Penobscot Valley Star Gazers

An Astronomical Society of Central Maine

http://www.gazers.org October 2009

Okie - Tex Tales

The PVSG begins astronomical autumn at the October meeting on Monday the 12th at 6:30 pm at John Bapst Memorial High School. Last month they heard reports from attendees of the big Northeastern astronomical convention, Stellafane; this month Bill will report on a big Southwestern one, the Okie-Tex Star Party. Bill reportedly brought a 12-inch scope to try out under the dark skies there.

Thanks for last month's program go to those who reported on their adventures on Breezy Hill.

Still Valid

Secretary's Report

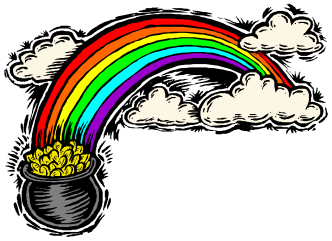
Sorry, the minutes were unavailable.

September 2009

Astronomy magazine is now having their annual club member magazine subscription drive. From now until October 15 renewing club and club members who wish to subscribe or extend their subscription to Astronomy can subscribe for $34 for one year and $60 for two years. This is $9 off the regular one year price and $11 off the two year rate. Bring your payments to the October meeting to ensure the receiving of this rate. After October 15 this price is not guaranteed. Subscriptions of subscribing members expire in this order: Wade 11/09, Doug 03/10, Bill 07/11, Carolyn 10/11, Dave 11/12.

It is also time to order **Astronomy calendars**. These have been very popular in the past and once again the price is discounted to 50% of the retail price of $12.95. It does not appear there is an additional discount for early bird orders this year but we need to have an idea of the number to order. There were 12 ordered last year and it was not enough but we do not want to over order either.

Dues Were Due October 1st



Regular $18.00
Family $27.00
Junior $9.00
Yes, they have been raised.
Pay at the meeting or send to Bill

Comets Come From Where?

The conventional idea for the origin of comets was postulated in 1950 by Jan Oort who believed long period comets such as Haley's came from an orbiting cloud of comets surrounding our solar system. He thought the comet cloud was divided into a doughnut shaped inner and a spherical shaped outer cloud with the outer cloud reaching almost a quarter of the way to the closest star. The long period comets came from the outer cloud when it was thought a passing star or maybe even the gravitational effect of the Milky Way acted on the unstable comets in the outer cloud and sent them on a long journey into the solar system where they were able to escape the gravitational grasp of Jupiter and Saturn.

This idea has problems, most notably the number of comets observed is more than the number which would be produced by the current idea. Enter computer simulations by Nathan Kalb and Thomas Quinn at the University of Washington. Their simulations showed it was possible for interactions between the outer planets and the inner Oort cloud to send comets to the outer Oort cloud where a suddenly longer orbit and interactions in the outer Oort cloud changed their orbits sufficiently to enable these comets to pass the Jupiter-Saturn barrier and make it to the inner solar system. This mechanism could account for over half the long period comets that reach the inner solar system.

Mr. Astronomy

On the Schedule

(Items Subject to Change)

PROGRAMS

?

STAR PARTIES

?

First date is primary, second is rain date; ? Tentative; (rs) rain or shine; (co) clear only