



# Capitol Skies

*The Newsletter of the Madison Astronomical Society*

## From the president's desktop

by John Rummel

As of June, the Madison Astronomical Society is officially under new management. For the first time in over a decade, there has been significant change in the leadership of the club. Stepping down after over 10 years are treasurer Mary Ellestad and observatory director Tim Ellestad. Tim and Mary's imprint on MAS is immeasurable. Aside from their roles in key leadership positions, they have each taken on numerous other responsibilities, and made countless contributions, both tangible and intangible, to the success of the club. Wynn Wacker has been vice-president since the mid-90's and additionally served a few terms as the president back in the early 70's while a graduate student at the UW. Don Martin is finishing his second year as president of the society. Three others have

decided to stay on the board: Dan Strome and Chris Zeltner will assume new roles (Dan as treasurer and Chris as vice president), and Dave Odell will remain as secretary. Former MAS president Neil Robinson returns to the board as

member at-large, and newcomer Martin Mika rounds out the board in the second at-large position. The final board position – observatory director – has been filled by Mark Hanson. Mark is an outstanding astrophotographer and all-around equipment guru. Yanna Research Station will be in good hands under his guidance.

And I, as the byline above indicates, will be assuming the role of president. I've been a member of MAS since the mid-90's, served as the editor of the newsletter from June 1999 until my final issue in November of 2009. I purposefully tried to stay clear of club politics after getting into trouble on several occasions with decisions I made regarding the newsletter, but decided this year that I had avoided the inevitable for long

enough. I'm happy to take my turn at the top, and make a run at providing some direction and leadership to the club.

My philosophy is pretty simple; I'm an observer. I like to

spend time at the eyepiece, I like to take photos and dabble in astrophotography, and I like to share my interest and passion for

astronomy with the public. My pledge to you as your president is that I will put observing back on center stage for the club.



We'll continue our tradition of outstanding Moon Over Monona events every fall, and we'll find a way to add at least one, and ideally two more events like it each year (spring and summer). There are many possibilities for such events and we'll be actively exploring the establishment of these new "showpiece" events in the near future.

I have been fortunate to be associated with the Madison School District's planetarium for the past ten years, and will actively seek to strengthen the partnership between the MAS and the planetarium. The third partner in this triad of Madison area astronomy is obviously the UW Space Place. In addition to hosting our monthly meetings, Jim Lattis has always lent his expertise and advice to the club, and we will seek to strengthen that partnership as

**My pledge to you as your president is that I will put observing back on center stage for the club.**

*Continued top of next page*

## From the observatory director

by Mark Hanson

First, I would again like to thank Tim Ellestad for all of his years of dedication and service to MAS. Tim has done a great job and has given many painstaking hours to MAS and YRS. Thanks Tim!

As the new observatory director, I'd like to tell you a little about myself, and about what has been done at YRS recently, and to let you know some of the things I would like to see happen over the next year.

I have been interested in astronomy for the last 15 years. My main interest is as an avid astrophotographer. I have traveled to some of the darkest sites in the U.S. and have had many images published in Astronomy Magazine over the years. I've also been involved in building three remote observatories here in Wisconsin.

Matt Mills and I have spent the last few Fridays out at YRS assessing what needs to be done in the immediate future and taking care of some much needed maintenance. All of the buildings have had a good overall cleaning and debugging (there was a large colony of ants in one of them). The clubhouse underwent quite a few changes too. Extensive time was spent here cleaning and refurnishing. All of the old computers that were not functioning have been removed and replaced with two new Pentium 4 computers and a laptop for the Doc G. The old couches and broken chairs have been removed and replaced with a used couch, love seat and recliner. There is also now a small dorm refrigerator there and a new backpack style vacuum that can be used to vacuum out the observatories and the clubhouse. I hope that a more comfortable atmosphere will encourage more YRS use.

Over the next year it has been decided that the KMO building will come down. The scope and mount will be salvaged and stored until its fate has been decided. I'd also like to see having the AKO running from the clubhouse for use with a CCD camera. We have multiple visual telescopes but none in working condition for science or taking pictures. I'm in the process of making new manuals for each scope that



*President's column, cont.*

well. These three groups are individually strong advocates for science education and the joy of astronomy. By working together even more closely in the future – let's just say that good things are going to happen.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions for the club, feel free to contact me. I've heard from many of you in the past few months. I look forward to talking with many more in the months (and years?) ahead.

### Matt Mills to speak at July meeting

MAS member Matt Mills will do a presentation at the **July 9, 2010** meeting on the April Wisconsin fireball that was observed over three states. Matt will speak about this event and attempt to gauge interest in an expedition to recover fragments.

Space Place is located in the basement of the Villager Mall in Madison, at 2300 South Park Street, on the west side of the street, between Hughes Place and Ridgewood Way, about three blocks north of the Beltline. The presentation will start promptly at **7:30 pm**.

