

N O V A C

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Cold Weather Observing Tips

Tom "Ironman" Dietz

1. No cotton or polyester/ cotton blends next to your skin. This includes underwear and socks. Polypropylene long Johns are excellent provided they're thick enough, arctic-weight wool/polypropylene blend long Johns are even better. Because cotton doesn't wick perspiration away from your skin, it quickly becomes moist and cold in cold weather, leading to rapid loss of body heat. The same property that makes cotton great for wearing in hot weather can contribute to hypothermia in cold conditions.

2. Dress in layers. Many thin garments with lots of dead air between layers to trap heat are better than a few thick ones. For observing in temperatures below 25 degrees, I generally wear the following:

- Wool/polypropylene or polypropylene long Johns (two pairs for subzero temperatures)
- Polypropylene sock liners
- Wool socks (one or two pairs)
- Flannel shirt (a synthetic fleece shirt would be even better)
- Jeans (synthetic fleece pants would be even better)
- Wool sweater
- Fleece layering jacket
- Down-filled bibs
- Down parka (rated to -40

degrees with the bibs)

- Balaclava
- Wool/Thinsulate® watch cap
- Wool fingerless gloves
- Pac boots (rated to -40 degrees when the expected low is above 20 degrees or another pair rated to -100 degrees when the low is in the teens or below or when observing on snow)

3. Always bring more layers than you think you'll need. Add or remove layers depending on air temperature, wind chill, and how much you're exerting yourself. If you're wearing enough to start feeling too warm while you're driving to the site or setting up your gear, you've probably got on too many layers and will get cold after you've stopped moving around as a result of having perspired under your cold weather gear. Don't put on all of the layers you plan to wear while observing, including heavy boots and socks, until you have everything set up and are ready to observe. On the other hand, if you feel comfortable wearing all of the layers you've brought while laboring to unload equipment and set up, you've probably not brought enough and will start to get cold as soon as you stop moving around.

4. Cold feet and/or hands are a symptom of a falling core body temperature. When this happens, the brain redirects blood away from the extremities to the vital organs, and the feet and hands become cold. If your core temperature is dropping, the heaviest boots and

gloves won't help you feel much warmer. Only adding layers will help. Drinking something hot will also speed recovery. If you keep your core temperature up, you can often observe in comfort without gloves.

5. Don't forget your head. Always wear at least one cap in cold conditions. An uncovered head rapidly radiates body heat away. A hood is even better, but often gets in the way. That's why I often wear a balaclava and a watch cap.

6. Temperature ratings for cold weather gear assume the wearer is actively exerting himself/herself. Wearing a parka rated for -40 degrees might seem excessive when its in the twenties, but experience has demonstrated that additional layers are still needed for a sedentary activity such as astronomy. Boots rated for -100 degrees are quite comfortable when the temperature is in the teens or below, especially if you're standing on cold ground or snow, but not if they've become moist from being worn in the car on the way to the site. Always remember to take the liners out of pac boots after an observing session to allow them to dry out, especially if you plan to observe the following night.

7. Keep well hydrated but avoid caffeine. Caffeine is a diuretic and reduces blood volume, making it more difficult for the body to maintain a normal temperature. I usually take bottled water and a half-gallon of decaffeinated coffee with me on cold nights.

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President's Message

Ed Karch

I would like to thank those outgoing officers and volunteers for their service to our community. At 550+ members the word "Club" doesn't quite describe us. We are a diverse group of folks from many backgrounds and with many different astronomical interests and skill levels. However, the active members all seem to have a couple of things in common. The first is a drive to do more. For some members, this means acquiring basic observing skills. For others, it means looking for fainter and fainter objects. For still others, it means exploring a different area within astronomy, such as CCD or satellites or even telescope building. The second thing in common is that all are impacted by increasingly light-polluted skies.

This year I want to find more ways to actively support and encourage members in their observing. How to carry this out is still in the thinking stage and could sure use some input from the membership. One idea I am considering is expansion of the chairs that are the real executive bodies of the organization. We have a very active extension chair and I would like to use this as a model for other action chairs such as education (or skills+), appropriate lighting, etc. What are your ideas? Feel free to contact me. Or, better yet, post your ideas on the list and let us all consult.

