

NOVAC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

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January observing session a big success!

by Rob McKinney

On January 11, many NOVAC members turned out at Crockett Park for NOVAC's first Monthly Observing Session (MOS). Below is a report from Rob McKinney, one of the MOS organizers.

Thanks to all of you who made the first club observing session so great! We were rewarded with reasonably good weather given the season . . . there was even a lull in the breeze from after sunset till at least 9 pm, when I left. So, it was cold and the seeing wasn't great, but it was a gorgeous night with lots of folks to share the observing with.

So, thanks first to Bob Parks for the idea and to the Board for supporting the idea of MOS. A sincere thanks goes to everyone who braved the chill and the drive to be part of the MOS. Hopefully, you found the great turnout a good opportunity to visit other club members, gain observing or technical tips, and

simply feel part of our wonderful group.

Thanks go as well to the early arrivals, who hosted the Walkabout.

We ended up starting

see "Inaugural MOS" on page 5

*Left: Jim Richberg entertains a visitor to "Frankenscope."
Below: A long line of cars and telescopes stretched across the field at Crockett Park for the first official MOS.*

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hone your observing skills

How good an observer are you? The factors that influence your skill are eyesight, optics, experience, and seeing conditions. Eyesight and seeing conditions can't be changed other than better glasses and moving to the desert.

You can always throw either elbow grease or money at optics and you might get something better than you already have.



The one thing that is the easiest and cheapest to manage is experience. This can be done by constantly striving to see something just a little fainter, a bit more difficult than the stuff you show the public.

One technique is to use those openings in our cloud cover that may occasionally occur for a couple of hours. It is not worth the packing and the drive to a site—it would probably sock in before you got there. Go out into your yard in light pollution hell, preferable in December when your neighbor's Christmas lights are in your face, and use your binoculars to pick out something that you know is there. The inability to see marker stars makes long star hops necessary. The familiar cluster you can see naked eye on a dark site becomes a challenge. A few sessions of this exercise will really sharpen your eye for faint fuzzy hunting. —Ed. ✪

PHOTO BY BOB PARKS



PHOTO BY ED SEWARD



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NOVAC outreach survey

by Bob Traube

This year the NOVAC Outreach program is reaching out to you, its members, to help bring astronomy to our communities. Our goal is to match the “willing” with the “wanting.” We want to match the members who are willing to help with specific types of activities with the groups wanting that type of NOVAC support.

To find out who you are and how you want to help, we have prepared a survey for each of you to complete and return to us. The survey lists most of the types of activities that we support throughout the year. All you have to do is mark the box that corresponds to an activity that interests you. When an activity like that is requested, we will *ask you* if you want to participate.

How about an example: Let's say you told us in your survey that you lived at zip code 20812 and that you would be willing to give a talk on astronomy, in the evening, to adult community centers, high school students, Boy Scouts, or Girl Scouts. When Troop XYZ contacts us for an evening talk in Bethesda (zip code 20810), we will call you and *ask* if you are available. You can use one of the prepared presentations (currently under construction) or you can draw from these presentations, your expertise, and other materials to create your own talk.

Ideally we will urge the groups asking for support to attend one of our Monthly Observing Sessions, but even then, it would be nice to have a specific point of contact for the group.

Here's all you have to do:

1. Get a copy of the NOVAC Outreach Information Sheet.

You can get one from any of the following:

- Page 3 of this newsletter
- The NOVAC website
- The membership package
- The NOVAC mail list
- Call or send an e-mail request to trauber@aol.com and Bob Traube will send you one right out.

2. Fill out the survey and tell us how you would like to help throughout the year. Be sure to include your zip code.

3. E-mail it back to Bob Traube (trauber@aol.com). If you can't e-mail it, call Bob at 703-492-1894 and he will give

you the snail mail address to use.

That's it. After that, we will enter your information into the outreach database and call you when something interesting comes up. To keep this from becoming a burden on anyone and to give as many of you as possible the opportunity to participate, we will spread the calls around as much as possible. But first we need to know who wants to help!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of the outreach committee members.

Bob Traube 703-492-1894
trauber@aol.com

Bob Garrett
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Tyler Swing
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Thanks, and see you out there . . . ★

Survey instructions

Thank you for offering to share your time, talents, and knowledge with the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club (NOVAC) and with the communities we serve. If you have any questions about this information sheet, or if you would like to volunteer in the future, please contact one of the following NOVAC Outreach Coordinator Committee Members, listed above.

