

NOVAC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB NO. 102 • VOL. 22 • JULY/AUGUST 2002

Observing from the city: the Astronomical League's Urban List

by Steve Blake

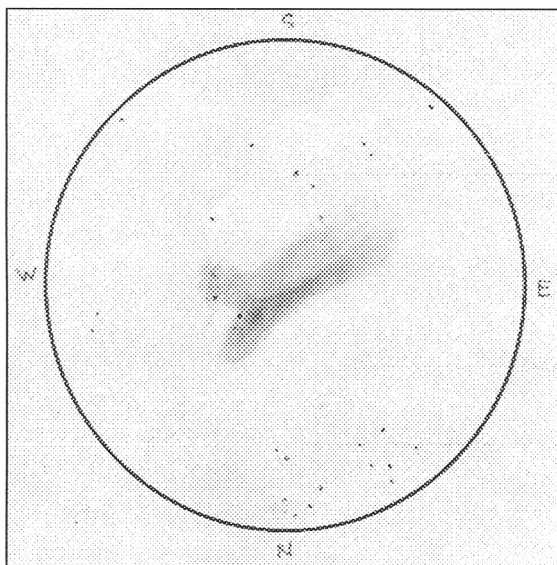
In recent years, the number of Astronomical League observing clubs has nearly doubled. Whereas in 1998, the League had clubs promoting observing the Messier objects, doubles stars, the Herschel 400, and the moon, now there are clubs for the next Herschel 400, Arp peculiar galaxies, meteors, the sun, and much more. (See the AL home page at www.astroleague.org.)

One of the newer clubs—the Urban Observing Club—might well have been designed with us in mind.

Not quite a Messier club

So what is on the Urban Club list? The only criterion for selection seems to be brightness. Not surprisingly, forty of the Urban Club's 100 objects are also on Messier's list. But sixty are taken from other catalogs. There are objects labeled NGC, IC, Collinder, Stock, Trumpler and Melotte. Thirteen of the 100 Urban Club objects are double or multiple stars, compared with only one (M40—one of Messier's "mistakes") on the Messier list. In addition to old favorites like Albireo and the Trapezium, there are more obscure ones such as Gamma Delphinus and Delta Cepheus. Some of the non-Messier masterpieces, such as the double cluster in Perseus and the Hyades in Taurus, finally get their due.

As you would suspect, the Urban Club list has fewer galaxies than the Messier list—11 compared to 39. There also are fewer globular clusters, only 11 compared



M17 in Sagittarius, also known as the Omega or Swan Nebula. Sketch by Mike Mills.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The past year NOVAC grew by ten percent. This means that we have quite a few new observers. I usually write the President's Message, but this time I will turn



NOVAC President Ed Karch

the podium over to Tom Whiting, President of the Eric County Mobile Observers Group. (We are not the only Nomads.)—Ed

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Tom Whiting's Sound advice for the novice astronomer

Astronomy is a LEARNING hobby. Its primary enjoyment comes from the knowledge and discovery of objects in the night sky. Astronomy is NOT a "flashy visuals" hobby. There are only about a dozen objects that are big and bright: the moon, a few planets and a few deep sky objects. These "wear thin" pretty fast. The remaining million objects are small, dim, or both. The enjoyment, in part, comes from the knowledge that the fuzzy blob of a galaxy you are viewing is 65 million light years distant. That means you are seeing the light of 65 million years ago. . . about the time the dinosaurs were dying. To be able to see it at all is remarkable! So. . . if you want flashy visuals, go watch TV.

Astronomical observing is NOT a "wimpy" activity. There is no such thing as a WARM clear night. You are always at odds with clouds, the bright moon, cold temperatures, wind, city sky light pollution and headlights of cars. It is a nighttime outdoor nature activity. If you don't enjoy being out-

see "Urban" on page 3

see "Sound advice" on page 4

NOVAC

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New observing site: Mercer Park

by Tilly Smith

Mickie Gordon is back? Well, not exactly, but close. Here is the deal:

Mickie Gordon is actually a piece of a larger park, Mercer Park, which is owned by the Loudoun County Public Schools.

