



Sky Watch

Issue #1-07
January

The Newsletter of the Brevard Astronomical Society

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Summary of Dec meeting:

Officer elections for 2007 were held. Results will be approved by motion to accept at Jan 07 meeting.

President: Gary Scott
VP: Bill Manley
Treasurer: Mark Jones
Secretary: Megan Boyd

Upcoming BAS Meetings & Agenda:

Jan 17th –
No specific agenda available at this time. Look for e-mail from Gary Scott in the coming week or so.

Upcoming BAS Star Parties:

Jan 13th – Harmony
Jan 20th – Shilo
(Dave Guibert)
Jan ???th – C54 Canal
(Bill Manley)

Moon Phases:

Full: Jan 3rd



New: Jan 18th



What's in the Sky in January 2007?

Happy New Year! Hopefully, the New Year will bring us some clear skies. Once again, our local observations were "limited" at best by mother nature over the past month, and especially the last few weeks. When are the clouds moving away? Does anyone *know*? In any event, it is hoped that all had a safe and happy Holiday!

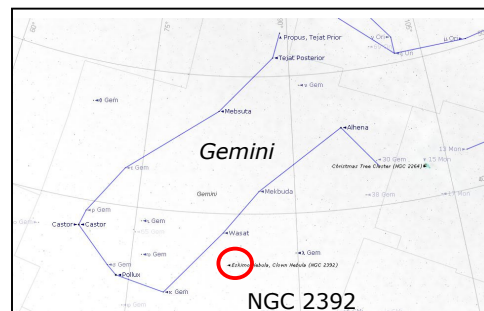
There appears to be a visible pass of the ISS just before (or at) dawn on the 13th of Jan. The ISS will pass SW to NE beginning at 6:37:52 and have a max Altitude of 76 deg. At 6:18:59. Check Heavens Above website for detailed updates. <http://www.heavens-above.com>

Since I referred to NGC 2264 and the inclusive *Christmas Tree Cluster* in December, there are two other objects worth searching for in the same general area during January if we get good dark skies at the remote sites.

One is located in Gemini, **NGC 2392**, the "**Eskimo Nebula**", and the other is **NGC 2237, The Rosette Nebula** located in the Monoceros constellation. These are both challenging objects to find and observe but worth it. They will require a dark sky, and NGC 2237 will require patience and a UHC or OIII filter.

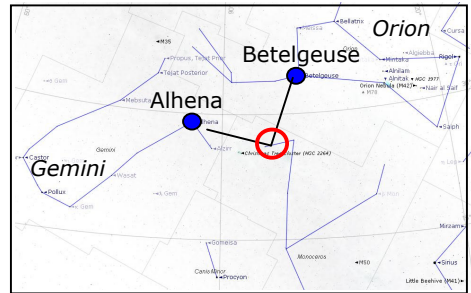
Let's start with the Eskimo Nebula which is over 3800 LY distant! (and very small by the way, opposed to the Rosette Nebula which is very expansive...).

The location of the Eskimo Nebula is below. You should see a star (HIP36370) at 8.21 App Mag., and NGC 2392 at a 10.5 App Mag in the same view using a 25mm eyepiece. They both appear to be stars but one looks fuzzy or out of focus. That's it!



Now to find NGC 2237.... Use the star Alhena in Gemini, and Betelgeuse in Orion. Draw an imaginary straight line down and to the right of Alhena, and another down and to the left from Betelgeuse. Where the two lines intersect to form a right angle (by eye, not "exact" right angle) is where you will find the Rosette Nebula. It is difficult, but may be possible from Shilo or the new south site on a new moon. Doubt it from Harmony, but not sure. A nebula filter is a must.

Locating the objects in these little star maps is probably more challenging than finding the real ones! However, they are meant only to show the general area. You need to zero in using coordinates or a larger map of course.....



PLANETS:

Saturn begins rise in the east earlier in the evening in January, and transits at approx 2 am by mid month. It will get better over the next few months. **Venus** will be visible in the west in the early evening. Look for it near a crescent moon on the 20th.

