

The Skyscraper

Vol. 31 no. 4

the monthly publication of



The Amateur Astronomical Society of Rhode Island

47 Peepoad Road
North Scituate, RI 02857

www.theskyscrapers.org

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See back page for directions to Seagrave Observatory.

Please submit items for the newsletter by April 15 to Jim Hendrickson, 1 Sunflower Circle, North Providence, RI 02911 or e-mail to jim@distantgalaxy.com

Email subscriptions:

To receive *The Skyscraper* by email, send email with your name and address to jim@distantgalaxy.com. Note that you will no longer receive the newsletter by postal mail.

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The Skyscraper

April 2004

April Meeting

Friday April 2, 7:30pm at Seagrave Observatory

Gary Walker, a member of the American Association of Variable Star Observers will be giving us a presentation on variable stars with (we hope) a live demonstration using one of the telescopes at Seagrave Observatory

In honor of April fools day, we are pleased to be providing an added bonus speaker for our April meeting. Our own, Gerry Dyck will be presenting "Great Moments in Astronomy Which Almost Everybody Missed." This will be a short presentation before our main speaker that I am sure everyone will enjoy.

Skyscrapers Calendar

Public observing is held every Saturday at Seagrave Observatory weather permitting and when the grounds are accessible.

April 2 **7:30pm Monthly Meeting** at Seagrave Observatory
Friday

April 3 **7:00pm Public Observing Night** at Seagrave
Saturday Observatory

April 10 **7:00pm Public Observing Night** at Seagrave
Saturday Observatory

April 17 **7:00pm Public Observing Night** at Seagrave
Saturday Observatory

April 24 **7:00pm Public Observing Night** at Seagrave
Saturday Observatory

Notices:

It is renewal time. Please complete the enclosed renewal form and return it with your check before the May meeting.

It is also election time. Please complete and return the enclosed election form by the April 2nd meeting.

If you have borrowed books or DVD's from the Skyscrapers Library, please return them at the April meeting so that we can get them back into circulation.

President's Message

Dan Lorraine, President

Dear Skyscrapers Members,

It's that time of year again; time to renew your dues. As you know, Skyscrapers is a non-profit organization that relies on the dues of its' membership to sustain the organization throughout the year. That's why it's important to renew your membership and show your support for a long-standing Rhode Island tradition of bringing the universe to the public. I hope that you've enjoyed being part of Skyscrapers and that you

took full advantage of the many exciting activities that we've offered over the past year. We also have a lot of great activities and events already planned for this year. And as always, we will continue to bring you monthly programming by some of the leading researchers in their respective fields!

Please complete the enclosed form and mail to the observatory at your earliest convenience.

Thanks for your support!

March Winds Bring April Meteor Shower

David A Huestis, Historian

Like me, you must be longing for some clear skies and moderate temperatures to enjoy a decent evening of stargazing. This past winter has been tough on all of us who look towards the heavens. When is the last time you remember observing even a modest display of shooting stars? Well, as long as March winds don't bring their usual rain showers, we have an opportunity to observe some members of the April Lyrids meteor shower on the night of the 21st to early morning of the 22nd. Mother Nature, are you listening?

I haven't written about the April Lyrids for a few years now because the shower had been in decline, and the observing conditions were always poor to fair at best. Well, this year the shower occurs just a couple of days after New Moon. The waxing crescent will set around 10:00 pm and will therefore not hinder observing even the faintest of the Lyrid members.

Besides the favorable Moon phase, some recent observations indicate increased activity during the last few years. I'd settle for just about any meteor rate as long it was above the random background of sporadics! Following are the specifics for the April Lyrids.

As mentioned above, the Lyrids peak on the night of April 21- 22. I would recommend to begin observing soon after the crescent Moon sets. The constellation Lyra, from where the meteors will appear to radiate, will be well up in the eastern sky. The swift and bright Lyrid meteors disintegrate after hitting our atmosphere at a moderate speed of 29.8 miles per second. They often produce luminous trains of dust that can be observed for several seconds.

Because moonlight will not interfere, perhaps 15 to 20 meteors per hour can be seen by an observer well away from city lights. Since the Lyrids are a narrow stream of

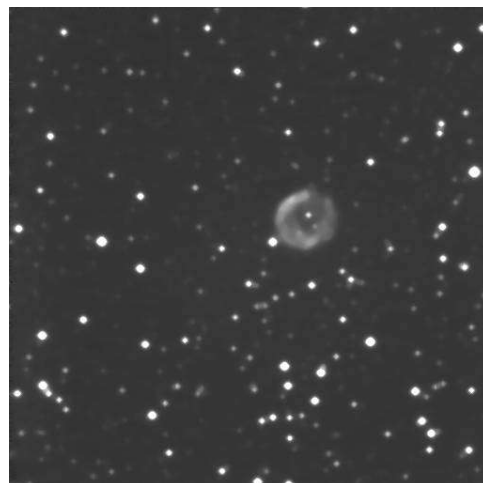
particles, the nights before and after the peak night will display perhaps less than half of the peak night numbers.

