March is a magnificent marathon month for the Messiers.
Left: M79.
Image: ©Tom Shaull, 2001
I wish to take this opportunity to thank the E-board of the past year, and welcome the new one. It is also appropriate to express appreciation to the Dark Sky Site committee, the many members who contributed time and money to the efforts at the site, the Public Night crews, and those that come and make the Open House so successful. I'm sure I speak for the membership when I thank all of these folks for their effort.

The next year will bring new challenges and continued growth for the Society. If members have any ideas please contact myself, an officer, or an eboard member to make your wishes known. Your thoughts are very important to us. Remember—this is your organization.

DSS REPORT—The Warming Hut is now working with electric heat and red lights. Yea! Rules will be posted at the warming hut soon. Plans for spring include more pads and possibility a vault toilet depending on what it costs, and how much money we have. If you are the last one to leave the site, please make sure the lights and heater are turned off and the door is locked. We do not have timers hooked up yet. We hope to have some chairs and a vacuum cleaner out there soon.

ATTENTION COMPUTER USERS! In order to save mailing costs, we are asking those who can comfortably receive their Denver Observer by e-mail to let us know. Please tell Patti Kurtz, pkurtz@starfirecreations.com if this works for you. We are now sending about 25 newsletters by email. By the way, the e-mail version comes in living color!

—Larry Brooks

New D.A.S. officers from left to right: Chuck Carlson, treasurer; Ron Pearson, secretary; Patti Kurtz, vice-president; Larry Brooks, president.

www.denverastro.org

D.A.S. Officers

President: Larry Brooks (303) 986-5255 Email: LBrooks100@aol.com
Vice President: Patti Kurtz (303) 948-5825 Email: pkurtz@starfirecreations.com
Secretary: Ron Pearson (303) 670-1299 Email: rpearson@ecentral.com
Treasurer: Chuck Carlson (303) 744-7331 Email: chcarlso@du.edu

Executive Board Members
Ted Cox Jerry Sherlin
Jack Eastman David Shouldice
Joe Gafford Steve Solon
Greg Marino Dan Wray
George Jones, Past President

D.A.S. Information Line:
(303) 986-5255

D.A.S. Correspondence:
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Van Nattan Scholarship Fund
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Lakewood, Colorado 80215-0743

Webmaster:
Terry Chatterton
Email: Kiowapages@aol.com

Newsletter:
Observer Editor, Patti Kurtz
(303) 948-5825

The Observer is available in color or b&w PDF format from the D.A.S. website.

The Executive Board conducts the business of the D.A.S. at 8 P.M. at Chamberlin Observatory. Please see the Schedule of Events for meeting dates. All members are welcome.
Note from the editor:

Newsletter contributions (ccd and film astrophotos, members with telescopes, star party candids, short observing anecdotes, observing and imaging tips, etc.) are welcome and encouraged. This is your chance to strut your stuff! Please submit by the 15th of each month as follows:

Film: Glossy prints by mail** or scanned and uploaded (high res.) to the listserve upload area.

CCD: Uploaded to the listserve upload area (resolution as high as possible, please).

Text: Articles should be no more than 250 words, please. Paste into an email and send to me at: pkurtz@starfirecreations.com.

If you don’t receive a confirmation email from me, I didn’t get your email. Also, be sure to let me know if you’ve uploaded a file.

Thank you!

**Patti Kurtz (call for mailing address)
(303) 948-5825
All images used are © the photographer and may not be reproduced.

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L.A.S. Springs into Star Party Season

D.A.S. members are invited to the third annual Sterling Star Party at North Sterling State Reservoir in eastern Colorado. Sponsored by the Longmont Astronomical Society (L.A.S.), the star party will be held next month, on April 20 and 21.

The reservoir is a three-thousand acre lake with three campgrounds about 15 miles north of Sterling. Bob Loomis, state park ranger there, has given this event the top campground on top of the hill above the middle of the lake where there are no visible lights. New restrooms are available at the site with hot water and showers. Gary Garzone, Vice-President of the L.A.S., said there is room inside the restrooms to warm up when needed.

Jim Sapp, L.A.S. member, said that Loomis approached the club two or three years ago and requested they visit the site, throw a star party, and guide the park system in constructing a possible public observatory there. He said it will probably consist of a 16-inch SCT under a dome or roll-off roof. Additionally, there will be video and a large screen in an amphitheater, and individual observing pads for visiting astronomers.

“This site is almost as dark as Fox Park, and darker than Pawnee—great for the diehard dark-sky lovers,” said Garzone. “We do see some sky glow from Sterling to the southeast, but that means the town is not too far away for people who want a restaurant or hotel. The first year we had an aurora from 9 P.M. until 3 A.M. It was so bright that we watched it most of the night!” This year they’re looking forward to watching the Lyrids meteor shower.

