



Snow, clouds shut down MAS

We all have weathered the record cloudy spell that has shut down many people's observing, but snowstorms have also driven board members away from the January meeting. As a result, no official business has been conducted at the December or January meetings. This weather snap has been a good opportunity for reflection (even if it isn't of starlight).

Calendar for March / April

March 17 - Monthly meeting: 7pm Board, 7:30pm New Member Orientation, 8pm Membership, at the Observatory. GUEST SPEAKER: Prof. Paul Rybski of UW-Whitewater on the topic: "Rotation Rates of Near-Earth Asteroids"

March 25 - Messier Marathon — Observatory.

April 1 - Cloud date, Messier Marathon — Observatory. Pleiades Occultations.

April 7 - Public Night: Saturn. Observatory, 7:30

April 21 - Monthly meeting. : 7pm Board, 7:30pm New Member Orientation, 8pm Membership, at the Observatory. Program to be determined.

April 28—Public Night: Spring Galaxies. Observatory, 7:30.

Check the website for up-to-date information on these meetings.

Observatory Notes

Last month someone left the baseboard heater in the office on. As a result, we received a large electric bill. Be aware of the circuit breaker positions. For the top row, up is off and down is on. On the bottom row, up is on and down is off. A sign next to the breaker panel has been added. Please read, and make sure that all breakers are off before you leave.

Note that one breaker on the top row is locked in the on position. This provides power to the refrigerator and the clock on the observing desk.

Elizabeth Brinn Foundation donation

At the February board meeting it was announced that the MAS has received a check for \$1000 from the Elizabeth Brinn Foundation for "our efforts to educate children of all races and economic backgrounds about the wonders of the universe we inhabit." Heartfelt thanks go to the Foundation and to Bill Jollie, whose efforts brought about this donation.

May's Elections

Every May the MAS elects a new Board and Officers. The offices of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer are one-year terms, whereas the board members serve three-year terms. Board members also are restricted to two terms (6 years) before they must sit out a year if they wish to run again.

President Steve Diesso has appointed Gerry Samolyk to head the nominating committee this year, and he will take nominations for the officers and the three board positions are up for re-elections this year. (We also take nominations from the floor during the election meeting.)

Those interested in contributing to this Society are encouraged to throw their hat into the ring. The Board is serious about their work, but we all recognize that this is a volunteer run organization and don't expect a second career in institution administration to be launched from here.

No Foolin', It's a Pleiades Occultation

On Saturday night, April 1, we will have our first opportunity to observe a lunar occultation of the Pleiades in many years. The passage of the moon in front of the cluster will start before sunset but will continue until 9 PM CST (note, daylight time begins the following morning). The Moon will only be 17% sunlit and the stars will disappear on the dark limb. Earthshine will make it easy to see the limb of the Moon against the sky. The reappearance of a few of the brighter stars may be observable against the bright limb.

The scopes at the observatory will be available for observing this event (including the nine 10" portascopes). Members interested in participating should contact Bob Manske at manske@tds.net or at 608-849-5287. In addition to timing the occultations, this event also provides an interesting opportunity for photography and video.



All members who wish to participate in the event are welcome to do so. In addition, any members who want to record their observations should bring an audio tape recorder, audio tape, and short wave receiver capable of receiving signals from WWV radio

at 2.5, 5, 10, 15, or 20 mHz. The brighter occultations may be recorded on video by putting time signals on the sound track. Note: this only works with VHS tape, the compact tape puts a time delay between the audio and video signals.

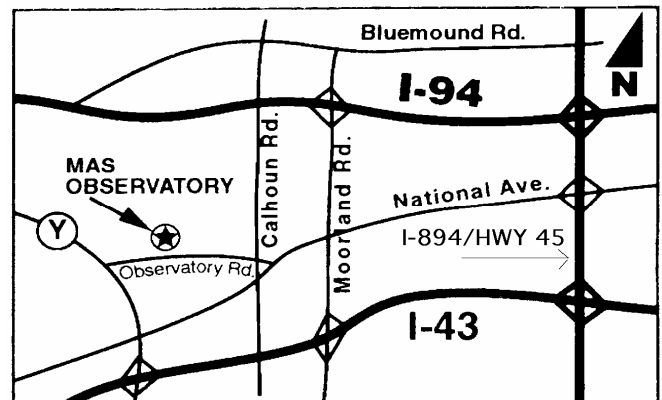
Assemble at the observatory at 5:30 CDT on Saturday April 1st to set up equipment for the event and to get instructions for recording actual times of events.

Detailed predictions are available on the website, and at the observatory on the night of the occultations.

— Gerry Samolyk & Bob Manske

AAVSO to meet in Rockford

Many of our members are also members of the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) who are meeting in Rockford IL May 4-6. This is a unique opportunity to meet amateurs and professionals from the Midwest and all over the world who focus on the study of variable stars. If you have an interest in this organization, visit their website at <http://www.aavso.org/>.



