



Newsletter of the
Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston
Including the Bond Astronomical Club
Established in 1934
In the Interest of Telescope Making & Using

Vol. 17, No. 3 March 2005

This Month's Meeting...

Thursday, March 10th, 2005 at 8:00 PM

Phillips Auditorium
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics
Parking at CfA is allowed for duration of meeting

Our speaker this month had a last minute change of plans so at the time of this publication the speaker for the month is somewhat up in the air. If no alternate speaker can be arranged in time for the meeting then we will have another Member night which should not be a problem since we always have members who are eager to talk about their latest projects. For up to date information on the speaker check out the ATMob website

Please join our speaker for a pre-meeting dinner at 5:45 PM (seating at 6:00 PM) at the Changsho Restaurant located at 1712 Mass Ave. in our fair city, Cambridge.

President's Message...

February 26, 2005 – Cambridge MA. Scientists today announced an amazing new theory on the origin of high levels of methane on Saturn's giant moon Titan.

The scientists, Rajev Sudaharnsxy and Boris Naxdfwerty of STEIP, pored over the photographs taken on Titan's surface by the ESA Huygens probe, applying advanced spectral and photographic analysis.

In a joint announcement with ESA, Sudaharnsxy noted the visual similarity of the rocks seen in photographs to piles of freeze-dried faeces commonly found in the Great Plains of the US Midwest. Sudaharnsxy and Naxdfwerty theorize that the methane on Titan came from a bovine source. Cows on Titan?

Sorry for leading you on. It's tough coming up with topics for each month's newsletter. I think that you'll agree that astronomy can and should be fun, and I certainly enjoy what I do with this club, mostly because of that.

Last month's board meeting brought some fun topics to the table – some that we hope you'll participate in and consider a fun contribution to the club that keeps on giving to its members.

Eileen Myers, working with **Virginia Renehan** and **Anna Hillier**, are revisiting the club history project. People are needed to help with editing and information verification, photo enhancing and scanning. Plans are to have this history published into a real book. Please contact Eileen to lend a hand.

Work continues on bolstering up the roof joists in preparation for a new shingle job this spring. No particular skills are needed, and volunteers have been on site almost every Saturday. Contact **Paul Cicchetti** for info on how you can help.

Network wiring will get underway inside the clubhouse this weekend. Several people are needed to help out with installing conduit, wall jacks, routers and hubs. No experience or tools are needed. Come by and apply what you learn to wire your home a small network. Contact **Bruce Berger**.

The Executive Board has adopted a policy on Green Laser Pointer use at the clubhouse and all ATMob assisted events. This common sense policy is reprinted elsewhere in this newsletter.

I hope to see you at the Messier Marathon scheduled during March. Watch the club website and your email for dates.

Bruce Berger
- **Bruce Berger, President** -

February Meeting Minutes. . .

Bruce Berger opened the 767th meeting of the ATMob to a good size crowd despite the slightly snowy forecast for the evening. This evening was a member presentation night and swap meet. A number of members had some interesting astro “stuff” for sale. The speakers were Lew Gramer who spoke to us about his trip to Texas last year for the Texas Star Party which he thoroughly enjoyed and plans on attending again this year. No small feat since he takes his 36” telescope with him in a trailer on a 42 hr drive (and back.) Mario Motta followed with pictures of his new house/observatory and some great pictures of his new 32” glass blank that was cast especially for him and is quite technically innovative. Grinding has just begun and he even had a short video clip of the **FIRST** grinding session at Scott Milligan’s shop complete with sound so you could also “hear” the grinding. Quite a sweet sound for Mario I’m sure. Bob Naeye followed with an update on the Huygens probe and the landing on Titan last month. He had some very spectacular mosaics to show as well as some good animations and artist’s renditions of what it must look like there. The mission lasted four hours on the ground; quite a feat given that the estimated longevity was originally stated in terms of minutes. In between talks Bruce entertained us with a quick game of Green Laser Trivia. He had a group of five members up front answering technical trivia questions about green lasers and the winners (all of them) were treated to some interesting Green Laser related prizes. If you missed it you’ll have to ask . . .

The business meeting was held at the beginning of the meeting this time. Standard reports were read by the committee members. An impromptu work party was announced for the upcoming weekend in preparation for work planned for the official work party on the 26th of February. The observing report included the successful deployment of the 36” telescope (Godzilla) for the first time on the club’s grounds. Charlie McDonald spoke about some past and upcoming star parties and also about Astronomy Day coming up on April 16th. We will once again be setting up at the Clay Center Observatory. Gary Walker announced that well known (to some) astronomical researcher Arne Hendon has taken over as the new director of the AAVSO. Gerry Sussman donated \$20 dollars to have the ATMob sponsor the Dark Sky Clock that appears on our web site. This allows for extra information to be displayed. A number of Non-ATMob events were also announced.

~ *Michael Hill* ~

Treasurer's Report...

Membership Report...