Loudoun County Schools leases the area called Mickie Gordon to Loudoun County Parks and Recreation for their use as a

county park. You can actually see the rest of Mercer Park off to the left when you are in Mickie Gordon.

NOVAC has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Loudoun Co. Public Schools for unlimited access to Mercer Park for astronomical observing. The details are noted below:

Who can use the site?

Unlimited access for NOVAC members and their guests only.

Where is Mercer Park?

Mercer Park is about 2 miles east of Middleburg on Route 50. Drive out Route 50 as though you are going to Mickie Gordon. The Mercer Park entrance is through a large blue gate off Route 50 about 50 yards west of Carter's Farm Lane (the turn off to go to Mickie Gordon).

Is there a lock on the gate?

A NOVAC lock is installed. The combination is the same as the standard NOVAC combination. Always lock the NOVAC lock to the school lock so they can get in the park if necessary. Same as at our other locations.

What else do I need to know?

The site consists of three fields, front, middle and back. While we can use any of the

three fields, I recommend we use only the middle field. That would minimize any site development considerations and would be the easiest field to get to—other than the front field, of course. I do not recommend the front field, as the lights from cars on Route 50 would be visible on the observing field. These fields are not cleared as in

Mickie Gordon but more like the fields at Camp Highroad with tall grass throughout. Loudoun Co. Schools will cut the fields, in fact they have been cut recently, but the grass is still a bit taller than we may want.

We can drive to the middle field, but try to stay on the cleared roadway. It is not much of a road

as it is only a cleared area in the field, but it will be easier to spot once it has been used a few times. I plan to put up some reflectors along the road to assist getting in and out. Please be careful not to just drive across the fields and try to set up somewhere relatively close to the roadway or on higher ground.

Since there is little space to park outside the gate, the first one in should leave the gate open for others and the last one out should close the gate.

Can I find out more?

The MOA is available from the members-only section of the website: www.novac.com/members.htm.

When can we start using the site?

Mercer Park is open for immediate use—enjoy! *

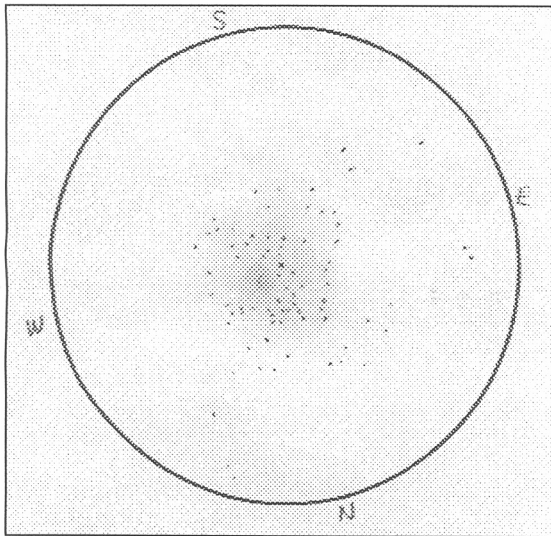


Urban, from page 1

to 29 Messier objects. But there are many more open clusters, 54 versus 27, and more than twice as many planetary nebulas, 9 compared to 4. All the objects on the Urban Club list are relatively bright. The galaxy M84 in Virgo is probably the faintest, and that is only around magnitude 10. I did the entire list with an 8-inch Dobsonian and 10x50 binoculars from my very light polluted backyard, and a nearby field, in Rockville, Maryland.

The rules, and some tips to deal with them

Unlike the Messier club, which will give you a certificate for observing 70 of the 110



M11, the Wild Duck Cluster, in the constellation Scutum. Sketch by Mike Mills.

Messier objects, you have to track down all 100 Urban Club objects. You also must observe the objects from light polluted skies, defined as any area where you cannot see the Milky Way with the unaided eye. The skies from my own yard in central Rockville are rarely better than magnitude 4.5. Previous observations may be used as long as they were made in light polluted skies, but I recommend doing what I did. Even if you have seen an object before, look at it again because these items are worth repeated visits. Another requirement is taking appropriate notes of each observation. (The AL website has the details on rules, as well as a list of all 100 objects.)

