



Panhandle Astronomy Club

"Amateur Astronomy & Education"



THE SCOPE

Volume 3 Issue 3

March 2008

MEET & GREET

to be held

March 11

7:00 pm

Gering Public Library

Join us each month as we explore this fascinating hobby we call astronomy!

Meet your fellow amateur astronomers, share your experiences, get advice and discuss opportunities to get together and view some of the wonders nature has to offer each month.

FEBRUARY PRESENTATION

Virginia Mues will be presenting the newest Night Sky Network Toolkit at the March Meet & Greet.

CLUB OFFICERS

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MARCH SKY EVENTS

March 5, pre-dawn: Watch for Mercury, Venus and the moon to be in the same binocular view this morning. They have very different distances from Earth this morning: the moon, just over 237,000 miles; Mercury, about 91 million miles; and Venus, about 140 million miles. They just happen today to lie on the same line of sight as seen from Earth. Very faint Neptune (almost 2.8 billion miles away) is in the view to the left of Venus, but may not be visible in the gathering twilight and a map would be necessary to tell it apart from faint stars.

March 5, late afternoon: An occultation of Venus will occur, when the moon passes directly between Earth and Venus, blocking our view. Binoculars or, better yet, a low power telescope, will be required for viewing this daytime event, and it may not be easy to see.

March 9: Daylight Saving Time Begins, banishing stars and the night sky to late in the evening.

March 14, early evening: the starlike object near the moon tonight will be Mars.

March 20, around midnight: The Vernal Equinox occurs, officially beginning Spring in the northern hemisphere.

March 28, pre-dawn: As morning twilight brightens, look at brilliant Venus in your binoculars. The fairly bright, starlike object below it will be Mercury. Slightly to the left and a little above Venus is the faint planet Uranus, but Uranus may be hard to find because of encroaching daylight.

WESTERN NEBRASKA

STAR GAZE III

May 29, 30, 31 & June 1, 2008

Bridgeport, Nebraska

You don't want to miss the Western Nebraska Star Gaze III.

Be sure to register today!

If you haven't received information on this event or are interested in volunteering with this event contact Bruce Mues.

Keep up to date on all the last minute details on our online yahoo group located at: http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Western_Nebraska_Star_Gaze/

Hope to see you there!

Other Star Parties

Rocky Mountain Star Stare

July 2 - July 6, 2008

Pikes Peak National Forest

Colorado

<http://www.rmss.org/>

15th Annual

Nebraska Star Party

July 27 - August 1, 2008

Merritt Reservoir

Valentine, Nebraska

<http://www.nebraskastarparty.org/>

18th Annual

Weekend Under the Stars

July 31 - August 2, 2008

Fox Park, Wyoming

<http://home.bresnan.net/~curranm/wuts.html>

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

Western Nebraska Home Educators Network

Astronomy Class

March 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31

Gering Baptist Church

10:00 to 11:00 am

Virginia Mues is teaching an astronomy class to homeschooled students in the area. This month they will be covering Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, Kuiper Belt and Space Travel. If anyone has materials or would like to assist with a class please let Virginia know. Guests are welcome.

CLUB OPPORTUNITIES

Club Observation Night

(Weather Permitting)

March 7th, 2008

Gering Oregon Trail Park

Big Picnic Shelter, North of Geil School

6:30 to 8:00 pm

Host: Bruce & Virginia Mues

Have questions about your scope, still learning the night sky, or working on an observing challenge? Come to the Club Observation Night and seek the help you need from your fellow amateur astronomers. Bring your binoculars, scopes, accessories, and lawn chair, if you have them. All club members are welcome with or without a telescope. Remember to bring extra clothing to change into as the nights are darn right cold this time of year. Red flashlights are encouraged for this event. If you don't have one ask one of the club officers how you can make your white light red.

If you have questions about this event contact the host. Generally, this event will be held, unless the weather does not allow it or nobody offers to host it. Keep an eye on our clear sky clock located on the Panhandle Astronomy Club website for weather conditions.

If you are interested in hosting a club observation night please contact the club president at or before the prior month's meet and greet. Hosts typically set up the location and time of the observation night and commit to attending the event. The date for each month's observation night is scheduled around the new moon. Here are the upcoming 2008 dates that hosts are needed for: April 4, May 2, June 6, August 29, September 26, October 24, and November 28.

PUBLIC STAR PARTIES

Panhandle Astronomy Club &

Western Nebraska Home Educators Network

PUBLIC STAR PARTY

(Weather Permitting)

March 14, 2008

Gering Oregon Trail Park

Big Picnic Shelter, North of Geil School

Members arrive 6:00 pm

starts at 6:30 pm and runs until 10:00 pm

Join us for a very special Public Star Party put on by both the Panhandle Astronomy Club and the Western Nebraska Home Educators Network Astronomy Class. Invite your family and friends and enjoy a night under the stars. Club Volunteers Are Needed!