Please fill in the information on page 3 and check *all* areas for which you would like to volunteer. Then mail the survey to Bob Traube at 12159 Pine-needle Ct, Woodbridge, VA 22192. Or you can fill out the survey online at the NOVAC website (www.novac.com) and submit your responses by e-mail.

When NOVAC needs volunteers for any of the types of activities you checked, we will contact you and let you know how you can help. We will do our best to spread the “wealth” around and contact as many of you as we can. ★

NOVAC Outreach Volunteer Information Sheet, 2003

Name:

Phone:

Home zip code (Important!):

E-mail:

Check all activities that you would be willing to assist with:

- Develop a presentation (using slides, overhead projector, or computer) for use by others on some aspect of astronomy of interest to the general public.
- Give an indoor presentation or demonstration about some aspect of astronomy to a group of people using a prepared or original presentation (for example, classroom or service club presentations).
 - I can do this on weekends
 - I can do this on weekdays during the evening
 - I can do this on weekdays during the day
- Lead a nighttime sky tour for a small group of people.
- Lead a nighttime sky tour for a larger group of people with help from other NOVAC volunteers.
- Support a nighttime sky tour (led by someone else) by sharing your knowledge of the sky with others. (Telescope, binoculars, etc., are a plus, but NOT required.)

Select the types of groups you would be willing to work with:

- Adult community groups
- High school
- Middle school (supervised)
- Boy Scouts (supervised)
- Girl Scouts (supervised)
- Cub Scouts, etc. (supervised)
- Brownies, etc. (supervised)

If you checked one of the boxes above, how far would you be willing to travel to support one of these activities? _____ miles

- Participate in NOVAC's Mentor Program to help others become more proficient in astronomy. (Want a mentor? Contact Kevin Beamer at k_beamer@yahoo.com.)
- Serve as Crockett Park Observing Coordinator on selected evenings.
- Serve as NOVAC Monthly Observing Sessions Coordinator on selected evenings.
- Serve as a NOVAC point of contact for the media (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.).
- Man an observing station (clusters, planets, etc.) during one of NOVAC's annual star parties.
- Help with NOVAC star party logistics (set up, tear down, traffic control, etc.).
- Judge a science fair for:
 - Junior High School
 - High School

During the warmer weather, the National Air and Space Museum has traditionally sponsored an observing program on one Saturday each month. While not an official NOVAC event, we have supported it well in the past and hope to continue that support.

- If you are *not* on the NOVAC Mailing list, and would like to be notified when these events are planned, check this block.

List any other talents or services you have that might be helpful to the NOVAC outreach effort:

Mail your completed survey to:
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Note: This directory is not to be reproduced or used for any commercial purpose.

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Inaugural MOS draws a crowd, from page 1

our “program” at 4:30 instead of 4:00, and had about two dozen folks there at that time.

If you found the information on the MOS handout useful and interesting, please thank Ed Seward. Between writing that up, scouting Crockett, posting his comet tracking link, helping guide late arrivals safely to good parking spots, and helping in ways he’s too humble to take credit for, Ed really made this MOS a success.

By the way, don’t forget to touch base with Kevin Beamer for mentor/mentee help.

I’d like to thank Jakob Hand for the “official” car count. He scurried up and down the field more than once to update our attendance. At the peak, we had 45 cars in the field and 16 in the parking lot! Sixty-one vehicles, with most in a wonderfully long row, scores of scopes set up behind them—what a sight! More than 61 folks came out

and I believe all but two or three cars were NOVACers. Some came in after the count, and a few cars brought more than one person, so I think it’s safe to say we had upwards of 70–75 people in attendance. Super!

We’d appreciate your feedback on the “organized” aspects of MOS: what you liked, what you’d like to see done differently, and so on. Please send your comments off-list to Bob Parks (MOS Coordinator) who can share it with the volunteers who’ll conduct future MOS. And if you would like to run one of these sessions, let him know!

