

Put together by
Rich DeMidio

The NHAS Observer

Newsletter of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society



Vol. 2024 No. 1

"All the news that fits in print"

January 2024

In Remembrance



Photo by Matt Paige from YFOS

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Editor's Message

As we step into 2024, I am planning some changes to the newsletter. My thanks to **Mike Atkinson**, **Muhammad Chughtai** and **Shail Srinivas** who have graciously offered to assist with putting together content and modernizing the look. As the year goes by, I plan to take a lesser role into an eventual transition. You will notice incremental changes throughout the year. My goal is to modernize but respect some of the history retaining important legacy. I would really like to hear what the members would like to see in the newsletter. I have my own ideas, but will hold those back because I don't want to bias anyone. So please, let me know your ideas.

NHAS is also going through what I am calling "generational change". Many older members such as myself are transitioning out while a new, fresher set of members are joining. New members bring fresh ideas and understand better how the world operates today. Change is a hard but must be done incrementally. It's my hope as a fossil in the organization, that their fresh approach be welcome and taken seriously.

In Memoriam

Over the past year, we lost three long term NHAS members. I chose the photo on the cover page as a way to believe they are still looking down upon us. At first, I was reluctant to write about this for fear of missing someone, but in retrospect, I believe it is important to honor and remember them. I'll ask for forgiveness if I have missed anyone, then honor them as well. Please reach out to me if this is the case.

Jim McCarthy

I did not know Jim very well, but we would exchange emails and met a few times in my early of NHAS at skywatches. We received this from Sarah and Kerry McCarthy. The family also shared the link for Jim's Obituary. <https://www.currentobituary.com/member/obit/281930>

Some of you may remember or know my dad James (Jim) McCarthy. He passed away yesterday 1-23-24. He wasn't in pain. He wasn't worried. He was surrounded by love & compassion. At one point a woman came in and sang some songs to him and then a therapy dog laid with him. The room couldn't have been filled with more love.

I don't have the words or emotional capacity to express what he meant to me right now or the impact he had on me but I'm so thankful he was my dad. My heart aches.

If you knew him, you'd know he was kind but stubborn. Loving but thoughtful and that he would give you his last dollar if you needed it. He would give you a ride if you needed and not think twice about gas money. He was a friend to all and talked to everyone, he could be an ass but he was our ass. He probably ate way too many lays potato chips in his lifetime and his last drink was sprite. He always had his TV loud

and his music louder. He was compassionate and empathetic— he loved life and valued life; even if it was a bug. it was a “beautiful life”

I'll miss just having the ability to stop in and say hi, grab a drink, pee and sit for a bit. I'll miss being able to call anytime chat & check in. I'll miss creating new memories with you Dad.

I'll miss going to pick you up for holidays. Going to the range to shoot and picking up hot brass so you can reload. I'll miss you so much, dad. I'll miss having you earth side. I'll miss having you spend time with the kids and telling you about what they've done that day. I'll miss you making cat jokes and talking about kitty basket (market basket) I'll miss French toast and the 3 stooges and those stupid jokes you made.

I'll miss, I think everything that's gone now that you're not here.

I have some peace in knowing you aren't in pain; you aren't suffering and that you had a beautiful passing and you weren't alone. May your soul shine and may you be enjoying the view from above, Dad.



People may ask what I need. I have no idea.

Maybe comment with a memory of my dad if you knew him or have one, I'd love to read it. If you don't have a memory of him, please go spend time with your parents or loved ones if you've still got them. Take photos, save voicemails, ask them what their favorite song is, take videos. You'll treasure them just the way I do.

Sarah and Kerry McCarthy

From Mike Townsend: Jim and I have known each other for a long time. I met him when I started working at Riley's Sport Shop in late 1980's. When I first met Jim, I didn't know that he was an amateur astronomer. We were both into shooting. Then, I bought my first telescope. I told Jim about it and then he told me that he was also into astronomy. Jim told me about NHAS and I joined. I also spent my first Stellafane under Jim's watchful eye. Jim was very generous with his time, food, and coffee.