TENATIVE SCHEDULE

6:00 pm	Arrive at the park to set up your displays
6:30	The Public Arrives
6:30-7:30	Homeschoolers share displays with the public.
6:30-7:30	Panhandle Astronomy Club members will be setting up their scopes. The public is invited to visit with these astronomers about their telescopes and to view any objects (moon, sun, etc.) that the astronomers may be looking at.
7:27	<u>Civil Twilight</u> : the horizon is clearly visible, and terrestrial objects easily perceptible, without artificial light.
7:30-8:00	Homeschoolers can pick up their displays and clean up the Shelter area.
7:30-8:00	The Panhandle Astronomy Club will do the Pocket Planets with the public.
7:59	<u>Nautical Twilight</u> : This is defined as the time when the center of the Sun is more than 6° below the horizon but less than 12°. At this time, sailors can take reliable star sights of well known stars, using a visible horizon for reference. Under good atmospheric conditions and in the absence of other illumination, general outlines of ground objects may be distinguishable, but detailed outdoor operations are not possible, and the horizon is indistinct
8:00 – 8:15	The Panhandle Astronomy Club will go over how to use star charts and star gaze etiquette with the public.
8:15-8:45	Homeschoolers give their constellation tour.
8:32	<u>Astronomical Twilight</u> : This is defined as the time when the center of the Sun is more than 12° below the horizon but less than 18°. Most casual observers would consider the entire sky already fully dark even when astronomical twilight is just beginning in the evening.
8:45-10:00	The Panhandle Astronomy Club members will have telescopes available for public viewing.



LUNAR ECLIPSE STAR PARTY

The Lunar Eclipse Star Party was held on February 20, 2008 at the Oregon Trail Park in Gering, Nebraska. There were around 40 children and adults in attendance despite the cold winter temperatures. Three telescopes were available to view the eclipse, Saturn and other deep sky objects as well as a number of binoculars. Thanks to all the club members who came out to help with this event.



ALConExpo

July 18-19 Marriott Hotel DesMoines, Iowa

www.alconexpo.com

The 2008 Astronomical League Convention will soon be here. There will be vendors, lectures and workshops both days on astronomy related topics. Tours of Madison County and Mansions are also available and the Ashton Observatory in Mingo will be open for participants. There will be a business meeting scheduled and an awards banquet. More information will be available at February's Meet and Greet or by contacting Bruce Mues. Cost varies.

The Panhandle Astronomy Club

is a member of the following organizations:



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Members receive the SCOPE, our monthly newsletter.
- Participation in monthly club observation nights and annual star parties.
- Each member is automatically a member of the Astronomical League, the only nation-wide organization for amateur astronomers.
- Free subscription to the Astronomical League's quarterly publication "The Reflector".
- 10% discount on astronomy books when purchased through the Astronomical League.
- Participation in both regional and national conventions through the Astronomical League.
- Membership in the Night Sky Network.

Panhandle Astronomy Club Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: The February Meeting was held on January 12th, 2008 at the Gering Public Library. The meeting was called to order by president, Bruce Mues. Members present were Bruce Mues, Jon Smith, Roger Leafgreen and astrodog, Amanda Mues, Virginia Mues, Chris Olsen, Johnny Escamilla and Celia, a friend of Johnny's.

Minutes: A motion to accept the January minutes was made by Amanda Mues and seconded by Roger Leafgreen.

Treasurer's Report: The annual financial report was given by Jon Smith. It was reported that we have a balance of 1520.55. The motion to accept the annual financial report was made by Amanda Mues and seconded by Virginia Mues.

Roger reported that he met with Tom at Walmart and we will be getting another grant. Roger has the paperwork for this and will be turning it in.

Presentation: Jon Smith gave a presentation on CCD imaging.

Outreach: The Western Nebraska Home Educators Network Astronomy Class will continue through March. The club will be giving a presentation at the Scottsbluff National Monument on Tuesday August 5th. It was also discussed to hold an event on February 20 for the Lunar Eclipse. Virginia will get the PR out for this.

Awards: The club has earned another Night Sky Network Toolkit, Our Galaxy Our Universe. Virginia Mues offered to demonstrate the toolkit at next months meeting.

Observing:

Club Observation Nights: The Club Observation Night scheduled for February 8th did not have a host, so we have no report on that event. There was an additional Observation Night scheduled for the homeschoolers on February 15th. Virginia Mues hosted this event. The next Club Observation Night is scheduled for March 7th from 6:30 to 8:00 at the Oregon Trail Park Large Picnic Shelter. Bruce and Virginia Mues will be hosting this event.

