunately not so to the east. The dawn wiped out my 2nd luminance image. ***From Dennis Miller*** I went out on Saturday the 4th and took advantage of the temporary clear skies that I had at the moment and took this shot. Of M65 and M66.



Photo by Dennis Miller

I'm still using my 6-inch refractor and the dsi Pro with an IR blocker and a minus V filter. The following shot is a sub frame total of 11 minutes, again from my driveway. Not exactly the best spot!

* Gardner Gerry

Radio Astronomy



Antenna by Bob Sletton

More field trips are being looked into for the Spring timeframe. The forums are also up and running so please visit there often to post questions and see what folks are talking about ***From Rich DeMidio*** Several years ago, I participated in the seti@home experiment in which our personal computers were used to analyze the raw data from the Arecibo radio telescope. I remember processing over 3,000

packets of data. It seems that the project is still alive and well with more things planned. Y'all might want to visit the website to see what is happening. The URL is <http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/> * Bob Sletton

Deep Sky Object of the Month

Editor's Note: Since it is Messier Marathon month, I thought it would be a good idea to include a few of these this month. Observer: Lew Gramer
Your skills: Intermediate (some years)
Date/time of observation: 20/21 Mar 1999 06:00 UT
Location of site: Lopez House, New Boston, NH, USA (Lat 44N, Elev 150m)
Site classification: Rural
Sky darkness: 7.1 <Limiting magnitude>
Seeing: 7 <1-10 Seeing Scale (10 best)>
Moon presence: None - moon not in sky
Instrument: 80mm binoculars on mount
Magnification: 16x?
Filter(s): None
Object(s): M83 (Southern Pinwheel)
Object category: Galaxy
Object class: SAB(s)c I-II
Constellation: Hya
Object data: mag 7.54:8.20 size 12.88x11.48 55Å°
Position: 133700.3-295204
Description:
Readily visible in this fine pair of binoculars. Found by a fellow observer during the New Hampshire Astronomical Society's annual Messier Marathon. It was surprisingly large, with a strong impression of mottling throughout the roundish disk, and an inner area only slightly brighter than the rest.

* Lew Gramer

The Bottom Line

Starting Balance: \$4,058.03
December Deposits: \$0.91 (acct. interest)
December A/P: \$342.83
 (Plowing, PO Box, Insurance, Propane, heater parts and stamps)
Net Balance: \$3716.11 Cash
Balance: \$3716.11
Membership: 105
New members:
 Tom Cocchiaro, Amy Riebau, Tony Bisson
Donations: None
Comments: None

* Chase McNiss

Looking Back at Last Month

Opening Matthew Marulla reported that Mr. Marc Stowbridge has volunteered to coordinate public sky watches.



Photo by Chase McNiss

Scope of the Month None.

Public Observing. Matthew Marulla reported that public observing events are starting to get into full swing. Matt will setup the forums and events in the website. All the critical information will be there making it easier for Marc. We did have a recent event at the Boy's scout in Manchester. Paul Winalski, Nils Wygant, and Gardner Gerry attended with about 12 people there. They consisted of adult scoutmasters and older scouts. Although the turnout was low, the audience was very engaging. Unfortunately, the sky conditions were hazy so there was not much to show. They were able to show the Orion Nebula, NGC 457, and a few other objects. People seemed interested and asked many questions. Things like how far are these objects, what are they made of, and so forth. Next event is

Monday at Milford High School. They are anticipating 250 people.

Book of the Month, None
Committees. Photo Club Chase

McNiss did his last report and handed over the baton to Gardner Gerry. The Sky Clock looks good so the photo club meeting is set for YFOS at 3pm. Short meeting inside the hut, then use the C14 for imaging. The plan is to some images, then process and bring back the following month. **Web:** Matthew Marulla reported on the creation of a new forum for selling, trading, or giving stuff away. Incidentally, Larry who is looking at old Radio tubes did the first first post ☺. **ATMs:** Larry Lopez No report. **YFOS** Larry Lopez was unable to attend the meeting so Chase McNiss reported in Larry's absence that they checked in on YFOS. The heater was operating fine and we have hired a new contractor for snow plowing. Chase and Larry briefed him on the rocks and telescope pad. Chase staked out some of the high rocks and scope platform. It looks great and everything is clearly marked now. It also appears that we might have fewer

rocks to address this spring. The ground is not that frozen only about 6 inches so far. Overall, it is in good shape

Membership:

Bob Sletten (acting) no report. **Other**

Topics.

Matthew Marulla on several recent events documented on <http://www.astronomydaily.com/> Discussion of new supernova in M100 and approximate 11 magnitude were discussed.

Evening Program. Group discussion on Messier Marathon tools including books, maps, and optical equipment. Rich was unable to stay for that portion of the meeting.

* Rich DeMidio

News Shorts

The Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MOR) has successfully entered orbit. Read about the details at <http://marsprogram.jpl.nasa.gov/mro/>

Sky and Telescope recently reported on some dire straits NASA has regarding science. Read about it at http://skyandtelescope.com/news/article_1691_1.asp

* Rich DeMidio

Member Blogs

I saw a fireball this evening! Report: Observer: NHAS member, Joel Harris, Epping, NH jjad@comcast dot net Time: about 9:26pm. Observer location: Candia NH, on RT101 going east, 65 MPH. Object start location: between Zenith and Polaris. Object end location: between Polaris and north horizon. Brightness: at least -7 mag Color: blue white Breakup: none, smooth ball of light, train did not persist for long. Comments: It caught my eye while driving home from work. I had to guess its location, until other cars passed. The meteor network was down, at <http://www.namnmeteors.org/> Hope someone else saw it! Deep in space!

* Joel Harris

I think I saw it too out my living room window from Milford, MA. It was low

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to the North horizon. I think bluish. But it was hard to tell as we were looking at TV and it caught my eye. I thought it was a fireball, but was too unsure under those conditions. It was right about the time you described.

* Roger Greenwood

I saw something around then too. I was outside in south Merrimack, NH. It was to the west northwest, about 25 or 30 degrees above the horizon, heading almost straight down. I have no experience estimating brightness, but to me it didn't seem as bright as -7. It appeared to me more like the same brightness as a bright Venus

* Mark Duckworth

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E-mail articles to the Editor.

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This month's contributors:

Mathew Marulla, Chase McNiss, Bob Sletten, Lew Gramer, Paul Winalski, Larry Lopez, Gardner Gerry, Joel Harris, Mark Duckworth, Roger Greenwood, Herb Bubert, Dennis Miller, Dave Weaver, Rich DeMidio

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St. Anslem's – Mini Messier Marathon

NHAS Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Location
Mar Business Meeting	Mar 17	7:30 pm	St Anslem's (Mini-Messier Marathon by Ed Ting)
Messier Marathon	Mar 24	Dusk	Lopez Residence, YFOS Alternate Location
Messier Marathon (Backup)	Mar 25	Dusk	Lopez Residence (if needed), YFOS Alternate Location
Coffee House	Mar 31	Dusk	YFOS
CMP Skywatch	Apr 7	7:00 pm	Planetarium Concord, NH
Apr Business Meeting	Apr 21	7:30 pm	Planetarium Concord, NH