

# Harford County Astronomical Society

Bel Air, Maryland  
www.harfordastro.org



*Volume 34 Issue 2*

*February 2008*

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**Public Star Party (Open House):**  
**Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008, At Sunset**  
At the Observatory

**Lunar Eclipse and General Meeting:**  
**Thursday, Feb. 20, 2008**  
**6:30 - Business Meeting**  
**7:30 - Lunar Eclipse Open House**  
At the Observatory

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### **Club Calendar for 2008:**

| <u>Open House/Public Star Party</u> | <u>Meeting Night</u> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| March 15                            | March 20             |
| April 12                            | April 17             |
| May 17                              | May 22               |
| June 14                             | June 19              |
| July 12                             | July 17              |
| August 9                            | August 14            |
| September 13                        | September 18         |
| October 11                          | October 16           |
| November 8                          | November 13          |
| December 6                          | December 11          |

*Please check the website for possible schedule updates and changes:*

<http://www.harfordastro.org>



<http://astroleague.org/>



<http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/>

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### **HCAS Business Meeting** **Minutes of the January 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

President Tom Rusek called meeting to order at 7:02. Participating tonight were 13 members and 2 guests. This is the most participation we have seen in some time.

#### **Old Business:**

- 1- Minutes for the December meeting were published in the last newsletter, dated 1/15. Karen Carey motioned that we accept the minutes as published. Tim Kamel seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- 2- Tim Kamel provided the Treasurer's report. There is \$5037.92 in the bank.
- 3- Tim Kamel provided the Membership Chairman's report. There are now a total of 46 paid up members. We have had 12 new members since the beginning of the fiscal year on 7/1/2007.
- 4- Tim Kamel is putting together a training program for the use of the observatory. Tonight, he provided a print out of the manual of about 30 pages, addressing the main parts of operating the keypad. This was given to Gary George for a review and comments.
- 5- On February 8<sup>th</sup> and March 7<sup>th</sup>, (both are Fridays) Gunpowder State Park is having an outdoor session called "Constellation Search" and is looking for our support. We are being asked to provide members that can point out constellations in the sky using our laser pointer.
- 6- Earth Day is scheduled for Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup> this year. We will again be participating.

- 7- We are continuing with our plans for a public session for the lunar eclipse on 2/20. Our business meeting will start 6:30 PM so that we can end in time to get set up. We are heavily advertising the session and have a note on our web site. Garry Lang has a sign in his window and is passing out a handout.
- 8- We had some discussion on our membership in the Astronomical League as no one has received a copy of the *Reflector Magazine* as yet. We are fairly sure that our membership is current. We have been paying the dues all along and I provided them with an updated membership list on 12/12/2007. They just acknowledged the roster on 1/17. I do not know what the schedule is for the *Reflector*, but I do understand that it is quarterly. They did provide us with the awards and pins that we awarded this meeting so we must be in good shape. Let's wait and see.
- 9- In the discussion of observation reports, Roy is going to Broad Creek on 1/25 and inquired if any one else was interested.
- 10- Tom Rusek discussed a new children's book called *George's Secret Key to the Universe* by Stephen Hawking and his daughter Lucy.
- 11- We now have our third Night Sky presentation kit. This one is called Planet Quest and we have it for having 5 public events in the last 6 months.

### **New Business:**

Tonight was Awards night and we had several categories. Our first recipient was Joe Manning for his performance in a PBS documentary called "Seeing in the Dark". We had two juvenile awards, Shooting Stars, to Maggie Carey and Angela Rusek. Finally, there were 10 awards made to club members for participation in outreach sessions and public events.

