

# NOVAC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB • NO. 100 • VOL. 22 • MARCH/APRIL 2002

## Observing Sites: Past, Present, and Future

By Michael Mills

One of the greatest resources the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club (NOVAC) provides to its members is access to reasonably dark observing sites. The variety and distribution of sites has enable members from all over northern Virginia to find dark skies. The club's presence has benefited the parks as well, through numerous outreach programs and public star parties. Unfortunately, recent administrative changes and bureaucratic hassles have forced NOVAC out of some parks.

Last year, NOVAC had serious concerns about our ability to execute a requirement in the MOA with Crockett Park that at least one NOVAC member serve as "Observing Coordinator" for each observing session. Furthermore, the park inadvertently advertised monthly "Astronomy Programs", which the club was not prepared to provide. This led NOVAC to abandon Crockett as a regular observing site.

More recently, the Loudoun County Parks Authority has closed Mickie Gordon Park at night, locking the gate and requiring that a county employee supervise after-dark activities (despite the fact that the park is unsupervised for all daytime activities). Of course, this makes it impossible for NOVAC to use Mickie Gordon Park as an observing site, as the club cannot afford to pay a county employee for each observing session. Former president Tilly Smith, representing the club in negotiations with Loudoun Parks, has been working hard to get a workable agreement. So far, these efforts have failed.

Meanwhile, the club has been actively seeking out access to new observing sites: Bob Parks secured access to Mason Neck State Park; Ed Witkowski has been trying to reach an agreement with the owners of Legacy Farms Buffalo Ranch to give the club access to their property; Sean O'Brien got permission for club members to observe from the Hanson Farm, just a few miles south of Sky Meadows State Park; and Renee Pleasant found that the owners of Glengary Christmas Tree Farm wouldn't mind if we observed from their property. Finally, members Bob Garrett and Dave Durica are looking for property that the club can lease

## 2002 Observing Site Schedule

Savage Farm has been reserved for the following nights in 2002:

Savage Farm Observing Dates	
March	8,9,10;15,16,17
April	5,6,7; 12,13,14
May	3,4,5; 10,11,12; 17,18,19
June	7,8,9; 14,15,16
July	5,6,7; 12,13,14
August	2,3,4; 9,10,11; 30,31
September	1; 6,7,8; 13,14,15
October	4,5,6; 11,12,13
November	1,2,3; 8,9,10; 29,30
December	1; 6,7,8; 27,28,29

Crockett park has been reserved for the following two weeks out of each month in 2002. Public observing nights are in parentheses:

Crockett Park Observing Dates	
March	4 - 17 (16)
April	5 - 20 (20, Astronomy Day)
May	3 - 17 (4)
June	3 - 16 (15)
July	1 - 14 (13)
August	2 - 16 (10), 30
September	1 - 13 (7), 30
October	30 - 13 (12*), 28-31
November	1 - 10 (9), 29 - 30
December	1 - 13 (7)

\* October 12 public viewing will be the Fall Star Party (Stargaze), currently planned for Franklin Park. Crockett is reserved as a backup location, should one be needed.

Club members may use these parks on the reserved nights without further notification. Other sites require that members make reservations ahead of time. Please familiarize yourself with each site's rules of use before going out.

(Continued on page 4)

# NOVAC Financial Statements

By Pedro Martinez

<b>Projected NOVAC 2002 Budget</b>		
<b>Revenues</b>		
Membership Dues		
Renewals Regular & Additional	\$8,760.00	
New Members Regular & Additional	3,640.00	
Total for Membership		\$12,400.00
Interest Income		275.00
NOVAC T-Shirt & Sticker Sales		2,200.00
Total Revenues Expected		<u>\$14,875.00</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Newsletter		
Printing	\$3,600.00	
Postage	500.00	
Total for Newsletter Expenditures		\$4,100.00
Astronomical League Dues		\$1,823.50
Library Books		\$100.00
Observing Site Expenses		
Porta-Jon Rental-Savage Farm	\$878.00	
Other Improvements	122.00	
Total for Observing Site Expenses		\$1,000.00
NOVAC Annual Picnic		
BBQ Food & Supplies	\$250.00	
Total Picnic Expenses		\$250.00
NOVAC Star Party		
Publicity	\$25.00	
Printing	35.00	
Miscellaneous	440.00	
Total Star Party Expenses		\$500.00
NOVAC WebPage Expenses		\$305.00
Science Fair Prizes		\$100.00
Astronomy Day—Publicity (Printing & Postage)		\$20.00
Award for Volunteers		\$200.00
International Darksky Association Membership		\$100.00
New Projects		\$2,731.50
Administrative		
Liability Insurance	\$300.00	
Printing-Membership Applications	50.00	
Printing-Stationary	30.00	
Printing Administrative	170.00	
Postage	500.00	
Supplies	300.00	
State Registration Fee	25.00	
Personal Property Tax	60.00	
Bank Service Charge	10.00	
Total for Administrative Expenses		<u>\$1,445.00</u>
Total Expenditures		<u>\$12,675.00</u>
Net Revenue		\$2,200.00

