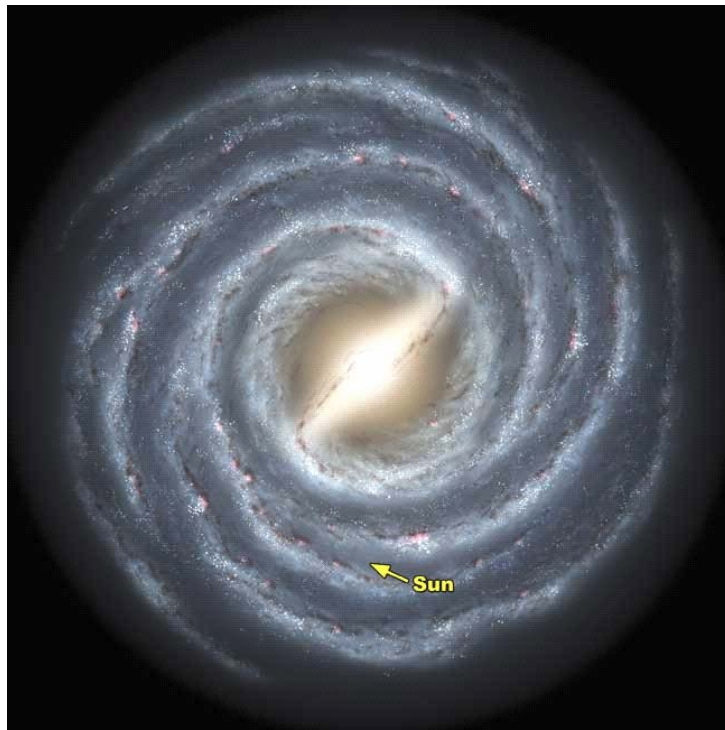




September 05 Newsletter of the Omaha Astronomical Society Issue 213

## Is the Milky Way a barred spiral?

Illustration Credit: R. Hurt (SSC), JPL-Caltech, NASA



General Meeting of the  
Omaha Astronomical Society  
Friday, September 2nd at 7:30 PM  
Durham Science Center, Room 169  
UNO Campus

Program: See Page 3

## Events

**September Club Star Party**  
**Saturday September 3, 2005**  
**Club Site Weeping Water**

**Mahoney Public Star Parties**  
**September 9, 2005**

"Wrap Up Party "for NSP 12  
will be at the Wayne & Carole Lainof's home on  
September 24, 2005 from 4 to 8 pm.

### **7th ANNUAL OAS\_PAC BANQUET**

October 14th, 2005 at 7:30 PM

**Mahoney State Park / Riverview Lodge**

Visit the club web site at: **[www.OmahaAstro.com](http://www.OmahaAstro.com)**

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## **BULLETINS**

### **Meeting Presentation**

Harlan Seyfer; program on  
Double Star Observing

### **Good September Dates to Observe at the OAS Club Site or at any other good location**

Friday 2 Sept, new moon  
Saturday 3 Sept, new moon

### **Upcoming Events**

Papillion-LaVista School  
events at Gretna 4H

Glenwood, IA School events  
at Camp Neyati Girl Scout  
camp

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## An Astronomy Quiz

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1. In the Reflector, June, 2005, Jay Brausch describes what as 1) glow 2) arc, 3) rayed arc or 4) chaotic flaming?
2. Who wrote, "All the disputes which have tormented philosophers through so many ages are exploded at once by the ...evidence of our eyes and we are freed from wordy disputes upon the subject, for the Galaxy is nothing else but a mass of innumerable stars planted together in clusters. Upon whatever part of it you direct the telescope, straight-way a vast crowd of stars presents itself to view."
3. Other than a neighborhood in New York City, what is SOHO?
4. The constellation Argo was broken up into four smaller constellations, named for things on a ship. They are: Carina (the Keel), Puppis (the Stern or Poop deck) Pyxis (the Compass), and what?
5. Where would you find craters named Beethoven, Raphael, Shelley and Keats?
6. At the Nebraska Star Party (NSP), near Valentine, NE limiting magnitude (the magnitude of the faintest stars that one can see without aid) is: a) 7.6 to 8.0, b) 5.4 to 6.0, or c) 8.0 to 8.5.
7. In what constellation can you find M36, M37 and M38?
8. Under a good, dark sky, such as the one at NSP 12, one can see a smudge of light in the northern sky, directly between the constellations Perseus and Cassiopeia. What is it?
9. Because of precession, the sun spends less time in which constellation than any other?
10. What event is coming up on October 17th, 2005 at about 7 AM?

Suggestion? Comments? Send them to Kim at [dallen@novia.net](mailto:dallen@novia.net).