- 12- Tim Kamel made a motion that we provide a gift of \$50.00 to the Clear Sky Clock. We sponsor 2 local sites (Broad Creek and the Observatory). Within the amateur community, there is a request for those organizations that sponsor sites to provide a financial offering to assist the site owner (Attila Danko) to recover from a recent attempt to sue him for trade name infringement. The suing company, Sky Clocks, has withdrawn the suit, but not before Attila incurred some legal expenses. The motion passed.
- 13- Additional discussion was held about obtaining 501C3 status as a non-profit organization. This will allow us to obtain donations from others. Indications are that this will cost about \$300.00 and about 4 months time. Incorporation is not required. The group moved that this status be obtained.
- 14- A motion was made by Tim Kamel, and seconded by Joe Manning, that the monthly business meeting be moved to the Thursday closest to the full moon. Further, the time of the meeting is to be moved forward to 7:00 PM. This change is to be a trial for a 6-month period, after which it will be revisited to decide if it should be continued or if it should be returned to the original schedule. The motion passed unanimously. The purpose of this change is to see if we can increase participation in the meetings, attendance at which has decreased to about 5-7 members. An informal survey completed over the last few months has shown that those that now attend would still attend a Thursday session though one would be inconvenienced and two would find it easier. It is hoped that the change would make it easier for those that cannot make it during the weekend to attend during the week. Dates for the meetings for the following four months are 8/30, 9/27, 10/25, 11/29 (to avoid Thanksgiving), and 12/27.
- 15- A discussion was held about the Lunar Eclipse on August 28th. Because it is a weeknight and is occurring very early in the morning, no one was interested in doing anything special at the observatory. Members may gather at Broad Creek but this is likely to be a spontaneous thing.
- 16- On the night of August 11/12, several members are planning on getting together at Broad Creek to look at the show and observe other objects.

17- Karen Carey inquired if Club T-shirts would be a worthwhile thing to do. After some discussion, Karen is going to investigate costs and what logo to use.

18 - Tim Kamel mentioned that now that we are using the main scope for the open house sessions, having the eyepieces, filters and other supplies in the equipment room is awkward. Suggestion was made that some of the supplies be moved upstairs. After a discussion, it was moved that the safe itself be moved up to the observatory level.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM

- Tim Kamel

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## **Observation Reports**

January 24, 2008

We had our monthly business meeting on Thursday, 1/24. It was a clear night even though the prediction was for solid overcast. After the meeting, we opened up the dome to do some observing. We had a potential member as a guest tonight and this was another reason to do some viewing. Mars was a little too high and we settled for some views of Orion and some nearby objects.

Unfortunately, clouds started rolling in shortly thereafter and we closed up around 9:00 PM, with less than an hour of viewing.

- Tim Kamel

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## **Observation Report**

January 27, 2008

On Sunday, January 27, the weather prediction was for clear skies and good transparency. Seeing was the usual poor, 2/5. Temperatures were in the mid 20's and there was a slight breeze. Roy, Grace and I went to Broad Creek to enjoy the night skies. Roy arrived around 5PM and Grace joined him shortly thereafter. I could not get there until about 7:30 as I had to drop my daughter off at college for the start of the spring semester. By that time, Grace had already packed up and was getting ready to leave.

I brought along my Criterion 8" F/7.8 on my LXD 75 mount. Roy brought his new 12.5" Obsession with Argo Navis push to computer controller. Grace brought her 6" Dob.

After setting up my scope, the first thing we did was test out two new binoculars that I had bought. One was a 7 x 35 and the other was a 10 x 50. Both are the Celestron CloseUp model. These are not quality binoculars by any means but seem suitable for using around the house. I wanted to test them at a dark site, and found them to be better than I thought they would be. I could easily pick up M41 and M50. Views of the Bee Hive were very nice, as were M31, the Pleiades, the Hyades and the Alpha Perseus Cluster. I was also able to pick out Comet Holmes, though very dim.

Then, it was time for Mars. My previous attempts to see it were a big disappointment with shaky views and no surface details visible. I suspect that tonight would be my last chance to see it and I was ready. I brought along a long focal length scope and some of my best eyepieces. Mars was almost directly overhead. Sky conditions looked better than they had in a while. Though the seeing was not good, the air did settle down enough at times that we had several seconds of good seeing and we could see several features on Mars including Syrtis Major, Mare Tyrrhenum

and Sinus Sabaeus and Sinus Meridiani. It took magnification quite well and we could take the magnification up to 240x or so. We probably spent a good part of an hour looking at Mars through different eyepieces and Roy tried out his yellow and neutral filters.

After that, I scanned the sky from the West through the north and around. I started with M31 using a 40mm eyepiece and could get M32 into the same field of view. I had no luck seeing M33 in my scope. Though my GOTOs were quite good, there was nothing to see. In Roy's scope, there was just hint of brightness to show where it was. I then went for the Double Cluster and M81/M82 but these were no go because their position in the sky was such that I could not reach the eyepiece. However, I did see both in Roy's. Obsession and the Double cluster was something to see in the same field of view. Next were M46, M47, M50 and M41. Nice clusters that looked good in both scopes.