**NOVAC Statement of Cash Received and Disbursed  
January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2001**

Cash Received

Membership Dues			
Renewals	\$7,502.00		
New Member	3,929.00		
Patron-New Member	150.00	\$11,581.00	
Interest Income		371.81	
NOVAC T-Shirt & Sticker Sales		1,482.00	
Telescope Making Kits		270.00	
Donation by Smithsonian for NOVAC Picnic		250.00	
Swap Meet Sales		46.00	
Kalmbach Book Discount		0.00	
Total Cash Received			\$14,006.86
Newsletter:			
Printing & Assembly	3,185.40		
Postage	404.00		
Labels	35.53	3,624.92	
Astronomical League Dues		1,686.50	
Astronomy Day Publicity		15.68	
NOVAC Picnic—food & supplies		190.77	
Observing Site Expenses			
Lock for Mason Neck Park Gate	18.02		
Savage Farm Porta-John Rental	877.00	895.82	
10" f/6 Club Telescope—shipping		102.81	
Storage locker for loaner scope		41.77	
Accessories for donated loaner scope		26.06	
Webpage expenses		316.84	
NOVAC ATM Special Interest Group			
Telescope Making Kits for resale	453.60		
Mirror kit donation for classroom	50.40	504.00	
IDA Membership		100.00	
Hotline expense		135.00	
H-Alpha Solar Filter		895.00	
T-Shirts & Stickers			
T-Shirts Purchase	2,191.89		
T-Shirt Contest Award	100.00		
NOVAC Stickers Purchase	70.49	2,362.38	
Administrative			
Liability Insurance	276.00		
Printing—Membership Applications	0.00		
Printing—Administrative	149.34		
Postage	438.33		
Supplies	263.97		
State Registration Fee	25.00		
Personal Property Tax	29.71		
Bank Service Charges	0.00	1,182.35	
Total Cash Disbursed			12,079.90
Excess of Cash Received over Cash Disbursed			1,926.96
Cash at beginning of period			11,334.48
Cash at end of period			13,261.44
Checks Received, Undeposited		0.00	
Checking Account		1,362.02	
Savings Account		4,582.39	
Certificate of Deposit, Due 1/4/2002		2,981.81	
Certificate of Deposit, Due 11/2/2002		2,323.57	
Certificate of Deposit, Due 5/2/2002		2,011.65	13,261.44
Respectfully Submitted,			
/s/			
Pedro Martinez,			
Treasurer			

**NOVAC**  
OFFICERS 2002

**President**

Ed Karch 703-631-3263  
karch@karch.com

**Vice President**

Sean O'Brien 703-823-3325  
sean.o'brien@nasm.si.edu

**Secretary**

Renee Pleasant 540-752-2478  
rkayakker@aol.com

**Treasure**

Pedro Martinez 703-534-2604  
pmartinez@ushcc.com

**NOVAC Trustees 2001**

John Avellone 703-768-8086  
jgavellone@aol.com

Alex Lim 703-222-0419  
alexander.lim@mci.com

Alan Figgatt 703-860-8239  
afiggatt@erols.com

Ed Witkowski 703-441-8428  
edwski@erols.com

John Deriso 703-476-3543  
seaotter@bellatlantic.net

**Directors**

**Membership Director:**

Joe Pierson 703-680-6343  
jmperson@home.com

**Public Events Coordinator:**

Ed Witkowski 703-441-8428

**Important NOVAC Numbers**

Savage (Paul McCray) 703-729-0596  
wodtrail@erols.com

Mason Neck SP 703-550-9960

Crockett Park 540-788-4867

Arlington  
Planetarium 703 358-6070

**NOVAC Web Page: <http://www.novac.com>**

**Webmaster**

Greg Piepol GPiepol@aol.com

**NOVAC Newsletter**

**Editor**

Michael Mills mjmill@fpcc.net

**Distribution**

John Nusbaum jnusbaum@bellatlantic.net

## Observing Sites

(Continued from page 1)

on a permanent basis. This property would replace (or supplement) Mickie Gordon as a conveniently accessible, reasonably dark site.

To top it all off, Tilly has negotiated a new access agreement for Crockett Park, better than what we originally enjoyed. Beginning in March, the club will have access to the park for two weeks each month (see pg. 1 for the 2002 schedule).

Although the board is still working hard to get our access to Mickie Gordon restored, club members have many options for places from which to enjoy the sky. This article is meant to update the status of each site.

### Savage Farm

Savage Farm is reserved and available to all NOVAC members on prime observing nights (see pg. 1). Club members can use Savage on other nights if they call at least 24 hours in advance. Contact information is printed with the NOVAC administrative information on page 3. Observing site rules and driving direction are printed in the Membership Guide and are also available from the member's section of the website.

### Mason Neck State Park

Mason Neck State Park is available to all NOVAC members, but each member must call the park by 3 p.m. on the day he or she wishes to observe. Contact information is available on page 3, and full observing guidelines are printed in the Membership Guide and are also available on the member's section of the website.

### Mickie Gordon Park

Currently, the Loudoun County Parks Authority requires a county employee to be present for all nighttime activities at Mickie Gordon Park. This would require that NOVAC pay \$14 per hour for each observing session, and the observing sessions would have to be scheduled well in advance. Clearly, this is not acceptable for NOVAC. Tilly Smith and the board are continuing to negotiate an access agreement that does not contain this requirement.

### C.M. Crockett Park

The new agreement with Fauquier County changes the rules of use for Crockett Park from what they have been in the past. Please read the detailed Rules and Regulations on page 5.

Also, the entire Memorandum of Agreement can be downloaded in PDF format from the members section of the website.

Under the new agreement, NOVAC has access to the park for approximately two weeks each month, including the prime observing weekends. The actual dates will fall near the new moon, and will be determined at the beginning of the year. There is no requirement to call the park service in advance to use the park during these two weeks—just show up and observe.

One Saturday observing session each month will be open to the public, but no special programs will be presented. All NOVAC members and visitors must arrive before 10 p.m. and they must sign the logbook. One NOVAC member must identify himself or herself as Observing Supervisor. No Observing Supervisor needs to be assigned in advance for NOVAC's private observing sessions. However, for the public sessions, an Observing Supervisor will have to be assigned ahead of time.

