



General Meeting of the Omaha Astronomical Society  
Friday, February 1st at 7:30 PM  
Durham Science Center, Room 169, UNO Campus  
Program: See Page 2



Comet Holmes as it appeared from a west Omaha driveway following its outburst in October. Nikon D70, 2500mm f/10, 60 seconds, 800 ASA



**Don't Miss February's Lunar Eclipse!**  
**See Page 5 for Club Activities!**

Omaha Astronomical Society is a  
member of the NASA Night Sky Network

# Events

## February Meeting Program 'Meet the Neighbors'

Eric Balcom will give a presentation on those nearest stars in our stellar neighborhood

## February Sky Calendar

6th New Moon  
13th First Quarter Moon  
20th Full Moon, Full Lunar Eclipse  
28th Last Quarter Moon

## Mahoney Public Star Parties

All Friday evenings from Twilight On the Golf Driving Range of the Mahoney State Park Ashland, NE

**Resuming Spring 2008**

## February Club Star Party, Saturday, February 9th OAS Club Site, Weeping Water

## Recent Observing Awards

None

## New Members

None

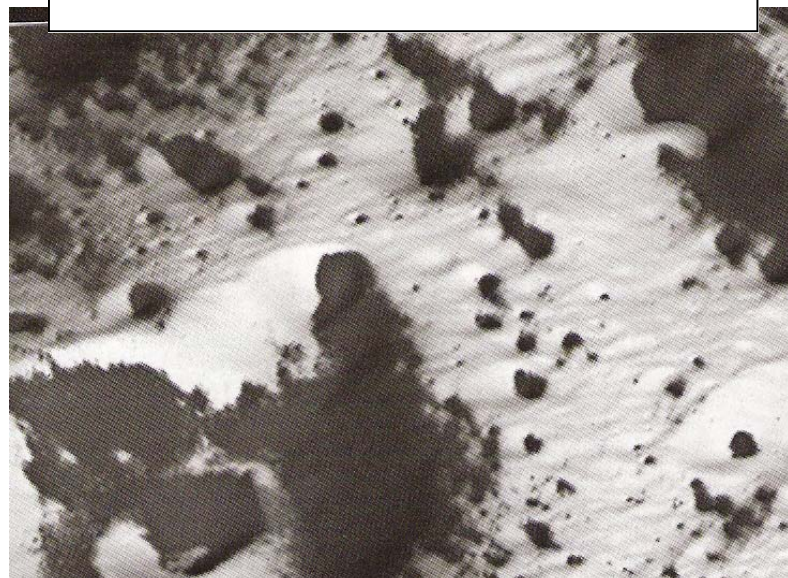
## Thanks Mark !

On behalf of the entire club, thanks for your years of service as newsletter editor! (not to speak of all the other roles you've contributed your time in!)

## Astronomy Quiz February 2008

1. What strange creature is between Orion's two hunting dogs, Canis Major and Canis Minor?
2. Lunar highlands are the \_\_\_\_\_ (dark or light) parts of the moons visible surface?
3. February 1<sup>st</sup> has a conjunction of the 2 brightest planets seen from Earth, what are they?
4. Astronomers currently know of about how many planets circling nearby stars (exoplanets)? a) 80, b) 200, c) 150 or d) 800.
5. In 1999 David Charbonneau checked out the gases in the atmosphere of an exoplanet as it passed in front of its sun. True or false?
6. In 1923 astronomers catalogued the 1000<sup>th</sup> asteroid (minor planet) and named it Piazzia after whom?
7. Whereas most lunar craters are round this lunar crater is weirdly elongated, about 179km by 71 km, shaped something like a footprint. Which is it?
8. What is the alpha Persei group?
9. In February the Moon will pass through the Earth's shadow; when will it happen exactly and what is this called?
10. John Dollard was an English optician who developed a composite lens from 2 types of glass to make an achromatic telescope or lens. Why is this important?
11. M36, M37 and M38 are open clusters in this constellation that reaches it's highest in the sky on January 10<sup>th</sup> each year. Which is it?
12. This lunar crater is one of only a few with double concentric walls, and is 15 km across. Which is it?
13. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, Earth will be at \_\_\_\_\_. Fill in perihelion or aphelion. What do those terms mean?
14. Where is this snowy image (below) from?