One of the first eventful times Jim and I spent observing was at the Laconia Old Home Days. Jim, Chase McNiss and myself set up telescopes for solar observing. Then, we also put on an evening sky watch. It was a very late evening and I stayed at Jim's house. Since that time, we did many overnights from his yard in Laconia. In recent times, we observed from his new home in Belmont. We also enjoyed many weekends shooting at Jim's gun club. He was a very good friend to me and will be sorely missed.

Barrie Sawyer

From Rich DeMidio: I knew Barry as well and had the privilege to visit his home to see Godzilla. I also brought Obby and the observing was fantastic. We talked for hours about Astronomy sharing our notes and passion for the hobby. In the earlier years, Barry made the trek to Concord many times to attend face to face club meetings. I loved his off the grid setup with solar panels and windmills. Being a cat lover, I quickly made friends with his cat who was just adorable. A few photos to remember his kindness.



Barrie's Cat who made friends with many of us! Photo by Rich DeMidio



Barrie's Home, I am sure he is watching down on us. Photo by Rich DeMidio

Funny, Barrie had a 5 inch refractor on Godzilla as a spotting scope. Made think of my AP130. Paul Winalski reminded me about this.

Thank you, Barrie, may you RIP.

From Dwight Lanpher: I was sad to hear of Barrie's passing. Although I didn't really know him, I will never forget Barrie and Kevin bringing Godzilla to the Acadia Night Sky Festival, Cadillac Mountain Star Party in 2017. It was an amazing night of viewing and I saw the Veil Nebula like I have never seen it before. Certainly, he was an important contributor to astronomy in New England.



Godzilla at the Arcadia Star Party, photo by Dwight Lanpher

From Melinde and Don Byrne: Such a loss. Barry was a wonderful host and loved a challenge finding obscure targets with Godzilla. Don and I should have gone there more often. A good man.

From Dave Roy: Oh, I'm so sorry to hear this news. I met Barry a few times when I first joined. He seemed a pleasant person. I regret that I didn't get a chance to go to his home for a star party. I'll pray for him. My condolences.

From Paul Winalski: Barrie was active in both outreach and in-reach for NHAS. He was part owner of Godzilla, the 36" Obsession dob and hosted a lot of star parties for club members at Starport, his home in Groton NH. He had both great enthusiasm and great knowledge of our hobby. He will be missed.

From Rob Mack: I met Barrie a few times, and he was always a most gracious and welcoming host. I'll always remember my first visit to Starport. Barrie had to go to the house for some power cords in the middle of the night, and 'gave me the keys' to Godzilla to find whatever I wanted while he was away. I immediately headed to the Ring Nebula with hopes of the central star, which was not visible because of the seeing, but what a view of the ring!!! Later that night he introduced me to the Egg Nebula in Cygnus which I was not aware of. It's now one of my go-to objects on clear summer nights! RIP Barrie.

Ken Charles

From Rich DeMidio: For those including myself who had the privilege to know Ken, he was a very passionate, dedicated, and caring Astronomer who did a lot for NHAS during his time. Ken was a great friend and fun to be around. I will always remember our visual observing sessions at YFOS or public sky watches. Ken had his challenges but they never stopped him from pursuing his love for Astronomy and sharing that knowledge with the public and club members.

Ken served NHAS for many years in several roles:

- Ken served as treasurer for many terms. At one point, he and Rags (David Gilmore) would alternate terms to give each other a break.
- Ken founded the NHAS store by painstaking getting items there that club members could order directly. Coats, mugs, t-shirts, etc. This alleviated the burden of ordering and delivering items manually.
- Ken worked with the city of Nashua and got NHAS involved in the annual Nashua sidewalk stroll.
- Ken did the research and setup the fall Ghost Hunt event. Similar to the Messier Marathon, these are challenging objects to observe in a single evening.

Most of all, Ken was a great friend. In recent years even though he had difficulty in getting out, he continued to talk about his passion and love for Astronomy.

From Ted Blank: Some pics of Ken from 2011 (just before the rain came down), doing what he loved. Lucky to have known him.



Ken with Smokie, a scope to explain about light. Photo by Ted Blank



Photo by Ted Blank

From Paul Winalski: In addition to Ken's passionate love for Astronomy, he was a passionate Allman Brothers Band fan. When he got his 10" Schmidt-Cassegrain, he named it Soulshine after the Allman Brothers song. Soulshine made many, many appearances at public observing events over the years.



