

The **ASTERISM**

as' ter ism ~ a recognizable pattern of stars
con stel la' tion ~ an internationally designated area of the sky

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Note: Use bookmark panel in Adobe Reader.

You cannot get this shot from Earth!

This picture is of a crescent Neptune and Titan one of its natural satellites taken in 1989 by Voyager II. The familiar blue of Neptune is lost from the Sun's rays.



Image credit Voyager II, NASA



Planetary Nebula

Dr. Orsola De Marco
Professor
Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia
Appearance by SKYPE

planetary nebula's asymmetrical appearances. Following the presentation, Dr. De Marco will be available by SKYPE for questions and answers from Sydney, Australia.

PLEASE JOIN US!!!

This lecture will start with an on-line 21 minute presentation by Dr. De Marco on stellar evolution leading to planetary nebula. Most planetary nebula are not spherical as their original star. The focus will be on the possible causes of the majority of

SOLAR OBSERVING AT TRAILSIDE SATURDAY APRIL 20, AT 1P.M. WEATHER PERMITTING

Member attendance is welcome and appreciated, if you would like to assist this program please contact any officer or trustee at our Friday meeting.

If the weather is inclement a cancellation notice will appear on the AAI website by noon. Thank you.

New Members Wanted!!

Amateur Astronomers, Inc. has no new members to report from the April Executive Committee meeting! Speak to your friends and colleagues on the merits of membership.

Irene Greenstein, Membership Chair

The Nominating Committee (David Satkowski, Chair, Donald Kruse, & Julie Holdom) has nominated the following persons for officer positions for the 2013 May election.

- President – Joseph A. Ascione
 - Vice President – Mary Ducca
 - Treasurer – Marcus Valdez
 - Recording Secretary – Alan P. Witzgall
 - Corresponding Secretary – David Satkowski
 - Trustee FTE May 2016 – John Sichel
- We thank them for their work.

**MEMBER ONLY STAR PARTY
JENNY JUMP STATE PARK
HOPE, NJ
SATURDAY MAY 11, 7:30PM**

**STAR PARTY
SPERRY OBSERVATORY
FRIDAY MAY 3
at 7:30 p.m.**

Spring is here. The grass is growing and buds are appearing on trees and shrubs. This means that it is the time of year for the North East Astronomy Forum (NEAF - <http://www.rocklandastronomy.com/NEAF/index.html>), a large astronomy convention. It is held every year in at Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY and is operated by the Rockland Astronomy Club (RAC - <http://www.rocklandastronomy.com>). This convention is the topic of this month's column.

NEAF Origins

Like all things, NEAF had a beginning. In 1988, Al Nagler, founder and owner of Televue, and Allan Green of the RAC attended a small astronomy expo in Connecticut. This inspired them to come up with one of their own. And, with vital input from Don Urban, also of the RAC, the NEAF concept was born. The first NEAF, in 1991, and the next one, were very small affairs that were held in a stretch of hallway outside the theater at Rockland Community College. NEAF soon grew and moved to the Holiday Inn in Suffern, NY. However, NEAF eventually outgrew that venue and returned to Rockland Community College, though it takes up far more space than the small portion of a hallway that it did back in 1991.

One of the things that has helped make NEAF very successful is the fact that the folks at RAC who founded and organized the event realized that weather was too unpredictable to support an observing event like Stellafane or the Texas Star Party and that by concentrating on presentations, weather would no longer be an issue. This, as well as having big name guests, is the recipe for success.

Similarities

Many members of AAI know that I attend a number of media nostalgia conventions and NEAF does have some similarities to those events. For instance, NEAF and the media nostalgia conventions both have areas where a wide variety of vendors set up displays of their wares and make sales. In the convention field, these are known as vendor areas or vendor rooms.

Another similarity is that both kinds of events feature celebrities. I don't think the AAI audience needs to be reminded about the celebrities who appear at media nostalgia events (they hear that from me already) and space would prohibit me from giving detailed lists.

The celebrities who appear at NEAF are of a different kind, but well known to AAI members. Recent notables have included Dr. Chris Lintott, the British astronomer who created the concept of citizen scientists going through archived data and is a likely successor to the late Sir Patrick Moore as host of "The Sky at Night"



Alex Fillipenko at 2011 NEAF
Images credit Stewart Meyers

Alex Fillipenko, host of the "Universe" TV series has also appeared at NEAF.

