

Inter-Stellar News

The Central Montana Astronomy Society

Summer 2004

Welcome

By Rollin Grey

Welcome to the new Inter-Stellar newsletter. I have been given the honor of publishing the Inter-Stellar news by Terry DeBates. Terry has done a fine job with the past issues in spite of the lack of member articles for it. I hope I can meet his standards and perhaps improve on it some.

The hardest part of producing a newsletter is getting articles to fill its pages. It is my hope that we can get more member participation in this effort.

You needn't be a professional writer to express your experiences. All you need is something that happened to you. Do you have a story to tell? Yes! Everyone has a

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The Candle of Knowledge

Renewing the spark

By Rollin Grey

It seems to me that our club has lost some of the fire and drive that we started out with, it's just a typical case of burnout. All clubs go through this and this is normal. It takes a lot of time and effort on each member's part to keep the enthusiasm alive. We are lucky to have such a fine group of knowledgeable people in our club. All of them have worked hard to bring our club so far in such a short time. I applaud you all. So how do we fix this?

First, allow me to address those of you who have been with us 2 years or less. It is your participation that is needed. The old hats of this club have put all of their available energies into this and their reserves are getting low. This is what causes burnout. We need other members to step in and relieve them during the club activities. In this way, you learn and help teach others at the same time.

What? You say you haven't learned enough about Astronomy yet? You already have the interest that already puts you ahead of the general public, and they only have curiosity! My other half doesn't have a degree, yet she can pass around a pair of binoculars at a star party! She can also answer some of the simpler questions. What she doesn't know, she can direct them to those that do! Never be afraid to say, "I don't know", just add, "that person over there can tell you!" You can also ask the question out loud, there may be many people in the crowd that want to know that very

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story and sharing that story is a good way for other members to get to know you. If every member sent in a short story, we would have enough material for at least a couple years of the newsletter. In that time, we would have new members with stories to tell. This is what keeps the newsletter interesting and going strong.

What do you write about? Things like an unusual observing experience, a helpful tip, a project that enhanced your observing, or just a funny thing that happened on the way to the forum! The stories do not have to be multiple pages long, you don't have to write a book. A couple of paragraphs or so will do. A good joke or two wouldn't hurt either.

With your help, I will do my best to get the Inter-Stellar news out in a timely manner. I am planning it as a quarterly as long as there is enough material. It would be nice to have several pages of interesting stuff in each issue. @

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Beginner's Tips

The best way to start out in astronomy is to get a star chart and a pair of binoculars. The star chart will help you learn the constellations and the binoculars will give you a closer look at the brighter objects in the sky.

Don't be in a hurry to buy a telescope, there are plenty you can look through in the club. Learn your way around the sky first, then move on to the fainter, (and harder to find) objects. Remember, help is just a question away! @



The 3 Musketeers

By Rollin Grey

What ever happened to the three Musketeers? Well, the one on the right went to Colorado, the one in the middle went to Billings and the one on the left went to Vaughn. So many miles are now between them that they only get together at the Montana StarWatch to fend off the clouds with their swords. But, every time there is an auroral display, each one thinks of the other two with fond memories of past displays well shared. Now we are on the downside of another Sunspot cycle and the Auroras will begin to fade, but not so of the Cosmic Bond that brought these brave souls together. They have charged boldly into the public eye, bringing visions of other worlds and the vastness of the Universe to those that seek to know. Alas, the distances between them shall quell their charge for some time to come, yet even this cannot quench the zeal of their quest for truth and understanding. @

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE – FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

DATE – JUNE 8TH

TIME - SUNRISE

Venus transits the Sun. This is a once in a lifetime event.

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE – HARLEY PARK –LITTLE BELT MOUNTAINS

DATE – JULY 16TH AND 17TH

TIME – ALL WEEKEND CAMP-OUT

Montana StarWatch

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE – LEWIS AND CLARK INTERPRETIVE CENTER

DATE – NO EVENTS PLANNED AT THIS TIME

TIME – ATTEND MEETINGS FOR UPDATES

Public star parties

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE – TWILIGHT TECH CAFE

DATE – NO EVENTS AT THIS TIME

TIME – ATTEND MEETINGS FOR UPDATES

Public star parties

thing! You still get the credit for finding the answer.