Next was M42. This was 30-40 minutes of looking at it through different eyepieces (40mm down to 16mm) and waiting for those still seconds. The Trapezium was grand and I thought I saw star E but am not sure. Roy saw both E and F in his cope. I also looked at M43 as well as NGC 1977 and 1981 further up Orion's sword. Roy also picked up M52 and NGC7789 in Cassiopeia, as well as M35 and M37.

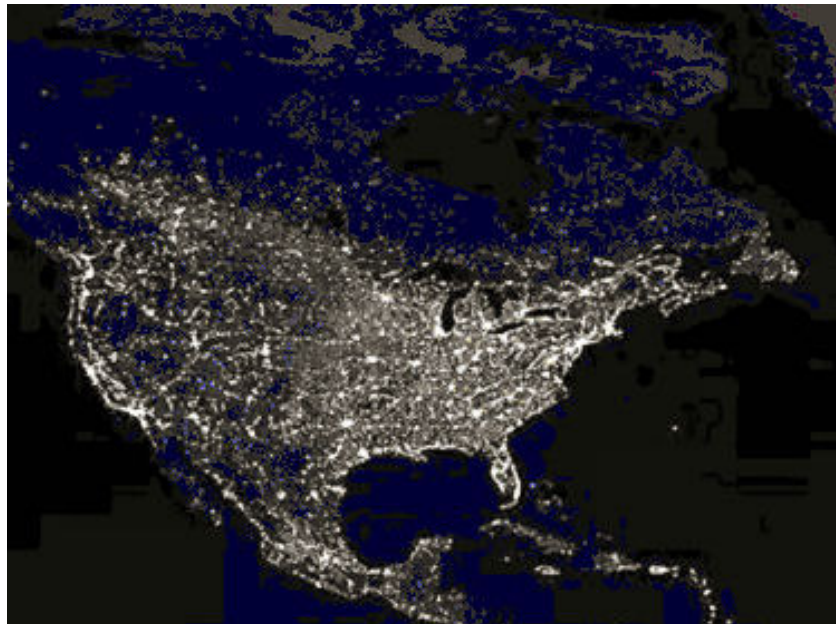
By now, it was about 10:30. We had planned to stay till the moon rose at 11:00 but we were getting cold. Since it takes Roy longer to pack up, I kept observing for a few more minutes. I went for Saturn, about 30 degrees up or so. It is still too low for decent viewing but Titan and rings were distinctly seen.

We were packed up before 11 and I was home by 11:35. Except for the cold, it was another very nice night.