Cheers! ★

Monthly observing sessions, 2003

Date	Location	Notes
March 8	Crockett Park	Make-up date for February
March 29	Camp Highroad	Messier Marathon
April 5	Mason Neck Park	
May 10	Crockett Park	Astronomy Day
June 21	Crockett Park	NOVAC Picnic
July 5	Camp Highroad	
August 23	Camp Highroad	Mars Mania
September 20	Crockett Park	NOVAC Star Gaze
October 18	Mason Neck Park	
November 29	Crockett Park	
December 13	Crockett Park	Geminid Meteor Shower



Meeting highlights

Annual Meeting

Tuesday, January 7, 2003

Arlington Planetarium

- ★ **Pedro Martinez** presented the **financial results for 2002** (page 8). Revenue was \$14,672.84 and expenditures were \$12,458.30, both within about \$200 of budget projections. The net revenue brings the club's cash at end of period to \$15,475.98. Questions and comments focused on the cost of the Savage portajohn, prospects for income from Spruce Knob, and the trend in non-renewing versus new members.
- ★ Pedro also presented a **draft budget for 2003** (page 9). Projected revenue would be \$14,105 while expenditures would be \$16,105, producing a \$2000 deficit. Questions and comments focused on increasing electronic distribution of newsletter to cut costs.
- ★ **Tilly Smith** reported that the Memoranda of Understanding for use of **Crockett Park** and for use of **Savage** have been approved.
- ★ **Bill Burton** spoke about past use of **Franklin Park** and the unfortunate cancellation of the **Star Gaze** there because of the sniper attacks in the region. He asked how Franklin fits into the picture, given the club's scheduling of observing sessions at **Crockett and Mason Neck**. The Board voted to continue to support Franklin Park activities. It was suggested that events could be scheduled at Franklin on nights other than those conflicting with major club events.
- ★ **Mike Mills** indicated that the **mirror is finished** and being returned; it is now en route. The mirror was chipped at the edge and repaired by grinding down to 34" diameter.
- ★ **Ed Karch** reported that a request was made to purchase an **18" Discovery Dobsonian** telescope, to be kept at **Camp Highroad**. Several reasons were raised for not doing this, including security of the telescope.

- ★ **Rob McKinney** suggested consideration of an **Adopt-a-School program**. He also asked if the club had a public relations officer.

General Membership Meeting

Sunday, January 12, 2003

George Mason University

- ★ **Sixty-nine people were in attendance**, including several first-time visitors. A large number of those in attendance were at the previous night's **Monthly Observing Session** at Crockett.
- ★ **Rob McKinney** reported an incredible turnout at the January 11 Monthly Observing Session (MOS), with more than 60 cars lined up in the field or in the gravel parking lot.
- ★ **Craig Tupper** reported that the group preparing the **Robotic Telescope project** is looking at various shelter designs—with one model on display at the meeting—and hopes to have the project going this summer. An **LX200 equipped with a CCD camera** will be located on a restricted access, private lot with other observatories in the mountains of West Virginia, accessible via the internet by NOVAC members for imaging projects.
- ★ **John Avellone** presented **Tom Littlejohn** with an Honorary Messier Certificate and pin.
- ★ **John Deriso** reported the **library** is in his basement. Let him know if you want to pick something up or have him bring it to the next meeting. The catalogue is online.
- ★ **One new telescope owner** rose to express appreciation for the **mentor program** and its manager, **Kevin Beamer**, for all of the assistance. He recommended that the program be continued and supported by the club.
- ★ **Sean O'Brien** reported that an executive decision was made in Virginia to curtail activity and hours of operation at **Sky**

Meadows State Park, which means that it is not now possible to schedule the popular astronomy program there organized by the **NASM's Einstein Planetarium**. It is possible that the passing of the state budget in April could allow resumption of the program there. Until then, it is unclear what to do.

- ★ **Bob Traube** thanked **Ed Witkowski** for handling public outreach almost single-handedly last year. He reported that a group including him, **Bob Garrett and Tyler Swing** will be organizing events this year. They will be sending out a request for information from members on their location and ability to help with requests to NOVAC by various groups.
- ★ **Alan Figgatt** conducted the **Sky Tour**. He noted that **Comet Kudo-Fujikawa** is up in the early morning sky and will disappear in the sun. He then focused on Canis Major, in particular the difficult **8.5-mag companion to -1.4 mag Sirius, known as the Pup**, but showed on a chart that the separation will be increasing over the next 2 decades. He also noted the difficulty in splitting the double **Adhara** (epsilon Canis Majoris), due not to the separation but the magnitude difference between the two stars and their low altitude from our latitudes. M41 is, on the other hand, a nice, easy open cluster, and **NGC 2360, 2362 and 2374** are also nice open clusters found in the constellation.
- ★ **Ed Witkowski** also spoke about the list of lists he is circulating to encourage people to observe. The lists, from the **Astronomical League**, range from objects that can be seen with binoculars to those needing telescopes, as well as from urban to dark skies.
- ★ **Pete Johnson** gave the guest presentation: **"What's Up? Planning an Observing Session."** Pete explained that planning helps motivate and manage observing time and is something to do on rainy nights. He noted and described such resources as observing lists, sky atlases, reference books, and observing books.