Public Star Parties: The February 1 Public Star Party was hosted by Bruce and Virginia Mues. Those in attendance were Bruce and Virginia Mues and Chris Olsen. We will host the Lunar Eclipse Star Party on February 20th. The next upcoming Public Star Party will be the WNHEN Home School Star Party on March 14th at the Oregon Trail Park. Virginia Mues will be hosting this event. Virginia will be sending PR to the media, Johnny will be in charge of making and distributing the flyers and Bruce will secure the park for this event.

Western Nebraska Star Gaze III: Bruce updated the members on the progress of the Star Gaze. Brochures along with a map, area attractions and registration forms were mailed to previous attendees, all present and past club members and area astronomy clubs. PR was sent to area media about the event along with a brochure. PR was also sent to Astronomy Magazines, Astronomical League and others. The website has been updated. Tasks during the Star Gaze were also assigned, they are as follows: Door Prizes: Roger, Jon & Chris, Registration Table: Amanda & Johnny, Ice Cream Social: Bruce, Astronomers Breakfast: Virginia & Chris, Swap Meet: will run on its own, Burger Bash: Jon & Bruce, Beginner's Workshop: Bruce & Roger, Constellation Tour: Amanda, Star B Q: Chris will call Gabe's, Bruce will call Arby's, Children Program: Virginia & Johnny, Public Constellation Tour: Amanda, Astro Photo Contest: Jon & Roger, Observing Challenges: Roger, Awards Ceremony: Bruce, PR: Johnny. Solar Observing will be included this year along with possible speakers next year.

Old Business: The Night Sky Network Teleconference was attended by Bruce, Virginia and Amanda. Directories were distributed with February's Newsletter. Johnny mentioned the Zoo is holding the renaissance festival and would like to have the Astronomy Club there doing some outreach. Discussion was tabled for this month and will be discussed in the next couple months after Johnny has more information on time, date, etc. Roger reported that he spoke with Bob Smith about the area in the Wildcat Hills and that they are ready for us to move forward on this. They would like to have members of our club at their meetings and help with getting grants and community fundraising.

New Business: It was brought up that the club may want to think about purchasing some Solar Observing equipment. It was also discussed to hold a club fundraiser. Bruce mentioned a sale on a nice beginner telescope that would be a good raffle item. A motion was made to purchase the telescope and hold a club raffle by Jon and seconded by Chris. Bruce, Jon and Roger will be in charge of this event.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 pm through a motion made by Bruce and seconded by Chris.

March 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 WNHEN Astronomy Class 10-11 am Gering Baptist Church	4	5	6	7 Host The Mues' Club Observation Night 6:30-8:00 pm Gering Oregon Trail Park Picnic Shelter New Moon	8
9	10 WNHEN Astronomy Class 10-11 am Gering Baptist Church	11 Meet & Greet 7:00 pm Gering Library	12	13	14 Host: Club and Astronomy Class Public Star Party 6:00 –10:00 pm Gering Oregon Trail Park Picnic Shelter First Quarter Moon	15
16	17 WNHEN Astronomy Class 10-11 am Gering Baptist Church	18	19	20 Vernal Equinox	21 Full Moon Good Friday	22
23 Easter Sunday	24 WNHEN Astronomy Class 10-11 am Gering Baptist Church	25 Newsletter Submissions Due	26	27	28	29 Last Quarter Moon
30	31 WNHEN Astronomy Class 10-11 am Gering Baptist Church	1	2	3	4 Host NEEDED Club Observation Night	5

Scottsbluff, Nebraska 69363-0987
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Panhandle Astronomy Club
The Scope

Panhandle Astronomy Club

PANHANDLE ASTRONOMY CLUB

The Panhandle Astronomy Club was founded in the Fall of 2005. Anyone with an interest in astronomy is welcome. Members are not required to own any equipment or have prior knowledge of astronomy. For more information on the Panhandle Astronomy Club log on to any of the following:

PAC Email: info@panhandleastronomyclub.com

PAC Website: www.panhandleastronomyclub.com

PAC Photo's: panhandleastronomyclub.myphotoalbum.com/albums.php

PAC Yahoo Group: tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/PanhandleAstronomyClub

2008 Western Nebraska Star Gaze: tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Western_Nebraska_Star_Gaze/

The Scope

Virginia Mues, Newsletter Editor

The Scope is an official monthly publication of the Panhandle Astronomy Club.

Submissions to *The Scope* are due by the Fourth Tuesday of the month. Guest columns are welcome.

Subscriptions for *The Scope* are \$20.00 per year for Individual Membership, \$15.00 per year for Student Membership and \$30.00 per year for Family Membership. *The Scope* is printed year round, January 1 through December 31.

Contact the Panhandle Astronomy Club c/o Virginia Mues, Newsletter Editor at P.O. Box 987, Scottsbluff, Nebraska 69363-0987; 308-641-1201.

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