

MESSIER MARATHON SOCIAL APRIL 17

This year the MAS is planning a social get together to foster camaraderie amongst members and allow us to do some observing together and get started on that Messier Certificate. The date is April 17 at 5:00 PM to ??, rain or shine. This event will be held in lieu of our regular April membership meeting.

For those who may not be familiar with the Messier Club, it is a program sponsored by the Astronomical League to foster observing and learning about the sky and one's telescope. The Messier Club awards a handsome pin and a regular certificate for observing 70 Messier objects and an honorary certificate for observing all 107 objects. These objects are the

best showpieces in the sky so it is a good way for a beginner with a small telescope to survey a wide variety of celestial sights and learn how to find your way around the sky in the process. A binocular version of the Messier club awards a pin & certificate after only 50 objects!

There will be information available on the Messier Certificates and other Astronomical League observing programs including a Lunar Certificate at this event. There will also be experienced observers available to help you with using your telescope or using one at the observatory.

In addition to the observing, we want this to be a social event, too. So we are asking anyone who comes to bring a dish to pass around and share. While there is power at the observatory, the electrical system is old so we want to discourage lots of dependance on power. We will have hot drinks and soda available as well as eating utensils.

If the skies are not clear, bring a favorite card or board game to pass some time and meet the other members of the MAS.

Come one, come all and lets make this get together a fun time!

MAS May Election Notice

The offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer are up for annual election. Additionally four board seats are up for election (two year terms). If you have any desire to run for one of these -positions, please contact Scott Jamieson or any officer or board member . The election will be the MAS observatory, May 21st, 8:00PM

Coming Attractions

The warmer climes approacheth the upcoming months and it is hoped that, with all the scope renovation/ repair there will also be an upsurge in observatory site useage. Its probably something our Tucson brethren don't have to experience (ie freezing your eyeball to the eyepiece!) in the winter months.

Its also a time when we will be razing the Quonset hut that served us so well for many years and erecting a brand new meeting hall in its place. This is premised on the building committee headed, by Vern Hoag, clearing the building plans and structure with the city, Vern is still looking for people to sign up to help build the structure using our "sweat Equity".

There are eight MAS open houses starting this month, thru summer and into fall. An article by Lee Keith, inside, sounds the clarion call and details the people needs.

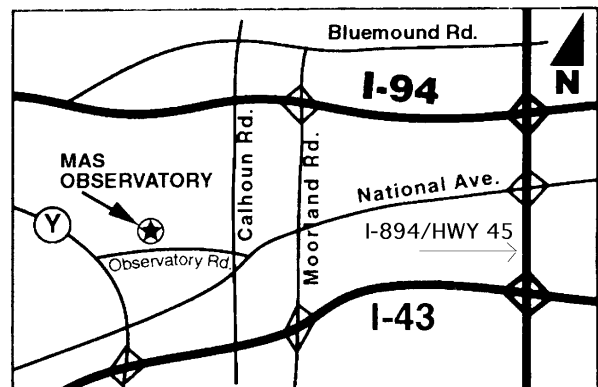
The annual Summer picnic is July 17th and has recently turned into a gastronomical event that "on the house". Don't plan your supper that Saturday!

Lastly, our Fall Campout at the Greenbush site of the north Kettle Moraine is slated for Oct 8& 9th.

Let the good times roll!

No Regular MAS Meeting in April

The regular MAS monthly meeting is canceled this month in order to give priority to the Messier hunt on Saturday, May 17th (see article elsewhere). **However, a very brief Board meeting will be held at 7:00PM preceding the nights activities.**



Presidents Message

I hope that many people will participate in the Messier Hunt scheduled for April 17 out at the observatory. I have found over the years that many people get in, and then out of, amateur astronomy because they really don't have enough knowledge of the sky to feel comfortable with their ability to find things and soon get bored with what is easy to find. The five brightest planets are easy to find and see through a telescope, but there is usually not enough detail to hold an observers interest for more than a short time each evening.

The moon has a wealth of detail, but unless you really study the geology of the moon and know what you're looking at, it too can fade in interest. (For many of us it is usually the object of irritation because it's light is blocking out what we really want to see!) My own reason for being interested in amateur astronomy has always had more to do with my love of building telescopes than in using them.

In the last couple of years, however, I have spent more time around others in the club that really are enthusiastic observers and have found that the thrill of the hunt can be a real reward for the work involved in finding objects. While I will admit that the CCD camera that the MAS now owns has made a dramatic difference in the joy I get from finding an object, it is easy to find much better images of anything I want to see on the Internet or in books. My point is that it is not the image that is thrilling, it is only the dramatic proof that I was able to find and document an object that 99.9% of the worlds population does not even know exists!

I am not a hunter of game or a fisherman, though I have tried both. I am a hunter of galaxies and clusters of thousands of stars. I delight in giant clouds of gas because I know that, in some, new worlds are being born. I look at these objects and know that I own a time machine because I am seeing them with light that left them eons ago. I ask myself what they would look like now from close up and realize that the study of astronomy is the only way to try to answer that question Like most endeavors, the more you understand, the more interesting the subject becomes.

