



# Obs~server

Newsletter of the Racine Astronomical Society

[www.rasastro.org](http://www.rasastro.org)

April 2008

## ~Presidents Message~

The first star party of the season, held on the rain date on April 5<sup>th</sup>, was a small success. There were only a few members that came out and spent a couple hours on the lawn with their scopes. Since they were kind enough to share their views we got to see Saturn, the Orion Nebula, several other messier objects, and several satellites including the Space Station. Afterwards we all enjoyed some pizza from R&R. Hopefully our next Star Party will be a little bit warmer. Hope to see you all at the work party on Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup>.

~Dave Mogensen~

## ~Vice Presidents Message~

Spring is finally here, at least according to the calendar. April is off to a good start with a successful Star party (which I missed). We have a general meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> and our first open house is on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Throw in the work party on the 12<sup>th</sup> (with the 19<sup>th</sup> as our rain date) and we have a pretty full month. If the skies are clear for the general meeting I will be opening the 14" for viewing Saturn. This is the first year I remember that we didn't start off the season with Astronomy Day. I'm hoping that we have a good turnout of both members and public on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

The RAS has a new member, Greg Roling. Welcome to the club!

~Dave Finch~

## ~Saturn in April and May~

If you haven't seen Saturn yet there is still time, but don't wait too long. Saturn will become lower in the western sky very rapidly after our June 6<sup>th</sup> open house. During the month of April Saturn is still very high in the sky, and is almost as big and bright as it has been for the last 2 months. If the skies cooperate we have 2 good opportunities to observe Saturn as a group in April – the general meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and our open house on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

In May Saturn will be a little smaller and dimmer, but might actually offer the best view of the apparition. The rings will be at they're maximum tilt and Saturn's globe will cast it's maximum shadow on the rings. Saturn will remain high enough for good observing through the month.

For more info:

<http://soc.jpl.nasa.gov/viewing.cfm>

## ~Iridium Flares~



Image courtesy of Dave Mogensen: Nikon D200, 24mm lens, ISO 800, 22 second exposure.

Dave Mogensen captured this image of an Iridium Flare from the observatory on April 1, 2008 at 7:40pm looking to the ESE. The magnitude of the flare was -8.0 according to [www.heavens-above.com](http://www.heavens-above.com), and happened right on schedule.

Iridium flares are the result of sunlight reflecting off of the antenna arrays of communication satellites. They are highly predictable and very bright – there are flares that can even be seen during the day! [www.heavens-above.com](http://www.heavens-above.com) is a good site for downloading predictions about Iridium Flares and passes of other satellites, the International Space Station, and the space shuttle. The site allows you to customize a link with information about you're location. I have links saved for both my home and the observatory, which comes in very handy.

For more information about observing Iridium flares:

<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/observing/objects/projects/3307166.html>

## ~Free star charts~

Skymaps.com is a good source for downloading free star charts for your own use, or to use as hand-outs for Astronomy related events. The charts contain a full sky view for a given month and include useful info about sky events for the month, and a list of objects that are visible.

<http://www.skymaps.com/downloads.html>

Be sure to check the "Distribution Policy" before distributing these in large quantities.

<http://www.skymaps.com/terms.html>

# 2008 Event Calendar

## March

29 - Spring Star Party

## April

5 - Spring Star Party (Rain Date)

12 - Work Party (9 AM)

19 - Work Party (Rain Date)

19 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)

25 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

## May

10 - Astronomy Day

2-5PM (Solar) & 8-11 PM

## June

6 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

## July

11 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

19 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)

26 - Summer Star Party

## August

2 - Summer Star Party (Rain Date)

16 - Picnic

22 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

## September

19 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

## October

18 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)

25 - Fall Star Party

## November

1 - Fall Star Party (Rain Date)

15 - Work Party (9 AM)

22 - Work Party (Rain Date)

## December

20 - Christmas Party (7:30 PM)

## ~Opening on the board of directors~

We have one opening on the board of directors for a member at large. This is a great opportunity to become more involved with RAS decisions and event planning, and gives us something to do on the first Monday of each month. No experience is required! If you are interested in being on the board or have questions, please send an e-mail to: [rasastro@wi.net](mailto:rasastro@wi.net) .

## ~ From the Editor~

If you have submissions for the newsletter, questions, comments, or ideas, please send me an e-mail.

Also, if you are still receiving you're newsletters via postal mail and have access to e-mail you can opt to receive them in a PDF format via e-mail instead. You'll get them a little faster and save the RAS a few bucks. If you would like to change you're delivery method or receive a sample PDF newsletter, please let me know.

Dave Finch

The free Adobe Acrobat reader can be downloaded here:

<http://www.adobe.com/go/BONRM>

## ~Contact Information~

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