

THE DARK SKY OBSERVER

The Dark Sky Observer is a publication of the North Jersey Astronomical Group (NJAG), whose purpose is to promote the study and knowledge of the science of astronomy.

The Dark Sky Observer needs your input! Letters, comments, suggestions, book and product reviews, and articles are welcomed and encouraged. Contact the editor at 973-340-5963, kdconod@earthlink.net, or at this address:

Dark Sky Observer
 North Jersey Astronomical Group
 P.O. Box 1472, Clifton, NJ 07015-1472
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VISIT OUR WEB PAGE AT

<http://community.nj.com/cc/njag>.
 Mary Lou West also maintains a web page at:
<http://www.csam.montclair.edu/~west/njag.html>

MEMBERSHIP

Dues are only \$15.00 per year (\$20.00 for family and \$10.00 for student memberships). Benefits of membership include: \$10 discount on subscriptions to "Sky & Telescope" or "Astronomy" magazines ("Sky & Telescope" subscribers also get a 10% discount on all books, maps, and products at Sky Publishing); a subscription to this newsletter; an e-mail list for the latest club and astronomy news; use of our dark sky sites; field trips to local planetariums, science centers, and star parties; a lending library of astronomical books; a Telescope Loan Program; and star parties for special celestial events.

Make checks out to the NJAG and mail to: North Jersey Astronomical Group, P.O. Box 1472, Clifton, NJ 07015-1472. If you have any questions regarding membership, contact our Acting Membership Committee Chair, Kevin Conod at: kdconod@earthlink.net or 973-340-5963.

UACNJ

The NJAG is a member of the United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey (UACNJ), a consortium of more than a dozen astronomy clubs, united to better help support, coordinate, and communicate ideas between stargazers in and around the state.

The UACNJ operates an observatory at Jenny Jump State Forest near Hope, NJ which serves as the NJAG's dark sky site.

FEBRUARY MEETING - Date changed to Feb. 21

Please note the February meeting of the NJAG has been changed to Wednesday, February 21. The meeting will begin at 8:00 p.m. in Richardson Hall, Room 226.

Elections will be held at this meeting, so all members are encouraged to attend.

Our guest speaker will be Dr. Mary Lou West. Dr. West will present an "Astronomy Update" featuring the latest astronomical news from the American Astronomical Society's recent meeting in San Diego, CA.

MARCH MEETING

The March meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 14. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Karl Hricko of Kean University. Dr. Hricko will give a slide presentation on archaeoastronomy, the study of the varied astronomical achievements of ancient peoples.

ANNUAL DINNER

Friday, March 23 at 7:30 p.m.

The NJAG's Annual Dinner will be held at the Russian Hall in Little Falls. The evening will feature an excellent "all you can eat" Buffer Dinner, a guest speaker, a 50/50 drawing, and of course our annual Astrophotography Contest! There will be lots of door prizes including a Meade Ultrawide 14mm eyepiece, an 8mm Televue Plossl eyepiece, a gift certificate from Bergen County Camera, plus much more!

Admission is \$25 per person. Send a check made out to NJAG:

Annual Dinner, NJAG, P.O. Box 1472, Clifton, NJ 07015



ELECTIONS

Elections will be coming up in February. Volunteers are needed for officers and committees. If you are interested in nominating someone or yourself, contact the nominating committee:

President

- Jim Coughlin

Vice President

- Kevin Conod

Recording Secretary

- Jim Piombino

Corresponding Secretary

- Heidi Cramer

Trustee

- Angelo Restivo

A nominee for Treasurer is needed.



For a weekly update on the night sky, call the StarLine at 973-680-8420.



KNOWING THE SKY

Thursdays thru June 28, 2001 at 6:45 pm.

What is that next to the Moon? What is that bright star in the west after sunset? For the answers to these questions, and many more, drop by the Newark Museum's Dreyfuss Planetarium every Thursday evening for a weekly update on the night sky. Explore the current sky, learn what constellations and planets are presently visible, and discuss hot topics in astronomy with our astronomy expert. Your questions set the course as you navigate through the stars! This 40 minute workshop is recommended for adults and children ages 10 and up. Free.

Admission is free at The Newark Museum, located at 49 Washington Street in the Downtown/Arts District of Newark, New Jersey. The Museum is open Wednesdays through Sundays from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m., with evening hours on Thursdays until 8:30 p.m. The Newark Museum is easy to reach by public transportation and from all major area highways, with attended parking available on-site. For more information or directions, call 973-596-6529 or consult the Planetarium's website at <http://www.newark-museum.org/planetarium>.

PHOTO GALLERY

Xmas Eclipse Captured on Film
Some nice shots of the recent solar eclipse have been added to our photo gallery. Check them out on our web page at: <http://community.nj.com/cc/njag>.

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Friday, March 23

The NJAG's annual Astrophotography contest will be held at the Annual Dinner on March 23. Our astrophotography contest is not really about competition but a great opportunity for the members to share their astronomical images. For rules and details on entering the contest, contact Angelo Restivo at 201-358-1381 or agrestivo@aol.com.

THE ASTRONOMER'S JOURNAL

The NJAG is making copies of "The Astronomer's Journal" available to its members at cost. The journal is a great 100 page notebook for writing down info and sketching objects while stargazing. Price is only \$7.00 (Please include \$4.00 for postage and handling if you want it mailed to you).

The Astronomer's Journal is a daily log designed to be used at the eyepiece by amateur astronomers of all skill levels. Each page has 16 fields of entry, two sketching circles, and ample room for detailed notes. In addition, The Journal has a blank table of contents that the user fills in with a brief description of each entry; it acts as a valuable reference for information contained in the book. Spiral bound and three-hole punched for observing convenience. Make checks or money orders out to the North Jersey Astronomical Group and send to:

Astronomer's Journal, NJAG, P.O. Box 1472, Clifton, NJ 07015-1472.