When we have our Messier hunt, it is true that we will be hunting dim fuzzy patches of light and that it is easy to be disappointed with an object once it is found. It is the knowledge of what that fuzzy patch of light represents that makes it become real. It is good to remember the hunter who hunts big game with a camera or the fisherman who throws all the fish he catches back. In the end, it was the pride in the ability to mount a successful hunt, not eating the fish, that brings the satisfaction.

So, come join us on our expedition, the game is big and the jungle is huge, but the pleasure of finding these elusive objects can be very real.

Scott Jamieson, President MAS

WE NEED OPEN HOUSE SPEAKERS!

This is the annual call for speakers to give a short (15 min) program on each of the open house nights. These programs are geared to a grade school audience. Because of the possible construction of the new building, we may not have an auditorium so we may have to wing it outside. We may hang a sheet on Z-building and have an outside show, weather permitting. If you would like to talk on one of the open house topics below, call Lee Keith at 425-2331 ASAP.

In addition to speakers, I want to encourage members to come out and help with the crushing crowds that attend all open houses. :-) If it cloudy, less people are needed, but on clear nights we need everyone that can come. Not surprisingly, clear nights are MUCH more popular than cloudy ones. We need members to direct people coming in from the parking lot; help out with sales of the Astronomical materials we have available; operate a telescope (your own or one from the MAS); talk with our visitors about our organization and the wonders of the sky. It really is a rewarding experience to share your enthusiasm for the hobby with newcomers. Please come out to share the fun! Open house dates are the following Fridays:

April 23	Constellation Myths
April 30	Moon Illusion
May 7	Spring Galaxies
May 14	Mars Looms Large

Aug 13	Perseid Meteor Shower
Aug 27	See the Center of the Milky Way
Sept 24	What's a Globular Cluster?
Oct 1	How to Buy a Telescope

GOT THE OLD MAGAZINE BLUES?

Donate those old unneeded back issues of Astronomy or Sky & Telescope magazines to the MAS to give out at Open Houses. They will be put to good use inspiring the next generation of astronomers. Just leave them at the Observatory with a note that they are to be given away

Editors Note: With the Open house season about to commence, now is the time to bring in those old Astronomy and Sky & Telescope magazines. If your like many, you've archived years worth of these magazines with good intentions of looking at them again. Except for a select few issues that probably won't happen...so bring in those issues for distribution to our Open House visitors where they will do some good!

MAS ASTRONOMY SOFTWARE LIBRARY AVAILABLE

The MAS has many megabytes of shareware astronomy software for IBM PCs that is available for no charge. Just send enough diskettes to hold about 17 MB of data (13 3.5" 1.44 MB floppies) to Lee Keith, MAS Computer Group, 8150 S. Legend Dr., Franklin, WI 53132-9623. Please include return postage and a mailing label with your return address.

Library News

This is the final listing of Brian Ganiere's donation of numerous books. All but the first are second copies for our library, but this serves as a reminder of the wide selection of materials available to all members;...

1. New Horizons in Amateur Astronomy: How to search for Meteors, Planets, Galaxies, Variable Stars, Comets, Satellites, Novas, and More; Grant Fjermedal - 1989.

2. Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space; Carl Sagan - 1994.

3. Chasing The Shadow: An Observer's Guide to Eclipses; Joel Harris and Richard Talcott - 1994.

4. What If The Moon Didn't Exist: Voyages to earths that Might Have Been; Neil F. Comins - 1993.

5. Beginner's Guide To Amateur Astronomy: An Owner's Manual for the Night Sky; David J. Eicher - 1993.

6. Observing The Constellations: An A - Z Guide for the Amateur Astronomer; John Sanford - 1989.

7. Thunderstones And Shooting Stars: The Meaning of Meteorites; Robert T. Dodd - 1986.

8. 365 Starry Nights: An Introduction to Astronomy for Every Night of the Year; Chet Raymo - 1982.

....the MAS Library contains over 500 books, Charts-atlases, over a dozen VHS videos and computer disks, and over 1200 visual slides. These resources can be used by any member by arrangement with a keyholder on Saturday member nights, on meeting nights (when at the Observatory) or by arrangement with the Librarian for special circumstances. Again thank you Brian and the many members that have made contributions to the MAS, making our library one of the most extensive, private Astronomy collections in Wisconsin.

Scott Jamieson, MAS Librarian 421-3517

Eds note: The MAS Library has to be one of the big, mostly undiscovered, resources available to all members (for free). In addition to donated materials, such as above, Scott is typically given a \$300 budget every year for new books and material acquisitions. Scott has obtained institutional type discounts (up to 40%) from various book sellers and, as a result, significant quantities of new and current Astronomy books are purchased every year. If you're thinking of buying a book, come in and take a look at our collection.... we probably have it already.

All ya gotta do is ask.....

