

Shoals Astronomy Club Newsletter

Vol. 1. No. 1 March. 7, 2009

Editorial

This was also a busy time for the people at NASA who attempted to launch a satellite to study the CO2 content in the air. Satellites on rockets are normally covered with a shell which makes up the nose cone of the rocket. The failure of separation of the shell caused the Orbiting Carbon Observatory to not reach orbit. The month also saw delay of the launch of the Shuttle Discovery to help assemble the space station. That launch has been not set to March 11th. Even more troubling was the Feb 10th collision in orbit of a defunct Russian military satellite and a communications satellite. As we launch more things into orbit we can't help but wonder if we are making space into a junkyard. In fact, NASA estimates the largest danger to shuttle launches is impact by space debris!

The month of March is going much better for NASA. The Kepler Mission took off in a spectacular night launch on March 6th. This mission will study a region between the constellations Cygnus and Lyra to look for tiny drops in brightness as earth-sized planets pass between us and their stars. The three-year mission will be the first to tell us how many planets like the Earth are out there orbiting their stars at just the right distance for liquid water to exist. Exciting times are ahead!

The February meeting of the Shoals Astronomy Club will be on Mar. 26, 2009 at 7:00PM at UNA Planetarium.

Observing Report

Here are some of the member's observing reports ...

Stan Peck, Feb. 20th.

Hey Group,

I got to see comet Lulin tonight! Went out around 1:30 a.m. to Key Cave NWR....and used a 4 1/4" scope and found it within 10 seconds of looking.. not that hard to spot...

It was in Virgo and is headed towards Leo right now...

Michael Beck, March 6th.

Well I finally got back to the telescope tonight, too bad moon so bright, but had company and they got to see the moon first time ever, kinda neat, I did not cut on computer so we just saw some regular stuff. I have yet, because of weather, and other things put together one solid night with the computer running to really check the 16 out, I do know though that the Trapezium in Orion, it blows those 4 stars wide open even on low power and when it is dark the nebulosity is awesome. Have not seen Saturn yet either, ...

Lunar Phases

1st Quarter Mar. 3rd

Full Moon Mar. 10th

3rd Quarter Mar. 18th

New Moon Mar. 26th

Member Article

"Looking Up!"

Hello Shoals Astronomy Club and anyone else that might be reading this newsletter.

I want to thank you for your interest in Astronomy. I, like you, enjoy looking up at the Heavens and seeing the wonders that are there.

My name is Matthew Sherrill and I am the Vice President, Treasury & Sectary of the Shoals Astronomy Club. I took the position back in January, 2009, so please be patient with me while I get used to this job.

I have been into "Looking Up!" for years, probably since about age 7 or 8. I wasn't as interested then as I am now. I joined our club when we reformed it about 3 years ago.

Our club has had many observing sessions over the last 3 years, a few side walk Astronomy events, and several other meetings where we talked about our hobby, shared web sites, (by the way, a web site was a place in the corner of the room where a spider lived when I first started "Looking Up!"), traded stories about what brought us to the hobby, and asked for help trying to set up our telescopes for the first few times.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be the Shoals Astronomy Club Vice President and Treasury & Sectary, (I'm going to refer to this position as SAC V.P. /T&S to save some time typing).

Welcome to the world of Astronomy if you aren't already a member. Our dues are \$10.00 every 6 months or \$20.00 a year. Our club meets on the last Thursday of each month except in December where we try to meet earlier in the month for a Christmas party.