Support The IDA

Join the International
Dark-Sky Association

www.darksky.org

Starting Out Right

Rob Lentini

While manning the booth at the 2000 NOVA Star Party, I was asked an interesting question. I was nervous about volunteering to represent NOVAC at the booth. As a novice amateur astronomer and new club member, I feel I know about as much about astronomy as I know about cooking. Mac and cheese, anyone? A club member brought a stack of old magazines to give away, mostly a mix of *Astronomy* and *Sky & Telescope*. The guests were merciful, and I didn't get any questions that were too tough, but a couple of people browsing the magazines asked, "Which is better, *Astronomy* or *Sky & Telescope*?"

I glossed over an answer, saying something like, "They're both pretty good. *Astronomy* is probably more cosmology/astronomy focused, and *Sky & Telescope* probably has more observational astronomy tips." That answer seemed to satisfy them, but I thought more about it after the Star Party. Santa Claus was good to me a year ago, and I was given subscriptions to both magazines. Seeing so many of the same ads in each magazine, I don't always realize which magazine I'm reading. I know both magazines are worth reading from cover to cover. I know both magazines are great bathroom reads. What would my answer be after more involved qualitative and quantitative analyses? The fact that some of my research was conducted in the loo should not cast a negative light on my conclusions.

Astronomy feature articles over the past year have most frequently covered astro images and art, cosmology and astronomy topics, observational astronomy and astro events, interviews with interesting personalities, astrophotography and imaging techniques, and articles on professional astronomy, observatories, and planetariums.

Astronomy generally starts off with six to ten of

these feature articles followed by their regular "departments." These include an editors note called "Behind The Scenes", a selection of readers' letters called "Talking Back", an "Astronews" section containing short articles on various developments and discoveries, a question and answer feature called "Ask Astro", a review of upcoming star parties and other events called "Looking Ahead", and a gallery of great astro photos called "Hot Shots". New products, books and computer software are reviewed in a monthly "Star Stuff" section. There is always an in-depth "Sky Show" section, where you'll find star maps, calendars, moon phases, planet sky and orbital positions, and lengthy descriptions of some telescope targets positioned for viewing that month. As you can see, *Astronomy* has lots of good stuff. The magazine is usually about 130 pages long.

Sky & Telescope typically has two to four general feature articles, plus four to six feature articles organized into recurring subject areas such as "Computers in Astronomy", "Amateur Astronomers", "Telescope Techniques", "Astro Imaging", an "Observer's Log", and "Test Reports". Over the past year, the most frequently covered topics have been what I would characterize as equipment test reports, observational astronomy and events, telescope techniques, astro clubs/observing sites/amateur astronomy, professional astronomy, observatories and planetariums, and astronomy history.

The regular features in *Sky & Telescope* include a group of articles composing a celestial calendar similar to *Astronomy's* "Sky Show". The first portion, titled "Rambling Through the Skies", is an interesting article focusing on the historical aspects of a constellation or other topic specific to the month. This is followed by *Sky & Telescope's* "Guide to the Evening Sky", where they have a monthly star chart, articles on various observing targets, and the like. A featured observing event is the third section of *Sky & Telescope's* celestial calendar, and this is followed by "SkyWise", an article on observing

techniques or knowledge. The celestial calendar section is followed by three columns (including one by David H. Levy), letters from readers, interesting historical articles from 50 and 25 years ago, astronomy news shorts, space mission reports, astronomy online, amateur events, and book/software/product reviews. Short articles titled "Lunar Notebook", "Deep-Sky Notebook", and "Observer's Notebook" supplement the celestial calendar and focus on observing. *Sky & Telescope* also finishes with wonderful astronomy images. *Sky & Telescope* is usually around 160 pages.

Personally, I can't get enough of these magazines, and they don't come fast enough for me. They really cheer me up on cloudy evenings. You can tell from my descriptions that *Astronomy* and *Sky & Telescope* are similar magazines filled with a great variety of content, and you aren't going to lose out choosing one over the other. *Astronomy* claims to be America's best-selling astronomy magazine. *Sky & Telescope* is a little longer. On the other hand, if you're worried about duplicating content and wasting money getting both magazines, you'll be pleasantly surprised each month. The star chart is the only feature approaching being identical, and even the monthly observing suggestions usually are very different. The January issue of *Astronomy* had two pairs of solar glasses for watching the Christmas eclipse (and two pairs of 3-D glasses the month before). The December issue of *Sky & Telescope* each year has a "Hot New Products" of the year special. Little extras like those just make you feel good about being a subscriber.

