



Longmont Astronomical Society

May 2003

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The View From Up Here

Dear members and friends,

Thanks to everyone who helped out at the Astronomy Day display last Saturday at Twin Peaks Mall. We had a sharp-looking setup, and great looking members! Our location was in a perfect area of the mall, and we had a tremendous amount of traffic. One new member signed up, and we have a couple of dozen folks who signed up for more info. The skies didn't cooperate for solar observing, but Philippe made up for it with sky simulations on his laptop!

Flanders was pretty much cloudy, but Leigh & I did spend about an hour & a half with mighty Jupe, beautiful Saturn, and some really groovy stuff on the moon! All in all, another great Astro Day for the LAS!

I will be in Pennsylvania this week for our oldest daughter's college graduation (yay Courtney!), so I hope the eclipse party turns out well. Also, I hope you all can make it to the 1st Annual Gilpin Star Party on the 17th – should be great spring skies at altitude! Have a great month!

Clear Skies,

Bob Spohn
President

If you've been coming to meetings for the past several months, you know we are using the second half of our monthly meeting to have members or guest speakers present a few slides on a specific topic.

Last month, we were fortunate to have Tom Ayres, solar physicist at the University of Colorado who gave a fascinating and enjoyable presentation, with video clips on solar observing using the McMath-Pierce solar telescope on Kitt Peak, and the proposed new Advanced Technology Solar Telescope.

Michael Hotka gave a JPL Solar System Ambassador presentation on upcoming JPL/NASA missions that look very exciting. At previous meetings Michael Hotka, Roy Martens, Brian Simpson and others produced and presented equally informative presentations.

Sharing experiences and knowledge is an essential part of our club activities!

I have personally noticed the increased participation of our members to our monthly meetings.

I had also many members coming to me after the meetings and sharing their satisfaction and appreciation of having such presentations made.

This is all great, but we need to schedule other presentations for the rest of this year.

This is my pledge to you....

If you know someone who would like to give a presentation or if you have a presentation you would like to share with us, don't worry, I will take care of the rest. We will schedule your presentation, I will bring my laptop and projector and we will enjoy another sharing experience.

Come and share....

Come and learn...

Come and enjoy....

It's free fun....

Philippe Bridenne
Newsletter editor

Calendar

May

New moon 5/01 – Star Party Pawnee 5/03 & 5/31 - Astronomy Day & Star Party Flanders 5/10 – LAS meeting 5/15 – Gilpin High School Star Part 5/17 - New moon 5/31

June

Star Party Flanders 6/07 - LAS meeting 6/19 – Rocky Mountain Star Stare Colorado Springs - 6/26 to 29 – Star Party Pawnee 6/28 - New moon 6/29

July

Star Party Flanders 7/05 - LAS meeting 7/17 – WUTS Fox Park 7/24-26 - New moon 7/29

August

Star Party Flanders 8/02 - LAS meeting 8/21 – Star Party Fox Park 8/23 - New moon 8/27 –Star Party Flanders 8/30

September

LAS meeting 9/18- New moon 9/26 – Star Party Pawnee 9/27

October

Star Party Flanders 10/04 - LAS meeting 10/16 - New moon & Star Party Pawnee 10/25

November

Star Party Flanders 11/01 - LAS meeting 11/20 – Star Party Pawnee 11/22 - New moon 11/23 – Star Party Flanders 11/29

December

LAS meeting 12/18 – Star Party Pawnee 12/20 - New moon 12/23

Report from Sterling

Arrived there on Wednesday afternoon. Brian Kimball was already there. Lots of rain. Then it quit. Got my popup camper setup, then it started again. Oh..and the wind...It blew. Wed evening, sometime around 9 PM, about 45 minutes of large sucker holes drifted overhead from the north. Bagged 5 binocular messier. Brian was trying to polar align his scope. Then the sky closed up for the rest of the night...then it rained some more and more wind. One observation...the streams were not filling up with water as one might think from all the rain we got...the ground soaked it all up...

