

Hello Everyone,

Here are the minutes of our March 4th meeting held at the Scituate Library.

- Eric Lawrence opened the meeting at 7:30

-Jim Ahola presented, " Comets Comes and Husband Reforms". It was a wonderful presentation about the history of Halley's Comet. Using music, props, vintage pictures and political cartoons, Jim's lecture was educational and entertaining.

-After the lecture, Eric showed videos of meteors, asteroids and comets.

-Eric confirmed that we will use the library as our meeting place for the future. Again, all felt it was a positive decision because of the better connection with the public, better technology and more conducive for discussions. We discussed buying a gift for the Norwell Senior Center as well. Viewing will continue at Centennial Field. This month, viewing nights are the 14th and 21st.

-The lighthouse viewing will begin in May.

-Mike McCabe and Patty Bogan discussed upcoming events for Astronomy Day on May 2nd. See e-mail Mike sent out with itinerary.

-There was a door prize of the complete collection of old copies of Sky and Telescope. Kathleen Wolf won the prize.

-Eric talked about making more T-shirts and sweatshirts for the club.

-After the meeting Mike and about six members went out to the parking lot to observe the sky. Please see attachment. It was a great meeting. Thanks to Patty and Louis who brought great snacks!

Best,
Judy

Post-Meeting Observing Report

After last night's meeting, about a half dozen of us stayed in the parking lot for some astronomical observing. Our first target was of course Luna, which at 74% waxing gibbous was dominating the sky. Of particular interest in the view were the Jura Mountains, the bases of which in the dark, but at over twelve thousand feet high the peaks were in sunlight. Kathleen described them as looking like a cup handle, which was quite apt indeed.

Next, we moved on to the beautiful multiple star system of Mizar and Alcor in the Big Dipper. Once used as a test of visual acuity, it was only ten years ago when it was proven that the two brightest stars in the system are actually gravitationally related. They are, and along with Mizar B it remains one of the prettiest sights one can see in a telescope.

From there we dropped in on Polaris and viewed its companion as well. This was a much tougher challenge than seeing Mizar B, mainly because the brightness of the moon was whitewashing the sky and 9th magnitude objects were feeling the hurt from it.

From Polaris we shifted our gaze up to Auriga and open cluster Messier 38. Again, the moon was taking its toll, but the basic shape that gives M38 its popular moniker, The Starfish Cluster, was still evident.

We then swung around to make a quick visit with Leo, where we spied Regulus and its wide spread secondary before dropping down to 'Mr. Dim', aka Betelgeuse where we observed the color and alleged brightening of this recently famous star.

From there we popped on up to Castor in Gemini, where we all enjoyed the eye test of separating the two closely spaced bright components of the system at just 65x. The seeing was generally bad but had its moments of settling down, and the two snapped into view quite nicely at those moments.

In wrapping it up we decided to end it on an absurd note by attempting to view M81 and M82 with a small scope in a moonlit sky. We had fun looking at them first separately, then with both of them in the same field of view. To paraphrase a fellow observer that I was viewing with one time many years ago, it was a view that only an astronomer could appreciate.

All in all it was great fun. The parking lot lights do indeed go out when the library closes, making it a pretty good place to observe from, and it didn't hurt that it wasn't too cold out. We are hoping that this can become a more regular part of our meeting nights.