YRS houses. I would also like to remove all of the old brush piles from YRS and add red solar lighting on the grounds. There's also discussion of a swap meet to raise funds and membership. If you would like to be involved in any of these upcoming projects, please let me know.

I hope that all of the changes that have taken place and that are planned for YRS's future will encourage the membership to use and enjoy our great jewel. I also look forward to hearing any ideas or comments that you may have. Please send them to me at [markh@tds.net](mailto:markh@tds.net).

## Public event opportunity!

On Saturday, July 17, the Madison Astronomical Society will join the Friends of Donald Park to host a family observing event at Donald Park. Donald is one of Dane County's newer parks, located just southeast of Mt. Horeb, about 17 miles from Madison. Our observing location is at a pavilion near a trailhead just a few feet from the parking lot. It has a wonderful southwest view over a cornfield with a minimum of light pollution for a location so close to Madison and Verona.

The Friends of Donald Park have been hosting family oriented events for the past few years and recently had nearly 150 attend a Father's Day picnic. The Friends are very excited about doing an



astronomy event and are confident that, between their publicity and ours, they will easily draw over 100 people. We invite any MAS members to come out with their telescopes or binoculars for this event, or to simply bring your family and enjoy the evening. Here are the particulars:

MAS members with telescopes can begin arriving around 7:30. Members may drive their cars down to the pavilion located just to the east of the parking lot to unload, and then park in the lot.

In the event of clouds or rain, we will post a "go-no go" decision on our web site by 4 pm on July 17, in which case the event will be rescheduled for the following day.

**When:** July 17 (rain/cloud date July 18th)  
**Time:** 8:00 pm to 10:30 pm  
**Where:** Donald Park is located in southwestern Dane County, on hwy 92 between Mt. Horeb and Mt. Vernon, just 17 miles southwest of Madison. The entrance to the park is located at 1945 Highway 92, Mount Horeb, WI (Google this address and it'll give you the exact park location).



## MAS Picnic draws near record crowd

The June picnic drew the largest crowd in recent memory, harkening back to the days when club events such as the banquet, Christmas party and picnic regularly drew 30 or 40 people. Though nobody reported an exact count, estimates for attendance at the picnic were in the low thirties. The necessary quorum for the officer elections was easily satisfied and two canine attendees even joined in the democratic process; When outgoing president Don asked for the “all in favor say aye” to approve the new slate of officers, the two dogs present, Zorro and Moose, startled by the chorus of affirmation, jumped to their feet and barked!

Also present, and adding an element of venerability to the crowd, were no less than four former presidents of the MAS: Wynn Wacker, Dick Greiner, Jeff



*Outgoing observatory director Tim Ellestad explains the operation of the newly mounted C11 to Mark Hanson, Jim Lattis and Neil Robinson.*

Shokler, and Neil Robinson. After the vote of affirmation approving the slate of new officers, Don Martin also became an ex-president, rounding out our field of emeritus presidents to five. If Greg

Sellek hadn't been away on vacation, we could have had six former presidents!



*After the business meeting concluded, members enjoyed the pleasant day while awaiting the announcement that burgers and brats were ready to eat.*



MAS periodically uses email to communicate with members. If you have not been receiving emails from previous president Don Martin or current president John Rummel, we may have an incorrect email address for you. If so, please send an email to Dan Strome (djestrome@gmail.com), include your name, and mention that you are updating your email address.



*Tim Ellestad explains the mounting of the CII to new observatory director Mark Hanson.*



*The incoming board: from left, Dan Strome (treasurer), John Rummel (president), Neil Robinson (member at large), Chris Zeltner (vice president), Martin Mika (member at large), Mark Hanson (observatory director)*

**All photos in this issue kindly provided by Tom Ferch.**



*The outgoing board: from left, Dan Strome (member at large), Don Martin (president), Mary Ellestad (treasurer), Wynn Wacker (vice president), Chris Zeltner (member at large), and Tim Ellestad (observatory director)*



*Capitol Skies*  
 502 Walton Place  
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First Class

MAS would like to thank  
**www.netwurx.net**  
 for hosting our web presence



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**Madison Astronomical Society** members are active in sharing the pleasures of astronomy with the public, acting as a resource for students and teachers, and exchanging information at Society meetings which occur monthly. The Society continues to pursue its original goal to “promote the science of astronomy and to educate the public in the wonders of the universe.” For more information about the Society, please contact one of the officers listed at left or visit us on the web at:

*[www.madisonastro.org](http://www.madisonastro.org)*

***MAS Membership Form***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

*Please circle membership type:*

*Student (\$5.00)*

*Regular (\$30.00)*

*Observing (\$70.00)*

*Enclose check and make payable to the Madison Astronomical Society.*

*Mail to MAS, 502 Walton Place,*

*Madison, WI 53704*