The combination to NOVAC's lock at Crockett Park will be different from the combination for the other observing site locks. This combination will only be provided to those NOVAC members who intend to observe at the park. If you would like to observe at Crockett, contact Ed Karch (ekarch@karch.com) for the lock combination.

### Glengary Tree Farm

The owners of Glengary Christmas Tree Farm, near Amisville, have granted NOVAC permission to observe from their property. Members who have observed from Glengary report that the limiting magnitude is above 6.0 and that the site has the potential to be the darkest of all club sites.

NOVAC would like to make our use of private property as convenient as possible for the landowners. One way to do this is to minimize the number of NOVAC members who call for permission to observe. Therefore, all observing sessions at Glengary will be coordinated by Renée Pleasant (kayakker@aol.com). If you would like to observe from Glengary, contact Renee and she will let the owners know that you will be coming.

Several semi-organized observing sessions have already taken place, and it is expected that future trips to the site will be announced ahead of time on the NOVAC e-mail list. Since the observing site can be tricky to find, you may want to sign up for the e-mail list so you can plan your first visit for a time when other members will be there (see your Membership Guide for instructions on using e-mail lists).

Directions and observing rules will be published in the next issue of the Membership Guide, and are available now from the member's section of the NOVAC website. Please remember that our access privileges can be revoked at any time; be courteous and considerate when you observe there.

### Hanson Farm

The Hanson Farm is a private farm on Route 17, south of Sky Meadows State Park. The Hansons have agreed to let NOVAC members have access to their property for observing sessions, and have even offered us the use of their bathroom facilities when they are at home.

Ed Karch (ekarch@karch.com) will be coordinating observing sessions at the Hanson Farm. The board has not yet scouted the site thoroughly, so observing rules and driving directions have not been established. It is expected that an organized observing night will be held at the farm later this spring. As this event will have to be timed according to the weather, it will probably be announced only on the e-mail lists. Therefore, if you would like to try observing from the Hanson Farm, make sure you are subscribed to at least one of the e-mail lists.

### Future Sites

At a recent club meeting, Ed Karch asked the attendees if they would be willing to pay an additional \$10 per year in dues if it would enable the club to lease use rights on a piece of property to serve as an observing site. The affirmative response was unanimous. A committee has been formed and tasked with the search for private landowners that would be willing to lease to the club permanent access to their property.

Finally, several club members have been searching for private sites near Mickie Gordon Park that could be made available, in case access to that park is lost. ✨



## Where are the Articles?

Contributed articles will now be published exclusively on the website. To read the latest articles, go to <http://www.novac.com/nl/newsletters.html>

See page 6 for an explanation and a list of new articles.

# C.M. Crockett Park: Rules and Regulations

Tilly Smith

NOVAC shall be permitted access to Crockett Park for approximately two weeks each month (including the two prime weekends), according to the Special Schedule, for the sole purpose of conducting astronomy observing sessions. These are normally the weeks on either side of the "new" Moon. The rules and regulations of C.M. Crockett Park, Fauquier County Parks and Recreation Department, and Fauquier County shall apply to NOVAC's use of the park for observing purposes.

## Club Sessions - Two weeks each month

NOVAC members may use the observing area during two weeks each month on the dates noted in the Special Observing Schedule only. No additional notification to Crockett Park Staff is required to observe on the nights identified in the Special Schedule. These sessions, except one Saturday each month, will not be open to the public. Members must arrive at the Park no later than 10:00PM. The gate will remain locked after the NOVAC member enters the Park and throughout the member's observing session. For member only sessions, all NOVAC members are required to sign the logbook and one member must identify himself or herself as the Observing Supervisor for that session, even if he/she is the only member observing that night. During the weekday and non-public weekend sessions, NOVAC members shall exercise the same level of oversight as during public sessions, but at an individual level.

## Public Viewing Sessions - one Saturday each month

On one Saturday each month, an observing session will be open to the public who will pay an admission fee, if applicable. No fees will be charged for NOVAC members for conducting these viewing sessions for the public. Public viewing sessions will conclude at 11:00 PM. The Park gates will be locked at 11:00 at which time the public will be asked to leave. NOVAC members may remain after the public viewing session. . NOVAC will assign an Observing Supervisor for each Saturday public session and provide that information through NOVAC's web site. The NOVAC Observing Supervisor must attend the session or notification to cancel must be given to C.M. Crockett Park by 2:00PM on the day of the session.

The public viewing sessions are informal. There will be no planned events such as a slide show, informative talks or sky tours at these sessions. However, the public will be encouraged to mingle and observe the stars along with the members present.

**Signage.** The NOVAC Observing Supervisor will place the signage (provided by the Park with information about the public viewing session) at the gate prior to each session and remove it when the gates are locked at 11:00PM.

**Cancellations.** A public session can be cancelled either by NOVAC or Crockett Park staff due to weather. At a minimum, the Park Service shall be notified by 2:00PM of the need to cancel a Sat. session. Cancellations will be posted on the Park's answering machine and on signage at the front gate, both of which are the responsibility of the Park staff. NOVAC will post the cancellation on their web site. Every effort shall be made to provide adequate notice to the public of cancellations. NOVAC shall promote all Saturday, public viewing sessions on their web site as appropriate.

**Logbook.** All participants, both NOVAC members and the public, are required to sign in using the logbook provided by Crockett Park. This is both to track attendance in order to show participation levels to the Department and to help tighten security on the site.