Because you cannot use observations from locations such as Savage, a major challenge is finding a decent (i.e., light polluted!)

observing site that has a reasonably good view to the south. Observing to the south is a real problem from my own yard, but I discovered that by dragging my scope to a back corner and pointing it between two trees, I actually had a 15 degree gap between the branches that permitted observations as far south as M8 in Sagittarius. I also discovered that when the leaves are gone in winter, it is often possible to view through trees.

You may find, as I did, that some objects are just too far south for your urban observing site. What to do? In my case, I took my binoculars to a nearby field from which I could view the open clusters M7 and M6 in Scorpius, and the globular cluster M62 in Ophiuchus. At -30 or more, these objects were simply impossible from my house.

Although I found many of the Urban Club objects using just a Telrad, it became much easier after I added a finder scope. It is hard to star hop using a Telrad in the city because large sections of the sky have no stars visible to the naked eye at all. I went whole hog and bought an 80 mm finder, but I suspect a 50 mm would do just fine.

I won't mention the various deep-sky observing tips, except for one. Increasing the power will do a lot to cut through the light pollution and improve the view. I frequently went from 49x to 81x—81x is still

fairly low—and doing so darkened the skies and improved the views considerably.

What you can learn

The first thing you can learn is that there are some wonderful deep-sky objects that are visible from a city. Yes, observing is better at Savage, but cold winter nights, a shortage of time, or light polluted skies should not keep you indoors on a clear night. Because many of these items are so bright, they also are visible when the moon is up.

You may have a few pleasant surprises, even when observing these familiar objects. One of mine occurred in search of the object identi-

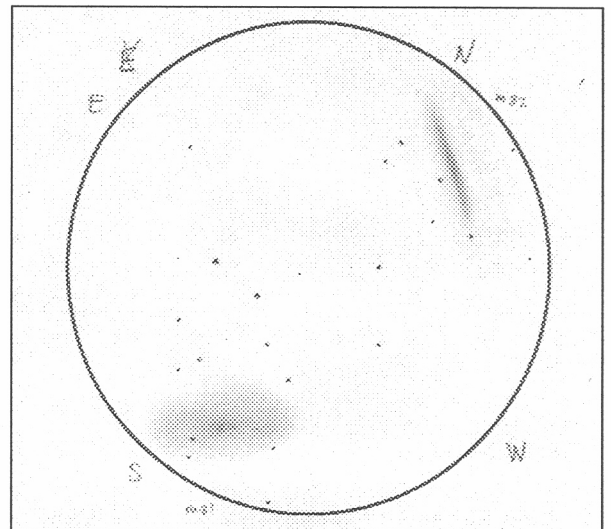
fied as Collinder 399. It was only when I got there that I discovered it was the “Coat hanger” open cluster in Vulpecula, which I had seen numerous times before. I had never viewed anything in the constellation of Lacerta, but this list introduced me to open clusters NGC 7209 and NGC 7243, two bright but often overlooked open clusters.

Surprisingly, there are objects on this list that, dare I say it, few NOVAC members have ever seen before. For example, have you seen Collinder 463? It is an open cluster in Cassiopeia that is not mentioned in such massive observing compendiums as Burnham's Celestial Handbook, Luginbuhl and Skiff's Observing Handbook and Catalog of Deep-Sky Objects or the Night Sky Observer's Guide by Kepple and Sanner. Collinder 463 is plotted in Uranometria.

Track it down next time you go observing

And of course, tracking down the objects on the Urban Club list gives you the chance to see old friends. I never pass up a chance to see the globular cluster M22 and diffuse nebula/open cluster M8 in Sagittarius. Even from the city they are very nice. (Trivia question: did you know that M8 is south of M22?)

Finally, the objects on the Urban Observing Club list are great to show friends or use at star parties. Almost all the great deep-sky objects are listed here, and almost all the 100 Urban Club objects are great. Many, probably most, are visible with binoculars. Check them out. You will be glad you did. *



Galaxies M81 (lower left) and M82, in Ursa Major. Sketch by Mike Mills.

