

**Milwaukee
Astronomical
Society**

18850 Observatory Rd
New Berlin, WI
Phone: 262-542-9071

We're on the web:
<http://www.milwaukeeastro.org>

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Focal Point

April 2010

With Little Fanfare— A Note From the President

With little fanfare this winter the MAS has begun again to look for a dark sky site. On the last day of February the observatory committee held a meeting to discuss where the observatory and the club was going to be in the immediate future. Members in attendance took turns listing their concerns about the observatory. In the end it was former president and founder member Scott Jamieson's turn to speak. His reasons for restarting the search were lucid.

With out a dark sky site, he believes that the MAS will cease to exist in 5 to 10 years. The reason? The average age of astronomy enthusiasts in the United States is in the mid-fifties. They are at a point in their lives where they have raised their kids, established themselves in their profession and

are beginning to look towards retirement and they have capital to spend on telescopes and equipment. What they don't have is easy access to dark skies, and that is something that the MAS cannot provide at this time. If you want to provide a service to your membership, a dark sky site goes a long way to doing that. The membership is dwindling. The MAS needs to reach out to the greater number of people interested in astronomy.

Yes, cultivating interest among the younger members is important. A positive experience now may very well generate a membership until career and family priorities captivate the free time necessary for the enjoyment of this hobby. These young members may very well come back when they reach the

middle of their lives. The question is will we still be in existence when they return.

The point was well received by many at that meeting, and questions abound. In answering them we did rehash much of what was discussed many years ago when the MAS started to look for land surrounded by that owned by the DNR.

Our previous concept of a move was to move all telescopes and buildings off the current grounds by a year after receiving the land and selling the New Berlin site to repay the large loan necessary. That in hindsight was a bit naïve to assume we could muster such manpower, that such a large portion of the membership would be available to help. Such an intense blitz of moving would have burned out many members also. Our current roster of members is much smaller now, so we have fewer

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Upcoming Elections

Every year the MAS holds elections for board members and officers. Board members serve for 3 year terms while the officers - president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer serve for a single year, with the exception of the Observatory Director who serves a 3 year term. Since there are 11 board members serving in a 3 year rotation, the number of seats available in a year follows a

4,4,3 pattern. This year we are holding elections for 4 seats.

Although not required by the by-laws, a nominating committee is formed for the purpose of seeking out individuals interested in filling vacant spots. For a change, this year we actually have a committee as opposed to one individual.

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Remember...
" Ask not what the Milwaukee Astronomical Society can do for you, but what you can do for The Milwaukee Astronomical Society".

Save The Date**April 16th**

Board Meeting
7:00 PM
Observatory

General Meeting
Members Only
Telescope Clinic
Observatory
8:00 PM

April 23rd

Public Observing
Lyrid Meteors
7:30 PM at the
Observatory

June 12th

Ottawa Lake Tele-
scope Clinic

August 6th & 7th

MAS Campout



Mercury is visible in the evening twilight.
Venus sets at 10p.m.
Mars crosses the meridian at 8 p.m., and sets at 3 a.m. **Jupiter** rises at 5 a.m. Saturn crosses the meridian at 11p.m. and sets at 6 a.m. (These times are local daylight time for an observer at 40° north latitude at midmonth)

At Your Service**Officers / Staff**

President	Neil Simmons	262-889-2039
Vice President	Tim Burrus	262-369-1022
Secretary	Henry Gemer	414-774-9194
Treasurer	Dan Yanko	262-255-3482
Observatory Director	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
Asst. Observatory Director	Henry Gemer	414-774-9194
Editor	Merri Tangney	941-961-4932

Board of Directors

Tim Burrus	262-369-1022
Russell Chabot	414-559-3502
Henry Gemer	414-774-9194
Al Hovey	262-524-5510
Kip Hoffman	920-980-0670
Jill Roberts	414-587-9422
Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
Lana Silke	262-966-4929
Neil Simmons	262-889-2039

Virgil Tangney	941-961-4932
Dan Yanko	262-255-3482

Key Holders

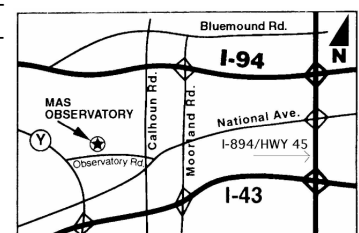
5/01/10	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517
5/08/10	Bob Manske	608-849-5287
5/15/10	Jill Roberts	414-587-9422
5/22/10	Terry Ross	262-784-2093
5/29/10	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
6/05/10	Tom Schmidt-kunz	414-352-1674
6/12/10	Neil Simmons	262-899-2093

Volunteers Needed

The grounds of the MAS Observatory are in need of a trim. Anyone having the time and talent to manicure the grounds is invited to contact Jill Roberts at 414-587-9422. Your help is greatly appreciated.