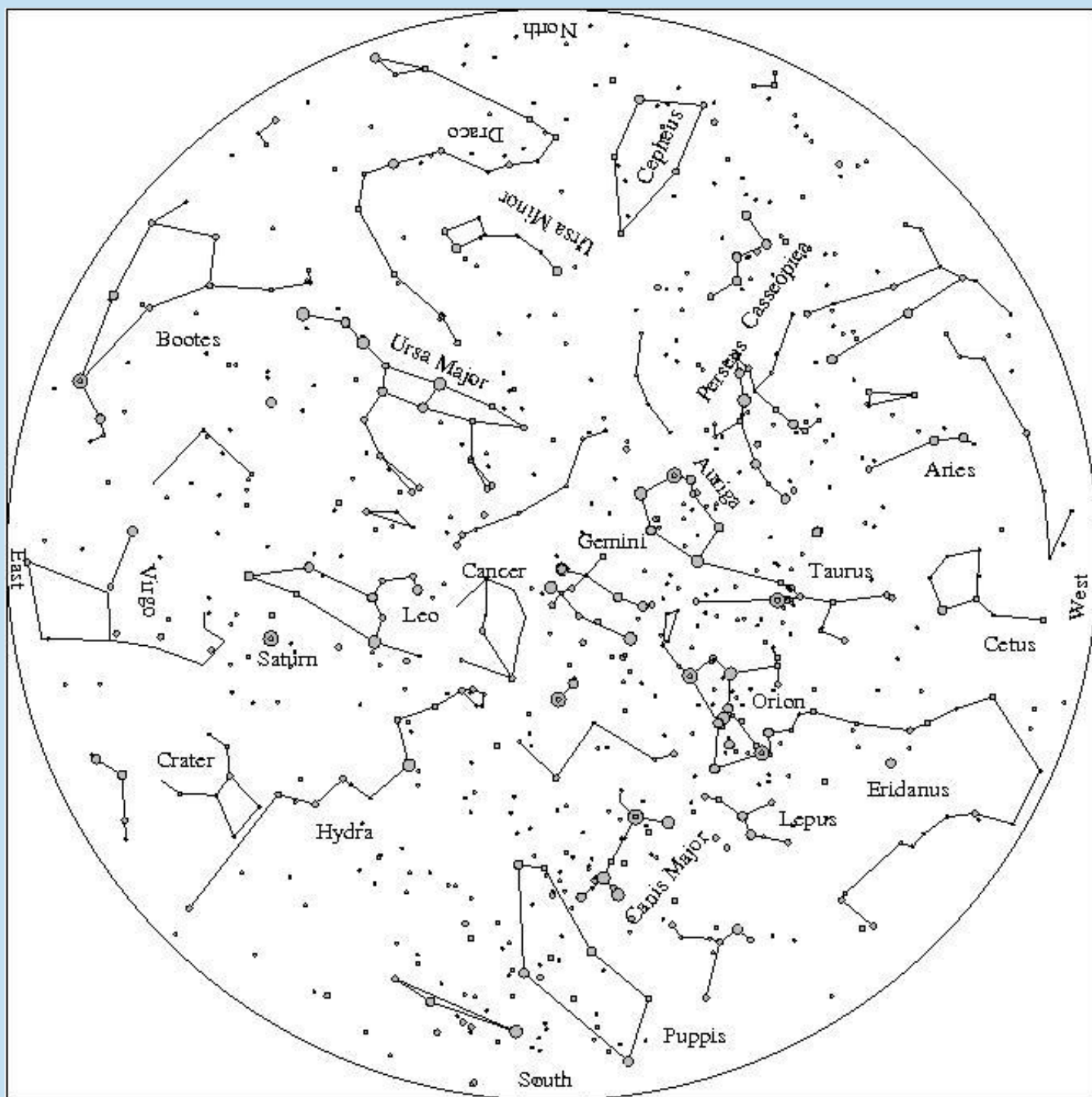
I hope we can have lots of fun "Looking Up!"

Sincerely, Matthew Sherrill SAC

V.P./T&S

Astro Quote: The treasures hidden in the heavens are so rich that the human mind shall never be lacking in fresh nourishment. Johannes Kepler.