He added that daytime activities at the reservoir include fishing and boating, and plenty of hiking trails. Last year’s star party drew more than 200 people from Sterling and Brush due to publicity from local television stations and newspapers. Camping fees are waived for astronomers—but you will still need to purchase a $4.00 daily park pass or use your annual Colorado State Park Pass ($40.00) which is good for the entire year. Maps and directions are available on the Sterling State Reservoir web site (http://coloradoparks.org/north_sterling/index.asp).

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Russia’s Mir Space Station is shown separating from the Space Shuttle during mission STS-71. Somewhere between March 13-18 (give or take four days), 50 tons of leftover Mir are expected to survive Earth’s atmosphere as it’s deorbited, and then splash down in the Pacific Ocean within a zone 3,726 miles long and 124 miles wide. (Russian Space Agency, Courtesy of NASA)
How do you feel about your knowledge of the sky? Would you like to test it? Some of the most spectacular, yet easy to see deep-space objects are the Messier objects. These are a collection of galaxies, open and globular clusters, nebulae, and even a supernova remnant that were cataloged by Charles Messier between 1758 and 1782. Seems at the time, finding new comets was all the rage, and Chuck wanted to be known as the greatest comet-hunter of all time. With diligence he set about his quest. As he found each “faint fuzzy” that turned out not to be a comet, he and associate Pierre Mechain, cataloged them (M1, M2, etc.). As fate would have it, he turned out not to be the greatest comet-hunter, but is famous for his catalog of 110 non-comets.

Every year at the end of March, it’s possible to see all 110 Messier objects in one night. Attempting to do so is called a Messier Marathon—as close to a sporting event as our hobby has. I’ve been in the hobby for two years, and I tried my first marathon last year. The moon was full at the peak time so I had to try a couple of weeks earlier. I was able to locate and observe 106 of the 110 objects. You can read my results on the Internet at http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/marathon/teg00.txt. This year we’re lucky—on March 25, we’ll have a new moon. Mark your calendars now and get out to the Dark Sky Site for a Messier Marathon on the star party night of March 24.

Here are some tips. Although we now have a “warming hut,” dress warmly as you will not have much time to hang around in the hut. Bring the best (laminated!) star charts you can find—make tabs for the pages as they will be hard to turn if you’re wearing gloves. The best instruments for the hunt, in my opinion, are 6- to 10-inch Dobsonian-mounted reflectors with Telrad finders—you can bag your prey much faster using these finders (using computers would be cheating, of course). The most critical parts of the search are at

- **Warming Hut Rules**
  - Nothing can be stored in the building. If you leave crumbs or spill food, clean up after yourself immediately in order to keep mice out of the building.
  - Be sure to close the door tightly so that it can’t be blown open.
  - When you are the last person to leave the building, turn off the lights, even if there are others still at the site.
  - Please do not bring any contributions to the building until you clear it with the E-board — this will help prevent duplication. For your information, we cannot have upholstered furniture in the building because mice like to nest in it. At this point, we do not want items like coffeepots because there is no water to wash them. Contributions not approved will be thrown out.
  - The Warming Hut is not an overnight camping site. You may take short naps, but it’s not designed for overnight use.

- **Classes**

  **UNIVERSITY OF DENVER ASTRONOMY CLASSES:**

  All levels of instruction are available at Chamberlin and Mt. Evans Observatories. Contact Dr. Bob Stencel (303) 871-2135, rstencel@du.edu, www.du.edu/~rstencel, and/or the D.U. Registrar’s Office at (303) 871-2284.
the beginning (dusk) and the end (dawn) as the objects are easily overcome by twilight. The exact order of objects is debatable but you may try mine from the web site report. If you keep a reasonable pace you will have a chance to get some sleep. Work your way from west to east until about midnight; then sleep; and get up at 2 A.M. to continue your search.

Watch the weather. If predictions for Saturday look cloudy, be ready to go Friday night. Last year there were only a couple of folks that stuck it out for the duration. Let’s make it a true club event this year. We will meet together for breakfast back in town the next morning. Perhaps we can even combine our reports for an article in a larger publication. When we’re finished, we’ll have a sense of accomplishment that will last. And, to really remember your hard work, check out the A.L. Messier certificate (see page 7). Good Luck to all.

