PAS-Times
The newsletter of the Pontchartrain Astronomy Society
visit us online www.astronola.org
March 2021
Volume 62, Issue 3

Tarantula Nebula
by PAS President
Philip Wollenberg

Next PAS General Meeting
Friday, March 26th - 7:30pm
Zoom meeting due to COVID-19
President’s Message

By: Philip Wollenberg

Fellow Astronomers,

As we enter March 2021, signs of life returning to normal are slowly being seen in New Orleans and vicinity. Kids out on the playgrounds, restaurant reservations are becoming scarce, and larger family gatherings are happening. Vaccines, at least in New Orleans, seem to be available and many arms of the PAS have already been poked. I will be getting mine this Thursday. This excites me, as hopefully, it means that outreaches can begin to happen, and soon we can again meet in person.

March also means that the constellation Virgo will begin rising earlier in the evening giving us a chance to observe the largest collection of galaxies in the sky. With an 8in or larger scope and dark skies, you can get a glimpse of the Markarian’s Chain, Needle Galaxy (NGC 4565), and Sombrero Galaxy (M104). For the early risers, Mercury, Saturn and Jupiter can be observed together in the sky just before sunrise. Other great targets include the Whirlpool Galaxy (M51), Aristotle Cluster (M41), and Beehive Cluster (M44). For the ambitious observers, this month is the ideal time to attempt to observe the entire Messier catalog in a single night (let us know how you do in the next meeting).

Clear skies,

Philip Wollenberg
PAS President 2021

Deep South Spring Scrimmage Sign Up

- Forumpost by Bsimon Wed Mar 10, 2021 8:47 pm

Sign up forms for the upcoming Deep South Spring Scrimmage are available on the Deep South Message Board @ https://dssg.boards.net/

They can be found in the board for the Spring Scrimmage.

This year’s dates run from Tuesday May 4th to Sunday May 9th. An additional day was added on the front end because some may have to leave early with Mother’s Day being on May 9th.

There is strong interest in the Spring Scrimmage this year partially because some other events are being cancelled because of COVID 19. On the sign up forms we do ask if you have received your COVID 19 vaccine yet. You are not obligated to have received one (or two) but your bunkhouse assignment if requesting that will be determined by your vaccination status. If vaccinated you will be in a bunkhouse only with others who have been vaccinated. If you have not been vaccinated and you request a bunkhouse assignment you will be in a bunkhouse with others who have not been vaccinated.
Secretary's Report February 2021 General Meeting  
By: Jeff Best

February 26th, 2021

22 participants were in attendance for our 10th virtual meeting via ZOOM and our 2nd FaceBook live broadcast.

See our FaceBook page for a full video replay of the meeting.

Philip Wollenberg opened the meeting at 7:30 pm welcomed everyone
- Presented list of the 2021 PAS Officers & discussed the following topics
  - Need Member Photos & articles for our monthly newsletter
    - Email to Kent Birkle at Pas2vp@astronola.org
  - Looking for presenters for future meetings
    - If interested contact Mike Danielson at pas1vp@astronola.org
  - In-town star party
    - Scheduled for 3/13/21 weather permitting
    - Refer to our webpage or FaceBook page for status as date approaches
  - February star party was rescheduled 2/19 & had about 6 attendees
  - Virtual targets Review
    - As discussed in January, Philip has an Apprentice membership to slooh.com
    - Provides access to Six telescopes, including a solar telescope, at the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands, and four telescopes near Santiago, Chile
    - Reviewed photos of M1, Sombrero Galaxy, Gabriela Mistral Nebula, & others
    - Email Philip at paspres@astronola.org with target suggestions for next month
  - Observed NASA video of the latest Mars Rover landing & discussed the event
  - Held an Open Discussion on the following questions posed to all by Phil
    - What sparked your interest in Astronomy?
    - What is your favorite target at this time of year?
  - Observed video of the Lowell Observatory’s latest webcast
    - Lowell Observatory is located in Flagstaff, Arizona
    - Goto www.lowell.edu for more information

Lagniappe
- Discussed the need for tree cutting at the SPMOS
- More to come as a work party is being organized

- Meeting adjourned at approx 9:10 pm
- Next Meeting: March 26th
Taking the Dog Stars for a Springtime Walk: Sirius and Procyon  By David Prosper

March skies feature many dazzling stars and constellations, glimmering high in the night, but two of the brightest stars are the focus of our attention this month: Sirius and Procyon, the dog stars! Sirius is the brightest star in the nighttime sky, in large part because it is one of the closest stars to our solar system at 8.6 light years away. Compared to our Sun, Sirius possesses twice the mass and is much younger. Sirius is estimated to be several hundred million years old, just a fraction of the Sun’s 4.6 billion years. Near Sirius - around the width of a hand with fingers splayed out, held away at arm’s length - you’ll find Procyon, the 8th brightest star in the night sky. Procyon is another one of our Sun’s closest neighbors, though a little farther away than Sirius, 11.5 light years away. While less massive than Sirius, it is much older and unusually luminous for a star of its type, leading astronomers to suspect that it may “soon” – at some point millions of years from now – swell into a giant star as it nears the end of its stellar life.