**Rules enforcement.** If any NOVAC member notices any person violating County park ordinances or departmental policy, the member is to

notify the Resident Manager or if he/she is not available, the Park Manager. For emergencies, dial 911 on a cell phone and Fauquier County Sheriff will respond. In addition, there is a pay phone at the concession building (deck-side) that will accept emergency calls.

Park Management will supply all Observing Supervisors with a handbook outlining their responsibilities while supervising public viewing sessions; an extra copy will be kept with the logbook.

**Areas to be used.** During EDT, set up only in the large field to the left of the paved parking lot. During EST, NOVAC can set up either in the large field or in the paved cul-de-sac 200 yards past the entrance gate. NOVAC members are asked to use their best judgment about driving on the field during wet conditions.

**Be a good neighbor.** Loud radios, alcoholic beverages or loose pets are not permitted. Do not leave trash or debris behind. We are guests of the Park and Park management may revoke our observing privileges at any time due to the carelessness of one person.

**NOVAC lock.** All NOVAC members must understand and agree that access to County property after hours is a very serious matter. A separate combination lock will be located on the exit gate for use by NOVAC. Only NOVAC members intending to use Crockett Park for observing sessions will have access to the combination. NOVAC agrees to keep a detailed list of who has access to this combination and will produce this list when requested by Park Staff. The combination will be changed annually or at any time Park Staff deems it necessary.

## Observing Supervisor Responsibilities - Public Sessions

A key item to remember is that NOVAC is essentially in charge of the Park when we are there observing, therefore, we need to take control of the schedule, the public and locking the gate. NOVAC is responsible to supervise our sessions from start to finish.

1. At Dusk, the entrance gate will be closed and the exit gate will be left open for NOVAC and the public to enter. The NOVAC supervisor will ensure that the gates are set up in this manner and that the required signage is displayed.
2. NOVAC observing sessions for the public will run from Dusk to 11:00PM at which time the Observing Supervisor will need to ask the public to leave. At 11:00PM the Observing Supervisor will lock the gates and no one except NOVAC members may enter. NOVAC members may stay as late as they please.
3. When the supervisor locks the gate, please remember that our lock is to be locked to the Crockett Park lock; this permits the Park Service to get in the Park by opening their lock. If the lock and chain arrangement only permits you to lock the NOVAC lock directly from the chain to the pole, that is OK. The Park Service has our combination and can unlock our lock. Under no circumstances should NOVAC leave the Park gate unlocked at the end of the observing session regardless of whether it is a public session or a member only session.
4. The Park Service shall prepare a sign to identify the NOVAC public observing session and to notify the public of the closure time. This sign should be at the guardhouse at the entrance to the Park. We need to place this sign so that the public will see it as they drive into the park.
5. The Park Service will create a Log Book to be used to enter the names of all NOVAC and public participants in the observing session. This will aid the Park in showing the extent of use of the Park for observing. This log will be in a box at the gate. The NOVAC supervisor will replace the Log Book in the box at the end of the session. In the Log Book will be a listing of park rules as well as key phone numbers to call if there are any problems. Please note that the public is not permitted access to Park general areas after dark; the public is only permitted access to the NOVAC observing area.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## New Newsletter Format

The NOVAC Newsletter is changing (again)!

Starting with this issue, the Newsletter that is mailed to members will include only important club-related information, like meeting highlights, financial information, observing site rules, and upcoming programs.

Longer articles that are submitted by members and that are of interest to a wider audience will be formatted for the web page only. Members will have to go to the web to read these articles. A list of new articles will be printed in the newsletter (see below), so everybody knows what is there.

I hope that this change will accomplish several goals:

1. Get the articles out to a wider audience, with better graphics and links to related information.
2. Allow important club information to be disseminated in a more timely manner.
3. Reduce the workload of formatting some articles twice.

If you cannot access the articles on the web, please let me know, and I will do my best to help.

As always, I welcome your comments and article submissions. You may contact me via e-mail at [mjmills@fpcc.net](mailto:mjmills@fpcc.net) or by phone at (703)333-5075.

Regards,  
Michael Mills

## Franklin Park Events

By Bill Burton

There are two upcoming public events in April and May being sponsored by the Barns at Franklin Park Performing Arts Center and NOVAC. Both events will be held at Franklin Park, in Purcellville, Virginia.

**PUBLIC COMET WATCH:** View comet Ikeya-Zhang.  
Friday, April 5 and Saturday, April 6  
7-9 PM

**SOLAR SYSTEM FESTIVAL**  
Saturday, May 18.  
8 PM to Midnight

Five planets and the first quarter moon will be visible starting at sundown. This is great opportunity to take a tour of the solar system!

Public admission: \$3/carload;  
NOVAC members with telescopes will be admitted for free

**DIRECTIONS TO FRANKLIN PARK:** Take Route 7 west to the Round Hill exit; turn left and go east on Business Route 7 for about a mile; the entrance to Franklin Park is on the right. Pass the swimming pool on the right; turn right at T-intersection and proceed to parking lot above theater and silo.

## New Articles Available on the Web

*A Visit to Birr Castle*, by Kim Bieler

Read about Kim's trip to Ireland, where she toured Birr Castle, the home of the Earl of Rosse's 72 inch reflecting telescope.

*Orion Upside Down in Summer*, by John Deriso

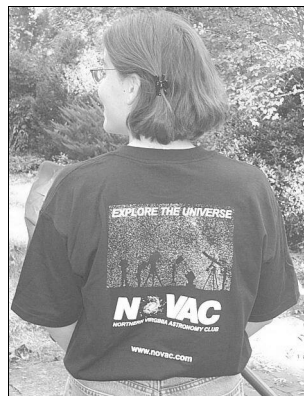
We all should have jobs that send us to Australia once in a while!