NCRAL in Appleton, April 21-22

The North Central Region of the Astronomical League will meet in Appleton this April 21-22. The slate of speakers include Dr. Carolyn Porco, leader of the Cassini Science Imaging Team, Apollo Astronaut/Geologist Dr. Harrison (Jack) Schmidt, famed video-imager Ron Dantowitz, Vatican astronomer Guy Consolmagno, and author and geophysicist Dan Davis. For more information find <http://www.new-star.org/NCRAL/> or contact the Northwest Wisconsin Stargazers at PO BOX 1611, Oshkosh, WI 54903-1611.

Wisconsin Observers Weekend (WOW), May 25-29

The Northwest Wisconsin Stargazers will also be hosting their annual star party on Memorial Day Weekend at Hartman Creek State Park—reserving all 5 group campsites. For more information go to <http://www.new-star.org/WOW/> or call Tom Riederer at 920-734-0248.

MPM Astronomy course

An invitation is extended to interested folks in the amateur astronomer community to join us at Milwaukee Public Museum for our Introduction to Stargazing class.

This 4-session program for adults (ages 16 and up) is essentially a mini-course in astronomy. The class is particularly suitable for anyone wanting to extend and deepen their understanding of the night sky (but with no homework!)

It meets over four Monday evenings, March 6, 13, 20 & 27 from 7-9:30 p.m. at Milwaukee Public Museum. There is a fee of \$50 per person for Museum members, \$65 for non-members.

We will cover topics such as: identifying constellations, how to find planets, the properties of stars and the processes that bring them to life and destroy them, a detailed solar system overview, galaxies and the Big Bang. Along the way we will also spend

an evening learning about telescopes and how to use them. If you are interested in registering, or have any questions, please give me a call or email me at:

Jeffery Bass
Vice President Education,
Public Programs and IMAX
Milwaukee Public Museum

414 278-6985

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Meade ETX-60AT for Sale

3 years old, asking \$175 (original price \$320). Call Joe Sturmburg at (262) 252-4546.

Cave Star Liner for Sale

Star Liner Deluxe 10" f/6 Newtonian, 1/20 wave optics, 10X50mm. finder scope with cross hairs, RA and DEC motors, 2" focuser, AccuTrack drive speed corrector with Lunar, Solar, and Sidereal settings with remote and coiled cord, 12 volt car cigarette lighter cord which plugs into AccuTrack corrector, 6mm, 12mm and 40mm Meade and Parks eyepieces, some have never been used, equatorial mount with weights, leveling bubble, adjustable leveling pads and eyepiece rack. All books and manuals plus original invoice.

Excellent to mint condition, telescope has always been stored inside and has been used only 3 to 4 times. \$1000. Call Jack Jasensky: 608-838-6702 home; 608-222-0463 work

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

The "Focal Point" is published bi-monthly (Jan, March, May, July, Sept, Nov).

Articles, Announcements, Graphics, Photos, Swap/Sale Ads etc. should be **submitted 10 days prior to the first of the month** of the pending issue.

Article inputs are strongly recommended via email in a Text or Word compatible format.

Submit Focal Point inputs to: MASFocalPoint@yahoo.com

Star Parties

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society provides tours and viewing for groups of people interested in astronomy. Contact Paul Borchardt at (262) 781-0169 for more information about scheduling and fees.

MAS Officers / Staff

President: Steve Diesso (262) 641-0331
Vice President: Dave Weier (608) 241-1444
Treasurer: Brian Ganiere (414) 961-8745
Secretary: Henry Gerner (414) 774-9194
Observatory Dir: Gerry Samolyk (414) 529-9051
Newsletter Ed: Neil Simmons (262) 889-2039
MAS Observatory: (262) 542-9071

MAS Membership is open to anyone interested in enriching their knowledge of Astronomy and related topics.

Yearly Membership Dues:

Student (under 18)	\$13		
Resident (Milwaukee and adjacent counties resident)		Non-resident	
Individual	\$31	Individual	\$19
Family	\$37	Family	\$23

Members can get subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* (©) and *Astronomy* (©) at a club discount.

For more information contact: Bob Manske, 404 Prospect Road, Waunakee, WI 53597. Phone: (608) 849 - 5287. Email: manske@tds.net

Saturday Night Key Holder

On Saturday nights the MAS opens its New Berlin facilities to all its members. If interested in using an observatory on the following nights, the following key holders will be on hand. Please contact them in advance to ensure access.

March

4	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
11	Lee Kieth	414-425-2331
18	Dan Koehler	262-662-2987
25	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517

April

1	Bob Manske	608-849-5287
8	Terry Ross	262-784-2093
15	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
22	Tom Schmidtkunz	414-352-1674
29	Lana Silke	262-966-4929

May

6	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
13	Neil Simmons	262-889-2039

Loaner Telescopes

These telescopes are available to members for local use.

Scott Jamieson (Waukesha)	(262) 896-0119	8"
Paul Borchardt (MAS site)	(262) 781-0169	6" & 8"
Chris Weber (New Berlin)	(262) 789-7128	8"

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society
c/o Neil Simmons
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ADDRESS CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