Sound advice, from page 1

doors at night, can't stand the cool air, are allergic to insect repellent, don't like to overdress or don't like staying up past 9 PM, then you had better think twice about astronomy as a hobby. We don't mean to discourage you, but we thought you would appreciate the straight "scoop." If you are still interested, here are the proper steps to follow to get into astronomy:

1. Astronomy is a learning hobby, so ransack the library. Find and read all you can about the subject. Also obtain a star chart of the night sky. You might be advised to buy (for under \$10) a planisphere, which is a night sky chart on a wheel within a square. The date and times are on the square and the stars are charted on the wheel.

2. Take the star chart outside at night and learn (self teach yourself) the night sky. This is not really as hard as it sounds. Constellations are simply areas of the sky; if you can learn and memorize the states (e.g., Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois), then you can also learn Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo. All are adjoining areas for identification purposes only. You need this foundation to build on; in construction, you can't build until you have a foundation first. You have to do this yourself, using charts and the library. Although friends can help, this basically has to be self-taught.

3. Don't buy a telescope yet—get a pair of inexpensive binoculars first. A telescope at this point is almost useless to you because if you can't point your finger to Saturn, the Andromeda Galaxy or the Beehive star cluster (all naked eye objects), how are you going to point a telescope toward them? Your first task is to learn the naked eye sky. Binoculars are easy to use, easy to carry, and allow you to see and identify objects you want to learn. A good telescope is expensive compared to binoculars; start saving for a telescope while you use your binoculars.

4. Get serious about star charts—learn how to use them. It's impossible to buy a star chart that is TOO good. A sailor of the seas needs top-notch charts and so does a "sailor" of the stars.

When it's time for a telescope, plunge in deep! You'll know when you are ready. This is no time to scrimp on quality; shun the flimsy department store or "science store"

telescopes. There are telescopes nice to look at and there are telescopes nice to look THROUGH. You want the latter, so you'll have to order one through the many advertisements in *Sky & Telescope* or *Astronomy* magazines. Department store telescopes are nice to look at, and that's all. Don't have enough money saved up? Then save another year while you use your binoculars, or get a loan. Don't squander hard-earned money on a cheaper department store telescope.

Final thoughts

This review was not meant to discourage, but to inform you of the best path to take since we have been down this road! Earlier we stated that good telescopes are expensive; we meant *relative* to binoculars. Actually

good telescopes have come down in price considerably in the past 20 years. Now you can purchase a good 6 or 8 inch reflector telescope for under \$500. Now compare that price to other hobbies and activities: boating, ham radio, flying (lessons, pilot's license, etc.), hunting (how much does a good rifle cost?), computers and peripheral software, etc. Some kids have \$500 in comic books and baseball cards! Plus: the night sky is still free! And good telescopes actually go up in value over the years. If you are still interested, press on!

Clear skies! *

Tom Whiting is president of the Erie County Mobile Observers Group and discoverer of the "mini-coathanger" asterism in Ursa Minor.

Upcoming NOVAC meeting programs

Sean O'Brien

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."

August 11, 2002

Explore the Universe • Dr. David DeVorkin

Have you seen "Explore the Universe," the major new exhibit 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.

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 www.novac.com/GMU.htm for a map and directions. **Please note:** The schedule of speakers is subject to change. Please check at 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 know. Come share and learn about your favorite topic!

National Capital Astronomers meetings

NCA Meetings are now held at 3:00 PM in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center of Montgomery County, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD, at 3:00. For future meeting programs and more information about NCA, see 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.

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Announcements

The Year-Long Star Party at Spruce Knob

by John Nusbaum

NOVAC is now the proud owner of a brand new, "no frills" star party at the premier observing location in the Eastern US! The Year-Long Star Party (YLSP) is held for 4 nights each month from March through November. The Star Party is held at the Gatewood Group Camping Area just west and slightly below Spruce Knob, the highest peak in West Virginia. Gatewood sits on top of a knoll at 4,338 feet.