## NOVAC T-Shirts and Decals Still Available

NOVAC is selling 100% cotton t-shirts that sport Bill Burton's design on the back and a small, circular logo on the front left breast. The shirts are navy blue, and the designs are rendered in white. They cost \$12 and come in adult sizes small, medium, large, extra large, and extra-extra large. The shirts will be available at general membership meetings.



T-shirt front



T-shirt back

Also available are self-adhesive decals that are decorated with a circular NOVAC galaxy logo. Decals will be sold in strips of five for one dollar.

See the club website (<http://www.novac.com/tshirt/tshirt.htm>) for more info and color photos.

# New Members: January 16 - February 21

Joe Pierson

**NOTE: This directory is not to be reproduced or used for any commercial purpose**

Bruce & Suzanne Brown  
30 Bridgeport Circle,  
Stafford, VA 22554  
Home# - 540-659-8816  
Work# - 703-558-7502  
sbbobrown@erols.com,  
sb.bobrown@verizon.net

Barry & Sarah Gowen  
2510 Pegasus Lane,  
Reston, VA 20191  
Home# - 703-620-3649  
sarbarwh@cs.com

Kevin Jones  
5250 Advance Mills Road,  
Earlsville, VA 22936  
kj@pobox.com

Ron Paras  
6919 Southridge Dr.,  
McLean, VA 22101  
Home# - 703-917-9666  
rparas@paras.com

Scott Downs  
8142 Larkin Lane,  
Vienna, VA 22182  
Home# - 703-207-9866  
Work# - 703-480-7119  
scott.downs@ps.net

Rick Hamilton  
14030 Roanoke St,  
Woodbridge, VA 22191  
Home# - 703-492-1060  
Work# - 202-332-7322  
zazezoo@msn.com

Bill MacMurdy, Jr.  
5205 Marvell Lane,  
Fairfax, VA 22032  
Home# - 703-764-0196  
macmurdy@ix.netcom.com

Jay Pisula  
43547 Fireston Place,  
Leesburg, VA 20176  
Home# - 703-737-7948  
Work# - 703-481-8960 x102  
jay@isolutionscorp.com

J. Scott Duresky  
5920 Queenston St,  
Springfield, VA 22152  
Home# - 703-451-6259  
Work# - 703-916-2472  
thehappyimp@webtv.net

Alexander Hazzouri  
12662 Magna Carta Road,  
Herndon, VA 20171  
Home# - 703-264-5875  
Work# - 703-264-1959  
alex@ballonyideas.com

Phillip, Bill, Debbie, & Patrick  
Marlow  
2811 Gibson Oaks Drive,  
Herndon, VA 20171  
Home# - 703-391-6177  
Work# - 703-626-1751

Bruce Wood  
2600 Dawson Ave, #250,  
Wheaton, MD 20902  
Home# - 301-929-2580  
brucesar@erols.com

## Highlights of NOVAC Meetings

### 2002 NOVAC Annual Meeting

January 8, 2002, Arlington Planetarium

President Ed Karch opened the meeting at 7:35 p.m. Ed then introduced the officers for 2002:  
\* Vice President: Sean O'Brien  
\* Secretary: Renée Pleasant  
\* Chief Financial Officer: Pedro Martinez  
\* Trustees: John Avellone, John Deriso, Alan Figgatt, and Alex Lim.

Pedro Martinez gave the financial results for 2001.

Ed Karch gave the membership report for 2001: 217 new members, 599 members total, 22 complementary members and 481 households.

Ed Witkowski announced that changes to NOVAC's Sky & Telescope information listing were necessary. A new POC is TBD.

Mike Mills announced that the newsletter is going to be split into two pieces. Important club information will be printed and mailed; articles will appear only on the website.

Sean O'Brien announced upcoming meeting programs.

Alan Figgatt gave a report on the loaner telescopes. The custodian for each scope was read:

- \* 6" f/5 Newt. on GEM: Doug Mistler
- \* 6" f/5 Dob: Paul Danaher
- \* 6" f/8 Dob: Ed Witkowski
- \* 10" f/6 Dob: Alex Lim
- \* 8" SCT-John Deriso
- \* 10" SCT-Renée Pleasant
- \* Prominence filter-Wolfgang Schubert

John Avellone gave a report about Sweet 16. It is currently at rest for the winter, due to con-

cerns about cold temperatures. It also needs a shroud to block stray light.

Mike Mills reported on the club's 34.5" mirror project. Price quotes have been obtained for regrinding the mirror to a f/4 curve. Shipping options are being explored.

Wolfgang Schubert reported that the Solarmax H-alpha filter performs very well.

Ed Witkowski gave a public outreach summary. Seven events were hosted in 2001. Plans are in the works for a "Media Night" at one of NOVAC's observing sites.

Bill Burton presented plans for the 2002 Star-gaze. A tentative date of October 12 was chosen. It was decided to return to Franklin Park.

Ed Karch announced the formation of a dark-site land lease committee, that will seek leased access to private land that is comparable to Mickie Gordon in sky quality and driving distance.

Tilly Smith updated the board on his negotiations with Loudoun County Parks regarding access to Mickie Gordon Park.

-Submitted by Mike Mills

### NOVAC Board Meeting

February 4, 2002, Arlington Planetarium

Attendees: Ed Karch, John Avellone, Joe Pierson, Alex Lim, John Deriso, Bill Burton, Sean O'Brien, Pedro Martinez, Alan Figgatt, & Tilly Smith.