Many other luminaries of the world of astronomy appear at NEAF. Vivian White and the now-retired Marni Berendsen of the Night Sky Network have put in a few appearances at the event. This year, the famous (or infamous, depending on your opinion about Pluto) Mike Brown, discoverer of Eris, will be in attendance.

Differences

Naturally, NEAF is a different breed than media nostalgia conventions and has a number of differences.

For starters, vendors play a far greater role at NEAF than at the other kind of conventions. Unlike at media nostalgia conventions (where vendors take up little space) at NEAF, the vendors are the main focus of the event and the vendor area takes up a cavernous gymnasium area.

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And that space is necessary. Some of the displayed items are extremely large, ranging from observatory domes to telescopes that dwarf anything owned by AAI members and which cost more than some cars. Add to that a number of impressive pieces of technology, and walking among the vendors area can be quite entertaining and enlightening.

Another difference is that some of the people at the vendor tables are famous in their own right. Usually one or two editors of Sky & Telescope attend NEAF. Astronomy magazine, ordinarily has a presence as well. At the 2011 NEAF, the cast of "Meteorite Men" was in attendance at their own table. And, at the table for Oceanside Photo & Telescope (OPT), one can find Craig Weatherwax, the head of the company and the guy who appears in most of OPT's print ads. Interestingly enough, he's not as imposing as he appears in the ads.

One nice thing about the large variety of vendors at NEAF is that you can find out what is going on at some of the major businesses that cater to astronomy. For example, Meade Telescopes had a booth at NEAF staffed by some of their executives. At the time, Meade was touting a new feature on some of their telescopes called "Astronomer Inside" and it was marketed with the slogan "Knows the sky so you don't have to." I had suspected that this slogan was concocted by their advertising agency, since I feel that statement embodies a bad attitude as I feel that people should learn their way around the sky before they get a telescope. So, I asked a Meade executive about it. He informed me that the ad men didn't create the slogan. It was the official company line. I tried to make my point, but the executive was adamant and cited something about the desire for "instant gratification".

So, if you have a question about an astronomical product at NEAF, don't be shy. Ask. You will get an answer.

While NEAF does not offer the same meet-and-greet opportunities with their celebrities that the media nostalgia conventions do, NEAF does have quite a few celebrity presentations. These have some superficial similarities to the presentations celebrities give at certain media nostalgia events, but the NEAF ones are much more organized and impart a sense of the latest developments in that expert's field. And, of course, they are very informative.

The Stage (and Screen)

A major attraction at NEAF is the fact that they have a number of interesting presentations, given by the big name guests in a large theater.

Sometimes, there is an extra event. In 2011, NEAF hosted a screening (one of the first) for "The City Dark" an anti-light pollution documentary produced by filmmaker Ian Cheney (<http://www.thecitydark.com>). Cheney was in attendance and took comments and questions from the audience. This was the full 83-minute version, not the cut-down 58-minute one that he later released for television. It's a good film and I have recommended it to some environmental groups.

While on the subject of light pollution, the International Dark-sky Association (IDA – <http://www.darksky.org>) also hosts a mini-convention in the same venue (but different rooms) as NEAF and on the same date. However, I believe that the IDA event is considered separate from NEAF and you would have to buy a ticket from the IDA to attend it. Apparently, the folks who run NEAF do not view the IDA event as competition.

Free Stuff

A NEAF attendee who is interested in obtaining some great astronomy gear can easily spend a significant amount of money, but there are some surprising things that are available for free. For instance, I was able to pick up some tiny meteorite samples (I believe they were from a fall in Argentina). Another vendor was handing out solar viewers. These used newer polymer materials, not Solar Skreen (which was invented by the late Roger W. Tuthill, member of AAI).

So, take a walk around the vendors area and keep your eyes open. You may never know what you are going to find.

Convention-al Fun

If you are able to drive or otherwise get to Rockland County College in Suffern, (just twenty-eight miles North of New York City). why not go to NEAF on Saturday or Sunday, April 20-21, 2013? It is one of the more interesting things you can do in astronomy that does not depend on the weather. You will see some of the big names in the field of astronomy, examine some of the latest equipment available to amateurs.

☆☆☆

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MEMBERSHIP DUES

Regular Membership:	\$21
Sustaining Membership:	\$31
Sponsoring Membership:	\$46
Family Membership:	\$5
First Time Application Fee:	\$3
<i>Sky & Telescope:</i>	\$32.95
<i>Astronomy</i> subscription:	\$34

(Subscription renewals to *S&T* can be done directly. See "Membership-Dues" on website for details.)