Some are portable and enhance mobility whereas others are more suitable for home reference. Other resources include: *S&T* magazine, a planisphere, Sky Cards and, of course, the Internet, with the SEDS website being particularly useful. He maintained that a dedicated observer:

- Reads more than observes, explaining the payoff of being an armchair astronomer
- Has a layered approach, with more than one instrument for observing
- Joins special interest news groups on the internet
- Plans to be spontaneous, especially in being able to react to suddenly favorable weather
- Sets goals.

Board of Trustees Meeting Tuesday, February 4, 2003

Arlington Planetarium

★ **Joe Pierson**, Membership Director, stated that he was taking the responsibility for the **Membership Guide** previously held by Mike Mills.

★ **Club Telescopes and Binoculars Report**—**Alan Figgatt** received from NOVAC member **Phil Herron** two binoculars donated to the club for membership use. A few corrections were suggested to the list of telescopes and the contact points for borrowing them.

★ **Bill Burton** thanked the Board for supporting activities at **Franklin Park** and indicated that a couple of events were being planned there in Spring and Summer. It was suggested that, while one MOS was already dedicated to observing Mars, the planet's historic apparition in 2003 might generate sufficient public interest to warrant an additional event at Franklin Park.

General Membership Meeting Sunday, February 9, 2003

George Mason University

★ 56 people were in attendance.

★ **Bob Stewart** spoke on the **Mentor Program**. He indicated that efforts will be made to give assistance at **Monthly Observing Sessions**. Bob also spoke on the **VOID group**. He will have video set-

ups at selected upcoming Monthly Observing Sessions.

★ **Bob Parks** spoke about **Monthly Observing Sessions**, noting the good turnout the night before at Mason Neck (although the MOS had technically been postponed until February 22 due to bad weather.)

★ **Bob Garrett** spoke for the **Outreach Committee**, asking people to fill out the survey developed on the website. He also noted requests for assistance from the **National Air and Space Museum** as well as from those seeking to clean up the **observatory at McLean High School**.

★ **John Deriso** presented some gifts to **Bob Stewart** for taking care of the grass at several observing sites. John also announced that 2 new binoculars are now available for loan to club members.

★ **Sky Tour**—**Alan Figgatt** focused on the upcoming "Mars Attack," or **apparition**

of Mars. It will be better situated in the southern sky than two years ago but will still be fairly low, which may prompt people to travel to Florida to see it. Alan finally focused on Jupiter, which just passed opposition. Now is the opportunity to view **interesting configurations of Jupiter's moons**, including mutual eclipses and occultations.

★ **Presentation**—**Dr. Harold Geller** of George Mason University spoke on **amateur radio astronomy**. He described plans currently underway to have a **radio telescope at George Mason** and expects that, once operating, it could be used by NOVAC members. Dr. Geller described the mechanism of a radio telescope, focusing on the 100 mm **Greenbank telescope**, the largest steerable telescope in the world, and the **Goldstone-Very Large Array** system used for measuring distances to objects in space.

Submitted by Bob Hand, Secretary.

Upcoming NOVAC meeting programs

March 9, 2003

Using digital weather forecasting in astronomy • Bob Bunge

The National Weather Service has recently started to produce digital forecasts that show some promise for more accurate weather predictions at observing sites. Forecasts every three hours and for 5-kilometer grids are two of the more interesting developments. The program will be a discussion of how the digital forecasts are produced, their pros and cons, and how amateur astronomers might use some of the web interfaces into these products.

April 13, 2003

The NOVAC "RoboScope" robotic telescope • Craig Tupper

Craig will update the club on the status and plans for NOVAC's robotic observatory, a remote-controlled, internet-operated rig that will be available to all members for CCD imaging. Planned to go into operation this summer, the project is described at www.novac.com/robo. Come find out the latest and ask any questions you may have.

May 18, 2003 *note special day*

Get ready for Mars! • Mike Mills

The 2003 apparition of Mars promises to give observers a once-in-a-lifetime chance to view the red planet. Throughout the year, as Mars gradually comes closer to Earth than it has been in some 70,000 years, amateur astronomers will have a great opportunity to contribute to planetary science by photographing or sketching the Martian disk. This presentation will cover how to prepare to observe Mars, how to record what you see, and what to do with the images that you get.