Both have cover prices of \$4.50, and subscribing for a year using the subscription cards would cost you \$39.95 for each. Order a new subscription through NOVAC, and you'll only pay \$29.95 for *Sky & Telescope* and \$29.00 for *Astronomy*. See the rear of this newsletter for info on how to subscribe. Well, I'm off to try out a new eyepiece. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season.

Keeping Warm

(Continued from page 1)

8. Cold conditions are often very dry conditions. Don't forget the lip balm, etc. I often find that any exposed skin gets dried out during the winter. A little moisturizing lotion when I get back to the house usually helps to keep my hands from becoming too badly chapped.

9. Chemical handwarmers are another good item to have, but aren't a substitute for wearing adequate layers of clothing. My parka has two pockets inside over the kidney area that are designed to hold handwarmers. This is a nice feature worth looking for in a heavyweight parka. Handwarmers can also be used as eye-

piece case heaters.

10. Keeping warm in freezing temperatures requires the body to burn calories at a great rate. Eat well before you head out to observe and bring some high-carbohydrate snacks to stoke the fire a bit during the night. For extended observing sessions during the colder months, a thermos of hot soup can really make the difference between an enjoyable outing and a cold and miserable one.

11. In addition to making it easier to move around while wearing multiple layers, loose-fitting clothing will keep you warmer because it allows for more dead air between the layers. Also avoid tight-fitting boots. Even with a couple of pairs of wool socks on, your feet will still get cold if you've cut off the circulation to them by squeezing them into boots that are too small to accommodate the extra socks. I wear a size

10 shoe, but my Pac boots are size 11. A larger size also allows me to place an additional wool inner sole under the boots' inner liner boots. Try on boots and outer layers while wearing the inner layers and socks you plan to wear while observing to find items with the proper fit.

12. If you have to retire to your car to warm up, please beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Never sit inside a stationary car with the windows rolled all the way up while the engine's running. Duh.

Hope these suggestions are useful to those who had questions about how to stay comfortable in cold weather.

How I got into Astronomy

Elizabeth Warner

(<http://www.geocities.com/adastragrl>)

I'm not really sure exactly how or when I first got interested in Astronomy. As far as I can recall, I've 'always' been interested.

I do remember writing a report on Jupiter when I was in the 5th grade (9-10 years old), using the just published *Our Universe* from National Geographic. Along with the book came a kit that included a) a put-together cardboard model of a Newtonian telescope which also served as a slide viewer for several b) slide strips, c) a flimsy square record that had sounds of Jupiter (from Voyager), and d) a planisphere. For years that little black and silver cardboard model of a telescope sat on my bookcase. Somewhere I still have that model and kit! The book is well-worn and actually falling apart from use.

In 1983-84 my parents tried to get me some sort of telescope from Edmund Scientific. We got the tripod but after nearly a year still hadn't received the scope. They eventually canceled the order and we went to a local camera shop that was also a Celestron dealer. We jumped right in and got a Celestron 8" SCT - black tube and great optics. At the time I was only about 14 and very petite. The telescope was almost bigger than I was. So my dad would set up the telescope, find stuff, and then let me look. Well, I let him do that for a while, but then I insisted that although he could help with the set up, I wanted to do the finding! And from the start, I

kept a logbook of my observations. Those first entries were brief paragraphs. Later logbooks incorporated stuff I had learned in science classes about keeping scientific journals.

Some of my most memorable observations

* For two or three weeks I'd get up every morning during the late summer and try to find the Andromeda Galaxy with binoculars. I remember how elated I was when I finally found M31 and how irritated I was because it turned out to be such a simple starhop!

* There was a partial solar eclipse visible in the spring of '87 from Columbia, SC. My parents let me stay home from school to watch it. My dad had brought home some welder's glass and sheets of mylar. I also put tiny holes in a poster board for projection. I sat outside on the driveway and sketched the tiny crescents on the paper and looked through the welders glass and mylar filter.