Ken Charles with Soulshine, photo provided by Paul Winalski

From Dave McDonald: I do remember Ken. Wonderful person. Dedicated. Friendly. Very knowledgeable and loved to share it. He will be missed.

From Tom Cocchiaro: Ken's not in the pic, but his telescope is—kind of shows his sense of humor and longstanding involvement in NHAS activities. Taken on a rainy Market Square Day in 2010. Ken put his scope cover on and added some electrical tape we had on hand and a pair of star sunglasses 😊



Photo by Tom Cocchiaro

And finally, one more of Soulshine 😊 Ken, you may no longer be with us, but your soul shines amongst those who had the privilege to call you “friend”.



Photo by Ed Ting

Public Skywatch summary

Since the weather has been horrible, it has been a very light month with only one sky watch at MSDC so I am holding off on charts until we gather more data.

Fun publicity in Jaffrey, NH (Alison Bentley)

Tonight, 1/27/2024, in Jaffrey's Library, they are doing the annual stuffed animal sleepover, kids bring their stuffed animals to leave for a slumber party, and pick them up the next day. The librarians take loads of silly photos and post them throughout the night. So far, the stuffies have many photos, one of them with the library's lending telescope :) If you hear of additional telescope requests for kids' groups, you'll know why. I tagged NHAS on the photo comment. <https://www.facebook.com/JaffreyLibrary>



<https://www.facebook.com/JaffreyLibrary/posts/pfbid02rUMUqe819zDJfgbxvh9DgxaFyuzSpSqUPXYPUcYXRknQoEUdvRqykq4qjvu6tw2Jl>

In Reach - Little River Park, Lee NH Observing (multiple reports)

From Michael F. Colford: Review of Little River Park observing in Lee, NH.

In spite of the cold temperatures and wind, the observing was good and the company was great. As Phil mentioned, the various equipment used to view the sky was wide. There was also plenty of sharing, which gave me an appreciation for the equipment and their capabilities. Amanda's new scope was very interesting, simple and made some great pictures. Michael's Oberwerk 100mm binoculars were impressive with the wide viewing angle and clarity. Phil is always helpful with steering people to dark sky objects with such clarity and use of constellations and stars. His stabilized 10x42 binoculars were also amazing.

I observed many objects with naked vision, my 8" Orion XT8 and on everyone else's equipment. With naked vision, I could make out the Andromeda galaxy and the Perseus double cluster. In the telescopes I observed M1 Crab Nebula, M31 Andromeda, M32, M35, M36, M37, M38, M42, M45, M46, M47, M48, M50, M78, M79, M110, Jupiter, Sigma Orion double star, NGC869 and 884 Perseus open double clusters.

Great night of observing and looking forward to the next one.

Michael F. Colford
Epping, NH

From Phil Babcock: Another review of last night at Little River Park in Lee.

It was cold and gusty, but we got a break in the wind for a while around 8:30. Most of the time the wind was just making things cold, but every now and then it would shake my refractor. The snow squall that came through around 6 pm left 1/2" of snow on the ground.

I was there with my Televue 85 refractor and 10x42 binoculars. **Mike Collard** had his 8" Orion dob. **Mike Atkinson** had an Oberwerk 100mm binocular. New member **Amanda Robinson** joined us with her 2 automated scopes, which are pretty amazing in what they can do.

It was a very clear night. M41 and M31 were naked eye visible, and Mike C and I were pretty sure we saw the Perseus double cluster without any aids.

I was wandering through Orion, Taurus and Canis Major looking at the usual things and some less common NGCs and Collinder objects.

Jupiter's moons were putting on a good show with Io right on the edge of the planet and slowly moving away. The proximity to Jupiter made it easy to see how quickly Io moves. Also, there appeared to be a star that lined up with the 4 Galilean Moons, looking like a 5th moon.

Overall a great night with clear skies and lots of wandering from scope-to-scope to see lots of objects with different equipment.

- Phil Babcock

Editor's comment: In the Sirius region, there is the **Tau Canis Majoris Cluster**. A beautiful circular cluster with a very bright star in the center. I counted 13 stars surrounding it with apparent consistent brightness with my Starmaster 7.

