

# Galactic Gazette



A Newsletter of the Kiski Astronomers

## Brutally Cold Night Hosts Great Sky Show!

by Denny Hill

Of course the weather was lousy around western PA the day of February 20, when all eyes were preparing for the lunar eclipse that evening. Although the forecasters were calling for clearing later in the evening, around here, you can never be sure what to believe!

That evening the beginning of the eclipse was looking "iffy" at best at my place. I stuck my head outside after the starting time and saw a sky full of clouds with the moon peaking in and out and Oh!!! it was brutally cold out there!!!

I decided to go back into the house and wait for a bit to see what was going to happen. After about 15 minutes I checked again and low and behold the sky had cleared! No excuse now to not view the eclipse.

I set my camera and tripod up on the patio and preceded to take some shots of the moon, now about half way into the Earth's shadow, trying to find the right exposures for a variety of shots. But it was just too darn cold! My right hand was getting numb from working the controls on the camera without a glove.



The moon at 10:46pm You can see Saturn to the left and Regulus to the top.

So I took a short break to thaw out and returned shortly before totality and waited for the last glimmer of sunlight to disappear from the limb of the moon.

With the moon now engulfed in shadow, it was displaying a reddish brown face to me, brighter towards the lower right.

Mars and Regulus shone as beacons through out, each on their respective sides of the moon! And now the "Lion of the Night" was proud again, for a short time, while the moon was being overshadowed by it's celestial parent.

It was great seeing the local celestial bodies showing off side by side during the night! It was quite a show but again, it was brutally cold. It was around 12 degrees when I finally gave up. The moon was still in totality but now I had lost most of my feeling in my toes and my hands were cold again so I packed it in. After a few minutes, I looked through my roof window just in time to see the sunlight begin to melt the shadow away!

## The Next Meeting

of the Kiski Astronomers



will be Thursday, March 6th, 2008 at 7 PM at  
Kiski High School in the LGI Room.

As of now, we have no programs scheduled for the evening but if you have any photos of the lunar eclipse you would like to share please bring them along.

Snacks: Larry Kort

Drinks: Bob Kalan (volunteered for the rest of the year)

*See you there!*

## Celestial Eye Candy for 2008

Continued

Calendar of events by Joe Rao

Back in December I listed some up and coming celestial events. Here's a brief glance at some more events that will hopefully tickle your astronomical fancy!

### May 10

Occultation of the Beehive star cluster: A waxing crescent moon, 38 percent illuminated, will pass in front of the famous Beehive Cluster this evening for North Americans, making for a pretty sight in binoculars and low-power telescopes. The stars in the cluster will disappear behind the moon's dark edge and will reappear about an hour later behind the bright edge.

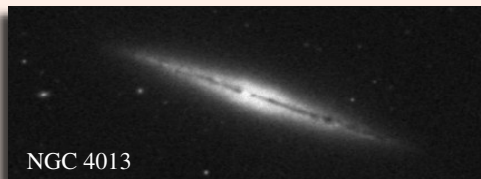
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# Travels on the Celestial Sphere

Glen Sanner and George Robert Kepple

**A**s spring progress, Ursa Major, the Great Bear, swings above Polaris allowing us a better view of its many wonderful galaxies. We thought you might enjoy viewing some of Ursa Major's fine spindle galaxies this month since they are also among our own favorite objects. Hopefully, after looking at these galaxies you will add them to your own observing lists too. These edge-on galaxies all reside in nearly the same area of the constellation. These galaxies are all visible with small telescopes, but, of course, the more aperture used, especially with galaxies, the better the view. Each size telescope offers a different perspective.



NGC 4013

**NGC 4013, Type Sb, Dia. 4.7'x1.0', Mag.11.2v, SB 12.8, 11h58.5m +43o57'**

Our first galaxy is NGC 4013, a 12th magnitude galaxy elongated 4' x 0.5' ENE-WSW with a bright 12.5 mag. star superimposed upon its halo that may be mistaken for a bright nucleus. You may notice a bulge near the center and with good skies, plenty of aperture, and averted vision you might see the dust lane that bisects its length. It lies at a distance of 55 million light years.