* Those were some cold nights (although I've observed in colder weather since!) trying to find and see Comet Halley. Dad and I made sketches

and that's the only way we knew that we had actually seen it. As a comet it wasn't impressive, but we did see Comet Halley!!

* In more recent times, I've seen: numerous lunar and solar eclipses, including 1999's Total Solar Eclipse in Hungary; several faint comets, as well as Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp; asteroids; grazing lunar occultations; satellites; Iridium flares; and shuttle launches, all while teaching, outreaching, or observing with my club or alone (on very rare occasions).

In 11th grade for English class, we had to write a sonnet since we were learning about them at the time. Mine was a biography of my future self. It's a little spooky how predictive it turned out to be. I spent my senior year in Germany as an exchange student and effectively 'took off' a year from Astronomy. When I got back, I went off to college at the University of South Carolina (Columbia). My sophomore year I signed up for one of the two astronomy programs offered at USC — one was self-paced and the other was through the Honors College, but both

Mar 22
Dad not home Mom took out scope
I found Orion Nebula and a star cluster by
myself. So happy cool-warm

Mar 11, 1984
Put together telescope looked at
Howell's license evening looked at
half moon with 26mm great 7mm
spaceship chilly very clear all day on off

Mar 14, 1984
7⁰⁰-9⁰⁰pm looked at moon too bright
convinced dad to look for M42
Orion Nebula looked for it in
finderscope looked for it with
scope found 4 stars in a hole in
hazy blue gas 3 stars in a line to
the right (left) tried for a galaxy

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Kevin Brown

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New Officers and Trustees Elected

Michael Mills

At the December General Meeting, trustees Ian Keith and John Avellone presented a slate of candidates for next year's officers and trustees:

President: Ed Karch
Vice President: Sean O'Brien
Secretary: Renee Pleasant
Treasurer: Pedro Martinez
Trustees: John Avellone, Alan Figgatt, Pete Johnson, Ian Keith, and Alex Lim.

Ian and John opened the floor for nominations, but none were offered. The entire slate was voted on and approved unanimously.

The volunteer directorships were also announced. Ed Witkowski will continue as public outreach director. Joe Pierson is taking over the duties of membership director from Kevin Brown.

Public Outreach Events

Watch the Public Outreach Webpage for Updates:

<http://www.novac.com/>

Highlights of NOVAC Meetings



November 8 NOVAC BOARD MEETING

19:30 Pete Johnson, President, called the board meeting to order.

Pete Johnson discussed the Loudon County public astronomy event to be held at Mickie Gordon Park on November 18.

Trustees Ian Keith and John Avellone discussed the potential 2001 NOVAC officer candidates for the upcoming elections in December.

Ed Witkowski listed the upcoming public outreach programs.

Craig Tupper listed the upcoming programs for the general membership meeting.

Pete Johnson adjourned the meeting at 21:00

the ones we currently have. A second one may be purchased in the future if this works out well.

The Treasurer, Pedro Martinez, presented the end of the year financial report to the board.

Craig Tupper listed the upcoming programs for the general membership meeting.

Pete Johnson adjourned the meeting at 21:00

December 10 NOVAC GENERAL MEETING

19:03 Pete Johnson, President, called the meeting to order. The prospective and new members introduced themselves.

Pete Johnson announced that we have ordered a Discovery 10" dobsonian as an additional, larger club loaner scope. Depending on how this works out, a second one may be added in the future.

Bill Burton announced a public observing event to be held on Thursday, December 14 at Franklin Park.

Vice President Craig Tupper listed the upcoming general meeting programs.

Trustees Ian Keith and John Avellone conducted the election of NOVAC officers for 2001. The proposed slate of officers was approved by the membership.

Pete Johnson announced that the annual membership meeting will be on Wednesday, January 10.

Ian Keith gave the sky tour.

For the main program, GMU professor and NOVAC member Harold Geller gave a talk about the Astronomical League sponsored project to place an amateur telescope on the International Space Station.

Pete adjourned the meeting at 20:00

There were approximately 48 in attendance.

Submitted by Kevin Brown, Secretary

November 2 NOVAC GENERAL MEETING

19:03 Pete Johnson, President, called the meeting to order. The prospective and new members introduced themselves.

