

Happy 1998, Sciaastro-ites! Hope Santa Claus filled your stockings with Naglers, and put a 20" scope under your tree! But if not, may 1998 be filled with clear skies during New Moon week, and we all get in lots of time at the eyepiece!

Your editor has been lax in her duties in getting out the newsletters in a timely fashion, and humbly apologizes. But we're back on track, so keep the news coming!

OBSERVING REPORT

By Rob_In_NJ

Observations recorded 12/1/97

Just got back inside and boy is it windy! I'm talking 25mph winds that go on for nearly a minute non-stop, it was horrible at times. However, I got a chance to scope out what was goin' on tonight. Tonight's sky was really dark, I mean I nearly had a chunky Milky Way. I could easily see down to 5th mag, or so. Transparency was wonderful.

Started out by aligning my Digital Setting circles on Fomahaut, and Altair (my two favorite alignment stars now that we're into the winter). Using my 2" 30mm I set out for M27 just to check how good of a job I had done and once the computer reached all zeros on both axis I was smack on M27. At 41x it was a fine site - edges nicely defined and a great contrast to the background sky. Easily the best I've seen it, next to Treefarm, in Vermont, of this year.

Next stop was M71 in Cygnus. Still using the 30mm wide this globular cluster was a resolved sprinkle of stars. It wasn't a hazy or misty spot in the eyepiece, but more of a blob in which you could see into, if you get my drift. I pumped up the power to 122x with my 10mm wide and the field was entirely too dark to observe M71, too much power. I went back to the 30mm and enjoyed the nice, bright/crisp, view at 41x. Makes me wish I had my 2" 2x barlow right then.

After that was M29 and M39, both Galactic Clusters in Cygnus. M29 was a small grouping of stars with no concentration at all. Very bland. I moved on to M39 and was greeted with a Leo, the constellation, looking cluster! The body of the Lion wasn't nearly as long, in proportion to the head, as the constellation, but never the less it looked just like him. I picked out a few sets of three stars at 41x that had one bright member and then two dimmer ones, which made it fun to try and see the dimmer ones next to the bright one. I love going for the dimmest objects.

Finally, the last two objects were M52 and M103, both in Cassiopeiae I believe. Low power, 30mm eyepiece, just did not do M52 any justice! Not until I stepped up to 122x did the true chunkiness of this cluster reveal itself. In the FOV of the 10mm wide (about a 72 degree apparent FOV) there were stars all over the place, with more concentration towards the western edge. Now that M11, the Wild Duck Cluster, is gone from the sky, M52 becomes my new favorite Galactic cluster.

M103 turned out to be better than when I had last observed it. The star (about half-way between the upper star and the lower right star of the triangle) in which I had thought was red last time out, turned out to be deep-red this time. And there was a whole mess of stars within the triangle

shape of the cluster and even some "falling out" of the triangle as stuffing falls out of a pillow.

And that was my night. I came inside to warm up and then started writing this! :) I will be heading out in a few more minutes, maybe I'll write up another one of these, who knows.

STAR PARTY REPORT

By Rob_In_NJ

A Forest of Telescopes (part 1 of 2)

Brilliant-blue skies stick in my mind the most from the September 26 to 28 Connecticut Starparty weekend in which I had the time of my life. So many people, telescopes, colors, trees, cars, tents and everything that one comes to expect at starparties was there in vast amounts. Between the old friends that showed up and the new friends made, I had a great time talking to my fellow astronomers. Who could have foreseen such a great weekend in advance?

My father and I arrived in north-western Connecticut from central New Jersey at approximately 4:00pm on Friday. As soon as we pulled up my buddy Adrian Lozinski (AKA NebM42 on #sciastro) came running up to the passenger side of my dad's 1973 Mini-Winnie motor home to greet me. Once we both got our scopes settled out in the field we showed each other our modifications to our own scopes.

Once set up, we watched everyone else run around like ants setting up their scopes. Parked next to us was a beat up and mistreated 16" Meade Dob (pictured) which was once left out in the middle of a NorEaster storm and that weekend had two large rocks duct-taped to it's backend for counterweight.

Further out in the field was a scope, a 24" Obsession (pictured), that resembled a Redwood in a forest of sapplings. Not only did the owner have to put the scope together but he had to assemble his ladder too! In addition, I regreably never got over to that monster.

Everyone crowded towards the Eastern side of the field (pictured) since there was a break in the trees up there to observe the majority of the southern sky. Adrian and I hung back with the other scopes previously mentioned towards the back of the field where we had a lot of room.

I admired the Milky Way, M31 and M33 naked eye then moved into the scope to plow through the Ophiuchus globular clusters. While observing, a P.A. Announcement which reached the 300 attendees broke the silence with the following announcement, "Attention: We'd just like to give a big birthday wish to a Mr. Rob Teeter!!" Boy, was I surprised !

I packed everything in around 11:00pm and got some shut eye. Adrian and I woke up early Saturday to head over to the swap meet. There we met Gary Hand and an associate of Rex's Astro Stuff. From Gary Hand I picked up a 12.4mm Meade Research Grade Erfle and from Rex's Astro Stuff Adrian got his 40mm Plossl, a Celestron, which he was drooling over. Pathetic. :)

That afternoon I met with my friend Ralph, an avid solar observer, whom I know from New Jersey. He was showing off a recent solar flare through his 4", I believe, Televue refractor piggy-backed on his 8"

Celestar - My first view through a thousand dollar prominence filter!!

