

march '76 Bulletin

What's going on on the club?

March 5: Olinder Center 7:30 PM

The general meeting this month will feature Dr. Gareth Williams of San Jose State University. Dr. Williams will deliver a forty-five minute talk on "Lasers in Astronomy". It would be appreciated if everyone holds any questions until the speaker finishes. There will be an extended personal business period afterwards.

March 27: Henery Coe State Park Dusk till Dawn

This month's star party is again at the upper site near the entrance to the park. If the weather cooperates, the many fine galaxies in Ursa Major and Leo will be readily accessible to even small scopes.

April 2: Olinder Center 7:30 PM

Another of the S.J.A.A.'s famous equipment & slide nights is the main attraction of April's general meeting. Start assembling your paraphernalia for discussion and display now. I would like to see something from those who have been shooting pictures but not showing them. You know who you are.

April 3: Half Moon Bay

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific is having a public star party.

April 10: K-MART Saratoga- Sunnyvale Rd.

Astronomy Day. This is the club's major public function of the year. Everyone who comes, whether layman or astronomer, seems to enjoy this event thoroughly. Most people like telescopes but have never seen one up close, much less looked through one! If we start now, perhaps this Astronomy Day will be as successful as the last lunar eclipse party.

April 30 to May 1: Fremont Peak

The A.A.N.C. has scheduled a three day star party.

Editorial

I often wonder why the same small crew shows up at most star parties. Are the locations too remote? Maybe you don't like driving on mountain roads at night? Perhaps it's the cost of the trip? Don't the darker skies at our sites make the trip worth-while? If someone would like to come up and doesn't/ can't drive, or doesn't know how to get there, speak up! We are willing to organize a caravan to the site, including a lift for those who want one.

I hope you like the new format and the two new columns, Tech Talk and Rattley Rattles, interesting and informative. Are there any comments?

Jack M. Zeiders
Editor

rattley rattles

Commentary: I have been volunteered, by, I am told myself?!?! to write a monthly column for our bulletin, so this is the first in a series. I will try to write up something of interest each month or present some objects for general viewing that will be visible at club star parties, clouds permitting.

This first article is going to deal with a matter that few probably know a great deal about, except myself, and that is the club's discount plan with Sky Publishing Corporation. You may have on occasion heard me mention this at a club meeting, but at the last meeting it was stressed even more strongly and several members seemed interested in it.

Before I go on, I need to make an important comment about the prices quoted at the February meeting. The price of the Skalnate Pleso field atlas was said to be \$2.63 through the clubs discount plan. I found that recent price hikes on some of Sky Publishing's offerings have affected this atlas. It is now going to cost \$3.15 (which in my opinion is still a bargain on an excellent atlas). Now for the good news, the Becvar Catalogue which goes along with it is still \$7.60 as was quoted at the meeting; at least it is for now.

The following is a list of some of the more interesting, in my opinion, of the Sky Publications available through the club's discount plan.

Publication	Retail	Discount	Club
Skalnate Pleso - field edition			
Atlas of the Heavens	\$ 5.00	30% plus	\$3.15
Skalnate Pleso - deluxe edition			
(multi-colored desk copy)	\$14.00	20%	\$11.20
Atlas Catalogue - II			
(goes well with the Skalnate			
Pleso atlases)	\$ 9.50	20%	\$ 7.60
Revised New General Catalogue			
by J.W. Sulentic & W.G. Tifft	\$10.50	20%	\$ 8.40
Norton's Star Atlas (16th edition)	\$12.50	20%	\$10.00
Atlas of Deep Sky Wonders			
by Dr. Hans Vehrenberg	\$22.00	15%	\$18.70

This concludes the present partial list of the many Sky Publications which are available to club members through the discount plan. If you are interested in purchasing any of these, please see me at a meeting or star party or call. All club members are eligible to use this plan, but only club members. All discounts go through the treasurer, that's me, to Sky Publishing. Note; all prices are subject to change without notice. Unfortunately, I have no control over this.

Well, I hope I didn't bore you too badly, and I hope you found this information of interest. And so I'll let it go for now and see you at the next star party or meeting.

Astronomically Yours
Gerald W. Rattley
treasurer, SJAA

tech talk

Here's a tip for those who are thinking of building or modifying a German Equatorial mounting. Most people know that it is a good idea to keep the bearing supports short and stocky, but few realize just how critical the distance between the front polar bearing and top dec. bearing really is. I recently took apart my 12" telescope mounting (made from heavy-wall PG&E gas pipe) and sawed off a 2" section of the upper declination housing. The result was to move the telescope 2" closer to the polar shaft and, of course, the top dec. bearing closer too. That relatively small distance is enough to make quite an improvement in stability. The greatest improvement, however, came from being able to remove almost fifty pounds of weight from the scope. This has resulted in much better damping and controllability of the scope. The proof came at the first sky test of the modified mount at the club star party at Henry Coe State Park on Jan 31.

It was one of those rare nights when the seeing (between the clouds) was about eleven on a scale of ten. The twelve inch scope was raised to about one thousand power on Saturn (well over the theoretical limit) and still gave very good, VERY STABLE, images. Numerous fine divisions were found in the middle ring, and one was found in the outer ring that none of us knew existed! The planet itself presented bands and swirls clearly. Those of you who didn't come to the star party missed a good one.

Donald S. Mc Glaufin