Pete Johnson announced that the NOVAC board has decided to purchase one or two larger club loaner dobsonian-type scopes in the 10" - 12" range.

Pete Johnson informed the membership that NOVAC is pursuing an observing agreement with Franklin Park.

Pete Johnson reminded the membership of the public observing event at Mickie Gordon Park on November 18.

Trustee John Avellone presented the slate of prospective 2001 NOVAC officers for the elections at the December meeting.

Ed Witkowski listed the upcoming public outreach events.

Ed Witkowski gave a sky tour of Messier objects in Cassiopia and Perseus.

For the main program, NOVAC member Tom "Iron Man" Dietz gave a talk on buying a telescope.

Pete adjourned the meeting at 20:00

There were approximately 58 in attendance.

December 6 NOVAC BOARD MEETING

19:30 Pete Johnson, President, called the board meeting to order.

Pete Johnson discussed the public astronomy event to be held at Franklin Park on December 14.

Trustees Ian Keith and John Avellone presented the final slate of officers for 2001. The elections will take place at the December 10 general membership meeting.

The board discussed and approved the purchase of a Discovery 10" dobsonian as to provide the members with a larger club loaner scope than

Upcoming NOVAC Meeting Programs

Craig Tupper

January 14

Dr. Eric Smith: The Next Generation Space Telescope

NGST is planned as a powerful space telescope that will replace the highly successful Hubble Space Telescope when it retires near the end of this decade. Scheduled for launch in 2009, NGST will feature lightweight optics approximately 8 meters in aperture (HST is 2.4 meters), and will carry cameras and spectrographs sensitive to infrared radiation. Over the telescope's 5-10 year lifetime astronomers hope to observe the farthest reaches of the universe. Dr. Smith is the Deputy Project Scientist for NGST a Goddard Space Flight Center.

February 11

Bob Gent: Astronomy and the Astronomical League

Come hear NOVAC's own Bob Gent, who also happens to be the Newsletter Editor and Public Relations Officer of the International Dark Sky Association, and Vice President of the Astronomical League. We've been lucky to have Bob in NOVAC for the last few years; come meet and hear him before we lose him to the Air Force in 2001!

PLEASE NOTE: the schedule of speakers is subject to change. Please check at <http://users.erols.com/ctupper/NOVAC/speakers.htm> for the latest info prior to the meeting.
What's YOUR interest? Let ctupper@erols.com know.
Come share and learn about YOUR favorite topic!

National Capital Astronomers Meetings

Elliott Fein

Dr. Maurice Shapiro will present the featured talk for the January 6 meeting of National Capital Astronomers, "Messengers from Outer Space? The Adventures of Cosmic Rays in the Galaxy". His talk is dedicated to the memory of Robert H. McCracken. The meeting will be held in the Lipsett Amphitheater in Building 10 (Clinical Center) of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda at 7:30 P.M.

Before the Meeting: Saturday, January 6, 5:30 P.M.:

Dinner with the speaker and NCA members at the

North China Restaurant

7814 Old Georgetown Road

Bethesda MD

Next Meeting: February 3, 2001. Speaker not yet selected. Location as usual.

NCA has regular monthly meeting September through June on the first Saturday of the month (unless it is a holiday weekend like September 2 is this year) at 7:30PM. at the Clinical Building in the Lipsett auditorium at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland, just a little north of Washington, D.C. You can get to their meeting by exiting at the Bethesda Medical Center stop on the Red Line of the Metro.

TELESCOPES FOR SALE

Three amateur built (by me) Newtonian reflector telescopes offered for sale to NOVAC members. All are on Altitude/Azimuth mounts that also allow tube rotation (to put the eyepiece at a comfortable viewing angle):

1. 3" f/10 (30" focal length) \$70. Smallest useful size general-purpose reflector.
2. 6" f/10 (60" focal length) \$175. Excellent "planetary newtonian".
3. 8" f/4.5 (36" focal length) \$280. Handy "richest field telescope"

For details, please contact:

John Avellone (703)-768-8086

jgavellone@aol.com

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Savage (Paul McCray) 703-729-0596
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Arlington Planetarium 703 358-6070

