



Spring 2013

Newsletter of the Racine Astronomical Society

www.rasastro.org

The Racine Astronomical Society has lost a founding member and friend ~



Ron Jones displaying our 50th anniversary cake in 2006

Ron Jones, one of the Racine Astronomical Societies founding members, passed away on February 27, 2013 at the age of 81. Ron was instrumental in the design and construction of the observatory buildings as well as the 16" telescope. Over the years Ron continued to stay involved in the operations of the society, the upkeep of the observatory buildings and equipment, and especially the care and upkeep of the 16" telescope that he designed. His passion for astronomy and sharing it with the public never faded. Ron will truly be missed.

The spring general meeting and spring star party are on April 13th ~

The spring general meeting is on April 13th beginning at 7:30 PM at the Modine Benstead observatory. The meeting will be immediately followed by our spring star party. If it's cloudy we will have a cloud party instead. In either case the RAS will be providing pizza for those in attendance.

The spring Work Party is on April 6th (rain date) ~

The spring work party is being held on the rain date, April 6th, at the Modine Benstead observatory. The snow is melting too slowly this year to hold it on the first date. There are a number of projects we need to complete, both inside and outside, to prepare the observatory for our 2013 season. The RAS will provide a pizza lunch for those members who come out to help.

Spring Astronomy Day 2013 is on April 20th ~

We will kick off the 2013 open house season with "Spring Astronomy Day 2013" on April 20th from 8 PM until 11 PM at the Modine Benstead observatory. Come on out and help us get the season started. Bring your personal telescope to set-up or just bring yourself. No experience is required to help with these events!

Jupiter and Saturn in 2013 ~

Jupiter reached opposition on December 3rd, 2012 and is currently well placed for observing. Jupiter will be high enough to observe early in the evening on the nights of our spring star party and Astronomy Day. Jupiter will be above the horizon early on the night of our May open house, but will be rapidly sinking in the west after that.

Saturn will reach opposition on April 28th. It will be low in the sky late on the nights of our spring star party and Astronomy Day. Saturn will begin to be a good object for observation late in the evening on the nights of our May members night and May open house night. It will be well placed for observing during our June and July open house nights, our June Members Night and during the summer star party. By the night of our August members night it will be low in the west at sunset.

2013 Comets - PAN STARRS and ISON ~

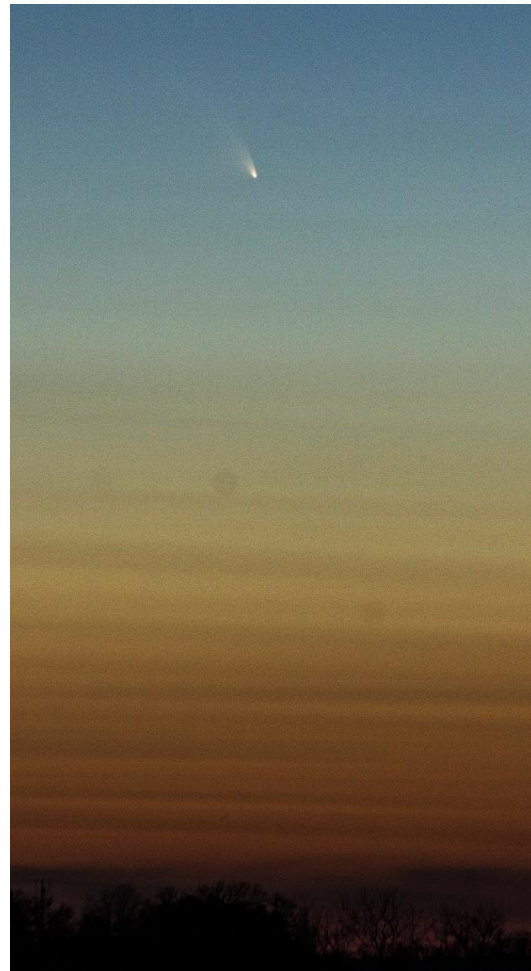
In mid-March comet PANSTARRS moved into our night sky and was observed and photographed by several of our members. Comet 2011 L4 (PANSTARRS) made its closest approach to the sun on March 10th, after which it rose into the western sky for northern hemisphere observers. The comet was at its brightest in



Comet PANSTARRS - photo by Tim Tadyak

mid-March and is expected to become very faint by month end. If you didn't see PANSTARRS there is another comet coming in late 2013 which could more than make up for it.

