

North Jersey Astronomical Group

# The Dark Sky Observer

A Publication of the North Jersey Astronomical Group

April, 1997

Vol. X, No. 2

## May meeting

Our guest speaker will be Michael Richmond of Princeton University. He will make a presentation to the Group on the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. The project's goal is to map the Northern Hemisphere of the sky with CCD cameras, just as the National Geographic-Palomar Observatory Sky Survey did on photographic plates between 1949 and 1956.

**Wednesday, May 14, 8:00 p.m.**  
**Richardson Hall Room 226.**

## 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 is produced monthly for NJAG members by NJAG members.

**FROM THE EDITOR:** Remember the Dark Sky Observer needs your input! Letters, comments, suggestions, and articles are welcomed and encouraged. Contact the editor at a meeting, at (201) 778 - 3038 or at this address:

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## May Sky Preview

By the time you read this, Comet Hale-Bopp has finished its spectacular appearance in the evening sky. Through most of March, the comet was a beautiful sight in the morning sky. From suburban areas the comet's tail was two to four degrees long even with all the light pollution. If you did not go see the comet under darker skies, you really missed out! Away from city lights the dust tail was twice as long and yellowish in color. One could also see the comet's plasma tail stretched like a blue veil more than ten degrees long. Seeing both tails, one yellow and the other blue, made it look like an odd check-mark in the sky.

During April, finally in the evening sky (at a much more reasonable hour!), the comet put on an incredible show. Though the dust tail did not grow to enormous lengths, it did have an interesting curved shape. On clear nights it was four degrees long from light polluted skies. Under dark skies the tail was often twice as long. The plasma tail was not as visible as it had been in the morning sky. The night of April 10 was particularly beautiful: a thin crescent Moon, the comet and Mars made a pretty trio after sunset!

Though the first couple of weeks of April were the best time to see it, the comet will continue to be visible for a little while longer. Exactly how long is hard to say . . . it will depend on

how much gas and dust is released. In early May, the comet is near the bright star Aldebaran in Taurus the Bull. It is getting lower and lower in the north-

“You lift your children onto your shoulders that they may better see a comet and, in so doing, join a chain of generations that stretches back far beyond written memory. There is no cause more important than protecting that ancient and most precious continuity.

— *Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan*

western sky, making it harder to view. Eventually it will disappear into the glare of the setting Sun.

Meanwhile waning along with Comet Hale-Bopp, the winter constellations are slipping into twilight. The Seven Sisters are not a constellation,

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The NJAG's StarLine is updated weekly with the latest astronomical information.

**Call (201) 614-9220**  
24 hours a day!

## Telescope

### Nights

Thursday Nights are Telescope Nights through May 8. Telescopes will be set up on the south side of Richardson Hall 8:00 to 9:00 pm. Join us...and bring a friend!

### NJAG Hats For Sale

NJAG hats are still available. They sport the nifty NJAG logo in white on a navy baseball cap. Only \$10.00. Contact Ruth Koenig at (201) 340-4640 or [dkoenig@intercall.com](mailto:dkoenig@intercall.com)

### Reminder

Remember that NJAG members get a discount on *Astronomy* and *Sky & Telescope* magazines. If you are a subscriber, or would like to subscribe, contact Ruth Koenig at (201) 340-4640.

## May Sky Preview

*Continued from p. 1*

but a star cluster called The Pleiades (M45). Anywhere from four to seven stars, or sisters, are visible with the naked eye depending on how good your eyesight is. The Pleiades belong to the constellation Taurus, the bull. About ten degrees to the west another star cluster makes up the face of the bull. The Hyades star cluster is shaped like a ragged letter "V." The bright reddish star Aldebaran, the glaring red eye of Taurus, is much closer to us than the cluster and so is not actually part of it.