MESSIER MARATHON LIST OF OBJECTS
Note: Object listed as M102 (alt) is not an official Messier object; viewing is optional. (O Cluster=Open Cluster; PLN=Planetary Nebula; Dif Neb=Diffuse Nebula; SN Remn=Supernova Remnant; Glb Cluster=Globular Cluster; El Galaxy=Elliptical Galaxy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Constellation</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
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<td><strong>EARLY EVENING:</strong></td>
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<td>74 Pisces Galaxy Difficult</td>
<td>51 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate</td>
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<td>77 Cetus Galaxy Difficult</td>
<td>106 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate</td>
<td>Ursa Major Galaxy Moderate</td>
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<td>31 Andromeda Galaxy Easy</td>
<td>107 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate</td>
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<td>110 Andromeda Galaxy Difficult</td>
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<td>79 Lepus Glb Cluster Moderate</td>
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<td>36 Auriga O Cluster Moderate</td>
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<td>67 Cancer O Cluster Moderate</td>
<td>132 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate</td>
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**LEO AND URSA MAJOR REGION:**

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| 66 Leo Galaxy Difficult | 134 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 95 Leo Galaxy Difficult | 135 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 96 Leo Galaxy Difficult | 136 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 105 Leo Galaxy Difficult | 137 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 3 Canes Venatici Glb Cluster Moderate | 138 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 53 Coma Berenices Glb Cluster Easy | 139 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 64 Coma Berenices Galaxy Moderate | 140 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 85 Coma Berenices Galaxy Moderate | 141 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |

**AFER MIDNIGHT:**

| 13 Hercules Glb Cluster Easy | 142 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 92 Hercules Glb Cluster Moderate | 143 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 56 Lyra Glb Cluster Difficult | 144 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 57 Lyra PLN Moderate | 145 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 71 Sagitta Glb Cluster Moderate | 146 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 27 Vulpecula PLN Easy | 147 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 15 Pegasus Glb Cluster Difficult | 148 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 2 Aquarius Glb Cluster Difficult | 149 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 72 Aquarius Glb Cluster Difficult | 150 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 73 Aquarius O Cluster Difficult | 151 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
| 30 Capricornus Glb Cluster Difficult | 152 Canes Venatici Galaxy Moderate | Galaxy Easy |
The Dark Sky Site is for the use of D.A.S. members and their guests. If you are neither, please contact an officer of the D.A.S. for a “guest pass.” Please remember that white light disrupts your eye’s dark adaptation and can ruin astrophotography. Most members (astrophotographers may be the exception) are happy to share views from their telescopes, however, please introduce yourself and ask permission upon approaching a telescope owner. Please follow these simple guidelines to maintain a positive experience for everyone:

- Try to arrive before dark. If you must arrive after dark, please turn off headlights when turning into the site, and try to arrive from the north.
- Don’t park on the graded graveled roads.
- Turn off or disable all dome and trunk lights in your car (or cover with layered red tape or duct tape)
- Use only dull RED FLASHLIGHTS.
- NO OPEN FIRES. NEVER.

- If you’re the last person to leave, close the gate.
- If you leave before everyone else, ask for assistance in getting out of the site without headlights.

Other suggestions:
- Wear warm clothing.
- Bring your own toilet paper in case that in the porta-pottie has run out.

Directions to the D.S.S.
The D.A.S. Deer Trail Dark Sky Site is about 60 miles east of the “mouse-trap” in downtown Denver. Take I-70 east to the Deer Trail exit (exit 328), turn left at the end of the exit ramp, and turn left again on CR 217 (after the Texaco station). Take CR 217 just over 1/2 mile, and turn right (east) onto CR 34. Stay on CR 34 about 6 miles until you get to CR 241. Turn left (north) onto CR 241 and continue about 1.5 miles – you’ll see a culvert with a wide gate on the right (east) side of the road.

Directions to D.S.S. from Denver, arrival from the North (for after-dark arrivals):
Take I-25 eastbound to exit 316 (Byers). Turn left at end of ramp which puts you on eastbound US-36. Take US-36 east 17.2 miles to CR 241. Turn right (south) onto CR 241 and continue for 6.2 miles. The D.S.S. entrance is on the left between two tall posts.

Note: Travel distance from Denver using the North route is actually 3.9 miles shorter than the traditional route. The first 5 miles of CR 241 going south from US-36 is narrow and somewhat rough. Be careful.

D.A.S. Spring Banquet

We’ve had such good luck with Dardano’s Italian Restaurant (www.dardanosrestaurant.com), we’re going to have the Annual Spring Banquet there again this year! Dardano’s is located at 11968 W. Jewell Avenue in Lakewood, just three blocks west of Kipling (on the south side of Jewell, next to a Texaco station).

We’re fortunate to have as our featured speaker Dr. John Bally, University of Colorado. Dr. Bally conducts his research in the areas of Star Formation, Molecular Clouds, and Freestyle Skiing (http://casa.colorado.edu/~bally/).