Thursday turned out to be cloudy. Went to WalMart to try to get Brian's camper batteries charged up. Turned out they appear to be bad. He only could run his central heat for part of the night before the batteries ran out. :- (Thurs afternoon showed broken clouds and blue sky. Great...then came sunset and total overcast. We waited for sucker holes like the night before and saw one huge one drifting in from the NW. We waited, and then when it was overhead, we went to work with binoculars. I didn't bag any messier and Brian got 3 or 4. Then total overcast.

Friday started out cloudy. Brian and I were the only two people there. By Friday night, 3 more families had shown up. Friday at sunset was high thin clouds but by the end of twilight, the sky was OK to view through. Brian observed till 5 AM, getting great views of Mars. No dust storm...could see surface features and a polar ice cap. I cashed it in at 4 AM.

Saturday was much like Friday at sunset. The quote of the star party was from Andrew Plank, at about 4 PM, there were only 3 telescopes at the star party. Gary had not shown up. Andrew said "with only 3 telescope we are in BIG trouble". Ranger Bob was worried also. Finally, Gary showed up with his 30 and it appeared he was leading a convoy. About a dozen more people followed him in, literally, and we were set for the crowds. It was prom night in Sterling, so the crowds were less than last year. But everyone was treated to many views through about 8 telescopes. THEN, again like last year, as soon as the crowd left, the clouds rolled in.

3 families were from Boulder, and were some of Andrew's kids he teaches.

There were about 20 people in line at Gary's scope one time I noticed and counted. Maybe about 50-70 people attended the star party that were not campers.

All in all, it was a nice time in Sterling. Ranger Bob, upon seeing Gary arrive, said "The A Team has arrived". While talking with us, Brian asked if we could "...squeeze off a few rounds from your gun?" Bob had a 9mm on his hip. Bob turned his hips so the gun was away from Brian, which was probably a good thing, as if to say "It's my gun...go get your own :-)".

There is a 2nd pump that can be heard now. In addition to the African Queen, which is across the lake to the west, there is a pump that is in the SE. It has a definite pump rhythm, 33 "chugs" then a HUGE backfire. How do I know this...well, when the clouds are about, your mind drifts and just starts counting these things. Brian first counted them though, one night while he was trying to fall asleep. Some people count sheep, Brian counts chugs.

There were 8 LAS members present, so we did well.

Michael Hotka

Hello stargazers, we were blessed with clear skies once again even against all odds. I was watching the weather all week and it sure looked bad. I prayed for the red sea of clouds to part for us, kind of like in the old days with Moses, and by god it did, we even got great seeing to go along with the clear sky. Jupiter early in evening, before dark even, was so spectacular, Jupiter moon eclipse and shadow of moon on Jupiter surface then red spot later made for some of the best views of night. Saturn was also very good with tiny little moons showing up real good, with easy division in rings seen.

Galaxies are us with the big scopes, like Ngc 4565 which runs out of the 20 Nagler eyepiece, also M104, dark lane so good in 30, Virgo clusters, and of course M51 all time favorite spiral for spring time viewing. M 13, M92, M3 ,M15 Globular, M57, M27 so many of the regulars, hard to do them all.

I just want to say THANKS, to all the hardy brave souls who traveled so far, in hopes of just a chance to get some great old fashion dark sky viewing in. I know who the real dark sky marines are, those who actually take the chance, and they are often rewarded with the best views. See you in the dark.

Gary Garzone

Report from Pawnee

Jim Sapp, Bill Possel and new guy Terry Frazier, and myself, GG, showed up at Crow valley campground. The sky was indeed opening up some from the afternoon clouds we had, just as I had hoped for. Jim's report said it all with too many campers and campfires we basically had to go to darker place, so back to cactus flats north. I loaded back up the 30 scope and drove out to our site for remainder of the night.

I had this very odd chance meeting of famous meteorite guy traveling to Colorado to do talk for Colorado Springs astronomy club. I do believe in cosmic connections, I some how in the middle of Pawnee, crow valley campground met, a guy named Larry who saw my scope and came over to have a look. He was the guy who studied the Jack and Sharon Walker meteorite in Denver last year when I also meet them, the Walkers, with Karen Mendenhall at Denver museum on astronomy day in October.