NOVAC's Web Page

<http://www.novac.net>

<http://www.novac.com>

NOVAC Newsletter

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Tom Dietz Craig Tupper
Elliott Fein Elizabeth Warner
Ed Karch

Upcoming Events

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
J A N U A R Y	31 •Observing at all sites • USNO Open House	1 • Happy New Millennium!	2 FIRST QUARTER	3	4	5	6
	7	8	9 FULL MOON	10 •Annual Meeting 7:30 pm @ Arlington Planetarium	11	12	13
	14 •General Meeting 7 pm @ GMU	15	16 LAST QUARTER	17	18	19 •Observing at all sites	20 •Observing at all sites
	21 •Observing at MG/ Savage	22	23	24 NEW MOON	25	26 •Observing at all sites	27 •Observing at all sites
	28 •Observing at MG/ Savage	29	30	31	1 FIRST QUARTER	2	3
	4	5	6	7 •Board Meeting 7:30 pm @ Arlington Planetarium	8 FULL MOON	9	10
	11 •General Meeting 7 pm @ GMU	12	13	14	15 LAST QUARTER	16 •Observing at all sites	17 •Observing at all sites
	18 •Observing at MG/ Savage •ATM SIG Meeting	19	20	21	22	23 NEW MOON •Observing at all sites	24 •Observing at all sites
	25 •Observing at MG/ Savage	26	27	28	1	2	3 FIRST QUARTER
F E B R U A R Y							

NOVAC Notices and Benefits

Discounts on Sky & Telescope and Astronomy.

As a member of NOVAC, you can get astronomy magazine subscriptions at a discount. To obtain *Sky & Telescope* for \$29.95 (instead of the standard \$37.95), make your check out to "Sky Publishing Co." You can subscribe to *Astronomy Magazine* for \$29.00 for one year. Make your check payable to "Kalmbach Publishing Company". In each case, note on the check: "new subscription" or "renewal." If a renewal, include your customer number. Send your check to Treasurer Pedro Martinez, Jr., 6319 Anneliese Dr., Falls Church VA 22044.

You can also order any publication directly from Sky Publishing at a 10% discount. Just mention the Club Discount Plan and that you are a member of NOVAC.

Discount on Books

NOVAC is participating in the discount book sales program offered by Kalmbach Publishing. They will sell our members any astronomy-related book in their catalog for 25% off the list price when we send in a group order. Kevin Brown is coordinating the sales. If you are interested, please see him at a meeting, or call him at home (703) 503-9523 to place an order. Make your check payable to "NOVAC" for the price of the book minus the discount, when you place the order. We anticipate doing this 3 - 4 times a year if demand warrants.

Club Telescopes and Binoculars

NOVAC makes available three six-inch Newtonian reflectors for club members to check out, free of charge, and use for a limited time.

One telescope is a Celestron model SP-C6 on a Super Polaris German equatorial mount and wood tripod. The telescope comes with Orion Ultrascope 10mm and Meade MA 25mm eyepieces with 1.25-inch barrel sizes.

The second telescope is a homemade six-inch f/5 reflector on a Dobsonian mount, and comes with a 25mm Kellner eyepiece. It is easy to transport to dark sky sites, and easy to use.

The third telescope is a six-inch, f/8 Meade Dobsonian reflector.

To borrow a telescope you will need to show your NOVAC observing pass and leave a \$500 (for the Celestron) or \$250.00 (for a Dobsonian) security deposit. To borrow the Celestron, contact Doug Mistler at (703) 437-0513; for the Dobson, contact Bob

L'Hommedieu at (703) 978-0946. Note: Checks must be made payable to "NOVAC". The club also has a pair of 10x50 binoculars available for members to borrow. They are kept in the club library in the GMU lecture hall, and can be checked out after the regular monthly meeting, for a period of one month. Please show your observing pass.

NOVAC Library

NOVAC has established a library at George Mason University for use by NOVAC members. Books may be checked out and returned only at the monthly meetings. Members may check out books for one month at a time. To borrow books, see NOVAC Librarians Pedro Martinez or Craig Tupper at the monthly meeting.

The NOVAC library seeks book donations to the library. If you have any astronomy books or materials you are thinking of discarding, please consider a donation to the NOVAC library.

A complete list of all library holdings is posted on the NOVAC website.

