

FIRST LIGHT Vol 2, No. 8 (?)

Happy Holidays to one and all! Hope you all found lots of new astro-goodies under your trees. Your lame excuse for an editor apologizes for getting this issue up so late; maybe in 1999 she can get the issues up in a more timely fashion. (ed. note - Don't hold your breath!)

BYTES AND PIECES

FireCapt got his write-up of observations of the double shadow transit on Jupiter printed in the February issue of Astronomy Magazine. It's entitled "Only The Shadow Knows...". Check it out! Nice work, FC!

Portia had her article on the Star of Bethlehem included as one of four links in a front page story on the MSNBC site written by John Mosley, of the Griffith Planetarium, on the Star. Check it out at <http://msnbc.com/news/226081.asp> The link says ICStars The Star of Bethlehem, but if you go to that link it will direct you to her new website on sciastro.net.

byte01 got a new Takahashi FS-102 for Christmas from his wife! WOW! Mrs. Byte is one nice wife! So far, he hasn't gotten to try it out; it is mounted and ready on top of his 10" SCT, but the weather isn't cooperating. Hopefully he'll get some clear skies here soon, and can let us know how it performs.

Critter just got his first ever telescope on Christmas Day, from Mrs. Critter! Sounds like there are a lot of nice astro-spouses out there this year! It's a 4.5" Meade equatorial, with three eyepieces. Congratulations, Critter! Let us know when it sees first light!

BTFriend had one of his images of C/1998 T1 (LINEAR) put up on the NASA comet page. Go see it at http://encke.jpl.nasa.gov/Recent_Images.html

Rigel has only 6 more double stars left on the Double Star List to get his certificate! KEWL!

comets' shot of a Leonid meteor crossing the winter Milky Way into Orion made the cut for the Thanksgiving Day (Nov 26, for non-US readers) Astronomy Picture of the Day. The Astronomy Picture of the Day site is at:
<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/>

CRAWLING THE WEB

Sealth stumbled onto this educational program called Think Quest which is basically an educational contest for kids in Jr High and High School challenging them to build educational websites. Check out <http://www.thinkquest.org> Among the winning sites is a nifty astronomy site.

Here is the URL for Digital Astronomy magazine:
<http://www.astrored.org/digital> and its e-mail address is digital@astrored.org Thanks to rvr for sending us this one.

Here is the website for SkyTools software for active observers. If you are looking for innovative planning tools, excellent charts, or observational logging, check this out. <http://www.skyhound.com/cs.html>

Shutan Camera in Chicago now offers those great plastic eyepiece containers similar to those that Meade eyepieces come in. These things are a little pricey, but great! Check 'em out at <http://www.shutan.com/html/cases.htm>

Here's another site where you can obtain these plastic cases at slightly lower prices. <http://idt.net/~wbf/EP.htm> Thanks to Sealth for sending us both of these URLs.

Interested in terraforming? Here are three sites with some great information on the subject:

<http://members.aol.com/Marsbugs/Terraformation/exobiology.html>

<http://www2.astrobiology.com/astro/terraforming.html>

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~marscase/cfm/terrabit.html>

The Space Books Online catalog is located at <http://www.ari.net/nss/msrb/> Great selection and good prices!

Here is a web site which is a memorial to the 1930 discoverer of Pluto, Clyde Tombaugh (who died in 1997), with links to information on Pluto and its moon Charon: <http://www.klx.com/clyde/>

YOU KNOW YOU ARE A DEEP-SKY OBSERVER WHEN:

You frequently wish Earth had no moon.

You consider Jupiter 'light pollution'.

You consider meteors 'light pollution'.

You consider the Milky Way 'light pollution'.

You pack Dry Ice around your head to reduce the "noise" from your retina and optic nerve.

You refuse to use the ladder with your 20" f/6 at the Winter Star Party stating, "If I use that, the objects are too far north."

You consider the H-II regions of distant galaxies as individual observing targets.

You like to choose objects that are easier to imagine than to see.

Your observing schedule demands that you search for objects in twilight.

You wonder how your favorite objects missed getting included in the New General Catalog or the Index Catalog.

You're not sure that anything in this solar system counts as Astronomy any more.

You're amazed that anyone needs artificial light to read charts.

You could do a Messier Marathon from memory, if you still bothered with Messier objects.

You can read all the NGC abbreviated visual descriptions without using the key, but you have to be careful not to cheat by just remembering what things look like.

You view a major earthquake as an opportunity for a close-in dark-sky star party.

You believe M13 ruined your dark adaptation.

You welcome (and have even considered instigating) power cuts, but only if they occur on clear moonless nights.

You observe M42 at the end of the sessions because it DOES ruin dark adaptation!

Your choice of a new vehicle is determined by the size of your scope.

Vacation time is planned around the Winter and Texas (or other) Star parties.

Your ideal telescope would be immovable.