Mercury becomes visible by the end of the month near Venus as it approaches maximum elongation on the 7th of February.

Jupiter, can be seen near Antares in Scorpius before dawn to the east. **Mars** begins to rise into the light as day begins.



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Outreach News:

January 11 (5:30 - 7:00pm)
West Melbourne School of
Science Star Party. See the
BAS website or contact
Oscar Sifuentes to
volunteer.

Club Telescope News:

The BAS currently has two
telescopes for use by club
members. Contact Bill
Manley (Newsletter Editor
e-mail) for additional
information.

The 16" Dobsonian
remains at the
planetarium.

The 8" Orion has been
loaned out to Rich Rosa.

by John Norczyk:

Did you know?

Did you know that the
earliest reflecting telescope
mirrors were made of
speculum metal? They
tarnished quickly and had
to be re-polished often.
Prior to the development of
the Foucault test first
published in 1859, mirrors
were tested more or less
by trial and error.

Submitted by John Norczyk:

Stargazing with a Purpose – Getting Started

We saved up our money. For many weeks
or months we pored over magazine, catalog,
and internet ads and built our wish list. We
placed our order and waited patiently for our
dream scope to arrive. We excitedly opened
the boxes and set up our new telescope.
We may have even read the User Manual.
Finally the next clear night arrives. We are
dazzled by the Orion nebula, the rings of
Saturn, the Hercules cluster, or any one of a
number of heavenly delights. We are
pleased in our soul. A few months
later.....

It's clear tonight, there's really nothing
special going on. I don't know if I want to
take the time to set up the telescope. We've
all been there. Stargazing becomes routine
and our enthusiasm wanes. During the next
few months I would like to present some
thoughts and ideas to make observing more
exciting and rewarding. I am hoping to get
the help of some of our members to conduct
mini seminars at our meetings to share and
explore and demonstrate observing
techniques.

The first thing that I recommend is to
invest one dollar in a bound composition
notebook and keep a log of all your
observing activities. Memory often plays
tricks. The second investment is the
Observer's Handbook 2007 published by the
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. BAS
members may purchase this at a discounted
price from the BCC Planetarium.

Astronomy is a hobby where it can literally
be said that the sky is the limit. I bemoan
the fact that in the last 40 years air and light
pollution have devastated the night sky. At
the same time amateurs have turned out
"astro-images" that rival or exceed the pros
of 40 years ago. The real cost and quality of
telescopes have vastly improved.
Computers and the internet have
revolutionized astronomy. We are living in
the best of times for amateur astronomy.
We are not longer held hostage to sky
conditions.

When observing is not an option I
sometimes dabble in telescope making.

Although this is not everyone's preference,
there are some things you can do to improve
your observing tools. As you have often
fumbled in the dark you may have thought to
yourself there's got to be a better way. What
kinds of little innovations can you come up
with to make observing, easier, efficient, and
fun?

Are you familiar with the night
sky? If you have computer there is a
plethora of computer aids that help
you get intimately familiar with the
stars, constellations, and deep sky
objects. Although not the real thing
you can familiarize yourself with
constellations and star names. A
good star atlas or guide is always
helpful. Again there are many
products available from simple to
comprehensive. Pre-planning your
observing using these tools is very
valuable.

For those who are not blessed
with the latest and greatest of
telescopes there is satellite and
meteor watching. If you have a pair
moderate binoculars there are a
number of interesting observing
projects that you can attack.

Of course, when seeing is good to
great we have to make some
choices on how to make best use of
this precious observing time.

Observing double stars and
variable stars does not always
require the best of seeing conditions.
Lunar, planetary, and deep sky
observing all have little tricks and
tools. Solar observing is something
we often ignore. When did you last
spend some quality time observing
the most brilliant of the heavenly
objects?

The Astronomical League and
other organizations provide lists,
charts and observing tips for various
kinds of observing programs.

The intended point of this article is
to get us refocused and recapture
the magic of the heavens that first
stirred our hearts and minds. Next
month I will talk about star charts
and other aids.

Have a great New Year.

JN

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