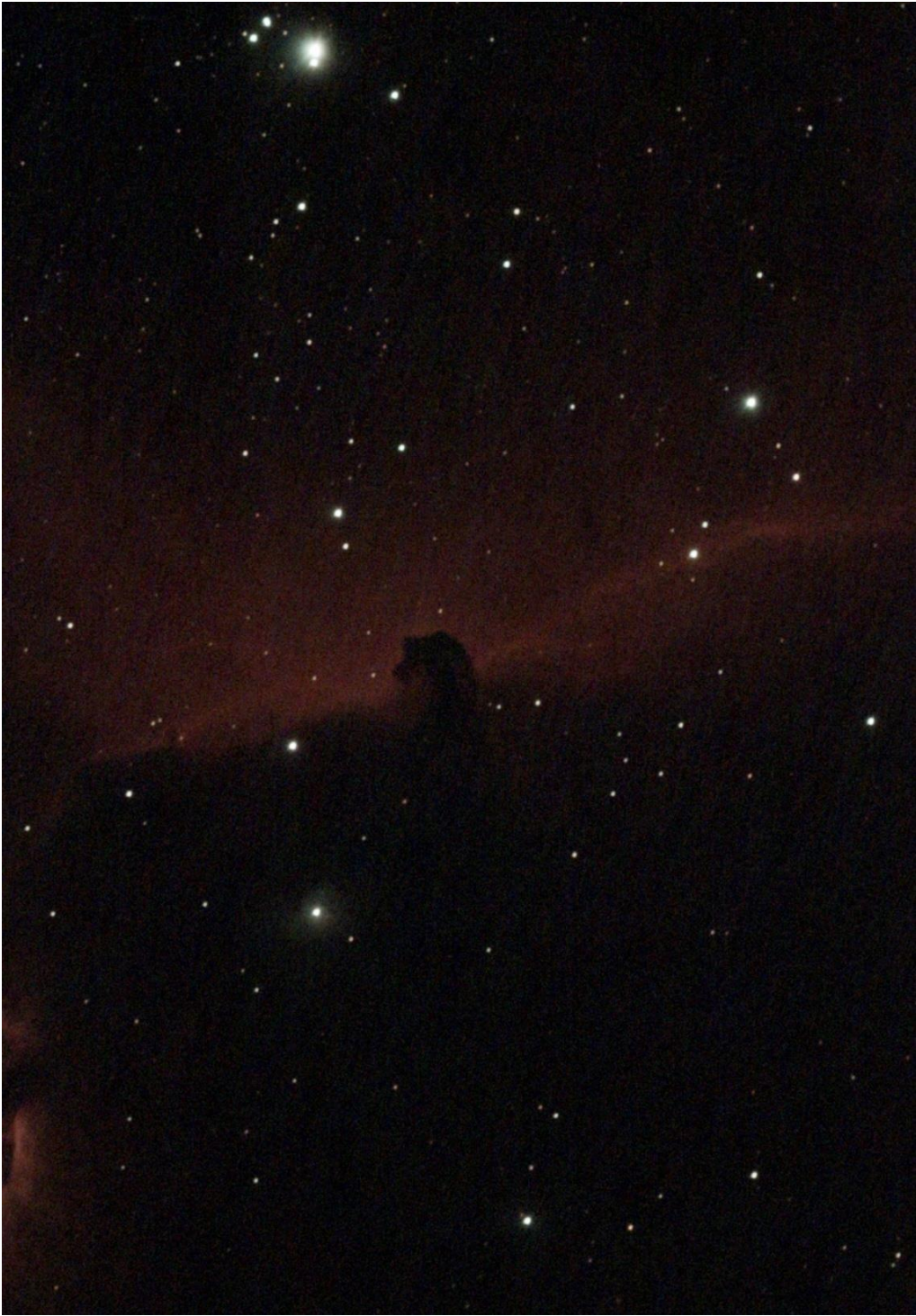
From Amanda Robinson: As I'm still a beginner, it is was an incredible experience meeting others who love the stars. It was a bit cold and windy but very enjoyable.

I loved how everyone shared their discoveries and the great company. Can't wait to the next meet up.