You prep your eyes by applying pupil dilating drops until they open to 10mm.

Instead of vitamins you take bilberry pills.

You actually know where to get bilberry jam, and make a point of consuming some prior to observing sessions

You'd rather observe than go on a hot date.

For some reason you're always depressed when that time of the month (full moon) occurs

In preparation for another DSO bout, you carefully massage your eyes to make sure all your rods are discharged.

You complain you can't really see the faint stuff because the Gegenschein is too bright.

You actually USE 'Uranometria', and can quote page numbers.

You frequently disagree with Burnham's, and have seriously considered publishing your OWN "observer's guide".

You see more DSOs on your laptop screen during an evening's observing session than you do through the eyepiece.

You have blackened the edges of your eyeglasses.

You are briefly taken aback by the brightness of a normal flashlight under "normal flashlight" circumstances (power outages, e.g.)

You hire a crop duster to spray the surrounding area because last night the fire flies kept ruining your dark adaptation.

You wear sun screen & sun glasses during full moon periods.

You've been thinking that a 14th century black monk's hood is a pretty cool idea.

The dome light of your car is painted red.

You paint the red LED's on your equipment with red fingernail polish so that they are dimmer.

You begin to realize that even the deepest red flash light is affecting your vision.

You remove the LED on your drive control panel, because THAT ruins your dark adaptation.

You use an infrared flashlight.

You keep thinking that if only the stars would go away, it might really get dark.

You always set your scope up so that you can't move your car until daylight.

You bring a gallon of coffee (or 12 pack of Diet Coke) to the viewing session. If the caffeine doesn't keep you awake the urge to "go" does.

Who needs caffeine? The passion for observing is the high.

You have elective surgery to replace your eye's natural lenses with f/0.8, oil-spaced, apochromatic triplet objectives designed by Roland Christensen.

You're caught by the police climbing light poles at night trying to "unscrew" the bulbs.

You ask your neighbors over to star gaze, so they will know to turn out their porch lights.

You can talk with a red flashlight in your mouth.

You can understand somebody else talking with a red flashlight in THEIR mouth.

You believe bug repellent messes up your coatings, so you've become adept at slapping mosquitoes without moving your eyes or bumping the scope.

Every November you are terrified that the Leonids might storm and mess up your observations.

Your wife (husband) hires a skywriter to tell you to come home.

You have Kendrick dew heaters on your eyeglasses.

You insist that your optician put anti-reflection coatings on your contact lenses.

PHOTO GALLERY

Here is this issue's collection of photos and images from channel members.

Ed. note: In the last issue, your lame excuse for an editor appears to have made a major faux pas on one of the images. The image of Saturn, incorrectly labeled as taken by Todd_, was actually Terry Platt's image. Evidently, the editor got the two mixed up somehow. Todd_'s image of Saturn appears below. She begs everyone's humble pardon, particularly Mr. Platt's, and Todd's. Thanks to Ermac for bringing this to her attention.

This image of M12 was captured by BTFriend, using a 10" f/10 LX-200 working at f/4 and an ST7 at -5C. It is a 60 second unguided exposure.

Here is another of BTFriend's images, this one of SN1998dh. It's a 60 second exposure, using the same equipment setup as above.

Here is a shot of M42 Todd_ took, at prime focus of a TeleVue 85mm, using Fuji 800 film and a 5 minute exposure. It was slightly enhanced in PaintShop.

Here are four lovely photographs of aurorae, taken by Carbon_WA at the Montana StarWatch.

Carbon_WA also sent us these three shots of Comet Hale-Bopp.

Dave_J took these two photographs of iridium flares from downtown Chicago on September 12. He used a 50mm lens, 400 ISO film, and a 20 second exposure for each.

AstroMan got this great shot of an iridium flare sizzling through Orion's legs using Kodak RG 1000, a 35mm lens at f/3.2 and a 30 second exposure on September 13. Nice shot!

byte01 took this lovely image of M31 at prime focus of a TeleVue Pronto with a 60 minute exposure.

FlashCA sent us this lovely series of Saturn images.

Here is an image of Jupiter, captured by Losmandy using eyepiece projection through a 6" f/6 Intes MN-61 with an 11mm Televue plossl eyepiece at about f/16 and an ST-7.

Here is another of FlashCA's efforts - M42 through a 4" Takahashi using an MX5c Starlight Xpress one-shot color CCD. It is a composite of two 45 second exposures.

And finally, here is an image taken by AlexFLA from the Lake Kissimmee Star Party. Happy Holidays!! hehhehheh!

We are always looking for newsletter items; observing reports, images, anecdotes, equipment reports, and astro-experiences of all kinds. Send them to portia@sciastro.net, preferably in .txt format. For images, we prefer jpgs with a 50% compression ratio. When sending images, please also tell us the equipment used, film, exposure time, etc. so that we can include it with the image.