Opportunities abound for learning to do Grazes, Occultations, Variable Star observing, etc. All you have to do is ask Observatory Director, Gerry Samolyk, "How do I get started?"

Focal Point Mail - A Free Remote Telescope Site

I read this article in the December 28, 1998 issue of the Northwest Herald written by Amy Beth Graves of the Associated Press and thought that other club members might find it interesting as well.

"CLEVELAND - Those with a favorite spot in space now can capture that image by accessing and operating an 8-ton robotic telescope."

"On Dec. 15, Case Western Reserve University's telescope went online, allowing amateur and professional astronomers to ask for specific images of celestial bodies."

"To our knowledge, it's the only one the general public will have access to. There were others, but they are no longer online," said Earle Luck, chairman of the school's department."

"Astronomers can have free access to the telescope by filling out a form on the university's web site. They must provide the name of the celestial body, exposure time and if they want colored filters to be used. After the pictures are taken at the Nassau Astronomical Station, they automatically are sent via e-mail to those who requested them."

"No images of the moon or sun are allowed because they are too bright and can damage the telescope. The equipment can focus on faraway stars but is not yet designed to take snapshots of planets or comets."

"Processing requests can take anywhere from days to months, depending on how many people ask for images and how difficult they are to obtain, according to directions on the web site. Fifteen percent of the observing time will be devoted to the public, 20 percent to secondary schools and the rest is for Case Western faculty and students, Luck said."

"The 36-inch telescope sat idle for more than a decade before Luck came up with the idea three years ago for its current use. The astronomy department spent more than \$200,000, some from private donors, to modernize it and get the computer system running."

"When all goes well, teachers will be able to introduce their students to the mysteries of the universe through the telescope and not just through books, Luck said."

"But the location of the observatory could affect how many requests are processed. The telescope is perched high on a hill in Geauga County just east of Chardon, a traditional snowbelt area."

"The telescope starts operating after an outside camera indicates it has kept the North Star in sight for 30 minutes straight, meaning the weather is clear."

mike marinelle, M²

In the May Issue....

We hope to add a Photo section to the May issue of FP that features some newly acquired CCD images including one of a Quasar complete with axial jet.

Lastly, we want to print a listing of new members (including family members) since last fall, because we really do appreciate your joining!

MAS Officers/ Staff

President	Scott Jamieson	896-0119
Vice President	Lee Keith	425-2331
Treasurer	Dan Yanko	453-3382
Secretary	Margaret Warner	327-7427
Observatory Director	Gerry Samolyk	529-9051
Assistant Observatory Director	Paul Borchardt	781-0169
Focal Point	Rudy Poklar, Editor	786-8931

Future MAS Events

April 17 (Saturday) Messier Hunt At MAS (no April 16th meeting).
 MAS Open House: APR 23,30; May 7, 14; Aug 13, 27; Sep 24; Oct 1 (see article inside).

MAS Membership is open to all with an interest in Astronomy and expanding their knowledge of the Universe. Yearly Membership Dues are: Individual \$28/yr; Family \$32; Non-resident (individual \$18, Family \$22); Student (under 18) \$12. **For more information, contact Membership Chairperson Julie Frey, 11040 W. Meinecke Avenue, Milwaukee WI.**

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines
 Focal Point Newsletter is published monthly from Sept through May with a Mid-summer issue in July. Articles, Announcements, Graphics, Photos, Swap/Sale Ads etc should be submitted at least 10 days prior to the first of the month (of the desired issue). Article inputs are preferred via E-Mail, or diskette in a text or Word compatible format, if possible. Submit FP inputs to:
 MAS Focal Point c/o Rudy Poklar
 12905 W. Crawford Drive

Saturday Keyholders

This program is intended for members only, who wish to use or familiarize themselves with the observatory scopes. Members can also obtain access to the observatory grounds for any evening by obtaining a gate cable key form the Observatory Director

April

3	Dan Yanko	453-3382
10	Wanda Burner	646-8229
17	Paul Borchardt	781-0169
24	Brian Ganiere	961-8745

May

1	Brian Garness	538-3888
8	Chris Hesseltine	482-4515
15	Vern Hoag	548-9130
22	Tim Hoff	662-2212
29	Scott Jamieson	896-0119

** If members want to be assured of observatory access on a given Saturday nite, they should call the keyholder ahead of time.*

Loaner Telescopes (available to members for local use)

Scott Jamieson (Waukesha)	896-0119	4"	f / 1 5 refractor
Lee Keith (Franklin)	425-2331	8"	Dob reflector
Rich Stearle (Greenfield)	543-7479	8"	Dob reflector

Visit our MAS Website:
<http://members.aol.com/masmemb/index.html>

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society
 2933 N.68th Street
 Milwaukee, WI. 53210-1208

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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PAID
 Permit # 4775
 Milwaukee, WI.

*** Regular April Meeting replaced by:
 -Messier Hunt Social nite, Saturday, April 17 at the MAS Observatory.
 * MAS Open houses, April 23, 30 at Observatory, 8:00PM**