## OAS Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2005

### Old Business

#### 1. OAS Outreach      Coordinator John Johnson

August 12 Mahoney Star party. Member Dave Burgess will be doing an interview on channel 6 news at Midday on Aug 8<sup>th</sup> about the event. Volunteers will be needed to set up scopes. Deb & Clark Cheney and Sara Basiaga will be there.

August 12 – Hitchcock Nature Center will have a Perseid watch, volunteers needed. Howard Bohm and Rita Livingood will be there.

August 25, 29, & 31 – Star Parties for the Papillion/ La Vista Schools. All parties will be at the 4-H Camp south of Gretna, NE. They begin at Start at 7:30pm.

#### 2. Messier Observing Committee.      Clark & Deb Cheney

Deb & Clark Cheney reported on NSP.

3. **MSRAL** - Rita Livingood inquired about the typical format of the convention. George Allen stated it revolves around the regional business meeting, some speakers and usually a social event sometimes with observing if possible. Phil Heflin commented it was a great place to meet other astronomers from the region and make new friends.

### New Business.

1. Rita Livingood has large pipe available that could be used to make telescope piers.
2. George Allen suggested if you have a Messier certificate to put your name and number on Google and see what you get back.

### Awards & Recognition.

None at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

***Eric Balcom***

OAS Secretary

## ANNUAL SCHOOL OUTREACH EVENTS

Well it is that time of year again!! Below are the dates for the subject school's "Science Night" activities:  
Papillion/La Vista 6th grade elementary school outdoor education events at the Gretna 4-H Center are:

Thursday - Aug. 25th - Tara School - ~ 75 kids  
Monday - Aug. 29th - Hickory - ~ 63 kids  
Wednesday - Aug. 31st - Carriage - ~ 49 kids  
Thursday - Sept. 8th - LaVista West - ~ 54 kids  
Monday - Sept. 12th - G. Stanley - ~ 52 kids  
Wednesday - Sept. 14th - Portal/Walnut - ~ 76 kids  
Monday - Sept. 19th - Golden/Anderson - ~ 74 kids  
Wednesday - Sept. 21st - Ramsey - ~ 98 kids!!  
Monday - Sept. 26th - Trumble - ~ 51 kids  
Monday - Oct 4th— Parkview - ~ 55 kids

We also have been asked to help out again at the Greenwood Schools outdoor education events at the Camp Neyati Girl Scout camp in Iowa. Those dates are:

Monday - Sept. 26th (Yes this will be in addition to helping out at Gretna this night too!)  
Thursday - Sept. 29th

Times for all the events is to be set-up and ready to go by about 7:30 PM. I know for the early dates the Sun will still be up, but at least the kids can see the telescopes and we can show them some "terrestrial views".

The events at the Gretna 4-H center are "rain or shine" since we set up indoors there and at least explain the use of the telescopes & etc.

If you can help out with any of these dates and please let me know either by return e-mail or calling me at the number below. I will try to have sign up sheets for the Sept. meeting. For the August dates, please try to let me know if you can help: H - 333-5460 W- 533-6875

Thanks so much if you can help out. It is truly a rewarding experience!

John

## September Sky Calendar

3rd New Moon  
11th First Quarter Moon  
17th Full Moon  
22nd Autumnal Equinox  
25th Last Quarter Moon

**Recent Observing Awards None**

**New Members...None**

## Astronomy Quiz Answers

1. Aurorae.(plural of aurora) The article is called “Aurora Chasers.”
2. Galileo Galilei, in Siderus Nuncius or the Starry Messenger., 1610. Isn't that something like what you thought when you first looked through a telescope?
3. A satellite, the Solar and Heliotropic Observatory, that observes our sun.
4. Vela, the Sails.
5. Mercury
6. a) 7.6 to 8.0
7. Auriga, the Charioteer
8. The “Double Cluster,” NGC 869 and NGC 884 A pair of open star clusters, impressive with binoculars or a telescope.
9. Scorpius. The sun is “in” Scorpius from November 23rd to November 30th.
10. Partial lunar eclipse.