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 ctupper@erols.com know. Come share and learn about your favorite topic!

Northern Virginia Astronomy Club Projected 2003 Budget

Revenues	
Membership Dues	
Renewals Regular & Additional	9,465.00
New Members Regular & Additional	3,640.00
Total for Membership	13,105.00
Interest Income	200.00
NOVAC T-Shirt & Sticker Sales	600.00
Spruce Knob	200.00
Total Revenues Expected	\$14,105.00

Expenditures	
Newsletter	
Printing	3,500.00
Postage	500.00
Total for Newsletter Expenditures	4,000.00
Astronomical League Dues	1,900.00
Library books	100.00
Observing Site Expenses	
Porta-Jon Rental-Savage Farm	878.00
Porta-Jon Rental-Camp Highroad	794.00
Spruce Knob Site Lease	840.00
Other Improvements	188.00
Total for Observing Site Expenses	2,700.00
NOVAC Annual Picnic: Food & Supplies	250.00
NOVAC Star Party	
Publicity	25.00
Printing	35.00
Miscellaneous	140.00
Total Star Party Expenses	200.00
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
Big Monster-34 1/2 inch Telescope	1,500.00
Robotic Telescope	3,000.00
New Projects	400.00
Administrative	
Liability Insurance	300.00
Printing-Membership Applications	20.00
Printing-Stationary	20.00
Printing Administrative	170.00
Postage	500.00
Supplies	150.00
State Registration Fee	25.00
Personal Property Tax	120.00
Printing-New Checks	15.00
Bank Service Charge	10.00
Total for Administrative Expenses	1,330.00
Total Expenditures	\$16,105.00
Net Revenue/Loss	(\$2,000.00)

Expenditures Per Member

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Newsletter	\$8.64	\$6.43	\$7.78	\$7.28	\$7.94
IDA Membership	\$0.26	\$0.24	\$0.21	\$0.20	\$0.20
Astronomical					
League	\$2.68	\$3.07	\$3.62	\$3.36	\$3.77
Administrative	\$3.15	\$3.27	\$2.54	\$2.00	\$2.64
Operations	\$5.90	\$6.11	\$5.32	\$11.23	\$16.78
Total	\$20.63	\$19.12	\$19.47	\$24.07	\$31.33

Announcements

New mentor program

by Kevin Beamer

NOVAC is pleased to announce its new mentor program. The mentor program is an effort to accomplish the goal of the second part of the NOVAC slogan, "... and to help others observe." The mentor program helps novice observers get in touch with more experienced observers (mentors) who can help them with questions, developing observing skills, and assist them with selecting and using equipment.

Some areas that mentors can help novice observers with are:

- **Stellar navigation**—finding and identifying constellations and bright stars, star hopping, finding alignment stars for go-to scopes, using star charts.
- **Observing techniques**—finding deep-sky objects, planetary observing, keeping a log book.
- **Equipment**—selecting a new telescope, selecting additional equipment (eyepieces, filters, etc.), setting up and aligning a telescope.
- **NOVAC site logistics**—finding and getting into NOVAC sites. Although the directions on the web site are very good, novice observers may want to follow someone to a site for the first time.

If you want help from a mentor

Send me an e-mail at k_beamer@yahoo.com, and let me know the areas with which you would like help. I will get you in touch with a mentor who is familiar with those areas. You can then set up a mutually convenient time and location to meet. The NOVAC Monthly Observing Sessions are good times to meet, since there will be other NOVAC members around to help in the event that you "stump" the mentor.

If you would like to be a mentor

You do not need to be an extremely advanced observer with ten years of experience and a 20" dob to be a mentor. All you need is to feel comfortable in some observing skills or area of knowledge, and a desire to help someone with less experience. You will help them get started observing, improve their observing skills, and perhaps steer them away from some of the mistakes that you made when you first started.

Send me an e-mail at k_beamer@yahoo.com. I will send you a short questionnaire that will ask about your observing experience. As requests for assistance are received, you will be contacted to see if you can help. After that, you can get in touch with the observer who requested help to set up a time and place to meet.

NOVAC robotic telescope project donations, as of January 2003

Pedro Martinez, Treasurer

NOVAC would like to knowledge receipt of charitable contributions from the following individuals for the robotic telescope project. These contributions are tax deductible (for tax year 2002) under the IRS Section 501(c)(3). Additional contributions will be welcomed and appreciated.