Answers on back page



# OAS Meeting Minutes

January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Gary Grimes called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. We had 1 guest and 43 people total. Kim Moss-Allen read the December minutes; Bob Dunn made a motion to accept and Howard Bohm seconded. John Macy gave a Treasurer's report with income in December '07 of **\$433.90**, expenses of **\$595.60** and a balance for the club of **\$4328.01**

**~Outreach** Millard West has contacted John Johnson for a tentative project involving the club, but no details at this time. No outreach events planned for January.

**~Observing** Comet Holmes is still naked eye visible, but best viewed from a darker site than Omaha. The coma is spreading out (it is about 2 degrees) making it harder to observe. Comet Tuttle is in good position for viewing; it's a fast moving periodic comet, quickly moving to the south. The variable star Mira is brightening now will be going from about 5<sup>th</sup> magnitude to 3<sup>rd</sup>. Mars is still bright and good for viewing. Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup> brings a lunar eclipse, peaking at 9:30 local time.

**~Telescopes** In good shape in general, Almost ALL are available for check out. Ask any club officer or Scope Coordinator Bob Dunn for details on check out policies. Currently with:

6" Silver	David Osterburg
6" Black	Available
8" SCT	Down for repairs
Binoculars	Bill Bond
13" Dobsonian	Available

PST (Personal Solar Telescope) Not ready for use yet.

**~Awards** None at this time.

**~Vice President** No news.

## Old Business

**Website** After some discussion we decided not to add a link to the FotoSearch website at [www.fotosearch.com/photos-images/galaxy.html](http://www.fotosearch.com/photos-images/galaxy.html) Viewing the photos was free but the point of the site was to offer photos for sale, anywhere from \$50 to \$750. We felt we would simply be free advertising for the FotoSearch site. A motion was made not to add the link by Howard Bohm, seconded by Nina Baker and passed by the membership.

**501c3 Tax Status** No news at this time.

## New Business

**Budget 2008** was presented by President Gary Grimes. Projected expenses included Awards, Astronomical League dues, Astropark upkeep and insurance, PO Box, Stella and website, telescopes, miscellaneous correspondence, Astronomy Day, Holiday Party Door Prizes, school programs (i.e. Metro Science Fair) and miscellaneous expenses totaling \$2543.

Projected income including member dues, donations, (i.e. from Outreach programs for schools), lease receipts, Public Star Party (i.e. the Winery), totaling \$\_\_\_\_\_.

After some discussion a motion was entertained to accept the budget by Wayne Boeck, seconded by Howard Bohm and passed.

**Stella Editor** Thank you Jeff Huston! For stepping up to the job of Stella Editor, as well as webmaster. Welcome!

**Local astronomy equipment** Someone brought up the fact that [telescopes.com](http://telescopes.com) now has its warehouse in Omaha, bringing up the possibility of some kind of professional partnering in the future. Also, [Canfields](#) used to carry some astronomy equipment and then stopped and is going to be carrying Mead telescopes again.

Next Meeting will be Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, Durham Science Center, Rm 169, 7:30.

Tonight's Program: **The Sun** by Eric Balcom

Motion made to adjourn the meeting by Eric Balcom, seconded by John Macy, passed.

Kim Moss-Allen  
Secretary

# Telescopes.com has come to Omaha... and they're bearing gifts...

... well, no gifts really, but they do have some really cool bargain priced binoculars. More on that later.

Following the headline, in case you hadn't heard, the large astronomical product distributor Telescopes.com was acquired by the Omaha based web retailer NetShops. As part of that acquisition the entire Telescopes.com operation was relocated right here to River City from Duluth, Minnesota. Informal communication with company representatives has revealed that they have in fact been here since last summer. Indeed, a little digging through their website will eventually lead you to a webpage which shows a picture of their office, none other than a building on the former Western Electric property.

Telescopes.com representatives have become aware of our clubs existence as well and have indicated an interest in possibly seeking out our expertise in helping some of their new staff who were hired locally to replace those who didn't relocate to Omaha. It sounds like a fairly substantial astronomy knowledge void was created as a result of move.