## The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual NEBRASKA STAR PARTY July 31-August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Once again, my experience with the Nebraska Star Party was well worth the trip. After a feverish evening of loading the van, I had decided to head out at about 9 a.m., but one glance at my left rear tire showed it would be a much later start. It took several hours for a local tire shop to get to me, but by 11:30 a.m., the tire was fixed, I had had a quick lunch and was finally out on the road to the high Sandhills of northwestern Nebraska. The star party is held each year at Merritt Reservoir, which is a fish-hook shaped lake about 11 miles long located 28 miles southwest of Valentine, Nebraska. It is about a six and a half hour drive, but conditions weren't too bad, so I arrived in plenty of time to check in at Merritt Resort. I didn't find any of my cabin mates right at the resort, so I found a few NSP staffers from Omaha who were there and had dinner with them at the "Water's Edge" restaurant above the lake's sugar-sand beaches. The sky was partly cloudy, so the next step was to head out to the observing fields at the Snake Campground to see who had arrived early. I did find one cabin mate Allen Beers from Iowa setting up his 10 inch along and his little Coronado PST, so we watched the sun through it until it went behind a low cloud in the west. I also got to help one of the Iowa people get their prominence filter working on an LX-200 SCT, and while it did show the prominences, the view through the PST of disk detail was better. The Iowa group had both 16 and 20 inch Dobsonians being set up, so I pulled out my camera and started doing some picture taking. I walked around a bit and ran into fellow Prairie Astronomy Club members Jim Kvasnicka and Bob Kacvinsky with their 10 and 12 inch Orion dobs at the ready. After taking their pictures, I went down to Dob Row to see what was cooking. A few of the big guns were already set up, so I wandered down to a guy and his NexStar 11 to chat for a bit. I heard some funny noises coming from a motor home parked to the east, including sounds of a door slamming, a backup alarm from some heavy equipment, and an odd synthesized voice. This was all coming from a grey African parrot who one attendee had brought with him. The bird was quite entertaining, but I wonder if the owner was teaching it to blurt out NGC numbers or object suggestions? I made the rounds for a while until it got dark enough to observe, but other than a few clusters and double stars that made it through the sucker holes, I didn't get a lot looked at.

Sunday morning dawned bright and fairly clear, so with the sun up, I pulled out my Coronado PST H-alpha solar scope and set it up on the picnic table next to our cabin. Allen had gotten up and set up his PST as well, so we had a good chance to check the performance of the two scopes. The sun was fairly active, and both scopes showed lots of detail, especially when using Allen's Arcturus 8-24mm zoom eyepiece. We tried to put both scopes side-by-side to "binoview" with them, but their physical nature prevented us from

making them into a large pair of H-alpha binoculars. I walked up the hill to the other cabins and ran into Carole and Wayne Lainof who invited me over for a little breakfast. Later in the morning, one of the Iowa group came by and informed me that Astrosystems was setting up and that they were a University Optics dealer. I shot up the hill to the front of the restaurant where they were setting up, and Judy did indeed have the eyepiece that I had longed for: the 40mm MK80 Konig. I ended up about \$225 poorer, and knew that the sky would surely be cloudy sometime that week as I had the gaul to actually buy a new eyepiece! Sadly, Camera Concepts, set up next to Astrosystems, did not have the zoom eyepiece recommended by Allen, so I had to settle for a tripod adapter for my 10x60 binoculars. After a quick lunch and a nap, it was back to the vendors to see if any more goodies were to be had, and then down to the lakeside to sit in the shade for a while and admire the view. The evening meal was again at the Water's Edge restaurant, where I dined on prime rib (a Sunday tradition at NSP). I ran into John Johnson (my co-teacher for the NSP Beginner's Field School), and was able to get a copy of the field school manual to him for the first session Monday. After this it was back over to the observing fields above the Snake Campground to take a few more pictures. Again, clouds tended to make observing somewhat more difficult although it cleared in the wee hours of the morning.

Monday was the first session of the NSP Beginner's Field School beginning at noon in the Water's Edge restaurant. John Johnson and I had nearly 80 people at that first session, where we covered things like star party etiquette, finding your way around in the sky, and books, star atlases, and binoculars. After a quick lunch of a few sandwiches, I was back looking at the vendors once again. I had a quick evening meal at the restaurant before heading out to the little picnic pavilion at the Snake Campground to help out with the NSP Ice Cream Social. This little event is an excellent "ice breaker", allowing the attendees to mingle as well as getting some ice cold beverages and ice cream. The first of the door prizes were handed out, M.C'd by NSP Coordinator Eric Balcom. Following this, most attendees went back to their scopes to try for a few hours viewing. However, long time NSP helper Lorri May from South Dakota gave the NSP Field School attendees a nice constellation tour with both a laser pointer and her "Death Ray" (an 6-cell Maglite flashlight). A large thunderstorm blew up from the southwest and spoiled the late night observing, although again, it cleared prior to dawn.