The constellations Orion, Gemini, and Canis Major will soon follow Taurus. Orion and Gemini being further north will be above the horizon a little longer. You

still have time to gaze at the Orion nebula (M42) or the star cluster M35 in Gemini

Later in the month, Venus joins Mars in the evening sky. Look for Venus low in the west-northwest. Mars will be high in the southeast after sunset. ☆

### Celestial Coordinates for C/1995 O1 (Hale-Bopp)

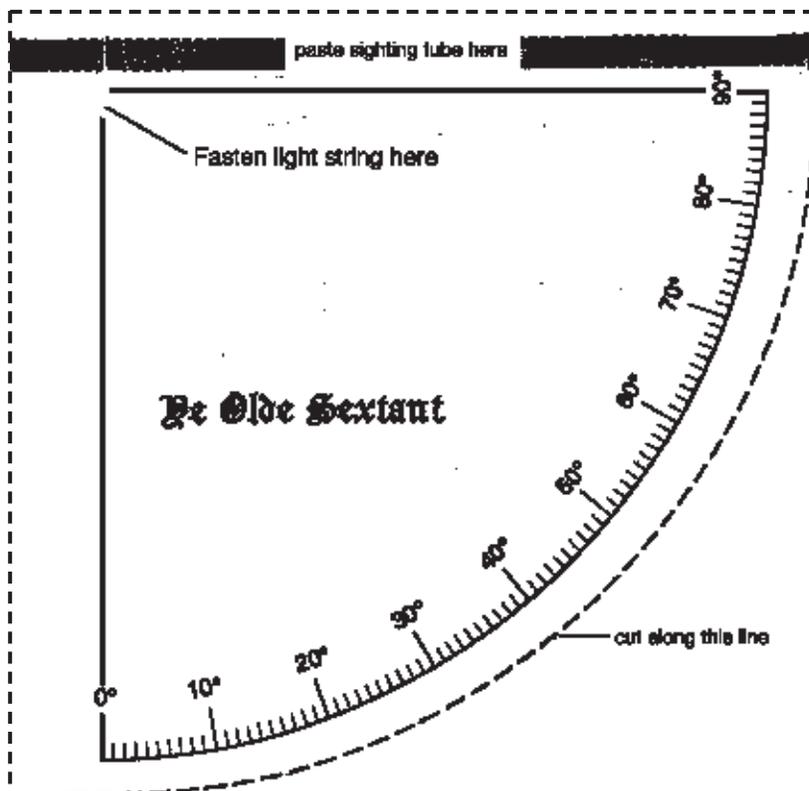
| DATE<br>(MONTH/DAY) | RIGHT<br>ASCENSION<br>(HRS/MIN) | DECLINATION<br>(DEGREES) | MAGNITUDE |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 04 07.0             | 02 38                           | +41.7                    | -1.6      |
| 04 12.0             | 03 13                           | +38.6                    | -1.5      |
| 04 17.0             | 03 42                           | +35.3                    | -1.3      |
| 04 22.0             | 04 07                           | +31.9                    | -1.0      |
| 04 27.0             | 04 27                           | +28.6                    | -0.7      |
| 05 02.0             | 04 44                           | +25.4                    | -0.5      |

### Astronomy Junior: Make Your Own Sextant

To begin, cut out the piece below, glue it to cardboard and trim along the dotted line. Punch a hole for the string, then tape the top edge to an empty paper towel tube, placing the curved edge near the viewing end. Attach a length of string,

knocking it behind the sextant and leaving it long enough to hang an inch below. Weight the string with an old bolt or screw tied to the bottom.

Now you can track the moon and other heavenly bodies through the sky. ☆





## Committees

Volunteers are needed for the following committees (most are self-explanatory, except where noted):

### Membership

### Newsletter

### Public Night

**Observing** (arranging observing sessions)

### Library

### Computer

### Education

**Program** (making arrangements for guest speakers)

### Astrophotography/

### Darkroom

### Project

(telescope building, etc.)

If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact

Joe Marzullo (857-1678

or

marzullo@saturn.montclair.edu) or Gene

Faulkner

(779-7932 or

wizbang@intercall.com).



## NJAG Annual Dinner



Our annual dinner was held at the Russian Hall again this year and we all enjoyed it very much. We had quite a few door prizes and here is a list of the winners:

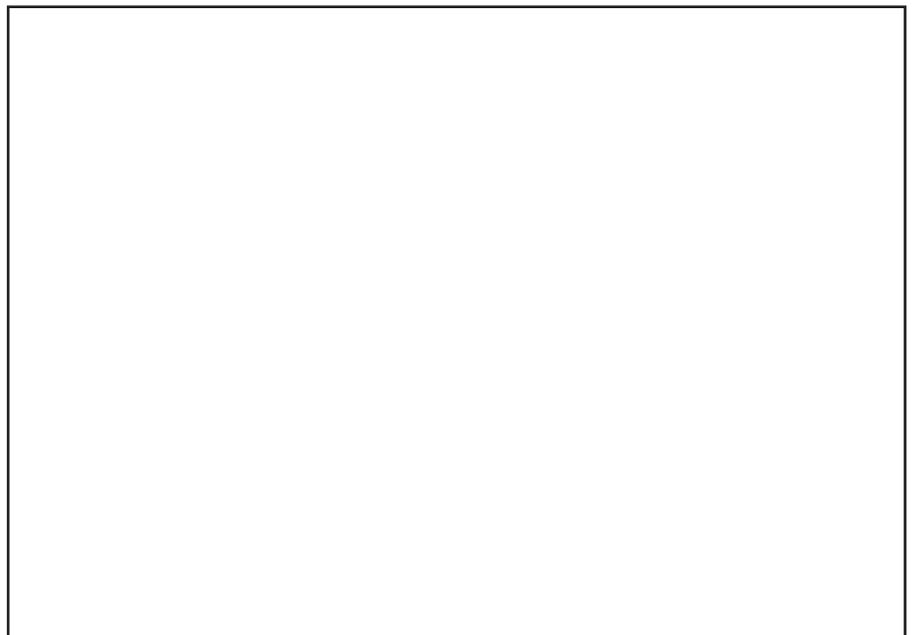
A \$20.00 Gift Certificate donated by Wholesale Optics was won by Joseph Koenig. Four Free Passes to the Newark Museum Planetarium were won by the following people: Jackie Perkins, Ruth Koenig, Tom Vanatta's guest Claire, John Mikists, Doug Kittedge. The "Atlas of Deep Sky" donated by Sky Publishing was won by Kevin Conod. The \$25.00 gift certificates donated by Scope City were won by Gene Faulkner, Enrico Hurtado, Jim Piombino. The \$25.00 gift certificate donated by Pocono Mt. Optics was won by Angelo Restivo. A 1 year subscription for Astronomy magazine was won by Tom Vanatta. The "Guide to the Solar System" donated by Kalmbach Publishing was won by our speaker Dr. Karen Magee-

Sauer. The iBeginner's Guide to the Sun donated by Kalmbach Publishing was won by Kevin Conod. The \$20.00 gift certificate donated by Lumicon was won by Enrico Hurtado's guest Vin. The club hats were won by Maja Britton and Jackie Perkin's guest Carol. The 12 MM RKE Eyepiece was won by Barbara Piombino.

Our 50-50 amounted to \$181.00 resulting in \$95.50 for the winner and \$95.50 for the club. This was won by Andrew Restivo.

Our speaker was very interesting and timely. Her talk was about the research she is doing with comets. And our treasury has now been increased by \$250.00 as a result of the dinner. Thank you to everyone for your support, hope you all enjoyed it and we look forward to having it again next year. If you wish to mark your calendars the date next year is March 20, 1998. ☆

## NJAG Astrophoto Gallery



# The Dark Sky Observer

North Jersey Astronomical Group  
 P.O. Box 1472  
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## Sky Calendar

- 1 Comet Hale Bopp in Taurus, 15° above WNW horizon at sunset
- 3 Moon at perigee
- 4 Saturn dips behind Moon
- 4 Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks
- 6 New Moon
- 7 Look for very young Moon in west
- 11 Mother's Day
- 14 NJAG Business Meeting, 8pm
- 14 First Quarter Moon
- 15 Moon at apogee
- 19 Venus 6° north of Aldebaran
- 22 Full Moon
- 25 Pluto at opposition
- 26 Memorial Day observed
- 29 Last Quarter Moon
- 30 Memorial Day
- ☼ NJAG PUBLIC NIGHTS - Through May 8 • 8 - 9 p.m.

| <b>May</b>     |           |               |                |                |           |           |
|----------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Su             | Mo        | Tu            | We             | Th             | Fr        | Sa        |
|                |           |               |                | <b>1</b>       | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>4</b>       | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b><br>● | <b>7</b>       | <b>8</b><br>☼  | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>11</b><br>f | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b>     | <b>14</b><br>☾ | <b>15</b>      | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> |
| <b>18</b>      | <b>19</b> | <b>20</b>     | <b>21</b>      | <b>22</b><br>○ | <b>23</b> | <b>24</b> |
| <b>25</b>      | <b>26</b> | <b>27</b>     | <b>28</b>      | <b>29</b><br>D | <b>30</b> | <b>31</b> |