AAI Dues can be paid in person to our Membership Chair, or by mail to: AAI, PO Box 111, Garwood, NJ 07027-0111

DOME DUTY

Apr	26	Team E
May	3	Team A
May	10	Team B
May	17	Team C

FRIDAYS AT SPERRY

Apr 26 2013

Space Missions Briefing

Dave Satkowski

Strange Telescopes

Aaron Zuckerman

May 3, 2013

What's Up? A Down to Earth

Sky Guide Kathy Vaccari

Space Missions Briefing

Bill Whitehead

May 10, 2013

2012 Australian Eclipse

Irene & Richard Greenstein

May 24, 2013

Our Little Drop of the Ocean:

What's In the Sun's Backyard

John Sichel

All schedules above were accurate at time of publication. Please check www.asterism.org for latest information (click on "Club Activities")

☆☆☆

The next **General Membership Meeting** is the third **Friday, May 17, 2013**. This is the **Annual Membership Meeting**, for member presentations and to elect officers.

Please join us.

Theaterⁱⁿ_{the} Sky by Ron Ruemmler

May 2013 is a spectacular month for planet watchers. The three brightest planets converge dramatically over the western horizon about an hour after sunset.

As the month begins, **Venus** is a challenge, setting just 45 minutes after sunset. **Jupiter** sets a full three hours after the **Sun** at this time, but the two planets are racing toward each other. By midmonth an unusually bright **Mercury** has outpaced both of them to end up on top as the three meet for the start of the last week of May. Beautiful!

If you can find **Venus** in bright twilight on the 10th, use binoculars to look for the less-than-day-old crescent Moon 1.4 degrees to the planet's lower left.

Saturn is visible for most of the night, setting in morning twilight. **Mars** is invisibly close to the **Sun** all month.

This month's solar eclipse occurs just four days before apogee, so the **Moon** appears too small to cover all of the **Sun**. The resulting annular eclipse is mostly visible over the open central Pacific. The very beginning, however, retraces the start of last November's total eclipse in northern Queensland, Australia.

The penumbral lunar eclipse this month is not visible from anywhere, but it is not without interest. Like all eclipses, it is part of a *saros*, a family of almost identical eclipses separated by regular intervals of 18.03 years. This month's annular solar eclipse, for example, is number 31 of the 70 eclipses in solar saros number 138, which runs from June 6, 1472 until July 11, 2716.

However, 18.03 years ago, the **Moon** narrowly missed the northern edge of the **Earth's** shadow completely. So our invisibly slight penumbral lunar eclipse is the very first in a brand new saros. If you are up around midnight on May 24/25, look up at the Full **Moon** and celebrate the birth of lunar saros number 150 whose 71 members will march along until June 30, 3275.

May (times are PM unless noted)

2 Th 7:14 AM	First Last Quarter Moon
9 Th 8:28	New Moon ; annular solar eclipse visible from south Pacific
10 Fri 8:10	Extremely thin crescent Moon lower left of Venus (binoculars)
11 Sat 5:00	Mercury in conjunction with Sun ; enters evening sky
11 Sat 8:40	Very thin crescent Moon below Jupiter
12 Sun 9:00	Thin crescent Moon upper left of Jupiter
13 M 9:32 AM	Moon farthest from Earth (apogee); 252,168 miles
18 S 12:35AM	First Quarter Moon
24 Fri 9:00	Mercury 1.5 degrees upper right of Venus
24 Fri 9:00	Jupiter 4 degrees upper left of Venus
24 Fri 11:53	Penumbral lunar eclipse begins
25 S 12:11 AM	Mid-eclipse; 0.0157 of Moon's diameter in partial shadow
25 S 12:25 AM	Full Moon
25 S 12:26 AM	Penumbral lunar eclipse ends
25 Sat 9:43	Moon nearest Earth (perigee); 222,685 miles
26 Sun 9:00	Mercury , Jupiter , and Venus in tightest trio
27 Mon 9:00	Jupiter 1.25 degrees left of Venus
27 Mon 9:00	Mercury 2.6 degrees above Venus
31 Fri 2:58	Second Last Quarter Moon
31 Fri 9:00	Mercury-Venus-Jupiter in evenly spaced straight line, top to bottom