Treasurer's Report - Pedro handed out the 2002 proposed budget. The board reviewed the budget and approved it unanimously.

Membership Report - Joe reported that there were 33 Household renewals in January (36 actual members) and 10 New Households (16 actual members). Joe then read comments from renewal letters.

John Avellone will be awarding an AL Urban Viewing award at the next General Meeting. He also announced that NOVAC has a minor involvement in Astronomy Day activities at Huntley Park in Fairfax in support of the Fairfax County School Planetarium programs.

Alan Figgatt reported that there is no new status on loaner scopes. Board members who manage loaner scopes reported that they are out on loan.

Sean O'Brien is working on getting more outside speakers, pulling some from Air&Space Museum and possibly from Goddard.

Tilly Smith reported that the Crocket MOA will go to the Fauquier County Board this week for approval. (Addendum - The Fauquier County Board approved the MOA on 2/6/02). Tilly met with Loudoun Co representatives in regard to Mickie Gordon park. He does not expect them to budge on their policy, so Mickie Gordon will remain closed to NOVAC for observing. The board agreed that the next step with Mickie Gordon was to apply subtle pressure to the County Supervisors.

Bill Burton requested that the club continue to support programs at Franklin Park at least through the end of the year. There was discussion on continuing to support Franklin Park, but no decision was made at this time. Several of the potential private sites were reviewed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

-Submitted by Joe Pierson

# Upcoming NOVAC Meeting Programs

Sean O'Brien

*March 10, 2002*

## **Solar System Ambassadors**

Woody Davis

Some NOVACians may have met Woody Davis, Solar System Ambassador, at the public observing sessions at Sky Meadows State Park. The Ambassadors are part of a JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory) public outreach program. Tonight is your chance to learn more from Woody about this program, and what it can do for you and our country.

*April 14, 2002*

## **Explore the Universe**

Dr. David DeVorkin

Have you seen the major new exhibit, "Explore the Universe", at the National Air and Space Museum? The exhibit curator, David DeVorkin, will speak about "Explore the Universe" and some of the thoughts and materials that went into its creation.

*May 12, 2002*

**TBD**

*June 9, 2002*

## **The Life Cycle of Our Sun**

Dr. Jack Greenblat

Join Jack Greenblat, scientist and amateur astronomer, as he examines the birth, long life, and future death-throes of our home star. How do astronomers think they know the details of the Sun's multi-billion year life cycle? Come to the meeting and find out!

*July 14, 2002*

## **Poetry Under the Stars**

Patty Seaton

Join Patty Seaton, amateur astronomer and poet, tonight to enjoy selections of what we call "Poetry Under the Stars". It's a little "literary" and a lot of "fun".

**NOVAC meetings are held at 7:00 PM on the second Sunday of each month in Room 80 of the Enterprise Hall at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. See <http://www.novac.com/GMU.htm> for a map and directions.**

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PLEASE NOTE: the schedule of speakers is subject to change. Please check at <http://www.novac.com/craig/speakers.htm> for the latest info prior to the meeting. What's YOUR interest? Let [sean.o'brien@nasm.si.edu](mailto:sean.o'brien@nasm.si.edu) know. Come share and learn about YOUR favorite topic!

# National Capital Astronomers Meetings

## **Note: New Time and Place!!**

NCA's meeting topics for January 5 and February 2 were not known by press time. See their website (given below) for updates.

Meetings are now held in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center of Montgomery County, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD at 3:00 P.M.

The meeting will be held from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Dinner will be held at the Rio Grande Restaurant, 4919 Fairmont Ave., Bethesda, tel. 301 - 656-2981, following the meeting.

For future meeting programs, see <http://www.capitalastronomers.org>

## **About NCA Meetings**

*NCA has regular monthly meetings September through June on the first Saturday of the month (unless it is a holiday weekend).*

*They do not have a monthly meeting in July or August.*

# NASM/Einstein Planetarium Public Observing 2002 Schedule Sky Meadows State Park, Paris, VA

Sean O'Brien

Join Sean O'Brien, staff astronomer of the Albert Einstein Planetarium, and other local amateur astronomers, for public telescopic observing under dark, star-filled skies, away from city lights. The evening begins with a short night sky orientation at dusk, followed by telescopic observing of various astronomical objects, ending at 11 pm.