The skies at the Year-Long Star Party are truly dark. M33, the face on spiral galaxy in Triangulum is a naked eye object and the Milky Way stretches from horizon to horizon in both summer and winter! If you have never observed in truly dark, magnitude 7 skies, you will be in for a real treat!

2002 Schedule—Spruce Knob, WV

July 11–14	Thursday–Sunday nights
August 8–12	Thursday–Monday nights
September 5–8	Thursday–Sunday nights
October 4–7	Friday–Monday nights
November 1–4	Friday–Monday nights

The Star Party is free to NOVAC members and there is a nominal cost for non-members.

For more information see the NOVAC website at www.novac.com/spruce or contact John Nusbaum at john@nusbaum.com.

NASM/Einstein Planetarium public observing

2002 Schedule—Sky Meadows State Park, Paris, VA

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.

Directions to Sky Meadows State Park: 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 \$4 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.

Date (all Saturdays)	Comments
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

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.

Newsletter now available via e-mail

As an added convenience, members may now elect to receive their newsletter in electronic form via e-mail. The electronic version will be in Adobe PDF format and will typically be 500 to 800 kilobytes. Photos will appear with much better resolution in the electronic copy.

If you would like to receive the newsletter in PDF format, send your name, mailing address, and the e-mail address to which you want the newsletter delivered to mjmills@fpcc.net. Please put "Newsletter PDF" in the subject line. Changes will take effect with the July/August issue. Please note: if you choose to receive the electronic copy, you will not receive a paper copy.

Meeting highlights

Board Meeting

May 7, 2002

Arlington Planetarium

- * **Board members in attendance:** Ed Karch (President), Ed Witkowski (Trustee, Public Outreach, List Manager), Alex Lim (Trustee), Pedro Martinez (Treasurer), Alan Figgatt (Trustee, Loaner Scopes), John Avellone (Trustee, ALCOR), John Deriso (Trustee), Renée Pleasant (Secretary). Volunteers present: Tilly Smith (site coordinator), Mike Mills (newsletter), John Nusbaum (Spruce Knob), Joe Pierson (membership), Scott Downs (newsletter).
- * Meeting called to order at 7:35 p.m.
- * **Minutes of previous meeting approved** as posted to the Board email list.
- * **Treasurers report:** Pedro. Joe confirmed Pedro had received most recent batch of checks mailed to Pedro.
- * **Membership report:** Joe. 20 new members. Total membership: 628. Joe read comments from renewal forms. Tilly requested a break down of membership numbers by zipcode for use in negotiating with **Loudoun County**. Joe and Mike explained the difficulty in providing that breakdown. Mike was the last person to try and do a breakdown by zipcode.
- * **Site coordinator's report:** Tilly will talk to **Crockett** about expanding the observing time that we do not have to call and notify the park. He will wait to negotiate this after we have fulfilled some of our public outreach obligations with the park as they have recently been cancelled due to weather. Discussion followed regarding **Camp Highroad** and its use. Consensus was that members using it were happy with the arrangement and site.
- * Further discussion was held on **Crockett Park** and how many members are using it. Pedro said there were around 6 or 7 cars there during his last visit. Ed Karch stated 40 people had asked for the combination.

- * **Mickie Gordon:** Packets were sent to the supervisors. Tilly received replies from some supervisors, with the most recent offering the use of the **Mercer School** site, which is adjacent to the Mickie Gordon Park.
- * **John Nusbaum** then spoke to the Board about the opportunity NOVAC may have to coordinate observing at **Spruce Knob** with the local concessionaire, now that it is a fee area. The Board voted to give John the approval to negotiate terms with the USFS concessionaire. He will report his findings back to the Board for further discussion.
- * **Newsletter report:** Mike. Kim Bieler is working on the layout now. Mike introduced new newsletter volunteer Scott Downs. Advertising was discussed again and it was determined NOVAC does not want to add advertising to its newsletter at this time.
- * **Powers scope:** Mike showed pictures of mirror being packed and shipped. He provided a tentative budget for the telescope, budget on file with treasurer and secretary.
- * **Planetarium update:** John Avellone will speak at the Board meeting on Monday May 14, 2002 opposing budget cuts that would remove funding from the Planetarium. Joe Pierson mentioned corporate funding that is available, for example from his employer Boeing.
- * **Loaner scope report:** Alan reported on usage of loaner scopes. A motion was made to donate the 6" Dob to **Camp Highroad**. Motion passed. John Deriso will email Greg to get loaner scopes and contacts listed on the website.
- * **Analemma Society:** Alan Figgatt reported attending the meeting and relayed their plans for a **robotic remote control telescope** that will be controlled via the Internet. The Society has asked for the NOVAC mailing list for fundraising purposes and has been declined.

