



DESERT SKY

Presidents Message - February, 2008

It is February and the sky's brightest star, Sirius, rises in the South chasing Orion. Sirius is in the constellation Canis Major, the Greater Dog. It is the star that is the nose of the dog, Canis Minor, the Lesser Dog, is a very unassuming constellation North of the Greater Dog, and also following Orion, Canis Minor's biggest claim to fame is the bright star Procyon.

Sirius is also called the "Dog Star" because of its position. It has a Magnitude of -1.4 which is very bright. The name "Sirius" is from the Greek word for "scorching" because in ancient times Sirius was believed to provide heat to us Earthlings. They thought this because in high Summer it is positioned close to the Sun. That is why the hot days of Summer are called "the Dog Days of Summer". You can dazzle your friends with that little piece of trivia. The Egyptians used Sirius as a calendar indicator because it was bright and it was easy to mark its yearly arrival. On January 1st this year, Sirius was right at due South at midnight.

Sirius is twice as large as the Sun and has double its mass. It produces more than 20 times the light as the Sun. That isn't really super bright, but since Sirius is only 8.6 light years from us, it is exceptionally bright. There is only one naked eye star closer to the Earth and that is Alpha Centauri, which is 4-5 light years distant, and only visible from the Southern Hemisphere.

Take the opportunity to view Sirius in a small telescope or binoculars. You will find it a wonderful view. Even though it is a blue-white star, our atmosphere makes it shimmer in a multitude of colors.

So that is the story of the "Dog Star". Throw on some warm clothes and join us at the Observatory some Saturday night this month, and watch the Greater Dog chase Orion.

P.S. Don't forget the Lunar Eclipse on the 20th of this month. We will have more info on that at this month's meeting. Happy Viewing, Mike Thomas

January Minutes

Mike Thomas opened the January WNAS meeting at 7:00 PM. The meeting covered safety procedures for opening the Observatory roof. Brian (Treasurer) was absent and will update the membership on WNAS account numbers in February. Members talked briefly about the departure of Comet Holmes from our part of the Solar System.

Jack Davis updated those present with the Board of Director's efforts to obtain and post emergency numbers at the Observatory. These numbers include the college security office and the Buildings and Grounds on call person's cell number. This was so we can get assistance in the event of another incident, like the night the roof jammed in an open position.

Mike Thomas gave an excellent slideshow on the Great Auto Race of 1908!!

Next WNAS General Membership Meeting - Tuesday, February 19th @ 7:00 pm

February WNAS Membership Meeting GUEST SPEAKER!!

Planetary Geologist, Dr. Steve Gillett, will present "The Galilean Moons"

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Events Calendar

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
17		18	19 WNAS meeting at 7:00 pm	20 Lunar Eclipse, Full Moon	21	22	23 Star Party
24	Saturn at Opposition	25	26	27	28 Last Qtr Moon	29	1 Star Party
2	3	4	5	6	7 New Moon	8	Star Party, Dark Sky Night
9	10	11	12	13	14 First Qtr Moon	15	Star Party
16	17	18	19	20 Vernal Equinox	21	22	Star Party

February March



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