



# The Meridian

The newsletter of the  
Quad Cities Astronomical Society

March 2009

<http://www.qcas.org>

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## February Meeting Minutes

Joe Bannon

Dana began the February meeting with a review of old business. An inventory of items in the observatory, blockhouse and books (some of which are at Cecil's house) was confirmed though likely needs to be updated. As an example, Steve mentioned an optic set that the club purchased and that Mike Valdez had at one time. Gary said Jim R. has this.

Cecil will update the form for the club's status as an Iowa non-profit organization. This can be done online. Dana – was there some further discussion that you would take care of this? If so, feel free to update this sentence.

The last piece of old business was the 2009 schedule for public star parties. It was decided these would be held on the last Saturday of the month, April through October. These dates will not conflict with any Menke parties or the EISP, which was scheduled for October 16-18. Joe will communicate these dates with the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and the Clinton County Conservation Board.

Moving on to new business, Dana received an e-mail from a teacher in the Dewitt area who would like an astronomy program for low-income kids. Her initial thought was to borrow a telescope and have a few sessions at the trailer park where most of the kids live. Later, she would bring them to the observatory during a public star party. Members expressed concern about loaning equipment to people outside the club with little or no experience using a scope. Questions included the size of the group and the ages of the kids. Dana will contact the woman and see if she is able to come to a meeting so we can better assess what she would like and what we may be able to do.

John W. raised the idea of some spring or summer road trips and mentioned the Yerkes Observatory, Fermi Lab and the Adler Planetarium as possibilities. Cecil mentioned Torus, a telescope maker in Iowa City and others mentioned a 24" telescope in Peoria.

Karl and Gary presented a variation on the Constellation of the Month, focusing on Messier objects in preparation for the March Messier marathon. More than 20 open clusters; galaxies; planetary, emission and diffuse nebulae were discussed, all visible during the mid-winter months.

After the presentation, members discussed the Marathon itself. The best days are March 27-28 and as that gets closer we can make more definite plans. Gary lamented that he has to work that weekend and may be looking to go on another night.

Members traded notes on their previous marathons, including tips like scheduling your observations to catch some objects early, before they set. Gary said about five years ago he got about 50, even though he was working with a broken red-dot finder. That same evening Jim got 74 and Ken B. mentioned he got about 80. Dana mentioned that Virgo can be tricky because there can be three or four galaxies in the field of view and you need to be sure what you're looking at. Discussion continued on the "official" ways to conduct a marathon and the use of digital v. conventional setting circles and go-to scopes.

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## Member Astrophotos

John B. took these photos of M42 and the Flame Nebula on February 14. He made several exposures of varying length for M42 and composited them using Photoshop.



On February 28, John was back at the observatory and took these photos of Comet Lulin and NGC2903. The exposures on these were between 10-13 seconds and 4-8 pictures were stacked.




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## Upcoming Celestial and Club Events

March 8	Daylight savings time begins; Saturn at opposition and at its closest to Earth
March 10	Saturn visible to upper left of the full Moon
March 12-28	Zodiacal light visible 80-120 minutes after sunset
March 20	Spring begins
March 22	A.M. - Waning crescent Moon is upper right of Jupiter
March 24	A.M. – Mars is a few degrees below the crescent Moon in the east
March 27-28	Messier Marathon
March 29-30	Crescent Moon is below and then above the Pleiades

Jens-Wendt Observatory – Quad Cities Astronomical Society – Located at Sherman Park in Dixon, Iowa

Monsignor Menke Observatory – St. Ambrose University – Located at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center in Dixon, Iowa

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## QCAS Contacts

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All other contacts can be sent to [qcas@mchsi.com](mailto:qcas@mchsi.com) or mailed to the club at P.O. Box 3706, Davenport, IA, 52808. Members are also reminded that anyone can submit articles for *The Meridian*. Submit articles to Joe Bannon at [jbannon@midamerican.com](mailto:jbannon@midamerican.com) and [mzbannon@aol.com](mailto:mzbannon@aol.com).

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