**NGC 4026, Type SO, Dia. 4.6'x1.2', Mag. 10.8v, SB 12.5, 11h59.4m +50o58'**



NGC 4026

Our next object is NGC 4026, a 12th magnitude edge-on galaxy located 7' SSW of a 9th mag. star. It has a sharply concentrated core containing a bright non-stellar nucleus surrounded by a 4' x 0.75' N-S halo. This galaxy is also 55 million light years distant.

**NGC 4100, Type SAbc, Dia. 5.1'x1.8', Mag. 12.2v, SB 13.4, 12h06.2m +49o35'**

NGC 4100 is a fairly bright, uniformly illuminated sliver extending 5'x1.5' NNW-SSE with tapered ends. Examining its envelope at high power will reveal a mottled texture with light and dark

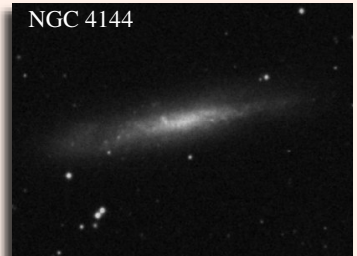


NGC 4100

areas. Its central area is bulged and displays a small oval core.

**NGC 4144, Type SABcd, Dia. 6.3'x1.6', Mag. 11.6v, SB 14.0, 12h10.0m +46o27'**

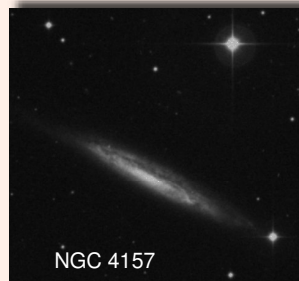
NGC 4144 is an 11th magnitude edge-on galaxy elongated 5' x 0.75' WSW-ENE. Its core extends nearly half of the length of the halo's major axis, is thin and varied but



NGC 4144

brighter than the halo. A 13th magnitude star is just north of the of the galaxy's WNW elongation and a 13th mag. double lies just south of its ESE elongation forming an isosceles triangle with another 13th mag. star at the ESE tip. This galaxy is a member of the Canes II galaxy group at a distance of 30 million light years.

**NGC 4157, Type SABb sp, Dia. 7.1'x1.2', Mag. 11.3v, SB 13.5, 12h11.1m +50o29'**

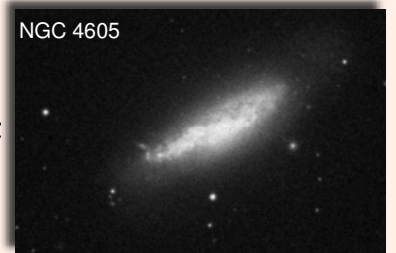


NGC 4157

NGC 4157, centered 5' SSE of an 8th magnitude star, is elongated 6'x 0.75' ENE-WSW. This fine needle of light has a pronounced central bulge with tapered ends. With enough aperture, a dust lane extending nearly half the length of its major axis along its NW flank may be observed. This galaxy is nicely placed in a beautiful star field. It is 50 million light years away.

**NGC 4605, Type SB pec, Dia. 6.4'x2.3', Mag. 10.3v, SB 13.1, 12h40.0m +61o37'**

NGC 4605 is a fine luminous streak extending 5.5'x2.0' NW-SE with a thin 3' long core. In medium-size telescopes at high power the halo shows some mottling but lacks a central nucleus. We hope you enjoy this selection of the Great Bear's many fine treasures. Get out there and enjoy the night sky.