He even had a very large stoney one with him along with several smaller ones he was showing me.

What are the odds of some one traveling across the state to happen to be camping in unlikely spot of Crow valley, Briggsdale, then meet me and have such a connection to astronomy, the world is shrinking for such a chance like this. I thought I was in the middle of nowhere with no people, hence no lights, Wow!! What a night after all.

The other cosmic thing I learned, war vet Terry, who had lost both legs, yet had the spirit to get up and drive to Pawnee to view with us. He is an inspiration to me, to see such an attitude of letting nothing stop him from having fun. We could all learn a few things from him. I hope to introduce him to club members this coming month at meeting, trying to keep it cosmic Tom T,

Gary Garzone

Report from Foxpark and the Flats

Got some photons. :)

We usually do the Foxpark area the first time each year in late May or early June (depending on lunar phase), but I was eager to see the condition of the snow pack at Foxpark this time of year. It looks like the extra lunation is a requirement. :)

The chain was hanging at about 45 degrees going up toward Laramie (as usual) and it's still March there. The road at Woods Landing has the hardtop stripped off for a couple hundred yards and some heavy equipment sitting around - looks like they are building a new bridge and improving the intersection a bit. The Aspens are just starting to show a little green just west of there.

I got a little snow shower going up the hill to Foxpark (it's still February there) and there were a few blue sucker holes, but very little access to clear ground due to remaining snow drifts. Areas that receive a lot of sun are clear with a faint hint of grass greening. Areas in the shade typically have 2 to 4 feet of snow remaining. The main dirt road from the highway is maintained and clear up to the gate at Foxpark, but the town is still in hibernation. The road is NOT maintained beyond where you usually hang a left at the gate. I ventured on past the left turn a bit just as far as 2WD would take me without a hassle (so I could get out in 4WD without a hassle) which turned out to be about 100 feet beyond the driveway into the forest service administration compound on the south side of the road. At that point I decided to turn around while there was still room to. The road had a couple of spots where dirt/mud was exposed but the majority was still drifted over with from 8 inches to 2 or 3 feet (depending on sun exposure) of that "used-to-be-snow-pack-but-is-softening-kind-of-crunchy-stuff" that you climb up on a bit then crunch down into. Will have to give it another lunar go-round... I headed from there to Cactus Flats north where the wind was a little on the rambunctious side, then headed on over to Crow Valley where I was surprised to find the place PACKED with tents and campfires. I took a loop around the area and found Gary G. setting up his monster. We were shortly joined by Bill P. and another seeker of photons, but the crowds and noise and lights and smoke spooked us back out onto the flats North, where we got set up and observing around 10:30 or so. The wind died down pretty well and we got an hour or so of fair views, but the clouds moved in and we had to dodge into sucker holes until about 2:00 when it socked in pretty bad.

Snoozy time.

I put together a little webpage with some pictures of the Foxpark road and the condition of Cactus Flats this weekend if anyone is curious. Go to:

<http://home.att.net/~jsstars/SPPics/030503.html>

See ya next new moon.

Jim S.

The Unusable Telescope Star Party!

Prizes could be awarded in many categories:

- Most Overall Unusable Telescope
- Most Unstable Telescope
- Best Innovation in Support of Unusability
- Most Useless but Very Expensive Technical Innovation
- Best Technical Innovation that Makes the Scope Much Harder to Use
- Most Dangerous To Use or Set Up Telescope
- Outstanding Bad Craftsmanship
- Outstanding Lazy Workmanship
- Best Promising Design Ruined by Incompetent Fabrication
- Worst Induced Vibration from Barely Touching the Focus
- Heaviest Telescope for a Given Aperture
- Worst Viewfinder
- Outstanding Achievement in Non-Transportability
- Worst Figure on a Primary Mirror
- Outstanding Achievement in Astigmatism
- Outstanding Turned or Rolled Edge
- Outstanding Incomplete Polish
- Least Satisfactory Bearings

And let's not forget the Competitive Events:

- Best Bad Collimation
- Most Bodily Injury Suffered During Transportation or Set Up
- Longest Set Up Time
- Most Messier Objects that Couldn't Be Found
- Longest Time to Get Telescope Pointed at Anything
- Outstanding Use of Too Much Magnification
- Outstanding Use of Too Little Magnification
- Most Confusing or Incorrect Explanation of an Observed
- Object Given to a Star Party Guest

Some announcements

Denver Museum of Nature & Science Space Science Events

Wednesday, May 21

Field Trip – Bioserve Space Technologies

10:00 A.M.–Noon

Cost is \$13 for members, \$17 for nonmembers

BioServe Space Technologies at the University of Colorado works in partnership with commercial companies and NASA to develop and conduct innovative commercial space science research in the agricultural, biomedical, and biotechnology arenas. Visit BioServe's laboratory to see hardware flown in space and learn about shuttle experiments and upcoming experiments planned for the International Space Station. For ages 12 and up. Call 303-322-7009 for reservations.

Saturday, May 24–Sunday, May 25

Astronomy Campout

6:30 P.M.–9:00 A.M.

Cost is \$40 for members, \$50 for nonmembers, \$20 for children, ages 6–13

Join DMNS astronomy educators for a fun evening under the stars at the Jefferson County Outdoor Lab School Observatory. Camp, hear astronomy lectures, and observe the heavens using various telescopes throughout the night. The Museum will provide hot beverages, punch, and snacks. Participants provide their own camping gear and, due to the drought, cold meals only. Rest rooms and water are available on-site. Details sent with confirmation. An adult must accompany children under 18. Call 303-322-7009 for reservations.

Friday, May 30

60 Minutes in Space: Beyond the Headlines

Curator from the Department of Space Sciences

7:00 P.M., VIP Room, Denver Museum of Nature & Science

Cost is \$7 for members, \$10 for nonmembers, \$5 for students

Dr. Laura Danly, Dr. Steve Lee, and/or Dr. Dimitri Klebe will take you behind the headlines and give you the spicy details of breaking news in space science. Find out what's happening in the cosmos with up-to-the-minute reports of breakthroughs and events in astronomy and space exploration. Call 303-322-7009 for reservations.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 21–Sunday, June 22

Astronomy Campout

6:30 P.M.– 9:00 A.M.

Cost is \$40 for members, \$50 for nonmembers, \$20 for children ages 6–12

Join DMNS astronomy educators for a fun evening under the stars at the Jefferson County Outdoor Lab School Observatory. Camp, hear astronomy lectures, and observe the heavens using various telescopes throughout the night. The Museum will provide hot beverages, punch, and snacks. Participants provide their own camping gear and, due to the drought, cold meals only. Rest rooms and water are available on-site. Details sent with confirmation. An adult must accompany children under 18. Call 303-322-7009 for reservations.

Friday, June 27

60 Minutes in Space: Beyond the Headlines

Curator from the Department of Space Sciences

7:00 P.M., VIP Room, Denver Museum of Nature & Science

Cost is \$7 for members, \$10 for nonmembers, \$5 for students

Dr. Laura Danly, Dr. Steve Lee, and/or Dr. Dimitri Klebe will take you behind the headlines and give you the spicy details of breaking news in space science. Find out what's happening in the cosmos with up-to-the-minute reports of breakthroughs and events in astronomy and space exploration. Call 303-322-7009 for reservations.

Upcoming Trips

Saturday, July 19–Sunday, July 20

Astronomy Campout

6:30 P.M.– 9:00 A.M.

Cost is \$40 for members, \$50 for nonmembers, \$20 for children ages 6–12

Join DMNS astronomy educators for a fun evening under the stars at the Jefferson County Outdoor Lab School Observatory. Camp, hear astronomy lectures, and observe the heavens using various telescopes throughout the night. The Museum will provide hot beverages, punch, and snacks. Participants provide their own camping gear and, due to the drought, cold meals only. Rest rooms and water are available on-site. Details sent with confirmation. An adult must accompany children under 18. Call 303-322-7009 for reservations.

Friday, August 1–Sunday, August 3

Stargazing by Canoe for Families

Cost is \$335 per adult, \$295 per child 8–12 years, plus transportation to Fruita, Colorado. A \$100 deposit is due upon registration, with balance due July 3.