**April Board Meeting / Telescope Clinic**

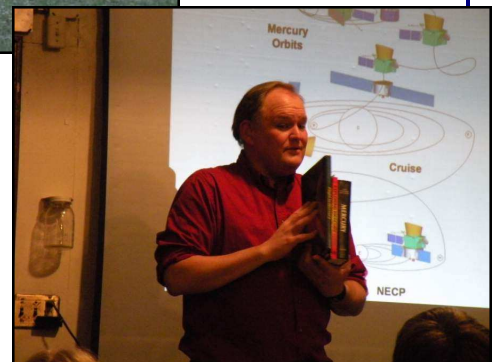
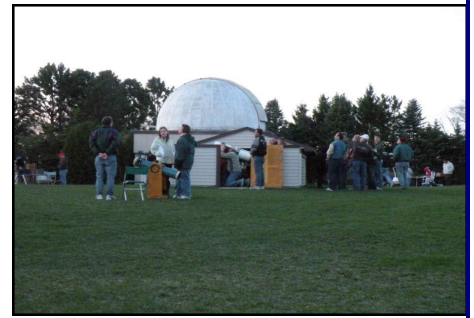
The next Board meeting is scheduled for 7:00 PM on April 16th, 2010 at the MAS Observatory located at 1880 Observatory Road in New Berlin. The general meeting, **open** to members only will follow at 8:00 PM with a telescope clinic.



WOW! What a response!

Enthusiasm from both the membership and from the public made our April 9th public viewing kickoff a huge success. To everybody who showed up to help I give you my thanks. According to Jill's counts we had well over a hundred people come through the gate. There was always a line up the stairs of Z-Dome it seems, and with members help, people saw every planet available (Jupiter being the oddball). It was certainly a wonderful time. ...Neil Simmons

Photos submitted by Russel Chabot



Kid's Corner—The Lyrid Meteors



Every year in late April Earth passes through the dusty tail of Comet Thatcher (C/1861 G1), and the encounter causes a meteor shower--the Lyrids. This year the shower peaks on Wednesday morning, April 22nd. The best time to look, no matter where you live, is during the dark hours before dawn. Lyrid meteors appear to stream from the bright star Vega in the constellation Lyra. As the Earth plows through Thatcher's drawn-out dusty tail, flakes of comet dust, most no bigger than grains of sand, strike Earth's atmosphere traveling 49 km/s (110,000 mph) and disintegrate as streaks of light--meteors! Lyrid meteors are typically as bright as the stars in the Big Dipper, which is to say of middling brightness. But some are more intense, even brighter than Venus.

These "Lyrid fireballs" cast shadows for a split second and leave behind

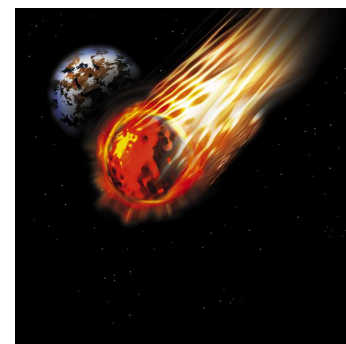
debris trails that linger for minutes. Occasionally, the shower intensifies. Most years in April there are no more than 5 to 20 meteors per hour during the shower's peak. But sometimes, when Earth glides through an unusually dense clump of comet debris, the rate increases.

What will the Lyrids do this year? The only way to know for sure is to go outside and look.

Your best bet for seeing the most meteors will be to get away from lights. Dress appropriately for the cool nights and use a lawn chair to lay flat, giving you the best view of as much of the sky as possible

Join the members of the MAS on Friday, April 23rd and send us your pho-

tos. We will publish them on the newsletter and possibly on the website.



The Milwaukee Astronomical Society

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society has a respectable antiquity, dating back to 1932. Among its early members were none other than Walter Scott Houston and Ed Halbach. MAS members are loyal, many retain their membership even when they move out of state. We even have members living in Colorado, Arizona and Florida!

The Society possesses a fine observatory and has an active observing program. It sponsors special projects to introduce members to various aspects of astronomy and special events which cover one-time observing opportunities. Activities include variable star observing, eclipsing binaries, RR Lyraes, Asteroid Occultations, Lunar Grazes, and much, much more. The club actively promotes hands-on astronomy and public outreach.

The observing page provides positional and physical ephemerides of the

Sun, Moon, and planets to help members find the planets and interpret what they are seeing.

Through the link to SSEC in Madison, you can get satellite pictures of Wisconsin showing cloud cover in daylight and IR at night. The pictures are usually less than fifteen minutes old.

New members are always welcome and take advantage of the knowledge gained and shared by more experienced observers. The club possesses several telescopes and three CCD cameras which are available to all members. Many members are avid astrophotographers using film and CCD imaging. Some of the images such as this photo taken by taken by MAS member, Paul Borchardt are displayed in the Showcase. section of the MAS website. These im-

ages demonstrate the light grabbing power of the CCD camera even in the light polluted environment of New Berlin.