NGC 4605

## 2008 Officers

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## Nocturnal Notables February 2008

- March 5 Mercury 0.2° north of Moon, occultation  
 March 5 Venus 0.2° south of Moon, occultation  
 March 5 Neptune 0.2° north of Moon, occultation  
 March 7 ☉ New Moon 12:14 P.M.  
 March 10 Moon at perigee  
 March 14 ☾ First Quarter Moon 6:46 A.M.  
 March 19 Regulus 0.8° north of Moon, occultation  
 March 20 Vernal equinox 1:48 A.M.  
 March 21 ● Full Moon 2:40 P.M.  
 March 26 Moon at apogee  
 March 2 Antares 0.5° north of Moon, occultation  
 March 29 ☾ Last Quarter Moon 5:47 P.M.  
 April 2 Pluto stationary  
 April 5 ☉ New Moon 11:55 P.M.  
 April 7 Moon at perigee  
 April 12 ☾ First Quarter Moon 2:32 P.M.

## Easter Trivia!

Here is a little Easter Trivia that Larry Kort sent me that I thought would be fitting to share since Easter is based on astronomical events. Enjoy!

The date of this coming Easter is quite early this year. Easter is always the 1st Sunday after the 1st full moon after the Spring Equinox (which is March 20). This dating of Easter is based on the lunar calendar that Hebrew people used to identify Passover, which is why it moves around on our Roman calendar.

Here's the interesting info. This year is the earliest Easter any of us will ever see the rest of our lives! And only the most elderly of our population have ever seen it this early (95 years old or above!). And none of us have ever, or will ever, see it a day earlier!

Here's the facts : 1) The next time Easter will be this early (March 23) will be the year 2228 (220 years from now). The last time it was this early was 1913 (so if you're 95 or older, you are the only ones that were around for that!). 2) The next time it will be a day earlier, March 22, will be in the year 2285 ( 277 years from now ). The last time it was on March 22 was 1818. So, no one alive today has or will ever see it any earlier than this year !



## The Galactic Gazette

is published & edited by  
Denny Hill

Contributions to the newsletter are greatly appreciated!

Please consider sharing your knowledge and experiences along with any expertise with me for future issues!

*This is your newsletter! Make it the best it can be!*  
Email your articles to me at [dhill955@alltel.net](mailto:dhill955@alltel.net)

**Thanks!**





### Celestial Eye Candy

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#### May 21-22

Jupiter without satellites! Anyone who points a small telescope toward the planet Jupiter will nearly always see some or all of the four famous Galilean satellites. Usually at least two or three of these moons are immediately evident; sometimes all four. It is very rare when only one moon is in view and rarer still when no moons at all are visible. On this night, for parts of the northeast U.S. and eastern Canada, Jupiter will appear moonless for about 20 minutes.

#### June 30

Occultation of the Pleiades star cluster: This occultation will already be in progress as a skinny sliver of a waning crescent moon rises in the pre-dawn skies over the northeastern United States. Earthshine should also be present, imparting a "3-D effect" in binoculars and small telescopes. The best views will come as the brighter stars of this cluster reappear along the dark lunar limb.

#### August 1

Total eclipse of the sun: Siberia anyone? From Novosibirsk you'll see the late-afternoon sun completely blotted out for 2.3 minutes. Totality will also be visible from Canada's Northwest Passage, western Mongolia and the western end of the Great Wall of China.