- * Meeting adjourned 9:15 p.m.

Monthly Club Meeting

May 12, 2002

(34 members present)

- * **Ed Karch:** Have you been out observing? Have you tried out our NOVAC viewing sites? Have you been working on your telescopes?
- * 8 people reported trying out **Camp Highroad**, and all liked it.
- * NOVAC has another new site: **Spruce Knob, WV**. If you are a paid-in-full member, just go there. If not a NOVAC member, then \$20 for the season, or \$5 per visit. We have reserved the 4 days nearest the new moon each month from May through November. Even so, we can use it all winter, if we let the caretaker know we're coming. The site is 4-5 hours away, depending on whether you stop for dinner, etc.
- * **Harold Geller:** GMU used to have an observatory 20 years ago, but it was destroyed by vandals, and never rebuilt. The undergraduate program at GMU has not yet been approved. Harold will be teaching at **GMU** and **NVCC** this summer and may ask for volunteers to come out and talk about specialized subjects. If you know of anyone who used to belong to the **Science Center of Northern Virginia**, that used to meet at Arlington Planetarium, please let him know. They had designs for an observatory and/or planetarium that we may be interested in.
- * **John Avellone:** John is the interface between our club and the **Astronomical League**, which includes all astronomy clubs in the country. The AL presents awards to enthusiasts who have completed various requirements/lists, which may be found on their website at www.astroleague.org. Our club has 1 award pending (Deep Sky Binocular). Go to the website, find an observing program, start it, do it, and get an award!

Meeting highlights, cont.

The AL is proposing to NASA to get an amateur telescope on the **Space Station**, and a **remote-control telescope** in Arizona that you can pay for time on. Check out www.issat.org for info on the Space Station amateur telescope.

- * Thanks for the response to the **Save the Planetarium** program! As of right now, the several planetaria in Fairfax County are no longer on the budget cut list, but please continue to send emails to the Fairfax County School Board.
- * Pete Johnson: The **amateur telescope making group** meets on the Sunday AFTER the Sunday of the monthly NOVAC meeting, at Pete's house.
- * **Bob Garret**: The club is always on the lookout for land we can use/purchase. If you know of any **land-buying opportunities**, please send an email to rgarret@cais.net.
- * **Sky tour**: Alan Figgatt. Things to look for this month:
 - **Visible planets** are close together.
 - **Comets**—Ikeya-Zhang in Hercules; on the 15th, near M13; near M5 at the end of June.
 - **Deep sky**—Ursa Major; M81 and M82 are bright galaxies; M40—just a double, but nice to find for the Messier Marathon; M51—Whirlpool Galaxy, just off the handle of the Big Dipper—looks like a double smudge; M101—"big diffuse hazy spot"; use lower power, wide field to see the hazy patch (need 18-20" to see the spiral); The Owl Nebula (not a galaxy)
- * **Presentation: Pete Johnson. "What's Up? Planning an Observing Session."** Make the most of your observing time by taking the time to plan beforehand. If you've done the research, you know what's out and available to see. To help in planning, you need to build and use a library of **reference materials**. The following work well:
 - Sky charts.
 - Reference books.

- Observing books—for example, the *Night Sky Observing Guide* gives you "in the know" information, like what magnification to use to find a deep-sky object. This reference tells you what objects look like through a 4", 6", 8", 10" scope, etc., which is a good way to decide what kind of scope you want.
- *Sky & Telescope* issues.
- Planisphere.
- Astro Cards—sets of cards (for example: Messier, NGC) has starfields and useful, interesting information.
- Internet.