I brought my new Vaonis Vespara and took a couple stacked photos of M82 Cigar Galaxy and IC 434 Horsehead Nebula. Here's the photos



M82, Cigar Galaxy by Amanda Robinson



The Horsehead Nebula by Amanda Robinson

From Mike Atkinson: Phil, Mandy, Michael and I each arrived at Little River Park last evening for some viewing. They were all there before I arrived just after 7:00 and we all left just before 10:00. So, a good and productive evening of view, I think.

Despite the earlier squalls, the sky was cloud free. The sky seemed pretty dark, with lots of stars and colors visible, in our viewing.

The temperature when I arrived was 27 degrees. When I left it had dropped about few degrees. But the real challenge was the wind. It was pretty persistent. Although there were a few breaks with little wind. Sometimes the wind would introduce instability for our optics.

I viewed M35 in Gemini, M41 in Canis Major, M42 in Orion, Sigma Orionis, the double star Mintaka in Orion, the Owl Cluster in Cassiopeia, Jupiter and probably a few other targets as well. Other targets, by other members, included the Auriga clusters, M38, M36, M37, M82, M50 and M1. Beyond that, I am sure there were others.

Hope to see you out there.

Mike Atkinson

Nashua, NH.

MSDC first Friday (John Rose)

Mike Townsend called me Friday afternoon about going to the skywatch. I was concerned about the weather but had not been following the weather reports during the day. Decided to go anyways. It was partly cloudy when we got there. A woman and her daughter were there trying to set up a Celestron Powerseeker 127eq. Another woman pulled up and asked if this was where the sky watch was taking place. After being informed it was, she brought out a Celestron Starsense 130. Unfortunately, while this was going on the clouds were getting thicker. I was trying to find Jupiter for the owners of the Powerseeker when it clouded over. Eventually they put it away and went inside the Discovery center. Mike and I stayed for a while talking with the owner of the Starsense and a man who showed up to check out the skywatch. Mike and I packed up and left about 8:30 PM.

Mythology of Callisto (Mike Atkinson)

The Mythology of Callisto.

Callisto was one of the daughters of Lycaon, the king of Arcadia.

Callisto was an admirer of things natural and wild. As such, she pledged herself to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, of the wilderness, of the care of children and of chastity. Callisto, as a follower of Artemis chose a life of chastity in the wild.

But, for poor Callisto, one of the gods thought her desirable. In order to seduce her, Zeus put on a disguise; some say of Apollo, other of Artemis. The result of the seduction was a pregnancy. When Callisto was discovered with child, she was cast out of Artemis' group.

Hera, the wife of Zeus, learned of the affair and in revenge turned Callisto into a bear. Only in mythology can a woman, turned into a bear, give birth to a boy. But that is what we are told.

Callisto's son, Arcas grew for many years. As a teen, he went hunting. He saw a bear, his quarry, not knowing it was his own mother, having been raised by his grandfather, Lycaon.

Just as Arcas was about to kill his mother, Zeus intervened. Zeus diverted Arcas javelin.

For his love of Callisto, and for her continued safety, Zeus grabbed the bear by the tail, and swung her around vigorously, placing her into the heavens; where she still resides today.

And because Callisto loved her son, Zeus, transformed Arcas, into a bear, and placed him in the heavens in the same manner.

So, a big bear and a little bear walk forever in the sky, for their own safety. But, Hera, still angry at the affair, appealed to the river god Tethys, that mother and son never meet in the heavens.

And, today, we know this story is true, because both of the bears in the heavens have long tails. I mean, have you ever seen a bear with a long tail?

Callisto
The Big Bear
Ursa Major



Constellation of the Month (Phil Babcock)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JagUHh7mGIYZf6llxUeftJLHMa5-L8G3/view?usp=sharing>

Fellow Astronomers:

Here is the 10th Episode of “The Constellation of the Month-ish”.

In this Episode we explore Auriga, the Charioteer. We use two fun and memorable asterisms to asterism-hop to 3 open clusters. Auriga’s open clusters, M36, M37, M38, are all close enough together to be able to easily see 2 at a time in the Field of View (FOV) of binoculars or a finder scope. If you have ones with a wide field (about 6° or more), you can see all 3 in the same FOV. Even better, each open cluster has its own personality and responds to magnification differently. The constellation is anchored by 0th magnitude Capella, the 4th brightest star in the NH skies. Also, Auriga is just to the “left” of Perseus, which we found and explored in Episode 9.