This month we would like to welcome the following new members :

ASHISH GUTTEDAR Reading MA
BOB PHINNEY Medway MA

~ *Shilpa Lawande*~

Clubhouse Saturday Schedule

March 5	Mike Hill	Bruce Berger
March 12	Steve Mock	Rich Nugent
March 19	Shilpa Lawande	Nitin Sonawane
March 26	Glen Meurer	Dave Prowten
April 2	Jack Drobot	Steve Herzberg

National Astronomy Day

Dexter-Southfield School, in collaboration with ATMob, is hosting National Astronomy Day on Saturday, April 16th at the Clay Center Observatory in Brookline. We have many activities planned. Family, friends, children... all are welcome. This promises to be a wonderful event. Daytime events and solar observing 2:00- 5:00pm. Evening events and observing 7:00 - 10:00pm. Come anytime to one or both time slots.

The event is free and open to the public. For details and to register for the event, please go to www.claycenter.org/astro **15- 20 Scopes Needed** - If you plan to bring a telescope, please let me know vrenehan@gis.net or (978) 283-0862.

~ *Virginia Renehan* ~

Alternate Astronomy Day Event

Umass Lowell – Also, though still in the tentative planning stage, I has been asked by the science and library departments of the University of Mass – Lowell, to stage an exhibit and observing on Astronomy Day with help from ATMob. I will send out email and post notice on the club's website as details solidify. It is anticipated that 10 telescopes may be needed. For further information refer to the ATMob website or contact me at:

president @ atmob.org.

~ *Bruce Berger* ~

Messier Marathon

A Messier marathon will be held at the clubhouse on Friday March 11 and Saturday March 12 with a cloud date of Friday and Saturday, April 8th and 9th. I will try to make a Messier check list available for any observer who attempts this challenge. Parking on the observing field will be possible for those with equipment and, preference will be given to those observers who plan on staying late, i.e., after midnight. Our "red light" policy will be in effect for both observing sessions. Hope to see you there!

~*Steve Cloughert*~

Upcoming Star Parties

**Club Star Party Coordinator –
Virginia Renehan 978-283-0862
starparty@atmob.org**

March 14th - Awesome Annual Acton Event
Contact Steve Feinstein (617) 835-0014 cell, (781) 515-5313 direct

March 15th - Birch Meadow School, Reading
Contact Charlie McDonald (781) 944-6140

Astronomy in Sri Lanka

ATMoB has been contacted by folks at the Planetarium in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This is the only planetarium in their country, and heavily used by school children from all over Sri Lanka. In an attempt to extend astronomy knowledge among children beyond the planetarium shows, the staff is forming an astronomy club that will cover astronomy history, space missions, planetary data etc. They are looking for astronomy related donations such as history books, slides, posters, software, teaching materials, star charts, astronomy CD/DVD's, VHS tapes, etc. If any member would like to donate an item, new or used, please email me at vrenehan@gis.net, or call (978) 283-0862. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

~*Virginia Renehan*~

New Member Orientation

Thank you to all who helped with NMO on February 12th. We had twelve new guests in attendance along with a host of veteran members. Jerry Sussman, John Blomquist and Dave Prowten set up their telescopes to share views of Saturn and the fading Comet Macholtz. Lew Gramer gave a great "oh yea there it is" naked-eye tour of the sky replete with fact and mythology. Clouds came and went, and Shilpa Lawande and Niten Sonawane brought out the club 17". Thank you to Dave Seigrist for mirror grinding demonstration. Thanks also to Eileen Myers, Dick Koolish and Art Swedlow for directing traffic - and to the clubhouse committee John Reed, Bruce Gerhard, and Paul Cicchetti for clearing the observing field of snow. Next time we won't bring so many healthy snacks.

~*Shilpa Lawande and Virginia*~

Green Lasers – Safety First

Direct viewing of a laser-pointer beam, even briefly and at a distance of a kilometer or two, has the potential to cause temporary flash blindness — the same effect you get right after a flash photo is taken — or afterimages. These effects last anywhere from seconds to minutes. Glare, which is a reduction or loss of central vision, lasts only as long as exposure to the beam. All these effects could be disastrous if they struck a person operating machinery, driving a car or truck, or flying a plane.

To help use our laser tools safely, the Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston, Inc. has adopted these recommendations as policy. These are based on suggestions from the [Laser Institute of America](#) and published in May 2005 by Sky & Telescope:

 Laser pointers are designed to illuminate inanimate objects. Never shine a laser pointer toward any person, aircraft, or other vehicle.

 Never look directly into the beam of a laser pointer of any type.

 Do not allow children to use a pointer unsupervised. Laser pointers are not toys.

 If your telescope is equipped with a laser pointer that has a "constant-on" setting, do not leave the instrument unattended with the laser switched on.

 Do not aim a laser pointer toward mirrors or other shiny surfaces. The reflected beam may inadvertently strike someone in the eye.

 Do not aim a laser pointer skyward if you hear or see an aircraft of any kind flying overhead.