Tuesday was partly cloudy and hot, and again, John Johnson and I conducted the second Beginner's Field School session (telescopes) at noon, followed by the Swap Meet. The evening brought the hamburger Barbeque at the restaurant, and after that, I went back out to the observing fields to take more images. I got a nice sequence of the setup of the 32 inch truss-tube Dobsonian on Dob row, which was the largest telescope there. In addition, two 25 inch Obsessions, a couple of 20 inchers, several 16 and 14 inch Dobs, and a variety of

other scopes dominated the central observing fields. Up on the hill in the middle of things was Jim Hopkins and his group with 12 and 14 inch Meade LX-200's ready to scan the skies. I did some more picture taking before more partly cloudy skies made observing difficult that evening as well, with distant thunderstorms visible in the area.

Wednesday was the last of our NSP Beginner's Field School Sessions. This last session got a boost from Jim Hopkins with his presentation on observing the Deep Sky. After this was the NSP Beach Party, where a lot of people (and a **lot** of kids) cut loose in and close to the water. Things like a sand wedge pitching contest, 3-legged races, water balloon toss, and sand volleyball were all featured, followed by a nice hot dog barbeque just above the lake. More door prizes were awarded, but as they were being presented, the winds came up and the temperature dropped like a rock. I got a little observing done with my NexStar 9.25GPS after a friend of mine from Florida uploaded new motor control software into the scope. The slews now seemed a bit faster, and I even got to try out my new eyepiece on the objects which were visible between the clouds. I called it a night early, as I had to be well rested for the river trip in the morning.

Thursday, the great Niobrara river canoe/tubing trip lived up to expectations despite a somewhat cool stars. Lots of water cannon battles erupted after the stop for lunch at Smith Falls, and all had a really good time. The evening brought a bratts barbeque, and the skies cleared off, allowing us one of the best nights I have seen in a long time. The Milky Way was simply incredible in my 100mm f/6 refractor or even my binoculars. Even the galaxies in the western sky showed their stuff, with spiral structure visible in my Nexstar in both M51 and M101. M81 and M82 were real crowd pleasers, as were the clusters in the Milky Way. The Veil, the North American, the Dumbell, and others all fell to the onslaught of filter-equipped big guns on the observing fields. After ordering my NexStar to go to Uranus, I sighted along the tube and could clearly see that dim planet with my unaided eye! The night ended very late for me, as I did have to get up the next morning for the presentations at the Valentine High School.

Friday was probably the best day of the entire star party, with cool clear weather and activities centered around the auditorium and gymnasium of Valentine High. The vendors were once again selling their wares in the gym, while formal presentations went on in the auditorium. Doub Zubenel gave a very nice presentation on Leslie Peltier, while Jim Hopkins presented some of the Cassini mission results. After lunch, Brenda Culbertson gave a talk on Native American star lore, while James Holloway did his talk on a homemade mirror grinding machine. More door prizes were awarded and then the group broke up for the final night of observing back out at Merritt Reservoir. This last night was also the public night, with perhaps 100 people from the Valen-

tine area showing up to observe through the scopes on the observing fields. The sky was even better than it had been on the previous night, with the dark details in the Milky Way being easily seen with the unaided eye. The huge dome of the central bulge of the galaxy was visible clear out into Ophiuchus, and many Messier objects were visible with the unaided eye. I had my scope slewing over huge areas of the sky trying to get the maximum amount of viewing in on my last night of the star party. After midnight, a faint auroral display began in the north to top off one of the nicest nights I have had under the stars in a long time. Saturday morning would come all too soon, when most of us would say our good byes for this year and head out on our long journeys home.

David Knisely

From the mind of Mark Weiss:

Remember that club elections are just around the corner, along with annual PAC-OAS banquet, and the annual holiday party in December. Please be thinking of donations for the December meeting door prizes.

From the mind of Al Dorn:

Notice from Al Dorn. We will take orders for Astronomy (magazine) calendars, Ottewell calendars, RASC Observer's Guides but on a "pay as you go" basis. A substantial, non-refundable deposit will be required so warn everyone they will need to bring cash or checks.

From the mind of Bill Bond:

Signup for calendars will begin in Sept. I will send the signup sheets around in Sept., Oct., and Nov. Then send the order in after the November meeting. If you could put a notice in the Stella about that it may get some interest generated. I anticipate charging \$10 for the wall calendar and \$15 for the desk calendar.



**Club Officers .....**

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**BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP**

- ◆ Members receive the STELLA, our monthly newsletter.
- ◆ Each member is automatically a member of the Astronomical League, the only nation-wide organization for amateur astronomers.
- ◆ Use of the observing site at Weeping Water, NE
- ◆ The opportunity to borrow one of several club-owned telescopes.
- ◆ Organized trips to local observatories, planetariums and museums.
- ◆ Significant savings on subscriptions to **Sky & Telescope** and **Astronomy** magazines.
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