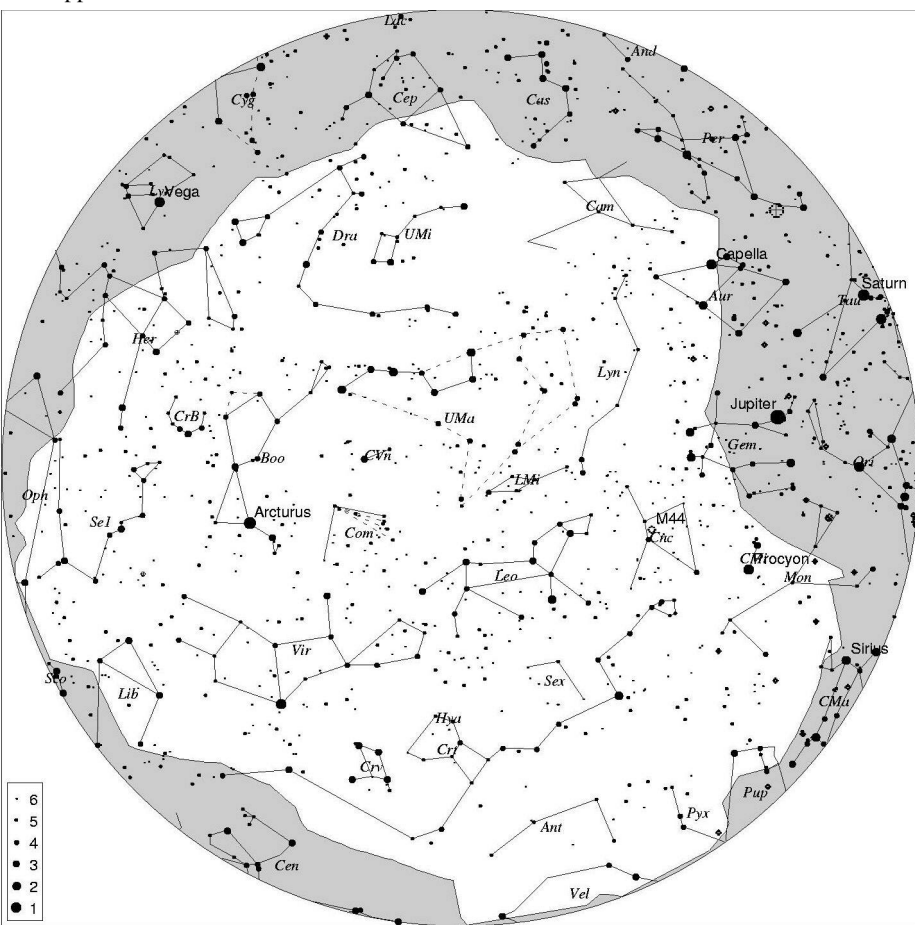
Sky Meadows State Park is west of Washington, D.C. on US Route 17 North, 1 mile south of US Route 50, or 7 miles north of Interstate 66, Exit 23. The park contact phone number is (540) 592-3556. There is a \$2 parking fee per car. Please cover flashlights with a red filter or a brown paper bag. Dress warmly. In case of clouds or rain, an amateur astronomer will lead a short alternate program.

Editor's Note: This is a fun program for NOVAC members to help out with. Sky Meadows park has great skies, and the public is always very receptive.

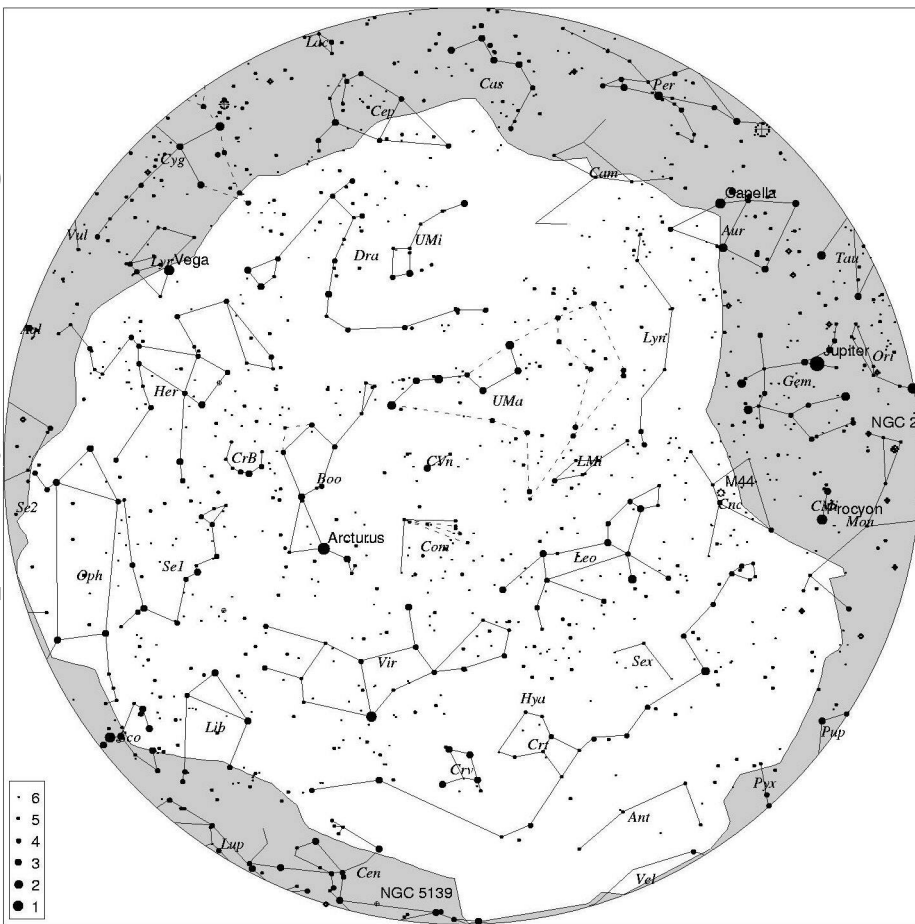
Date (all Saturdays)	Comments
April 13	1 day after New Moo
May 4	Last Quarter Moon
June 1	1 day before Last Quarter
July 13	3 days after New Moon
August 10	2 days after New Moon
September 7	1 day after New Moon
October 5	1 day before New Moon
November 9	2 days before 1st Quarter

Each map depicts the sky at 0 hours for the 15th day of the respective month. The shaded area approximates the local horizon obstruction at each site.

March Sky from Savage Farm



April Sky from Savage Farm



# Jeff's Observing Report

Jeff Stetekluh

Jeff's astronomical calculations are made for the Northern Virginia area. See <http://www.novac.com/jeff/jrefs.html> for calculation references and further details.