#### August 11-12

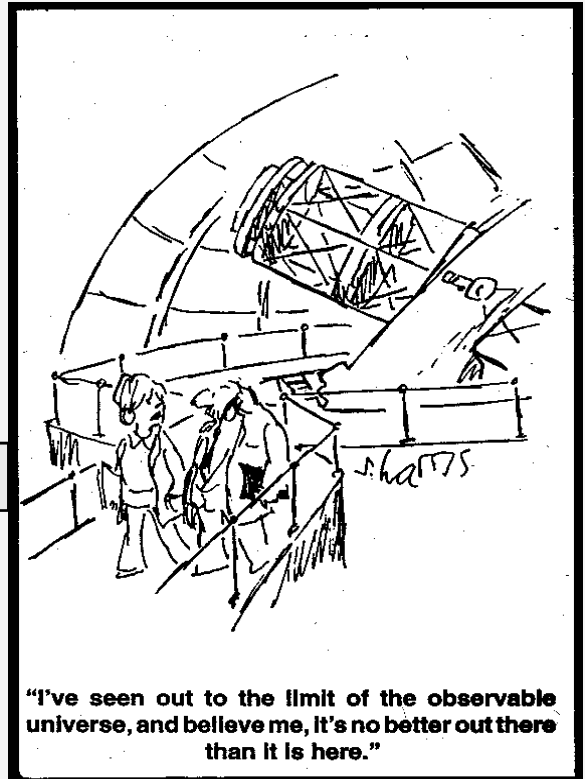
Perseid meteor shower: At first glance, this doesn't look like a favorable year to view this famous meteor display, since the moon will be in a bright waxing gibbous phase on the peak viewing night. Fortunately, the moon will set at around 1:45 a.m. local daylight time, leaving the rest of the night dark for meteor watchers.

Aug. 16

Partial eclipse of the moon: Europe, Africa and Asia will be in the best position to watch up to four-fifths of the moon become immersed in Earth's dark umbral shadow.

## Galactic Humor!

Submitted by Denny Hill



#### September 19

Another Pleiades occultation: A waning gibbous moon will already be within the Pleiades as it rises over the eastern United States and Canada during the mid-evening hours. The reappearance of stars such as Alcyone and Taygeta should be well-seen along the moon's dark limb.

#### December 1

Venus-Jupiter conjunction, Part 2: This will be the second pairing-off of the two brightest planets in 2008, this time in the evening sky soon after sundown. And as a bonus, the crescent moon will join them, forming a striking triangle and likely making even those who normally don't look up at the sky take notice.

## Kiski Minute

The Kiski Astronomers met at 7pm at Kiski High School in the LGI room. John Labrecque presented the program for the evening on Regional Summer Star Parties.

The business was called to order at 8:25 pm by president John Labrecque. Reading of January's minutes were waived due to their posting in the newsletter.

**Treasurers report:** Opening balance: \$1009.62. Closing balance \$1041.12.

### **Old Business:**

- Website update by Larry McHenry.
- Denny Hill gave his report on Northmoreland Park as a possible star party site. He said we would need a \$20 yearly permit and then discuss the details including star party dates with park officials. They seemed very interested in having us.
- Recapped Gary Shannon's email report of Moraine State Park as a possible site. Observing site would have to be next to the bicycle rental building as the AAAP's party last year.
- Tony O. reported that Freeport Park wasn't a good possibility because the park is closed at night except for Lobby Hall events.
- Terry & John reported on their 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with township supervisors about Kunkle Park. Supervisors were very receptive and welcomed us to hold our public star parties. They will advertise our events on their township roadside signs each month.

## February 7, 2008 Minutes

- Membership voted to hold the public star parties at Kunkle Park. They will be held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month from May through September weather permitting. Members are to arrive an hour before sunset for setup. Proposed dates are: May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9, and September 13.
- Denny Hill contacted the Valley News Dispatch and got the information and the ok to have our meetings submitted for posting in the "Stroller".

### **Observations:**

- Denny Hill observed Mars next to the full moon and then the distance between them 3 hours later.
- Terry Trees saw Demos using his occulting bar
- Larry McHenry reported that the sun is quiet. Also mentioned that we have officially begun the new solar cycle with the sighting of a reverse polarity sun spot.

### **New business:**

- Dave Koren has scheduled his star party for August 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Ed K. to check into what would be involved to incorporate the club.
- Denny H. to check into local publications for meeting announcements.

March's program –None Scheduled.

Drinks – Bob Kalan (volunteered for the rest of the year)

Snacks – Larry Kort

Meeting was adjourned at 9pm