

NOVA

The Newsletter Of The Sheep Hill Astronomical Assn.

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Committee Chairs

Observation	Jack Weber	Observatory	Ray Smith	Publicity	Donna Baia
		Program	Open		http://www.sheephillastro.org

To Schedule Observatory Qualifications: contact Ray Smith (regular) or Andy Monka (advanced)

GREETINGS

The next business meeting of SHAA will be held on March 7, 2010. The meeting will be held at the Boonton Town Hall's Community Room at 7:30 P.M. The program for the evening will be an episode from the History Channel series "The Universe".

Executive Board Meeting

The next executive board meeting will be held on March 7, 2010 at 6:30 P.M. All members are invited to attend.

Club Night

The next Club Night will be held on Saturday, March 13, weather permitting.

Public Nights

The next Public Night Open House will be held on Friday, March 19, weather permitting.

Upcoming Events

April 9-11, 2010 – Stokes Star Party at Stokes State Forrest. Details at <http://www.teeterstelescopes.com/stokes>

April 17-18, 2010 – Northeast Astronomy Forum and Telescope Show – Rockland Community College, Suffern, NY. Details at <http://www.rocklandastronomy.com/neaf.htm>.

Qualification Reminder

There aren't many rules in SHAA, but an agreement was reached in 2001 about participation required for the maintenance of qualified observer status. The issue was discussed and it was agreed that a minimum of five events combined (Public Nights, Club Nights) and three business meetings per year are necessary to retain your qualified observer status. Please review your recent participation and make the appropriate adjustments, if necessary.

SHAA Observatory Dome Repair

Repairs to the observatory dome began this summer. This includes removal of the old paint finish, filling of any holes uncovered and repainting of the dome. Keep an eye on the SHAA web page for information on further activities.

A Telescopic Tour for March:

R.A	Declination	Description	R.A	Declination.	Description.
2h 03.9 m	+42d 20s	γ Andromedae, Double Star	6h 32.4m	+4d 52s	Rosette Nebula
2h 21.5 m	+57d 08s	Perseus Double Cluster	8h 40.4m	+19d 41s	Beehive star cluster
2h 29.0m	+67d 24s	ι Cassiopeiae, triple star	9h 55.6m	+69d 04s	M81 Galaxy
2h 50.6m	+55d 53s	η Persei, double star	10h 19.9m	+19d 51s	γ Leonis, double star
3h 47.5m	+24d 06s	Pleiades star cluster	12h 24.5m	+25d 43s	Coma Berenices cluster
4h 59.6m	-14d 47s	R Leporis, Crimson Star	12h 56.1m	+39d 19s	Cor Caroli, double star
5h 34.5m	+22d 01m	M1, Crab Nebula	13h 23.9m	+54d 55s	Mizar, double star
5h 35.4m	-5d 22m	M42, Orion Nebula	13h 42.2m	+28d 23s	M3 globular cluster
5h 38.7m	-2d 35m	σ Orionis, multiple star	17h 41.9m	+72d 10s	ψ Draconis, double star

Night Sky Network Website Update

We are in a rather quiet period now with regards to astronomy events, so this letter is highlighting a major update to the NASA Night Sky Network website. It will already have launched by the time you get this letter, so check it out at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qw5CyNEYHks>.

March 2010

Sky Views

As we begin the month, Venus shines brilliantly at magnitude -3.9 in the western sky at nightfall. It slowly increases its apparent height above the horizon each night, ending the month at 12 degrees above the horizon a half hour after sunset. Its disc stays at a relatively constant 10 minutes diameter throughout the month. On March 20th the Moon crosses the southern portion of the Pleiades star cluster, eclipsing a few of the fainter stars of the cluster as it passes. Mercury appears unusually high during this apparition due to the steep angle of the ecliptic right now. On the 31st, Mercury and Venus stand three degrees apart in the evening sky. Mars is past opposition now and is slowly growing smaller. It shines at magnitude -0.6 on the first of this month, brighter than any star except Sirius, but fades to +0.1 by the end. You can still make out surface detail in a large telescope throughout the month. Saturn rises at the end of twilight as March begins and is high in southeast by late evening. During this month its disc spans 20 minutes across at the equator and the rings span 44 minutes along the long axis. The rings are now at a 3 degree tilt to our angle of view and will open up during the latter part of the year to 10 degrees by the year's end. Saturn's four largest moons (Titan, Tethys, Dione, and Rhea) are easily visible through a six inch or larger aperture telescope. Jupiter reappears before dawn at month's end, just above the eastern horizon 30 minutes before sunrise.