Observers Log by Lew Gramer

Observer: Lew Gramer
Your skills: Intermediate (some years)
Date/time of observation: 1998-03-10/11 01:45 UT
Location of site: Medford, MA, USA (Lat 42oN, Elev 5m)
Site classification: Suburban
Sky darkness: 5.1 <Limiting magnitude>
Seeing: 5 <1-10 Seeing Scale (10 best)>
Moon presence: None - moon not in sky
Instrument: 8" f/10 SCT on fork
Magnification: 170x, 340x
Filter(s): None
Category: Multiple star.

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TWO observations...

Object(s): Castor (alpha Gem)
Class: A1V, A2V
Constellation: Gem
Data: mag 1.9, 2.9 size 3.9" PA 72o (catalog)
Position: RA 07:35 DEC +31:53
Description:

This famous visual binary is an easy split at almost any power in the SCT: The separation tonight was estimated at 3" (not bad), at PA 50o (pretty bad!) At a higher magnification (340x), the comes was estimated at just under one magnitude fainter than the primary (very good), and had a distinct lavender-blue color in contrast with the white primary, as independently confirmed by a fellow observer.

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Object(s): Regulus (alpha Leo)
Class: B8, G
Constellation: Leo
Data: mag 1.4, 7.7, 13.2 size 177" PA 307o (catalog)
Position: RA 10:08 DEC +11:58
Description:

The Regulus multiple system is very pretty at any telescopic magnification. Although it appears as a single star with no companions in the finder, it is easily split at the lowest powers available in the SCT. The nearest of the "companion" stars is about mag. 8, separated by just under 3' (quite a good estimate for a beginner like me), at what appeared to me to be PA 250o (not quite as good). At higher power (340x), a "C" companion, mag 11 or 12, was apparent to direct vision, separated from comes "B" by about 30" and from primary Regulus by perhaps 4' at PA 200o (not bad). Finally, a possible mag. 10-11 "D" companion was noted at over 5' separation, PA 270o. Interestingly, all stars in the group were colorless except Regulus itself - which appeared distinctly more yellowish the higher the power! A strange contrast effect!

Observer: Lew Gramer

Your skills: Intermediate (some years)
Date/time of observation: 1998-01-01/02 09:00-12:00UT
Location of site: Deerfield Township, OH, USA (Lat 41oN, Elev 100m)
Site classification: Rural
Sky darkness: 6.8-5.5 (twilight) <Limiting magnitude>
Seeing: 7 <1-10 Seeing Scale (10 best)>
Moon presence: None - moon not in sky
Instrument: 7x50 handheld binoculars
Magnification: 7x
Filter(s): None
Object(s): Mel 111 (Coma Berenices)
Category: Open cluster
Class: II 3p / III 3r
Constellation: Com
Data: mag 1.8 size 4.5o
Position: RA 12:25 DEC +26:00
Description:
From the beginning of my session until twilight grew too heavy, I continued to check in periodically with the Coma open cluster. This glorious binocular sight showed about 30 individual members at first, but gradually faded of course during morning's advance. Despite the many fainter members however, the familiar naked-eye "lambda" pattern of bright stars was still prominent from dark until well into dawn. At all contrasts however, the area just S and W of the center of the lambda was curiously empty of stars...

**April Star Fields deadline
Saturday, April 2nd**

**Email articles to Mike Hill
at noatak@aol.com**

POSTMASTER NOTE: First Class Postage Mailed March 4th, 2005

Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston, Inc.
c/o Shilpa Lawande, Membership Secretary
13 Royal Crest Dr., #12
Nashua, NH 03060

FIRST CLASS

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2004-2005

PRESIDENT: Bruce Berger (978) 256-9208
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1998-00 Joseph Rothchild (617) 964-6626

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John Reed (781) 861-8031
Steve Clougherty (781) 784-3024

HISTORIAN: Anna Hillier (781) 861-8338

OBSERVING: Virginia Renehan (978) 283-0862

How to Find Us...

Web Page www.atmob.org

MEETINGS: Held the second Thursday of each month (September to July) at 8:00PM in the Phillips Auditorium, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 60 Garden St., Cambridge MA. For INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATION listen to WBZ (1030 AM)

CLUBHOUSE: Latitude 42° 36.5' N Longitude 71° 29.8' W

The Tom Britton Clubhouse is open every Saturday from 7 p.m. to late evening. It is the white farmhouse on the grounds of MIT's Haystack Observatory in Westford, MA. Take Rt. 3 North from Rt. 128 or Rt. 495 to Exit 33 and proceed West on Rt. 40 for five miles. Turn right at the MIT Lincoln Lab, Haystack Observatory at the Groton town line. Proceed to the farmhouse on left side of the road. Clubhouse attendance varies with the weather. It is wise to call in advance: (978) 692-8708.

Heads Up For The Month . . .

To calculate Eastern Standard Time (EDT) from Universal Time (UT) subtract 5 from UT.

March 10 New Moon
March 12 Mercury reaches greatest eastern elongation
March 17 First Quarter Moon
March 20 Vernal Equinox 12:33 UT
March 25 Full Moon
March 31 Nice grouping of Jupiter's' moon 10:30 p.m. EST