Viewing the wilderness night sky is a phenomenal way to learn more about our solar system, constellations, and deep sky objects. With luck, at this time of year you may even be able to see the beginning of the Perseid meteor showers. Paddle the Colorado River through a spectacular 26-mile section of canyon country by day and enjoy dark skies and astronomy interpretations at your wilderness campsite at night. Call Carol Cochran at 303-370-8335 for information and reservations.

Friday, September 19–Sunday, September 21

Stargazer's Weekend

YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch near Winter Park

Cost: \$260–\$275 includes program, meals, two nights' lodging. Book before July 18 and save! The theme will be the top stories of 2003. Call after May 1 to receive brochure (303-370-8335).

Celestial Events – No Museum Event

Thursday, May 15

Lunar Eclipse

On the 15th the Moon rises at 7:57 p.m. in Denver. The umbral phase of the eclipse begins at 8:03 p.m. The total phase of the eclipse begins at 9:14 p.m. The maximum eclipse is at 9:40 p.m. The total phase of the eclipse is over at 10:07 p.m. The umbral phase of the eclipse is over at 11:17 p.m. See the event below!

Thursday, May 15

Denver Astronomical Society Open House

Chamberlain Observatory, DU Campus

An Open House will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Chamberlin Observatory, 2930 Warren Avenue, Denver. The historic facility's 20" Alvan Clark refractor will be available for viewing, as well as 30+ other telescopes. The event is free. Visit www.denverastrology.org for more information.

April LAS meeting notes

Officer reports:

- VP – Melinda: nothing to report
- Sec/Treasury – Monica: on vacation
- Editor – Philippe: Newsletter to webmaster to post on web site
- ALCor – Jim Crane: presented the Astronomical League's Double Star Certificate and Pin to Andrew Planck for observing and drawing 100 double stars. Congratulations, Andrew!
- Merchandise Chair – Kirk: 1st T-shirt order is in! (They look nice!)
Embroidered patches are also in - \$5.00 each. If there is sufficient interest, we will order 8" patches later. Kirk is also starting a grant process to procure \$25,000 for the club towards an observatory. Additional fund-raising events are being considered. Vinyl decals are still available for \$2.00 each.
- Equipment Chair – Leigh: taking a short break from the Monday & Wednesday work nights due to work schedule. Has been sanding 6' tubes, has secondary mirrors and holders, and rocker boxes are being built.
- Webmaster – Steve: has updated the astronomy links on the web page

Old Business:

Fundraising/Publicity Chair: Kirk Schneider was nominated last month. Nominations were reopened – no new nominations. There was a motion and a 2nd to close. Election was by voice vote – congratulations to Kirk Schneider as our newest officer. Also, many thanks to Michael Hotka for all the work he has put into this position over the years.

New Business:

Saturday, April 19th is Astronomy Day at Fiske Planetarium/Sommers-Bausch Observatory at C.U. A sign-up list was passed around for volunteers to run the LAS table.

The official Astronomy Day display and star party is Saturday, May 10th. The display will be at Twin Peaks Mall. We will be set up at the intersection past the main Country Buffet entrance, and will have the JPL backdrop, multimedia, and the solar scope. Star party will follow that evening at Flanders Park. Another sign-up sheet was floated around for these events. Advertising will be done on channel 3 public access, the Times-Call and the Daily Camera.

Philippe is coordinating a star party with the Gilpin School to help raise awareness of their observatory and our partnership and involvement with them. Archer visited the site to determine needed repairs, and said we have most everything required to get it in operational order. A work team will be organized to make the repairs.

Gary reported on the plans for the 5th annual Sterling Reservoir Star Party on the weekend of April 26th.

There is a lunar eclipse on May 15th, the night of our meeting. We will have a shortened meeting, and then adjourn to go view the eclipse. Site will be announced at the meeting.