Comet ISON will make its closest approach to the sun on November 28th when it will fly through the sun's atmosphere. If ISON survives this extremely close approach it could become the "Comet of the Century". If it doesn't, then it will be a non-event.



Comet PANSTARRS - photo by Brian Jensen



Comet PANSTARRS - photo by Chris Tobias

Another possibility is that ISON could break-up on closest approach and emerge as a "string of pearls" similar to Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 when it hit Jupiter in 1994. If it survives closest approach fully intact it is expected to be visible in daylight for a brief period and put on a spectacular show at night. Whether it survives intact or in pieces it will be well placed for observation in northern skies for months after its closest approach..... as long as it survives!



Comet PANSTARRS - photo by Tim Tadyak

Members favorite astronomy web sites - new feature or fizzle? - you decide ~

I have an idea for a new feature in the newsletter, but it's up to you. Each newsletter would contain a list of some of our members favorite astronomy links including an explanation of why you like it. It doesn't even have to be one of your favorites as long as you explain why you find it useful. I'll get things started.....

<http://www.spaceweather.com/> - submitted by Dave Finch

spaceweather.com is an excellent source of information about current events in astronomy, whether we've known about them for a while or they come up suddenly. You can sign up for e-mail alerts and you'll be notified if something comes up even if you don't have time to check the site regularly. Another thing I really like is the ability to change the date on the site and see how it appeared in years past during past astronomy events. In the upper corner of the site there are drop-down boxes that allow you to change the date.

<http://www.skymaps.com/> - submitted by Dave Finch

skymaps.com is an excellent source for printing monthly sky maps that can be distributed without permission by individuals (up to 30 copies) or for Non-commercial Education use (up to 300 copies). In addition to the sky map they contain a lot of other useful information about that months events, good objects to observe during the month, and some other useful information about general astronomy. Members of the RAS will frequently print up a bunch for distribution on our Public nights.

Here's a link to the current version: <http://www.skymaps.com/skymaps/tesmn1303.pdf>

If you want to see more of "Members favorite astronomy web sites" then send me you're links with a description of why you like them.

~ Dave Finch

2013 Event Calendar

March

30 - Work Party (9 AM)

April

6 - Work Party (Rain Date)
13 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)
13 - Spring Star Party
20 - Astronomy Day (8-11 PM)

May

4 - Members Night (8-11 PM)
10 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

June

1 - Members Night (8-11 PM)
14 - Public Night (8:30-11 PM)

July

13 - General Meeting (7:30 PM)
13 - Summer Star Party
26 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

August

3 - Members Night (8-11 PM)
9 - Public Night (8-11 PM)

September

13 - Public Night (8-11 PM)
14 - Annual Picnic (4 PM)

October

5 - General Meeting (7 PM)
5 - Fall Star Party
12 - Astronomy Day (7-10 PM)
19 - Work Party (9 AM)
26 - Work Party (Rain Date)

December

14 - Christmas Party (7:30 PM)

2013 Astronomy calendars available

We have a limited quantity of 2013 Astronomy calendars available to members for \$6.50 each (half price).



Please contact Dave Finch if you want one.

~ 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 your 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. Club updates and reminders are sent out on a regular basis via e-mail. If you would like to change your delivery method or receive a sample PDF newsletter, please let me know.

Dave Finch

The free Adobe Acrobat reader can be downloaded here:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

~Contact Information~

RAS Email: rasastro@wi.net

RAS Phone: 262-878-2774