Ask yourself how you are going to learn “enough” about Astronomy to do these events? Might I suggest the following? Attend the meetings, talk to the other members, share your ideas and above all, ask questions! Your question is not “silly” or “stupid”, only those questions that do not get asked are. We all started out knowing just as much, (or less”), than you do. We are the sum of our combined experiences, so won’t you please add yours?

When I started this, I was thinking of a candle. The flame is our energy to pass our knowledge to others. The pool of wax below the flame is the workload. When you first light the candle, the flame starts out small and grows brighter as we put more energy into it. The workload also grows, as the pool gets wider and deeper. Eventually, the pool (workload) grows large enough that it begins to snuff out the flame and the flame dims. To make the flame bright again, you must pour off some of the wax (spread the workload around).

What can we “old hats” do? The public needs more of our presence, the members need more workshops and we could all use some club project plus more observing time. Some of us just need a vacation! We have a great club, and together, we can make it greater! @



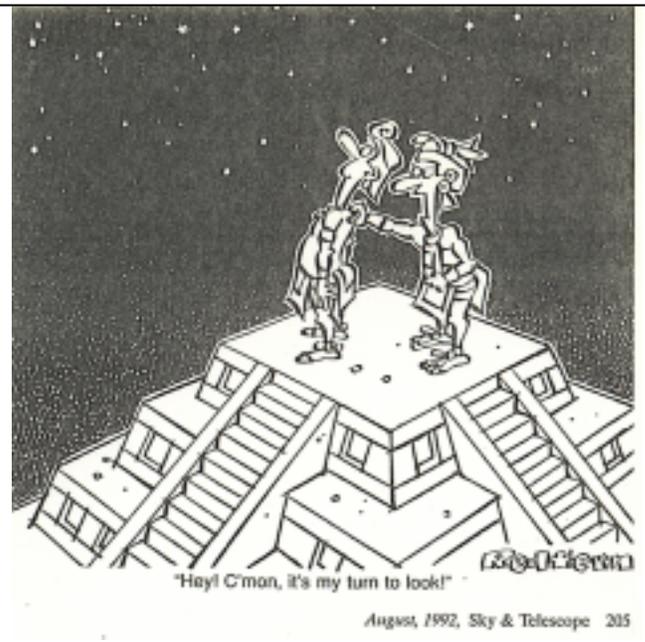
Star Party Etiquette

1. Don't use white lights! Use RED light sparingly. If for some reason you MUST use a white light, shout out a warning. Give them the chance to close shutters & eyes!
2. If you come to a star party without a telescope please park some distance away from the observing site to save room for those with heavy equipment to carry.
3. Park away from the viewing field if you arrive after dark or expect to leave before dawn. Remember, your vehicle back-up lights are bright white. A good idea is to back your vehicle in at the start of the evening so that when you leave, you can pull straight out rather than having to back up.
4. If you park near the viewing field, either disconnect the interior lights of your vehicle or cover them with red tail light repair tape, be sure your vehicle doesn't block a fellow observer.
5. Each person should have a red flashlight for use at the site. It is easy to modify a regular flashlight by covering the lens with a red filter. Red construction paper, red fabric, red cellophane (thick layers), or red tape works great to make filters. Always keep lights, even red ones, pointed downwards!
6. Never touch anyone else's equipment without asking first & never touch ANY glass optical surface.
7. Avoid loud & boisterous behavior. Stargazing is a quiet, peaceful activity.
8. If you want to listen to music, either keep the volume down, check with the folks close by to see if they share the same taste in music, or wear headphones.
9. Drive very slowly to avoid kicking up dust.
10. Watch your step (but don't use a WHITE flashlight). Be especially careful of wires on the ground. Some scopes require power and some folks use their vehicle's battery. If your scope requires power try to make the wires as safe as possible.
11. If you set up a telescope, be sure to put it several feet away from your closest neighbor. Many people need room for star chart tables, chairs, power supplies, cables...and especially for long