Month at a Glance

March 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Last Qtr. Moon; Business Meeting 7:30 P.M.	8	9	10	11	12	13 Club Night
14 DST begins	15 New Moon	16	17	18	19 Public Night	20 Vernal Equinox
21 Saturn at opposition	22	23 First Qtr. Moon	24	25	26	27
28	29 Full Moon	30 Mars at Aphelion	31			

Future Meeting Dates (Mark those Calendars)

March 7

April 11

May 2

June 6

July 11

Constellation Clues

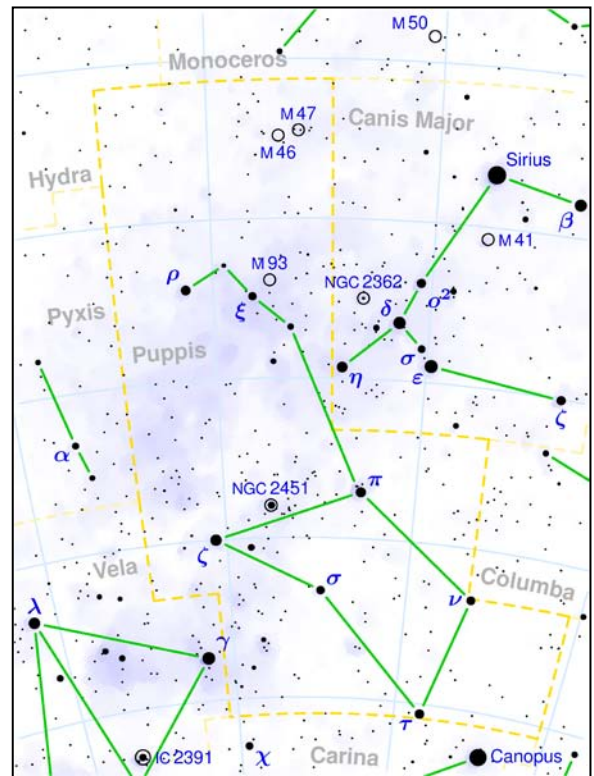
Cancer is the almost empty space down left from Pollux; it probably would not qualify as a constellation except that there has to be a sign of the Zodiac between Gemini and Leo. In the middle of Cancer the Crab, two stars called the Aselli "donkeys", feed from the manger "Praesepe", also called the "Beehive"! Under the Crab is the brighter head of Hydra the Water Serpent. Alford, the brightest star in Hydra, means "the lonely". It's relatively empty above Cancer, too; Leo Minor, Lynx and Camelopardalis are the dim constellations proceeding northwest before you reach Cassiopeia. The inventor of Lynx claimed that you had to have a lynx's eyes to see it. Connect the dots: a line from the Big Dipper pointers Merak and Dubhe to Polaris to Capella forms a right angle. (Constellation Clues from the Astronomical Calendar 2010 by Guy Ottewell).

Club Logo Apparel

At the February meeting, Andy Monka showed a neat club logo for application to various clothing items (T-shirts, etc.) There is a file in the SHAA newsgroup file area which shows the items available, along with suggested prices. If there is enough interest, he will purchase the items and apply the design. Email Andy with your order so he knows how much of each item to buy.

Focus On... Puppis, the Ship's Stern

The constellation Puppis was once part of the ancient Greek constellation Argo Navis, Jason's Ship. Due to its immense size, it was split into three separate constellations, the largest of which was Puppis, the "poop deck" of the great ship. While most of Puppis is positioned too low for northern observers to thoroughly enjoy, there are several interesting deep-space objects in the northern-most portion of the constellation. Three of its open clusters made their way onto Messier's list - M46, M47, and M93. While they are all beautiful in their own right, M46 stands out as the most unique, due to a conspicuous interloper set among its many stars. Planetary Nebula NGC 2438 can be seen near the cluster's NE edge at medium to high powers. At 75x, you can capture the entire cluster and see a distinct disk of the planetary nebula. A narrowband or OIII filter will help the nebula pop out among the stars. NGC 2438 is actually a foreground object that is not related to the cluster in any way other than being in our direct line of sight.



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