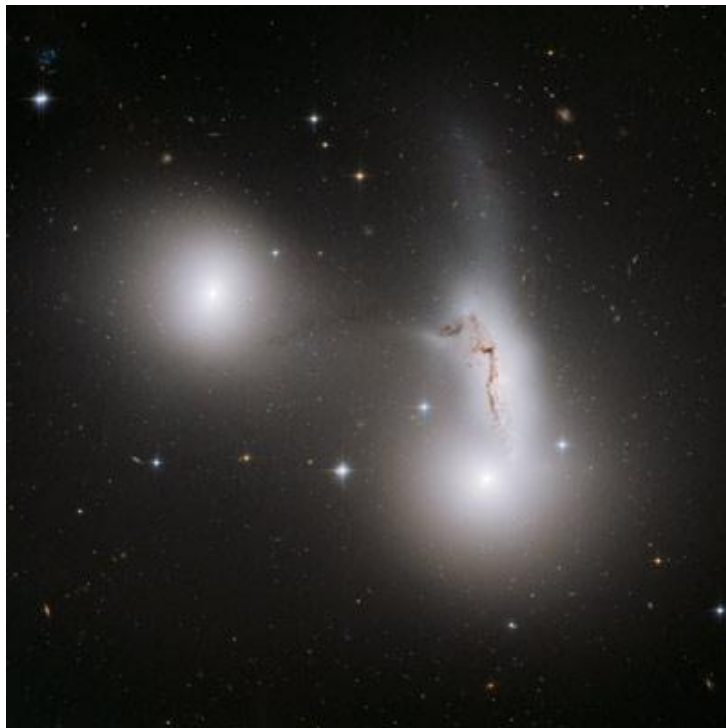
The March 2009 Sky for North Alabama



How to use this Chart: The sky is shown for 8:00PM, March 15th for Florence, Alabama. It will appear this way one hour earlier for each week difference in time. The stars brightness's are represented by different sized dots. The faintest stars you can see are the small dots; the brightest ones are large dots. Hold the chart with the direction you are facing down. So if you are facing north, hold the chart with north down. The circle represents the horizon and the center of the chart the point directly over your head. So an object half-way between the center and edge of the chart is half-way up in the sky. This chart was prepared using the SkyNow software of R. M. Blake. This chart may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes with the following acknowledgement included: Courtesy UNA Planetarium and Observatory. <http://www.una.edu/planetarium/>.

Images and Photos

Image of the Month



The Earth orbits the Sun as part of a giant disk of stars, planets, gas and dust which makes up the Milky Way galaxy. Galaxies are sort of cosmic cities in which most stars lie. Astronomers have discovered that galaxies have fairly violent histories, with small galaxies being “cannibalized” to help form larger galaxies. The Milky Way is currently gobbling up several smaller galaxies. In this Hubble Space Telescope image we see the process from the outside. The galaxies NGC 7173, NGC 7174 and NGC 7176 are seen here in the process of merging 100 million light years away in the constellation Piscis Austrinus. **Image courtesy NASA.**

Shoals Club Visits VBAS. Photo Matthew Sherrill.



February Meeting. Photo Dave Davis



February Board Meeting Report.

Matthew Sherrill

Hello Shoals Astronomy Club,

We had our Board meeting on Sunday at Fiesta Mexicana. We had a great time of idea and experience sharing.

We talked about:

1. The Galileo telescope building project and how we might ask the people who get the telescopes to pay part of the cost of the kit,
2. having a observing session out at Key Cave on 2-15-09,
3. Going to the VBAA club meeting on 2-20-09 as a group,
3. Stan talked about the comet Lulin,
4. Mel talked about getting a non-profit status for our club; Roy is going to look into this further,
5. Stan is our ALCOR- Astronomical League Representative, and check on our insurance for our club,
6. We talked about the Newsletter and what we could put into it.
7. At our next club meeting on 02-26-09, David Davies is going to have a session on Filters.
8. We collected dues from David D. and Roy L.

Thanks to Roy, David, Matthew, Mel, Heath and Stan (not in picture) for attending the meeting.

Look forward to seeing everyone at our next get together.

Keep Looking Up!

For Sale 10" DOB, some eyepieces, encoders and all with it suitable if you wanted computer control. Being sold because a new 0.40m telescope has been purchased. Price \$300.

Call Mike Beck 764-1654