STUMP THE ASTRONOMERS

Have a question about astronomy?

Send it in to Kevin Conod at the address on page 1 or to kdconod@earthlink.net

and we'll try to have an answer in the next newsletter.

NJAG MINUTES

Minutes of meeting, Jan. 10, 2001

The meeting started of with an informal discussion on the Christmas solar eclipse. Kevin Conod showed members his videotape of the eclipse, a video of the passing of the International Space Station and of the lunar eclipse of Jan. 9. Joe Marzullo and Jim Piombino showed their pictures taken of the eclipse and Angelo Restivo showed his pictures taken with his new digital camera. An informal meeting was then held because we did not have a quorum. The club dinner will be held on March 23, at the Russian Hall. Kevin reported the club's balance. Our club has 52 members. We will sponsor a public night at Riker Hill Park on March 17. Public nights at the college will start on Jan-

uary 18 and be held every clear Thursday. Kevin is lining up speakers for our club meetings and annual dinner. Nominations for club officers were held with the help of Heidi Cramer and a cell phone. Nominations were:
President - Jim Coughlin
Vice President - Kevin Conod
Recording Secretary - Jim Piombino
Corresponding Secretary - Heidi Cramer
Trustee - Angelo Restivo
A nominee for Treasurer is needed. Bags of sand are needed to fill the barrel the will hold the pier for the telescope that will be placed on the roof of the science building. Meeting broke up around 10:00 p.m.

PLANETWATCH

Saturday, March 17

Join us at Riker Hill Art Park in Livingston for a night of stargazing. Weather permitting, several large telescopes will be set up from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. to view Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and other wonders of the night sky.

TELESCOPE NIGHTS

Thursdays at 8:00 p.m.

Thursday Nights are Telescope Nights at Montclair State through May 3. The general public is invited to look through our telescopes from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. Weather permitting telescopes will be set up in front of Richardson Hall (the math and science building).

Note: our telescopes can't see through clouds! Telescope Night will be canceled if the skies are not clear.

For directions, call 973-680-8420 or visit our web page at:

<http://community.nj.com/cc/njag> and click on "Maps." Please Note there will be no Telescope Night on March 8 due to Spring Break at MSU.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following to the ranks of the NJAG. Please join us at our upcoming meetings and events!
Usheda Jackson of Irvington, NJ

NEW E-MAIL LIST

To improve communications between NJAG members, we've moved the club's e-mail list to Listbot.com. To join this list, simply go to <http://njag.listbot.com> and enter your e-mail address in the box. You'll then be asked to make up a password and enter your name. If you have any questions, contact Kevin Conod (kdconod@earthlink.net).



Planetary Nebula Mz3

LIGHT POLLUTION

One of the items on the agenda for our next business meeting we will be light pollution. The NJAG recently joined the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) and is forming a local light pollution committee (for which we will need volunteers).

UACNJ LIGHT POLLUTION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Gordon Bond

I am pleased to announce that the "United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey Recommendation of Sites for 'Dark Area' Protection Status" is now complete and ready for distribution!

For those of you unaware of what this is, let me give a little background. The NJ Governor-appointed Light Pollution Study Commission (NJLPSC) issued its findings in April of 1996. Among its recommendations was that the State should identify and survey those areas "especially suitable for astronomical observations or which provide nocturnal benefits to flora and fauna." These areas would receive protection by having state and local governments comply with anti-light pollution standards for lights they control and initiating actions to encourage private entities surrounding the area to do the same.

Needless to say, as with all the other recommendations made by the

NJLPSC, nothing was done to promote this. The UACNJ, therefore, took it upon themselves to do a preliminary survey of sites used by amateur astronomers - to at least identify such sites and provide basic data about them. The idea is to prod local and state officials into examining the concept and acting upon it. The result is the 107 page report announced here.

Copies of the report will be mailed to participating member-clubs. Additional copies can be provided at no cost as a service of the UACNJ. I will be mailing copies to State-level officials, though I am waiting for the new Governor's cabinet to "settle in" first. Clubs are encouraged to make use of the report by presenting it to their local governments. While the initial idea was for state protection, if local communities are willing to protect sites, it will add weight to a state action.

As always, it is important to stress that the astronomy aspects of light pollution must be kept within the context of the overall problem. It should be pointed out that amateur astronomy groups provide a service to the community and to education. If our organizations are seen to be positive parts of the communities, we will have better luck.

Thanks to John Batinsey, Rick Kurczewski and Kevin Conod for their input!



PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT

Kevin Conod

I've been working on getting speakers for our upcoming meetings. Spring 2001 is shaping up nicely! Dr. West will give us an "Astronomy Update" for the February meeting and Dr. Karl Hricko will do a presentation on archaeoastronomy in March. Here's the Spring 2001 meeting schedule:

SPEAKER	TOPIC	DATE
Dr. Mary Lou West, Montclair State	Astronomy Update	Feb. 21
Dr. Karl Hricko, Kean University	Archaeoastronomy	Mar. 14
Dr. Edward Groth, Princeton University	Optical SETI	Apr. 11
Ernie Rossi, Amateur Astronomers, Inc.	Telescopes: Past, Present, and Future	May 9
Gloria Villalobos, Hayden Planetarium	Topic To Be Announced	June 13
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The April lecture on Optical SETI should be particularly interesting. SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, usually employs radio telescopes to attempt interception of signals from other lifeforms in the galaxy. Optical SETI uses ordinary optical telescopes to try to detect alien laser signals from space.