When: Saturday, March 10
Time: 6:00-7:00 P.M. Cash Bar
7:00-8:00 P.M. Buffet Dinner
8:00 P.M. Speaker
Cost: $17.00/person—pay at the door.

Call or e-mail your reservations to Chuck Carlson (303-744-7331 or chcarlso@du.edu) by Monday, March 5.

D.A.S. Spring Banquet

Dark Sky Site Guidelines

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Other suggestions:
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- Bring your own toilet paper in case that in the porta-pottie has run out.

Image: unknown photographer

Greg Marino is loaded for bear with his 20-inch Obsession and 9.25-inch Celestron SCT telescopes. He uses the SCT primarily for solar observing at star parties. This photo was taken at Rocky Mountain Star Stare in July, 2000. The Observer wants photos of you with your scope(s) or at star parties—please send them in!
The D.A.S. Listserv is available to club members with an Internet connection. It’s operated by the E-board and can be accessed from a link provided at the D.A.S. website. Members are encouraged to join up and share anecdotes, observing and imaging tips, or whatever moves you astronomically. Be sure to check the website for profiles of upcoming speakers.

The Astronomical League and You
The Messier Award

The Astronomical League has 15 observing programs which are open to all League members. The oldest of these, and probably the best known, is the Messier Club Certificate. For over 25 years amateur astronomers have been developing or sharpening their knowledge of the sky by observing 70 or more of the deep-sky objects from Charles Messier’s famous catalog. As a DAS member, and thus a League member as well, you can also earn the Messier Certificate and pin.

The basic Messier Award comes after you have observed and kept a record of at least 70 of the “M” objects. If you go on to observe all 110 Messier objects, you then are given the Honorary Certificate and pin. Complete details may be found on the League’s website at www.astroleague.org: click on “Observing Clubs.” If you do not have Internet access, contact the program leader: Scott Krantz, 106 N. Darrowby Dr., Raymore, MO. 64083-9181.

Before you start, remember that this is a learning exercise; no fair using the computer keypads on the new automated scopes.

If you don’t have a telescope but do have binoculars, there is now a program for you as well. Again, go to the League web sites mentioned above and look for the “Binocular Messier Certificate.” If you don’t have Internet access, contact Mike Benson, 2116 Crystal Dr., Nashville, TN 37210.

This is a great way to learn deep sky observing and win a nice certificate and pin to boot. Clear Skies—Jerry M. Sherlin, Honorary Messier Certificate 154
About the Denver Astronomical Society

The D. A. S. is a group of amateur and professional astronomers that share a mutual interest in the heavens. The D.A.S. operates the University of Denver’s Chamberlin Observatory, along with its prized 1894 Alvan Clark 20-inch refracting telescope. Our members have been involved with the first public planetarium at the Denver Museum of Science and Nature and the Smithsonian Astrophysics Observatory’s “Moon Watch” program. The D.A.S. successfully petitioned to have the Chamberlin Observatory listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Our Credo is to provide members a forum for increasing and sharing their knowledge, to promote and educate the public about astronomy, and to preserve the historic telescope and observatory in cooperation with the University of Denver. To these ends we have established three tax deductible funds: the Van Nattan Scholarship Fund, the Chamberlin Restoration Fund, and the D.A.S. Dark Sky Site Fund. This last fund was established in order to construct and maintain observing facilities near Deer Trail in eastern Colorado.

Please call our Info Line at (303) 871-5172 and drop by the General Membership meetings. Become a member and enjoy speakers, facilities, events, and our monthly newsletter, The Denver Observer.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP TO THE
DENVER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Name: ____________________________  Address: ____________________________
City, State, Zip: ____________________  Phone numbers: Home ( ) Work ( )
E-mail Address: ____________________  Occupation: _______________________
Other Interests: ____________________  (Associates Only) School: ____________ Grade: ____________

Do you want to download the newsletter in PDF format from our website instead of by postal mail? Yes □ No □

Do you want the above information excluded from the yearly roster? Yes □ No □

Please Circle All That Apply:

- Regular Membership: $30  Associate: $10 (Age 22 and younger) $________
- Astronomy Magazine/$29
- Sky & Telescope Magazine/$29.95 $________
- Dark Sky Site Fund Donation $________
- Van Nattan Scholarship Fund $________
- Chamberlin Restoration Fund $________
- Total Amount Paid $________

Complete this form, or a copy, and mail it with your check or money order payable to The Denver Astronomical Society:
D.A.S. Treasurer, Chuck Carlson; 1521 So. Vine St.; Denver, CO 80210

Denver Astronomical Society

c/o Chamberlin Observatory
2930 East Warren Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80208

join us