Anyway, the primary reason I'm writing here is to talk about a certain pair of binoculars which caught my attention while visiting the Telescopes.com website. While I was familiar with Telescopes.com, it was only after becoming aware of their new local presence, that I actually took time to check them out. Along with an extensive line of the usual Meade, Celestron, and Televue products, Telescopes.com also markets their own brand of telescopes and optics under the name Zhumell. Some of their larger aperture Zhumell brand Dobsonians have actually received fairly decent reviews on the web. But it was a pair of 'Super Sale' priced binoculars which caught my attention. Specifically, the Zhumell 20x80 SuperGiants, priced at an eye popping \$69 (plus free shipping on some days). Now, on internet discussion forums, these binoculars seem to have garnered everything from "best for the money ever" to "you get what you



paid for". In some instances, there have been reports of receiving specimens which were out of collimation, and had to be returned for replacements. But more often than not, recipients have expressed happiness with their purchase.

I decided to order a pair... with knowledge of their sales/support staff now being located in Omaha... "Buy the Big O" as it were (of course it was necessary to 'buy' state and local government as well, being assessed the 7 1/2% sales tax, oh well). Three days later (apparently they end up in Lenexa, Kansas before coming back to Omaha) a package showed up at my doorstep.

Having only had a pair of 7x50's to this point, my first impression of these 20x80's was that they were HUGE! (see photo). While the weight is not excessive at 4 pounds, the 20 power magnification necessitates that the binoculars be mounted. An nearly equally cheap Paragon tripod, I had obtained from Orion years ago, fit the

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Lunar Eclipse: February 20th

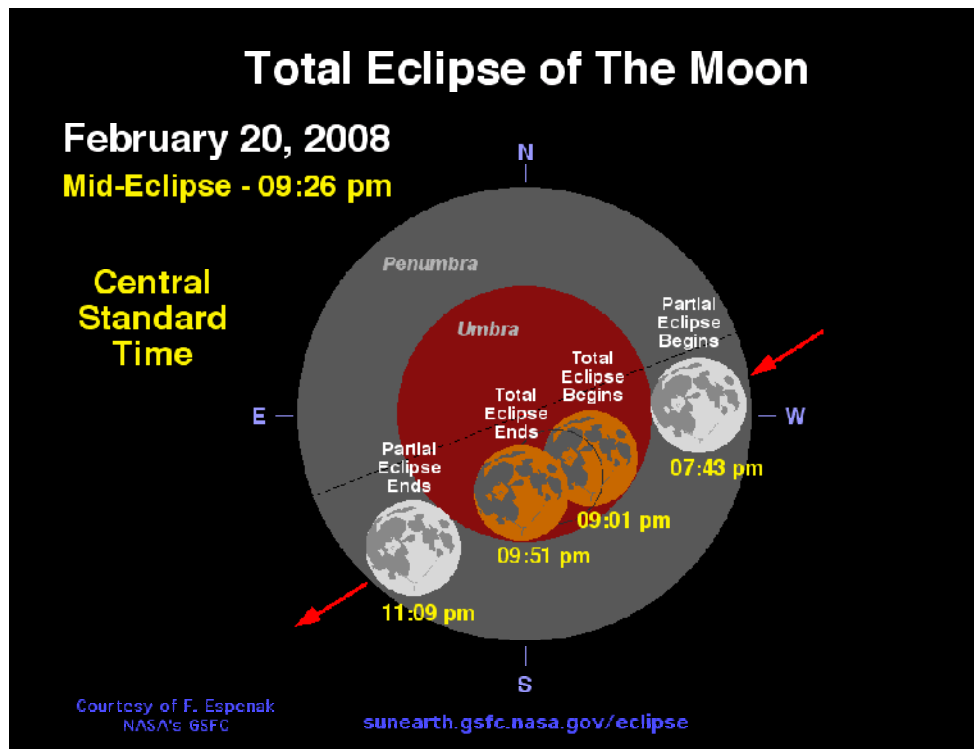
## Join us at Lake Zorinsky for Public Outreach!

The upcoming February 20th (Wednesday) total eclipse of the Moon presents a perfect opportunity to engage in some public outreach in the city.

We'll set up at dusk at Lake Zorinsky off one of the parking lots accessible via the south park entrance off 144th Street. Press releases will be sent out to all the major local media outlets and we can expect a sizeable crowd if similar past events are any indication.

