MHAA

Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association

March, 2025

Website: www.midhudsonastro.org

groups.io Group: mhaa.groups.io

President : Jack Chastain
Secretary: Jim Rockrohr
Newsletter Editor: Rick Versace
Publicity: Tim Denman
Speakers: Bart Henin

Vice President: Dave Sherman
Treasurer: Eric Myers
Membership Coordinator: TBD
Webmaster: Steve Dittmar
Outreach: Michael Goldstein
College Liaison: Dr. Amy Bartholomew

Directors: Alex Passas, Karl Loatman, Steve Dittmar, and Willie Yee

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The next meeting is March 18th, 2025, on Zoom and in person. Check MeetUp for details and link. Zoom link will be sent to all those that RSVP.

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March Speaker

"Pi-Finder"

Richard Wolff Jacobson will present a talk to the Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association and the public about his company's product called the Pi-Finder - a handy 'star navigation tool. The device is a small ingenious electronic device that attaches to any telescope and reads out how far and in which direction you need to move the scope to reach your desired target.

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Online link to the MHAA monthly Business Meeting Agenda:
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http://mhaa.midhudsonastro.org/agenda

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"Astronomy at Lake Taghkanic State Park"

http://spy-hill.net/myers/astro/ltsp/

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Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Mid Hudson Astronomical Association, February 18, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by President Jack Chastain in the Coykendall Auditorium at SUNY New Paltz, NY, and on the online application Zoom.

The minutes of the January meeting as published in the newsletter were passed unanimously.

Officer's Reports:

President: Jack Chastain was present.
- Nothing to report.

Vice President: Dave Sherman was present.
- Nothing to report.

Recording Secretary: Jim Rockrohr was present.
- Nothing to report.

Publicity: Tim Denman was present.
- Nothing to report.

Newsletter: Rick Versace was not present.
- (No report).

Treasurer: Eric Myers was present.
- See newsletter for latest numbers. We are doing fine; we have a significant surplus.
- Per the Bylaws the 2025 budget will be presented this month. See below.

Outreach: Mike Goldstein was present.
- **Olana star party** on 1/31/2025 was great. They would like to schedule more, especially one that would appeal to kids.

Speakers: Bart Henin was present.
- March: "PiFinder"
- Others booked through May. Working on June and July.

Membership: Eric Myers (acting) was present
- See newsletter for details.
- Needs someone to take over this job since the web application is up and running.
- The web version is working well.

Solar System Ambassador: Willie Yee was present.
- Nothing to report.

Webmaster: Steve Dittmar was present

- Do we want to have a lifetime membership category? Do we want one?
- Calendar still needs work (see the January Newsletter).

Old Business:

- **Olana** was a successful star party.
    - There were 7 club members present
- **Last club star party** – about 6 cars. Short meeting before clouds rolled in.

New Business:

- **Next Club Star Party** this Friday, 2/21. Be sure to RSVP.
- Updating **list of club equipment** on the web site.
    - If you have something, let Steve know and include pictures, if possible.
- Watching **asteroid 2024 YR4** in the news.

Events:

- **Tivoli** looking for a star party in the "June-ish" time frame. See Jack.
- **Dutchess County Science Fair** on 4/5. Need judges. See Eric.

Budget Discussion: Eric Myers

- Presented Budget for 2025-26.
    - For comparison also showed 2024-25 budget and actual.
    - This year's actuals were $5,082.58 income and $3,252.27 expenses.
    - After discussion a motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to accept the budget as presented by Eric.
    - See the March Newsletter for details of new budget.
- Eric suggested the club buy an **S30 Seestar telescope and 2 tripods** for club use and loan to members.
    - Cost is estimated to be no more than $600.00
    - After discussion a motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to allocate $600 for this purpose. Eric will make the purchase.
- Eric also suggested we consider sponsoring a **telescope lending library program**.
    - Buy another Seestar and loan it to local libraries for them to loan out.
    - We would train library people in its use.
    - If the library likes the program they could buy their own telescope and we would loan ours to another library.
    - After discussion a motion was made, seconded and approved to table this item for now.
- There was a suggestion for the club to buy and install a **weather station at Lake Taghkanic State Park**.
    - This could be linked to an online weather App such as Weather Underground and be available to the public.
    - Need discussion with Park Service.
    - Estimated cost is $400 to $1000.
    - After discussion a motion was made, seconded and approved to also table this item for now.

Reminders:

- Paid members get access to club equipment (telescopes, imagers, trackers) and club DVD/VHS video library.
    1. See the website or Jack for a list of available items.
- Paid members can also get access to the club Slack channels. Contact Jack or Eric for access.