General Membership Meetings

General Membership Meetings are held at George Mason University (GMU), Fairfax Campus, off Ox Road (Rt. 123) on the second Sunday of every month. To reach GMU, take either Rt. 66 to Ox Rd. (South) or Braddock Rd. to Ox Rd. (North). Enter GMU at the main entrance off Ox Rd. (University Drive) and proceed to Parking Lots F, G, or H for free parking. Pay Parking is also available in the Parking Garage.

The meetings are in the Lecture Hall, next to Fenwick Library, on the North side of campus across Patriot Circle from the parking lots. Meetings start at 7:00 p.m.

Trustee Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month. Members who are not trustees, but are interested in attending, should contact a club officer or board member for further information.

NOVAC On-line

NOVAC maintains an e-mail mailing list. Messages sent to the list include reminders about scheduled observing sessions, announcements for unscheduled sessions, requests for quick observing session summaries, MIR observability predictions, etc. To subscribe to the list, send a message to majordomo@his.com with the body "subscribe novac <your e-mail address>". You should soon thereafter receive a reply welcoming you to the list and describing how to navigate it in more detail. There is also a digest subscription option, which sends each

day's traffic in a single message the following day. To subscribe to this option, send a message to majordomo@his.com with "subscribe novac-digest <your e-mail address>" in the body. If you would like more information about listserv commands, send a message with "help" on a line by itself.

For additional information, send a message to Bob L'Hommedieu, bobcat@erols.com.

NOVAC Observing Site Rules

C. M. Crockett Park:

NOVAC has access to Crockett Park on Friday and Saturday of the two weekends closest to new moon. before and after the new moon. This access is dependent upon members serving as observing coordinators. If you would like to observe at Crockett park, please consider serving as coordinator when possible. For a schedule of observing nights and coordinators, as well as complete rules governing access to the park, please visit <http://www.novac.com/crockett.html>.

Savage Farm Site: Weekends (Friday/Saturday/Sunday): NOVAC has unlimited access to the park for all weekends.

Weekdays (Monday-Thursday.): For unscheduled observing sessions, contact the park manager, Paul McCray, at (703) 729-0596 or <wodtrail@erols.com> at least 24 hours in advance, and leave a message with your phone number or e-mail address. You may use the site for that session *unless* you hear from Mr. McCray stating otherwise.

No loud radios, alcoholic beverages, or loose pets. Pick up after yourself, and do not leave any trash behind. Make sure the gate is locked whenever you are in the park, and when you leave. We are guests of the NVRP and could have our access to this site revoked at any time if it is abused.

Mickey Gordon Regional Park:

There is a light pole on the road entering the park and it is a problem near the entrance of the park. It is better to set up further back in the park, or on a lower field behind the baseball diamond to escape the light.

The park is available without notice to all members seven days a week. As sports season begins, we will post the schedule when the lighted baseball facility will be in use.

Directions to NOVAC Observing Sites

C. M. Crockett Park:

From the Washington, D.C. area, go west on I-66 to Exit 43A in Gainesville onto Rt. 29 South toward Warrenton. After 11.8

miles on Rt. 29, stay left (toward Culpeper), to bypass Warrenton (but still on Rt. 29 S.) Go about 1 mile to the Rt. 643 exit, Meetze Road. Turn left (East) on Rt. 643. Go 7.5 miles on Rt. 643. Watch for the C.M. Crockett Park sign on your right, and turn right into the Park Entrance Road.

Alternate directions to Crockett

From Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia, go West on I-66 to exit 44. (234 bypass around Manassas). Take 234 bypass to Rt. 28 West. Stay on Rt. 28W for about 13.7 miles, through Nokesville, Catlett and Calverton. Turn right at Rt. 643 (store/gas station) on corner. Go 1 mile to Crockett Park entrance road on left.

Savage Site:

From D.C., I-66 West to Route 17 North. Stay on Route 17 North until it intersects with Route 50 at Ashby Gap. Turn left onto Route 50 and go 1.0 mile and turn right on Route 601. Continue on Route 601 (Blue Ridge Mountain Road) for 8.4 miles (about two miles past the main gate of the FEMA installation). Turn right at the park entrance after passing the gateposts with *Belle Allee* and *Ball Alley 1875* on your right.