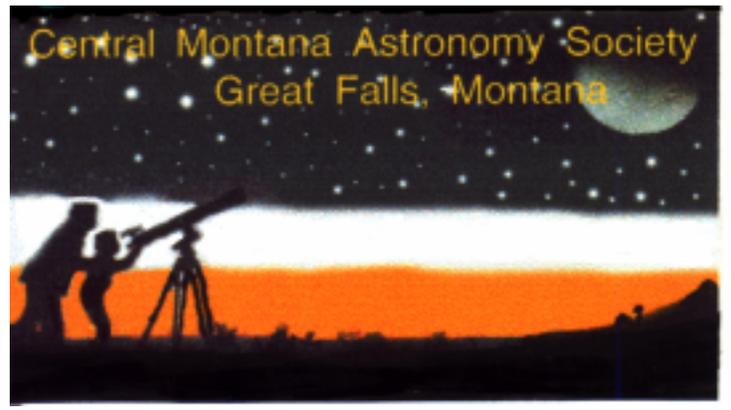
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What to bring for Children

1. Children - some folks welcome them, others don't. If you do bring a child make sure that he/she acts like an adult. (OTOH, many adults could use a dose of childish wonder at the beauty of the sky!)
2. When you bring your kids, they get tired and cold early; consider bringing a sleeping bag for them.
3. Bring warm clothes even on warm summer nights you will be more comfortable wearing a warm jacket and long pants.
4. Bring warm drinks and food/snacks.
5. Bring your binoculars. It's amazing how much you can see with them if you know where to look.
6. Bring a folding chair or chaise lounge. It's nice to sit under the stars, listening to the quiet sounds of voices in the night.
7. Bring your telescopes and star charts. Don't forget your eyepieces! Even if you do forget your scope, someone else may be short on eyepieces and willing to share their scope with you.



12. If you're a visitor or a "newbie", try not to monopolize another person's time. The astronomers are there to enjoy the sky, not to give lessons. (Except, of course when the party **is** specifically organized to help the public and/or newbies.) Then don't be afraid to **ask**. They love to answer questions; no question is **too** dumb!
13. Astrophotography/CCD imaging is an increasingly popular hobby of club members, and many will set up their equipment at the star parties. If you are planning on taking pictures, let those around you know that you have a camera set up so they can be careful about their red lights. On the other hand, be sure to check around you before flashing your red lights, opening your car doors, or using any running lights on your car when leaving so you don't inadvertently ruin someone's once in-a-lifetime 45-minute exposure at the 42-minute mark!
14. Don't litter, pack-it-in pack-it-out! If you do litter you volunteered for clean-up duty!
15. Smoking- smokers should stay downwind of non-smokers and their telescopes. Just because you're outdoors doesn't mean your smoke isn't annoying. Remember, smoke sticks to glass.
16. Alcohol- some ban it, some almost require it. If you do drink (at a party that allows it) make sure you don't violate the "loud and boisterous" rule. And be aware that alcohol may adversely affect your night vision, body temperature and ability to drive home safely.
17. If the night is cool and the dew is heavy try NOT to breathe onto the optics, if you do you will fog the eyepiece. It's a good practice not to breathe on them in any case.



Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center Public Star Parties

One of the clubs more enjoyable events are the public star parties at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Crowds can range from just a few people to well over 100! It is nice to have several telescopes set up and a good showing of club members to run them.

The public usually turns out in smaller groups with lots of different questions. Sometimes each group will have someone ask a question that you had just answered from a previous group. You will find you repeat yourself many times over the night. Remember that practice makes perfect! Answering those questions is the spice that make public events fun. Enjoy them!

CMAS Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month

Great Falls High School
Room SC 201
7:00pm

This issue is my first attempt at using Microsoft's Word newsletter template. I found it a bit confusing to get the articles and photos into it. Practice makes perfect so send your articles to:

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Or e-mail to: knollob@starband.net