The rest of this extravagant weekend continues in the very next #sciastro newsletter. I could write a book about this Starparty and nearly did, so I'm breaking it up into two parts. Thanks for reading!

BYTES AND PIECES

saber101 has now available THE OBSERVER'S GUIDE TO THE HERSCHEL 400, which includes search sequences, guide stars, coordinates, an observer's log -and more! This guide was written by saber, and designed to be an excellent tool for the deepsky enthusiast and a must-have for those attempting the Astronomical League's Herschel 400 Observe Program. It contains 218 pages, and can be obtained for only \$19.95 +\$3.00 shipping

send check or money order to:

SJMartens
c/o SaberStar Productions
4343 16th St. Suite 102
Moline, IL 61265

AstroCady and Portia are taking delivery of a new 18" f/4.5 StarMaster Dob at the Winter Star Party. Hoo, boy! When are these people going to stop? They go through scopes like some people go through underwear! But seriously, folks - this is a dream come true for them both. Now the question is - how much bloodletting will occur as they fight for time at the eyepiece?

It seems a large crowd of #sciastro-ites are planning to attend the Winter Star Party in the Florida Keys the end of this month. The group includes Ken_MI, Sealth, JoeyFLA, FireCapt, AstroCaddy and Portia, rickstr, erg, and Avian, and there may be more out there that we don't know about. So for all of you coming to WSP, we plan an informal get-together on Tuesday afternoon, say about 1:00 p.m. under our awning. We're vending outdoors, just past the mobile home on the road to the left. Can't miss it! We'll have plenty of lawn chairs, and cold cans of stuff to drink in the cooler, so come on over, introduce yourself and set a spell!

CosmicOne has just opened up his own telescope and accessories store and is now a Celestron and Televue dealer. Good luck on the business venture, Cos!

For those of you who got #sciastro t-shirts, and haven't sent in your \$\$, could you puh-leeze mail it in? T-shirts are still available - full information for ordering is elsewhere on the website.

Sealth Reveals Himself! or
Sciastro Reunion on the Gold Concourse
by AstroCaddy

Like all but of couple of sciastroites, Susan and I have been dying to find out what Sealth really looks like, being the only op NOT to send us his picture for our web site. On more than one occasion I accused him of being so butt-ugly that he broke every camera pointed in his direction!

Well, the mystery is over! On December 27, Portia and I were returning from visiting her family in Grand Forks, ND and had an hour layover in Minneapolis. It so happened that Sealth and his family were visiting his wife's family in Minneapolis at the same time, so he met us at the airport.

Fortunately, he had seen our pictures on the internet so he could identify us, because I never would have picked him out of the crowd. He really isn't THAT ugly.

Anyway, we had a nice chat as we walked the 16 miles from the Gold Concourse to the Aquamarine Concourse and we really look forward to spending more time with him during the WSP.

Oh yeah... want to see what Sealth looks like? [Click here!](#)

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CRAWLING THE WEB

Here are some nifty websites to take a look at. For those of you that haven't visited Garry Stusiak's astronomy page, take a look at it at <http://pacifier.com/~garrys/> - great stuff! Another great resource is the US Navy's Astronomical Applications site at <http://riemann.usno.navy.mil/AA/> - check out the FAQs page. The Space Environment Center's page is another wonderful resource; it provides real-time monitoring and forecasting of solar and geophysical events and even has current solar images. It can be found at <http://sel.blrdoc.gov/> Want to see Live Video Cam shots showing the daily construction progress of the 8 meter Gemini scope? Take a look at http://gemini.edu/gallery/daily_pic.html For some great tidbits from the annals of astronomy, check out Strange Cases from the Files of Astronomical Sociology, at <http://apwww.stmarys.ca/~west/AST217/strangeastronomers.html>

PHOTO GALLERY

byte01 has been out taking astropix with a vengeance! Here is one of his first shots of M31. This was a 45 minute exposure, but I forgot to ask him what the equipment was, or the film, but I believe it was shot through his Pronto. byte has just started into astrophotography - this is among some of his first attempts. Some of us go through dozens of rolls of film and don't come out with stuff this nice!

Get a load of this shot of the Orion Nebula, taken by Joe3, 20 mins, Ektar-1000, 1989-90 (he's not quite sure which year), using a Meade 2120 (10") SCT w/Giant Easy Guider working at f:6.5, from Hickory Hill, Fla. Joe3 sadly misses Ektar 1000, which is no longer available in the US. The colors in this photo of M42 are spectacular. Beautiful shot, Joe!

Mid-September's solar activity was, in saber101's words, very impressive and long overdue. He took this shot of Sol on September 11, using Kodak Royal Gold 400 at prime focus through his faithful 8" SCT. Exposure time and focal ratio was not available.

Do you have articles, pictures, etc, that you'd like included in the newsletter? Let us know! e-mail us at scarroll2@pipeline.com with your submissions. We do,

however, reserve the right to edit for spelling, grammar, and content, due to space limitations. For astrophotos, please include the equipment used, the type of film, and the length of the exposure. For photographs that are to accompany articles, please include a brief description of what's in the photo and where it should appear in the article. Please do NOT write your own cut lines - we will do that ourselves.