Dr. Bruce Wetzel	\$ 50.00
Jean-Paul Richard	50.00
Michele Fain	25.00
Beau Harbin	20.00
Robert McKinney	20.00
Total	\$165.00

Video and digital imaging special interest group (VOID)

by Robert Stewart

A new special interest group has been formed to facilitate the burgeoning video astronomy/digital camera arena. The NOVAC Video Occultation Image Digital (V.O.I.D.) group aims to help foster an interest in planetary, lunar and deep sky video astronomy. My particular interests lie in lunar occultations (did you see the *awesome* video Ed Karch made in the parking lot of the Arlington Planetarium?), but that will not be the only focus. With the upcoming best in our lifetime Mars season approaching, a great many opportunities will present themselves for videotaping and digital photography of the Red Planet.

So if you think you might be interested, step off into the VOID. If you have questions, e-mail Stew at rhshrs1@msn.com, and keep an eye on the NOVAC web page for information as the group develops.

Messier Marathon 2003

First Annual NOVAC Extreme "Messython"

March 2003—first weekend and last weekend are the best for observing

Simple rules: • No charts • No go-to • Do it from memory

Contact Stew at rhshrs1@msn.com for a copy of the rules.
Good luck!

Events in 2003

<p>March</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 2 11 18 24 NEW FIRST FULL LAST </p> <p>1-2 7-9 21-23 29-31 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>8 Public observing (Crockett)</p> <p>9 General meeting</p> <p>29 Monthly observing – Messier Marathon (Camp Highroad)</p> <p>1-9 21-31 Crockett open</p>	<p>April</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 1 9 16 23 NEW FIRST FULL LAST </p> <p>4-6 25-27 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>5 Public observing (Crockett)</p> <p>5 Monthly observing (Mason Neck)</p> <p>13 General meeting</p> <p>1-8 23-30 Crockett open</p>	<p>May</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 1 9 15 22 31 NEW FIRST FULL LAST NEW </p> <p>2-4 23-25 30-31 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>10 Monthly observing & Astronomy Day Star Party (Crockett)</p> <p>18 General meeting (special date)</p> <p>1-11 23-31 Crockett open</p>
<p>June</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 7 14 21 29 FIRST FULL LAST NEW </p> <p>6-8 20-22 27-29 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>8 General meeting</p> <p>21 Monthly observing & NOVAC Picnic (Crockett)</p> <p>1-8 20-30 Crockett open</p>	<p>July</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 6 13 21 29 FIRST FULL LAST NEW </p> <p>4-6 25-27 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>5 Monthly observing (Camp Highroad)</p> <p>13 General meeting</p> <p>26 Public observing (Crockett)</p> <p>1-6 21-31 Crockett open</p>	<p>August</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 5 12 19 27 FIRST FULL LAST NEW </p> <p>1-3 22-24 29-31 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>10 General meeting</p> <p>23 Monthly observing – Mars Mania! (Camp Highroad)</p> <p>30 Public observing (Crockett)</p> <p>1-3 20-31 Crockett open</p>
<p>September</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 3 10 18 25 FIRST FULL LAST NEW </p> <p>13-14 19-21 26-28 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>14 General meeting</p> <p>20 Monthly observing & NOVAC Star Gaze (Crockett)</p> <p>1-2 13-30 Crockett open</p>	<p>October</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 2 10 18 25 31 FIRST FULL LAST NEW FIRST </p> <p>17-19 24-26 31 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>12 General meeting</p> <p>18 Public observing (Crockett)</p> <p>18 Monthly observing (Mason Neck)</p> <p>1 17-31 Crockett open</p>	<p>November</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 8 16 23 30 FULL LAST NEW FIRST </p> <p>21-23 28-29 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>9 General meeting</p> <p>29 Monthly observing & public night (Crockett)</p> <p>1-2 17-30 Crockett open</p>
<p>December</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 8 16 23 30 FULL LAST NEW FIRST </p> <p>13-14 19-21 26-28 Prime observing weekends</p> <p>13 Monthly observing & public night (Crockett)</p> <p>14 General meeting</p> <p>13-28 Crockett open</p>	<p>January 2004</p>	<p>February 2004</p>

“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 Room 80 of the Enterprise Building 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 that members may borrow from by contacting John Deriso (seaotter@bellatlantic.net). A full list of titles is available from the club website.

Club website

Up to date information about club events and activities is maintained on the club website at 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

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@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: April 11 for the May/June 2003 newsletter.**

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