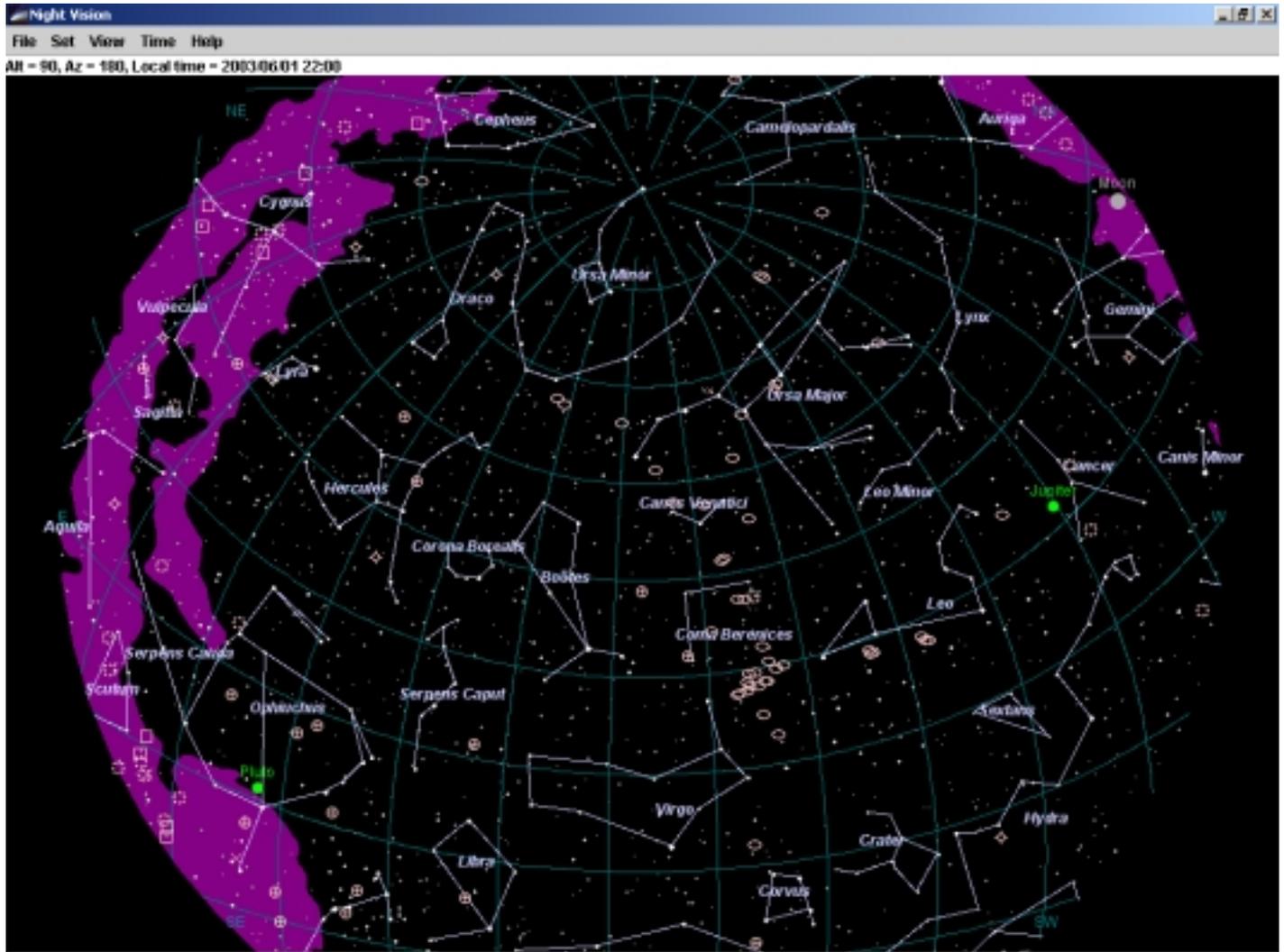
Main Speaker:

Tom Ayres, solar physicist at the University of Colorado gave an enjoyable talk on solar observing with the McMath solar telescope on Kitt Peak, and the proposed new Advanced Technology Solar Telescope that looks very exciting.