In these episodes, binoculars are mentioned pretty regularly. This isn’t to imply that you should only look at these objects with binoculars. Rather, in support of the mission of “The Constellation of the Month-ish”, which is to help beginners learn how to find things in the sky, the message here is that a lot of amateur astronomy can be done with just binoculars. Also, by focusing on objects that can be seen in binoculars, they can just as easily be seen in a finder scope, and that gets the telescope pointed there and the telescope will provide a different view and experience of the object. We build the skills of finding things in the sky with these easier, but rewarding, targets.

While “The Constellation of the Month-ish” is mostly for the members that are in the earlier parts of their journey, more experienced members can join in by sharing their favorite objects in this region, or share photos of these objects that they have taken.

And, of course, I welcome the always interesting and educational corrections people offer.

Happy hunting!

- Phil Babcock

In-Reach Report (Phil Babcock)

Editors Note: I am repeating this from last month's issue since it is still relevant.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JudAQ7zqtJm9a6zggHyqnRF-hVGpy1C8/view?usp=drive_link

Fellow Astronomers:

A pretty regular request from members that want to join in the fun at a public sky watch is, "What should I point my telescope at?" I've been there (not very long ago). We all have. In coordination with Paul Winalski (our coordinator for sky watches and experienced observer) and Rich DeMidio (a former NHAS President and experienced observer) I put together a list for December of things that tend to be crowd pleasers and are easy to find. If people find this helpful (for sky watches or just as a list of fun things to have a look at any clear night), let us all know.

December:

1. Saturn
2. Jupiter
3. The Moon
4. M45, The Pleiades
5. M31, The Andromeda Galaxy
6. NGC 457 in Cassiopeia
7. The Double Cluster in Perseus (NGC869 and NGC 884)
8. M34 in Perseus

The attached file has a little more info on each. The order of the entries in this list is somewhat aligned with what I believe are the things get the biggest "Wow!" from guests. Depending on the number of telescopes and guests at a sky watch will determine if you remain on one object for the whole evening or find that you need to show a few objects to the guests. I believe it is rare that you have a chance to show 5 or 6 objects. I don't recall ever having shown that many.

This list is not a "required" list for sky watches. It is being provided in case you aren't sure where to start. There are certainly many more targets people like to show at sky watches. You can point your scope at any target you want to, and move from target to target in any order you want to.

It's a good idea to practice finding the things you may want to show people BEFORE the sky watch. But don't be intimidated. Notice that the biggest crowd pleasers tend to be bright, so they are easy to point a scope at.

I hope to see you out at a sky watch!

Editor's comment: These objects are valid for January

ASTRO PHOTONS

Many club members have been showcasing their astrophotography talents on the Astro-pictures channel in Slack. Please go there to review photos as it would be terribly redundant to include them here. In addition, Herb Bubert takes a sampling from that channel posting them on the club's Facebook page on a monthly basis.

CLUB AND OTHER LINKS OF INTEREST

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=new%20hampshire%20astronomical%20society>

NHAS YouTube including some enablement education:

<https://www.youtube.com/@newhampshireastronomicalso1786>

NHAS Club Calendar:

<http://www.nhastro.com/calendar.php>

Did you know that Slack offers analytics? It's pretty cool if you are a metrics nerd like me 😊

<https://nhastro.slack.com/stats#overview>

LTP YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@librarytelescope>

Dave McDonald YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT6GsCflFlw>

Ed Ting YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@edting>

Phil Babcock In-Reach materials (let me know if you cannot see the folder)

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eVm896w7E_cGyLEdYP4QSRJIZGI8RPU3?usp=share_link

Marc Stowbridge provided this link to an LTP brochure:

https://librarytelescope.org/images/flyers/International_Library_Telescope-2023-flyer.pdf

SUMMARY

This is your newsletter so please let me know of content you might like to see. Anyone is welcome to submit articles of your choosing. For example, an observing session report, a field trip or some event, etc.

Clear Skies!

Rich DeMidio