As for the eclipse, the penumbra should become visible after 7pm with partial eclipse starting around 7:40pm. Total eclipse spans most of the 9 o'clock hour and the whole show comes to an end by 10:45pm.

While telescopic views of the eclipse will no doubt be of primary interest to the general public, there will be a number of other well placed objects including Saturn rising in the east, Mars overhead, M-42 in the south, the Pleiades, and whatever else the viewing conditions permit. The more telescopes the better! Please consider coming out and joining us, it should be a great time!



*(Continued from page 4)*

bill (hard to justify a pricey parallelogram mount for \$70 binoculars!). The binoculars come with a sturdy built-in tripod mount. Now I've never had an opportunity to do any significant amount of viewing through a 'real' quality binocular, so perhaps my standards are significantly lower than others. I say that because these binoculars really impress me (certainly given the price). While my discount short focal length refractors should have prepared me for the views, it is indeed different when you observe over such a wide (3 1/2 degree) field with both eyes. During my short (cold!) foray outside, I looked at everything from Mars to M-42, to the Pleiades and the open clusters of Auriga. The views were phenomenal! Bright and relatively sharp. Objectively, the sharpness drops off at the edges, and the bright moon exhibits some interesting color. But being a deep sky guy, I was in heaven. Many have debated on the web whether these binoculars are

truly multi-coated as Telescopes.com claims. I don't know, but I do know that there was little 'off axis' glare and enough light being transmitted for me to easily see numerous larger deep sky objects from my light polluted back yard, which I seldom have enjoyed with my longer focal length telescopes (there really is a whole wonderfully different realm of viewing waiting to the wide field observer). As with most, even cheap, binoculars, there are diopter adjustments on these binoculars, which in my haste to get out and view, I haven't touched. And I have yet to spend any substantial time using these 20x80's in a terrestrial application (birds!), so the jury may still be out in that realm. I've read some complain that misalignment shows up more readily when focusing in closer proximity. I can't comment on that, but I've seen more than enough to tell you that this is the best \$69+tax I have spent on a piece of astronomical equipment. Welcome to Omaha Telescopes.com! -Jeff



## OAS Club Officers

<b>President</b>	Gary Grimes	(712)-527-3495	
<b>Vice President</b>	Bill Bond		
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Macy	991-5587	ptmacy@doctor.com
<b>Secretary:</b>	Kim Moss-Allen	291-7887	dallen@novia.net
<b>Program Chair</b>	Eric Balcom	491-3502	ecbalcom@msn.com
<b>Outreach</b>	John Johnson	333-5460	jwjohanson@oppd.com
<b>Stella Editor</b>	Jeff Huston	333-1794	stella@omahaastro.com

### Answers to this months quiz

1. Monoceras, the Unicorn, is between Orion's two hunting dogs Canis Major and Canis Minor.
2. 'Lunar highlands' refers to the light colored, heavily cratered, mountainous parts of the moon, as opposed to the mostly smooth, dark 'maria' or 'seas.'
3. Venus and Jupiter meet in a bright conjunction on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, only 6/10 of a degree apart.
4. Astronomers currently know of about b) 200 planets circling nearby stars.
5. True
6. Piazzia is named for Giuseppe Piazzi, an Italian astronomer who discovered the first asteroid January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1801, calling it Ceres.
7. It's Schiller crater, near the southwest edge of the visible moon's disk.
8. The alpha Persei group is a small open cluster of stars, mostly 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> magnitude, around the star Algenib (also called Mirfak), the alpha star in Perseus.
9. Lunar eclipse will happen February 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 PM.
10. Because light is composed of different wavelengths or colors a simple lens will have the different wavelengths focusing at different points, creating distortion. An achromatic lens helps to counter this problem by making all wavelengths come to a single focus.
11. It's Auriga, the Charioteer.
12. It's Hesiodus A, at the southern edge of Mare Nubium.
13. Earth is at perihelion January 2<sup>nd</sup>, meaning its closest approach to the sun. Aphelion would be farthest from the sun.
14. This is a close up of what is believed to be water ice over dark ground on Iapetus, Saturn's moon.

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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.
- ◆ Savings on astronomy books and printed materials.

Visit the club web site at:  
**www.OmahaAstro.com**

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