Sirius and Procyon are nicknamed the “Dog Stars,” an apt name as they are the brightest stars in their respective constellations – Canis Major and Canis Minor – whose names translate to “Big Dog” and “Little Dog.” Not everyone sees them as canine companions. As two of the brightest stars in the sky, they feature prominently in the sky stories of cultures around the world. Sirius also captures the imaginations of people today: when rising or setting near the horizon, its brilliance mixes with our atmosphere’s turbulence, causing the star’s light to shimmer with wildly flickering color. This vivid, eerie sight was an indication to ancient peoples of changes in the seasons, and even triggers UFO reports in the modern era!
Both of these bright stars have unseen companions: tiny, dense white dwarf stars, the remnants of supermassive companion stars. Interestingly, both of these dim companions were inferred from careful studies of their parent stars' movements in the 1800s, before they were ever directly observed! They are a challenging observation, even with a large telescope, since their parent stars are so very bright that their light overwhelms the much dimmer light of their tiny companions. The white dwarf stars, just like their parent stars, have differences: Sirius B is younger, brighter, and more energetic than Procyon B. Careful observations of these nearby systems over hundreds of years have helped advance the fields of: astrometry, the precise measurement of stars; stellar evolution; and astroseismology, the study of the internal structure of stars via their oscillations. Discover more about our stellar neighborhood at nasa.gov!

Sirius and Procyon, the loyal hunting dogs of nearby Orion the Hunter! What other stories can you imagine for these stars? Learn about “Legends in the Sky” and create your own with this activity: https://bit.ly/legendsinthesky

Image created with assistance from Stellarium

This article is distributed by NASA Night Sky Network

The Night Sky Network program supports astronomy clubs across the USA dedicated to astronomy outreach. Visit nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov to find local clubs, events, and more!
In-Town Star Party
Friday March 12th - Post by Bsimon »
Sun Mar 14, 2021

Here are a few images from Friday night in Tourmaline Park. No planets or Moon to observe but several other interesting objects were up in an improving sky and the temperature was pleasant. Objects that were seen included some open clusters, the Orion Nebula, and other close Orion objects as well as the "Winter Albireo".

Here are a few images. 2 observers cloaked in darkness - Philip Wollenberg and Mike Danielson, plus another image of Mike Danielson and his scope.
On the Cover
Tarantula Nebula in RGB with a narrowband luminance by Philip Wollenberg

On the Back Cover
Constellation Cetus
from Urania’s Mirror - A View of the Heaven

Upcoming Events

PAS General Meeting Friday, March 26th. Virtual online due to COVID-19
DSSG Spring Scrimmage Tentative on May 6th - May 9th Camp White Horse

Visit the PAS website and forum for COVID-19 info, virtual meeting information and outreach updates...

www.astronola.org

2021 Membership Renewal Form

Date________________________

Name__________________________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________
City________________ St____ ZIP_______
Home Phone*________________________ Work Phone*________________________
Occupation________________________________________________________
E-mail Address____________________________________________________
*Check here ____ if you DO NOT want your phone numbers published.

Membership Dues:
(Calendar year per household) $40.00 _______
(Calendar year per Student) $20.00 _______

Optional Subscriptions
Sky & Telescope $32.95/yr $65.95 two years
New Renewal
Astronomy $34.00/yr or $60.00/2years
New Renewal
Mailed Newsletter $20.00/yr _______

SPMOS Key Deposit $50 _______
Only pay this if you do not have a Dorm key and want to obtain one.

Optional Donation: _______ (Tax Deductible)

Total Amount: _______

(Make check payable to PAS)
Mail to:
Pontchartrain Astronomy Society, Inc.
16082 Lake Ramsey Rd.
Covington, LA 70435

Members can also renew their membership and pay dues on the website. Here is the link: http://astronola.org/join.php
The Pontchartrain Astronomy Society, Inc. is an organization of amateur astronomers representing the greater New Orleans area, southeastern Louisiana and adjacent parts of Mississippi. Our members come from many walks of life, and have a common interest in astronomy and observing the sky. The PAS aims to enhance the study and enjoyment of astronomy among our members, and to promote an understanding of astronomy in our local community.

The Constellation Cetus is located in the region of the celestial equator and was listed by Ptolemy around AD 140.