Tips for your planning sessions (to maximize your viewing time in the field):

- Make your notes beforehand!
- It's best to identify objects that lie directly overhead, or at most 45 degrees off the zenith.
- Make a checklist and your own chart. Or you can mark existing charts.
- Map a star-hopping path to get to hard-to-find objects.
- Use Starry Night or similar program to create and map scope views.
- Plan your viewing session by constellation. Pete's favorite is Fornax, with its several double stars and spiral galaxies.
- Plan by your observing site and your observing time.

There are several **software packages** available to help in your planning. Also, set goals for yourself using observing lists, such as those listed by the Astronomical League (www.astroleague.org). The AL gives awards for completing the requirements of their different clubs, such as the Lunar Club, the Binocular Messier Club, or the Galaxy Groups and Clusters Club.

Submitted by Scott Downs










Board Meeting June 4, 2002 Arlington Planetarium

- * Present: Alex Lim, Alan Figgatt, Joe Pearson, Ed Witkowski, Pete Johnson, John Avellone, Ed Karch.
- * **Treasurer's report**: We got dough enough to pay bills.
- * **Membership report**: 606 active members.
- * **Camp Highroad scope**: Ed K. sold his Short Tube 80 for \$100 assigned to ATM group for mounting.
- * The "**Year-Long Star Party**" will be advertised in *S&T* and *Astronomy* magazines in a couple of months, after it gets established.
- * **Mercer Park** (next to Mickie Gordon) is now open to NOVAC members.
- * **ATM meeting** will be rotated between Pete Johnson and Mike Mills, with Ed Karch and John Avellone as reserve hosts.
- * **Picnic**. Ed K. will buy food and Joe and Ed W. will cook. There will be a swap meet. The solar scope will attend.

Submitted by Ed Karch, acting Secretary

Events in July and August

Shading indicates days that Crockett Park is open

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	JULY 1	2 LAST QUARTER 	3	4 Independence Day	5 Prime observing	6
7 Prime observing	8	9	10 NEW MOON 	11 YLSP @ Spruce Knob <small>(see page 6 for details)</small>	12 Prime observing YLSP @ Spruce Knob	13 YLSP @ Spruce Knob Public observing @ Crockett Park NASM observing @ Sky Meadows
14 Prime observing YLSP @ Spruce Knob General meeting 7pm @ GMU	15	16	17 FIRST QUARTER 	18	19	20
21 ATM-SIG meeting (location TBA)	22	23	24 FULL MOON 	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	AUG 1 LAST QUARTER  Astroblast, Franklin, PA	2 Prime observing AUGUST 1-6	3 Prime observing
4 Prime observing Astroblast, Franklin, PA	5 AUGUST 1-6	6	7	8 NEW MOON  YLSP @ Spruce Knob <small>(see page 6 for details)</small>	9 Prime observing YLSP @ Spruce Knob Stellafane, Springfield, VT	10 Public observing @ Crockett Park YLSP @ Spruce Knob NASM observing @ Sky Meadows AUGUST 9-10
11 Prime observing YLSP @ Spruce Knob General meeting 7pm @ GMU	12 Prime observing YLSP @ Spruce Knob * Perseid meteor shower peaks	13	14	15 FIRST QUARTER 	16 Prime observing	17 Public observing @ Crockett Park NOVAC picnic @ Crockett Park
18 Prime observing ATM-SIG meeting (location TBA)	19	20	21	22 FULL MOON 	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 LAST QUARTER  Prime observing	31 Prime observing

"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.

Private e-mail listserv

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

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
jmplerson@comcast.net

Change of address

All notices of change of address should be sent to Joe Pierson. Please include both old and new addresses.

Advertising

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

Submissions to the newsletter

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. **The deadline for submissions is two weeks in advance of publication: August 16 for the September/October 2002 newsletter.**

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Announcements • The Year-Long Star Party at Spruce Knob • NASM/Einstein Planetarium public observing • Newsletter now available via e-mail

Regular features • President's message • Upcoming NOVAC & NCA meetings • New members • NOVAC meeting highlights • Sky maps • Jeff's observing report • Events in July and August



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