### Jupiter Eclipse Events

- Mar 16 6:17 PM Io Eclipse End
- Mar 23 8:12 PM Io Eclipse End
- Mar 30 10:07 PM Io Eclipse End
- Apr 7 1:02 AM Io Eclipse End
- Apr 13 10:07 PM Europa Eclipse End
- Apr 21 12:45 AM Europa Eclipse End

### The Sun

- Mar 10 rises at 6:27 AM, sets at 6:10 PM
- Apr 14 rises at 6:33 AM, sets at 7:44 PM
- May 12 rises at 5:59 AM, sets at 8:11 PM

### The Moon

- Mar 13 New Moon
- Mar 21 First Quarter
- Mar 28 Full Moon
- Apr 4 Last Quarter
- Apr 12 New Moon
- Apr 20 First Quarter
- Apr 26 Full Moon
- May 4 Last Quarter
- May 12 New Moon

### Events

- Mar 20 Vernal Equinox
- Apr 7 EDT starts
- Apr 7 Mercury at Superior Conjunction
- Apr 22 The Lyrid meteor shower peaks (active Apr 16 to Apr 25)
- May 4 Mercury at Greatest Elong: 21.0°E
- May 6 The η-Aquarid meteor shower peaks (active Apr 19 to May 28)

### The Planets

Mar 10	Rises	Transits	Sets
Mercury	05:42	10:59	16:17
Venus	07:06	13:10	19:14
Mars	08:22	15:11	22:01
Jupiter	11:55	19:19	02:47
Saturn	10:13	17:24	00:40
Apr 14	Rises	Transits	Sets
Mercury	06:54	13:39	20:26
Venus	07:34	14:34	21:34
Mars	08:16	15:31	22:46
Jupiter	10:51	18:14	01:42
Saturn	09:05	16:19	23:32

# Upcoming Events

Shading indicates days that Crocket Park is open

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>M</b>	24	25	26	27	28	1	2
<b>A</b>	3	4	5 LAST QUARTER	6	7	8 ★Prime Observing	9 ★Prime Observing
<b>R</b>	10 ★General Meeting 7 pm @ GMU ★Prime Observing	11	12	13 NEW MOON	14	15 ★Prime Observing	16 ★Prime Observing ★Public @ Crockett
<b>C</b>	17 ★ATM-SIG Meeting (Location TBA) ★Prime Observing	18	19	20	21 FIRST QUARTER	22	23
<b>H</b>	24	25	26	27	28 FULL MOON	29	30
	31	1	2	3	4 LAST QUARTER	5 ★Prime Observing ★Comet Watch @Franklin Park (see pg. 6)	6 ★Prime Observing ★Comet Watch @Franklin Park (see pg. 6)
<b>A</b>	7 ★Prime Observing	8	9	10	11	12 NEW MOON ★Prime Observing	13 ★Prime Observing ★NASM Observing @ Sly Meadows
<b>P</b>	14 ★General Meeting 7 pm @ GMU ★Prime Observing	15	16	17	18	19	20 FIRST QUARTER ★Astronomy Day ★Public @ Crockett
<b>R</b>	21 ★ATM-SIG Meeting (Location TBA)	22	23	24	25	26 FULL MOON	27
<b>I</b>	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
<b>L</b>							

## **“To observe, and to help others observe”**

NOVAC is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization chartered to advance amateur astronomy in Northern Virginia. Members benefit from:

### **Access to dark sky observing sites:**

NOVAC maintains agreements that provide club members with year-round access to observing sites away from city lights

### **Monthly Meetings**

Monthly meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month in the Lecture Hall on the campus of George Mason University. Each meeting features a lecture on an interesting topic by a local expert. See the web page or future Newsletters for a schedule of speakers.

### **Bimonthly Newsletter**

The NOVAC Newsletter provides information specifically for NOVAC members, as well as general interest articles on such topics as observing reports, equipment reviews, upcoming events, ATM projects, and more.

### **High quality telescopes to borrow**

NOVAC members may borrow one of the clubs several “loaner” telescopes at no charge. Members may choose from among three 6” reflectors of different focal lengths, one 10” f/6 reflector and a couple of SCTs. Also available for loan is a 7x50 binocular.

### **Large club library**

NOVAC maintains a well stocked library near the lecture hall at GMU. At a monthly meeting, club members may check out books and observing guides and use them until the next meeting.

### **Club website**

Up to date information about club events and activities is maintained on the club website at [www.novac.com](http://www.novac.com).

### **Private e-mail list-serve**

Members keep up with current club information by subscribing to the NOVAC e-mail list, without fear of flame wars or spam e-mails.

### **Public outreach opportunities**

Several times each year, volunteers from NOVAC present astronomy programs to schools, churches, Scout troops, and other public groups.

### **Membership in the Astronomical League**

Through NOVAC’s membership in the Astronomical League, NOVAC members gain access to the AL’s newsletter, services, and observing programs.

### **Discounts on astronomy magazines and books**

Subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines are offered to club members at a considerable discount. Also, astronomy books purchased through the club are eligible for a 10-25% discount.

**See your *Membership Guide* for more details**

*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 \$25.00 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 \$5.00 per person. Contact Joe Pierson 15091 Jarrell Place Woodbridge, VA 22193 703-680-6343 [jmpierson@home.com](mailto:jmpierson@home.com)**

All notices of change of address should be sent to Joe Pierson. 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, at [mjmills@fpcc.net](mailto:mjmills@fpcc.net), (**The deadline for submissions is two weeks in advance of publication: April 12 for the May/June 2002 newsletter.**)

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**The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club**  
 c/o Joe Pierson, Membership Director  
 15091 Jarrell Place  
 Woodbridge, VA 22193

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