Membership information is available by contacting the MAS President, Neil Simmons at maspresident@milwaukeeastro.org or by dialing 262-889-2039 .



Photo courtesy of MAS member Gerry Samolyk

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society

2010 PUBLIC OBSERVING SCHEDULE

DATE	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
April 9	Mercury	Elusive Mercury climbs high away from the sun
April 23	Lyrid Meteor Shower	A spring-time meteor shower
May 7	Saturn	The rings are widening since winter's edge on appearance
June 18	Sun	Early show: 6 PM. Watch sunspots through safe, special filters
August 13	Perseid Meteor Shower	A late summer favorite. Learn the constellations while watching for meteors
September 17	Telescope Clinic	Bring your telescopes
October 1	TBA	
October 15	Moon	The moon is at 1st quarter



By: Gerry Samolyk, Milwaukee Astronomical Society

The MAS Observatory is conveniently located in New Berlin Wisconsin.

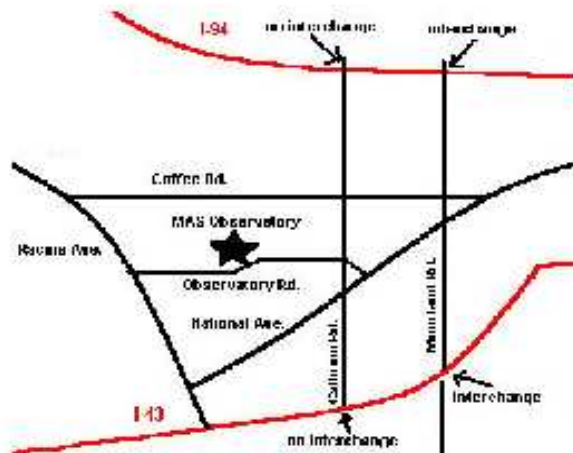
Directions

- Take National Ave. westbound to Observatory Rd. then west again on Observatory Rd.
- Or take I-94 to Moorland Rd, go south to National Ave. and west on Observatory Rd. There is no interchange at I-94 and Calhoun Rd.
- Or take I-43 to Moorland Rd, go north to National Ave. and west on Observatory Rd. There is no interchange at I-94 and Calhoun Rd.
- Or take Racine Rd east from Waukesha to Observatory Rd. and then eastbound on Observatory Rd.

Join us for an Evening Under the Stars!

\$2.00 per person or \$5.00 per Car Load

All Public Observing sessions begin at 7:30 PM except for June 18 which begins at 6:00 PM. A 20-minute presentation about our topic will be given. Club members will be available to answer your questions and be your guide to the Universe.



18850 Observatory Rd., New Berlin, WI 53146

For more information, visit us on the web at: www.milwaukeeastro.org

Ottawa Lake Telescope Clinic

On Saturday, June 12th, The Milwaukee Astronomical Society is hosting another Telescope Clinic for the campers and the public at Ottawa campground. We will set up just south of the beach. Feel free to invite your family and friends.

If you want, bring food and drinks to grill out at the park or just some sandwiches for your family. I will be there by 5:00 pm. We will begin the program at 7:00 pm.

We will help people set-up their telescopes, show them how to use it and have a laser show. You can stay as long as you wish.

I look forward to seeing some new members enjoy this opportunity to get familiar with their scope. If you don't have a telescope, there are others to share. Also, binoculars are also very useful. Bring a chair for yourself.

For more information call Jill Roberts at (414) 587-9422 or email her at jkrjpk@yahoo.com
Jill is a member of the MAS Board of Directors and serves as the Club's librarian.

Upcoming Elections
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Brian Ganiere, Dan Yanko, and Neil Simmons are seeking individuals who are interested in serving on the board or being an officer.

If you have an interest in serving the MAS, please contact one of the undersigned. We would love to hear from you. For a description of the responsibilities of a given position please consult the bylaws which can be found at <http://www.milwaukeeastro.org/Documents/Bylaws.pdf>.

Brian Ganeire (414) 961-8745 ganiere@execpc.com

Neil Simmons (262) 889-2039 neilsimm@gmail.com

Dan Yanko (262) 255-3482 danheleny@aol.com

With Little Fanfare
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members to draw upon.

The MAS intends to purchase the land outright from funds already in hand – something we can do in a depressed real estate market, we would be able to move our facilities out over the course of years, not months, giving us time to do it well without wearing down the members.

When the land is purchased, the immediate benefit is a place to observe on our own land under skies that are once again dark. This should generate some enthusiasm for the club that in turn can lead to additional improvements, as we are able to do them, both financially and through membership volunteers. Some of us may not be around when the final decision is made, but starting now we provide the future members of the MAS the ability to make such a decision.

Neil Simmons is the President of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”

Psalm 19:1

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society
18850 Observatory Road
New Berlin, WI 53151