So, weather conditions permitting, enjoy the annual shooting star display known as the April Lyrids. March winds are supposed to bring April showers. Let's hope they are of the meteoritic kind!!

A note about our Saturday public nights at Seagrave Memorial Observatory in North Scituate. Actually, the lack thereof this winter. First it was all the snow and ice. Now (early March) it's been the mud. I trust by the time you read this column we will be back to our regular weekly schedule. You can always surf our website (www.theskyscrapers.org) for up-to-date information.

Skyscrapers CCD Gallery

This image of the planetary nebula NGC 2438 in Puppis was captured by Tom Rinaldi and Ted Ferneza using the Skyscrapers CCD camera. The image was taken on February 27 by stacking 10 60-second exposures from the 16" Meade. NGC 2438 is visible in small telescopes as a faint halo embedded in the open star cluster M46.



2004-2005 Election Ballot

Please fill out this ballot and bring it to the Skyscrapers Meeting on Friday, April 2

Office	Nominee <i>(circle or write in)</i>	
President	Daniel Lorraine	_____
1st Vice President	Stephen Hubbard	_____
2nd Vice President	Robert Horton	_____
Secretary	Joel Cohen	_____
Treasurer	Bill Kirby	_____
Trustee (3 year term)	Richard Arnold	_____
Members at Large	Ken Dore	_____
	Mercedes Rivero-Hudec	_____



Seagrave Memorial Observatory
 47 Peeptoad Road
 N. Scituate, Rhode Island 02857

Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

- Junior (13-17)** \$10.00
- Regular (18+)** \$40.00
- Family** \$50.00
- Senior (65+)** \$10.00
- Sponsor** \$60.00
- Supporter** \$100.00
- Patron** \$250.00
- Benefactor** \$500.00

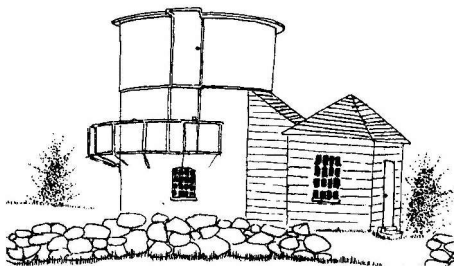
Skyscrapers now offer subscriptions to both leading astronomy magazines at a \$10 savings per year!!! If you currently subscribe they will extend your subscription.

Sky & Telescope subscription	\$32.95 _____	Astronomy Magazine subscription	\$29.00 1 year _____ \$55.00 2 years _____ Do you presently subscribe to Astronomy Yes / No
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I would also like to make an additional tax-deductible donation of \$ _____ to help with the expenses of operating and maintaining Seagrave Memorial Observatory.

Total enclosed \$ _____

Mail check to: Skyscrapers Inc., Attn: Membership Chairperson, 47 Peeptoad Road, North Scituate, Rhode Island 02857



Directions to Seagrave Observatory

From the Providence area:

Take Rt. 6 West to Interstate 295 in Johnston and proceed west on Rt. 6 to Scituate. In Scituate bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right onto Rt. 116 North. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

From Coventry/West Warwick area:

Take Rt. 116 North. Peeptoad Road is the first left after crossing Rt. 101.

From Southern Rhode Island:

Take Interstate 95 North. Exit onto Interstate 295 North in Warwick (left exit.) Exit to Rt. 6 West in Johnston. Bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right on Rt. 116. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

From Northern Rhode Island:

Take Rt. 116 South. Follow Rt. 116 thru Greenville. Turn left at Knight's Farm intersection (Rt. 116 turns left) and follow Rt. 116. Watch for Peeptoad Road on the right.

From Connecticut:

- Take Rt. 44 East to Greenville and turn right on Rt. 116 South. Turn left at Knight's Farm intersection (Rt. 116 turn left) and follow Rt. 116. Watch for Peeptoad Road on the right.
- Take Rt. 6 East toward Rhode Island; bear left on Rt. 101 East and continue to intersection with Rt. 116. Turn left; Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

From Massachusetts:

Take Interstate 295 South (off Interstate 95 in Attleboro.) Exit onto Rt. 6 West in Johnston. Bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right on Rt. 116. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.



47 PEEPTOAD ROAD
NORTH SCITUATE, RI 02857