- Tim Kamel

## **The GLOBE AT NIGHT Project**

<http://www.globe.gov/GaN/>



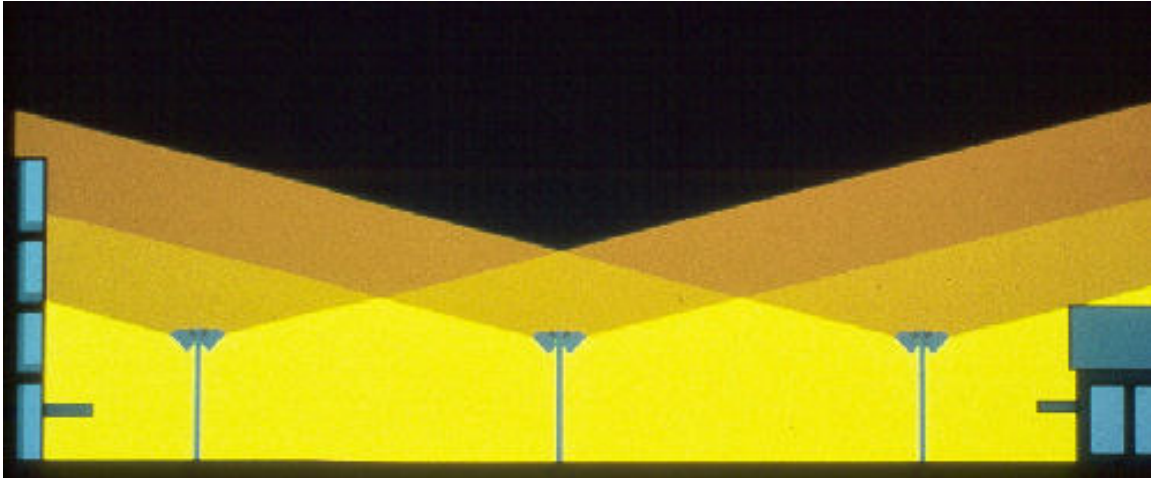
## **Light Pollution Teleconference**

**February 5, 2008**

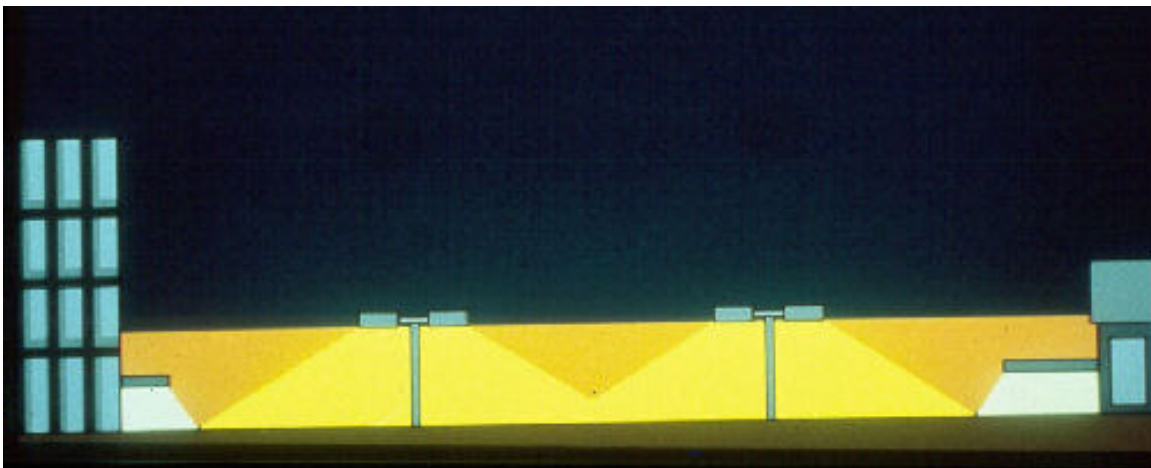
The Night Sky Network's recent teleconference provided a great opportunity to get the public informed and involved with the fight against light pollution. Connie Walker, of the Globe at Night

Project and the National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO), explained how to participate in this worldwide citizen science project to increase awareness about light pollution. As a special gift to Night Sky Network clubs, Globe at Night has given away 20 Sky-Quality Meters (to measure and codify excess light) with a full outreach kit to use at star parties, even cloudy ones!

Participants in the teleconference discussed different types of light pollution, as well as its effects on people and animals. PowerPoint graphics were also available for download. Below is an example of how parking lot lighting systems can be improved.



*Unnecessary lights shining up into the sky from a parking lot.*



*Improved lighting design. Note the added light near the entrances where there is more need*

Excess urban lighting can be highly expensive, as well. It creates shadows, which defeats the purpose of security lighting. (The bad guys can hide in the shadows.) Light only where it's needed. Upward lighting is unnecessary, as is spillover light from billboards.

The discussion ended with a request for NSN members to contact local county officials, developers, builders, and advertisers about the problems of light pollution.

Additionally, special light pollution "education kits" are available from the Globe at Night project.

**For more information on the Globe at Night Project, contact Connie Walker at:**

[cwalker@noao.edu](mailto:cwalker@noao.edu) or (520) 318-8535  
National Optical Astronomy Observatory  
950 N. Cherry Ave.  
Tucson, AZ 85719

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## **Lunar Eclipse** **February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

This is a reminder that on February 20<sup>th</sup>, there will be a full lunar eclipse that will be visible from Maryland in its entirety. For this eclipse, the full duration will be 5 hours and 39 minutes. The total phase of the eclipse will be about 50 minutes. First contact will be at 7:36 PM. This is when the moon enters the Penumbra and is difficult to see. The partial eclipse will begin at 8:43 PM and will be readily visible. The moon will be completely eclipsed, and totality will begin, at 10:01 PM. It will at 10:51. The partial eclipse ends at about 12:09 AM. The eclipse ends when the moon exits the penumbra shadow at 1:15 AM.