The park entrance on Route 601 is marked by a small NOVAC sign. As you turn into the park, go straight ahead until you reach the gate, which is secured by both a keyed padlock and a combination lock. These locks are located to your left behind the gate as you face it from the outside. The combination is on your NOVAC observing pass. **Always** lock the gate behind you. The NOVAC lock **must be locked to the keyed lock, not to the chain**, to allow emergency access by the fire department. Drive to the observing area (the stone patio next to the house). There is very limited parking at the observing area itself, so please park in the parking area on the right as you face the patio.

Alternate Directions to Savage via the Dulles Toll Road

Take the Dulles Toll Road west to the Dulles Greenway. Take the Greenway west about 14-15 miles to where it ends at Rt. 7 near Leesburg. Stay in the left-hand lane to go to the exit for Rt. 7 West. Take Rt. 7 West for about 18 miles to Route 601, Blue Ridge Mountain Road, which is at the top of Snickers Gap and

marked by a flashing yellow light on Rt. 7. Turn left onto Rt. 601 and continue 2.4 miles to the park entrance, which is on the left about two-tenths of a mile past a driveway on the left with a stone wall marked with the name "Ben Lomond." There is a white "NOVAC" sign nailed to a large tree to the right at the entrance to the somewhat rutted gravel driveway that leads to the park. Drive up to the white gate at the top of the hill. The combination for the gate is on your observing pass. The driveway curves down and around to the right to the observing area after you pass through the gate. Please lock the gate behind you and remember to use parking lights only as you approach the observing area, which is on the left as you reach the lawn in front of the old house.

Parking at the observing area itself is much more limited at Savage than at Crockett or Mickey Gordon. Try to leave an access lane to the area around the stone patio. If possible, unload your telescope and then park your car away from the area. There are plenty of places to park around the lawn and even south of the old house. This will allow those who arrive later to have access to whatever spots remain without having to lug equipment across the lawn. If you plan to leave early, please be considerate of others and either pack up away from the stone patio or avoid using backup lights when you drive down to pack up your equipment.

Mickey Gordon Regional Park:

The park is located on Rt. 50 fifteen miles west of the intersection of Rt. 28 and Rt. 50. It is only a 20-minute drive from the Centreville area and should be a convenient site for most members in western Northern Virginia. Directions to the park: take Rt. 66 west to Rt. 28 north. Take Rt. 28 to Rt. 50 West. Go 15 miles until you see the brown Mickey Gordon Regional Park sign. Make a right on Rt. 627, Carters Farm La. Go a few hundred yards to the park entrance on the left. The park has a gate but should never be locked.

Site Coordinates

Here are the locations of four observing sites as provided by NOVAC members:

- Savage: 39° 04.7' N; 77° 51.7' W
- Crockett: 38° 37' N; 77° 43' W
- Big Meadows: 38°32' N, 78°26' W
- Little Bennett Regional Park: 39°17.0' N, 77°17.5' W
- Mickey Gordon 38°58.58' N, 77°42.31' W

The NOVAC Newsletter is the official publication of the **Northern Virginia Astronomy Club** and is published six times per year. The *NOVAC Newsletter* is sent to members of NOVAC as a regular membership benefit.

Membership in the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club is \$18.00 per year and is open to anyone interested in astronomy or the sciences. Additional memberships at the same address without additional copies of the newsletter are \$6.00 per person. Contact Secretary Kevin N. Brown, 5755 Walnut Wood Ln. Burke, VA 22015 703-503-9523.

All notices of change of address should be sent to Kevin N. Brown. Please include both old and new addresses.

NOVAC does not knowingly accept advertising for products of inferior quality nor does it accept responsibility for the quality of advertised products.

NOVAC members are invited to submit articles for publication in the *NOVAC Newsletter*. The editor reserves the right to edit all materials submitted. Send article submissions to the Editor, Michael Mills mjmills@fpcc.net, (703)333-5075, 5001 Ridgewood Road, Alexandria, VA 22312.

The deadline for submissions is three weeks in advance of publication, e.g., February 7 for the March/April newsletter.

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NOVAC Annual Meeting

January 10, 7:30 PM

Arlington Planetarium

Come share your ideas for improving our club!

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