Short topic:

Michael Hotka gave a JPL Solar System Ambassador presentation on upcoming JPL/NASA missions

June Sky Map



Constellation of the month

Canes Venatici – The Hunting Dogs

This constellation, tucked away just South of the Big Dipper's handle, contains a wide variety of deep sky objects. Conceived by Hevelius in about 1687, Canes Venatici are the hunting dogs, Asterion and Chara, help on a leash by Bootes as he hunts the skies of the North for the bears Ursa Major and Ursa Minor.

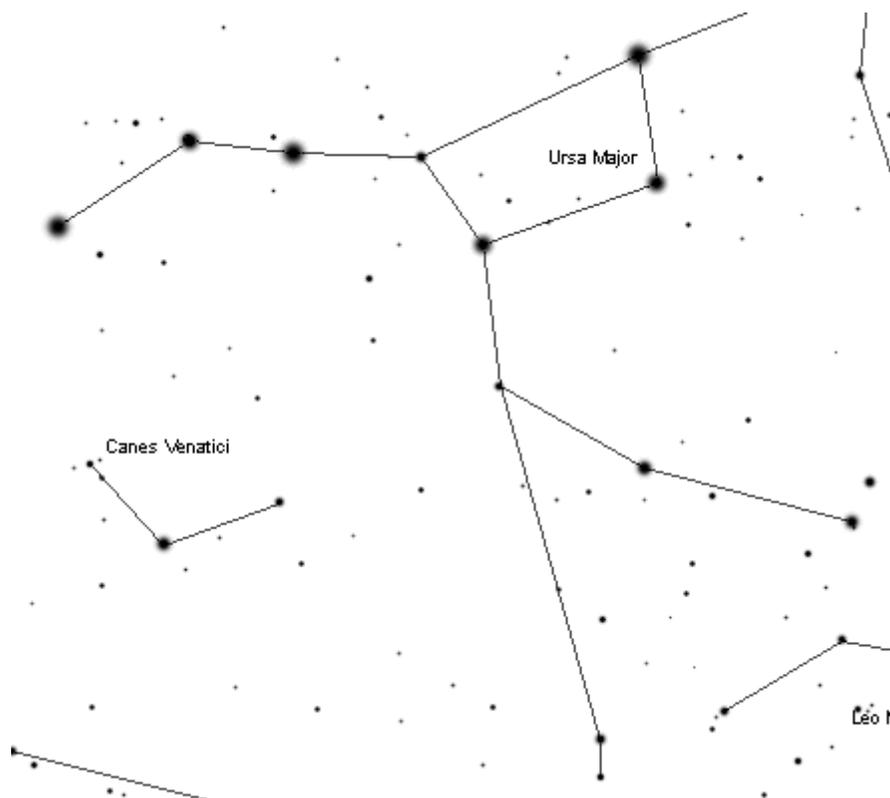
Cor Caroli: The heart of Charles, Alpha Canum Venaticorum is believed to have been named by Edmond Halley after his patron Charles II. It is a wide double (separation 20 arc second), easily split by the smallest telescope.

M3: A rare gem of the northern sky, this globular cluster is midway between Cor Caroli and Arcturus. Some 35,000 light years away and 200 light years across, M3 begins to resolve into stars through a small telescope.

Y Canum Venaticorum: Named La Superba by Secchi in the nineteenth century, this 5th magnitude star is splendidly red. It varies from magnitude 5.2 to 6.6 over 157 days.



The Whirlpool Galaxy (M51): This fabulous galaxy appears as a round, 8th magnitude glow with a bright nucleus. A 12-inch (300mm) telescope will show its spiral structure.



Astronomy Day

What a snow storm! After shaking the trees, and cleaning the driveway, it was time to go to Longmont Mall to for the Astronomy Day. I made several demos of the upcoming Lunar eclipse with Starry Night software loaded on my laptop and displayed on a monitor brought by Bob. I also had a slide show with moon pictures from Bob Noble and amazing pictures taken by Brian Kimball. We gave away dozens of free pictures and LAS club information sheets. We even had new members signing-up at our booth. Because of weather, we had very little attendance at Flanders.

--Philippe Bridenne