We are planning to be on hand to set up telescopes and binoculars for use by members and the general public. The general public is invited to join the members and to bring and set up their own equipment on site. Binoculars and low power telescopes would be the best instruments for this event.

If you are available, we can sure use your help. For last year's March 3<sup>rd</sup> Eclipse, we had a full parking lot even though the weather prediction was poor and the sky was over cast. If the weather cooperates, we can expect a huge turnout.

We have moved our business meeting from Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> to support this event and have changed the time to 6:30 to allow us time to set up our equipment and be ready for the event. The public session will be held in the parking lot of the Technical High School, the one north of the school and next to our driveway.

- Tim Kamel

## **Observatory Operations**

**January 2008**

Thursday, 1/24 was the night for our business meeting.

We found that the DSL modem has been restored. After mysteriously disappearing, it has reappeared and is now installed on the board and has lights that are working and blinking. We tested it using my laptop and found that the connection is quite fast. It is definitely working and working well.

Trying to use the computer in the classroom was again unsuccessful. We are still unable to install anything on it and cannot install software needed to run DVDs.

The trash is being removed and we are pretty sure that the building is being swept up since the accumulation of dead flies has decreased.

## Astronomical League Awards



In January 2006, the Astronomical League created a new category of awards. The new awards are for astronomy outreach. Only hours that include face to face contact with the public are permitted to be counted towards the award levels. There are three levels eligible for awards. The first level is "Outreach Award". To qualify for the Outreach Award, the member must complete a minimum of five-2 hour outreach events. Each person who achieves this level will receive a pin and a certificate.

The pin "is a silhouette of a hand with stars coming up out of it, the stars narrowing as they reach skyward. The hand symbolizes the outreach efforts, the stars each of the people we touch, which then go out and populate the universe!"

The second level is the "Stellar Outreach Award". Stellar Outreach recipients will need the original 10 hours plus an additional fifty hours of outreach events. They will also need to write a report on one of their outreach events. Persons achieving this award level will receive a certificate of recognition.

The third level is "Master Outreach Award". Master Outreach recipients must achieve the Outreach Level and Stellar Level and then must complete at least another one hundred hours in outreach events. The Master Outreach Award nominee will report on what seems to work best for their outreach efforts; these can be specific activities, locations, etc. Recognition for this level is a certificate and may include a pin at a later date.



*Ten members of the Harford County Astronomical Society recently received Outreach Awards from the Astronomical League. Members were required to participate in at least five outreach programs to receive the award. Pictured left to right: Barbara Rusek, Tim Kamel, Karen Carey, Tom Rusek, Mark Kregel, Roy Troxel, Mike Talbard, Grace Wyatt, Irv Koplovitz. (Not pictured-- Jim Garrett). Also in the picture in the front row are Angela Rusek and Maggie Carey holding awards for junior participation.*

Karen Carey has volunteered to be the club's new Astronomical League Correspondent (ALCor). Karen will be the point of contact for anyone wishing to submit hours to receive outreach awards from the Astronomical League.

- Grace Wyatt

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Observatory Needs Utensils**

Members of HCAS recently cleaned the observatory and building. Since the refrigerator and coffee pot were not usable, they were discarded. If you have a refrigerator or a coffee pot you can donate, please let us know.

You can contact Grace at [dgracew@comcast.net](mailto:dgracew@comcast.net) or call at 410-836-7285 if you have a donation available. Thanks!

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**Community College of Baltimore, Dundalk**  
<http://www.ccbcmd.edu/catonsvilleplanetarium/starparties.html>

**Schedule for Star Parties**  
**They are also holding an Eclipse event.**

#### **Friday evenings**

February 15, 2008, 7 - 9 p.m.  
February 29, 2008, 7 - 9 p.m.  
March 14, 2008, 8 - 10 p.m.  
April 11, 2008, 8 - 10 p.m.  
April 25, 2008, 8 - 10 p.m.  
May 9, 2008, 8 - 10 p.m.

This newsletter is the official publication of:

**Harford County Astronomical Society**

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