Observing Reports:

- (None reported)

The business meeting was adjourned at 8:11 PM. There were 19 Zoom windows open at the end of the business meeting and approximately 18 people were in the auditorium. **The next meeting is March 18th, 2025, on Zoom and in person. Check MeetUp for details and link. Zoom link will be sent to all those that RSVP.**

The presentation that followed was by member Mike Goldstein: "Dark Skies in the Mid-Hudson Valley and Catskills."

Submitted by James Rockrohr, March 14, 2025.

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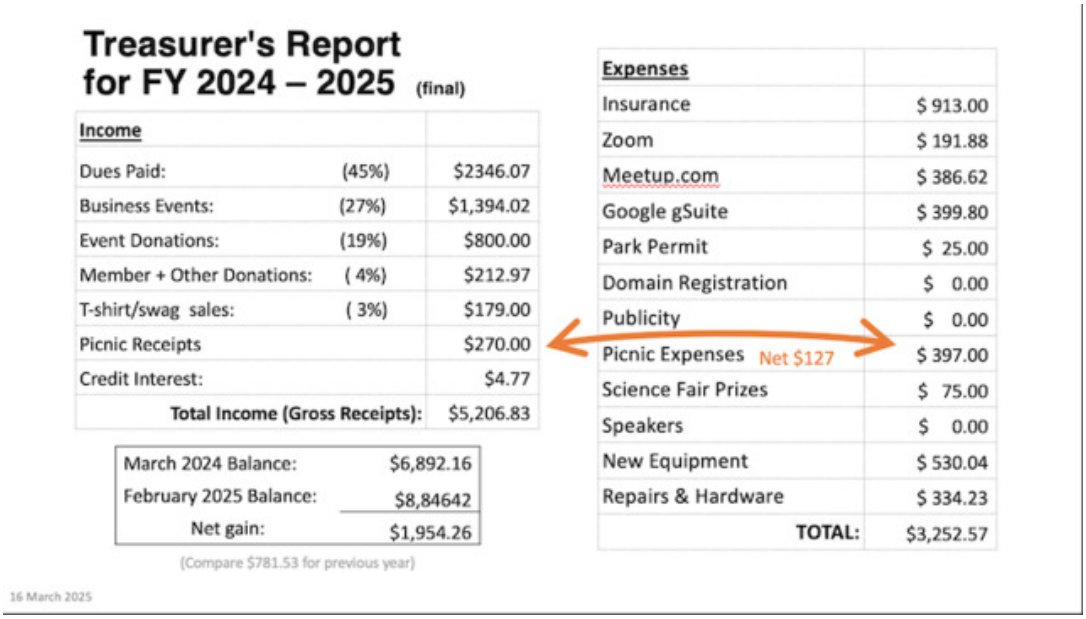
MHAA Treasurer's Report for March 2025

As of 16 March 2025 we have $5,932.17 in our bank account and $3,014.72 in our PayPal account, with the Treasurer holding $50.00 in petty cash. Our monthly payment for Google gSuite on the first of the month was again $31.14, and we paid $15.99 on the 15th for Zoom Pro for one month.

Since the previous meeting we took in $198.40 in dues for 8 renewing members and $123.00 for 5 new members.

The new fiscal year for the club began on March 1st, 2025. The final financial report for the previous year is presented here:



Treasurer's Report for FY 2024 – 2025 (final)

Income		
Dues Paid:	(45%)	$2346.07
Business Events:	(27%)	$1,394.02
Event Donations:	(19%)	$800.00
Member + Other Donations:	(4%)	$212.97
T-shirt/swag sales:	(3%)	$179.00
Picnic Receipts		$270.00
Credit Interest:		$4.77
Total Income (Gross Receipts):		$5,206.83

March 2024 Balance:	$6,892.16
February 2025 Balance:	$8,84642
Net gain:	$1,954.26

(Compare $781.53 for previous year)

Expenses	
Insurance	$ 913.00
Zoom	$ 191.88
Meetup.com	$ 386.62
Google gSuite	$ 399.80
Park Permit	$ 25.00
Domain Registration	$ 0.00
Publicity	$ 0.00
Picnic Expenses Net $127	$ 397.00
Science Fair Prizes	$ 75.00
Speakers	$ 0.00
New Equipment	$ 530.04
Repairs & Hardware	$ 334.23
TOTAL:	$3,252.57

16 March 2025

Respectfully Submitted,
Eric Myers
Treasurer

MHAA Membership Report for March 2025

As of 16 March 2025 the club has 108 members in good standing, of which 3 are students Since the last report there have been 8 membership renewals, and 5 new members has joined us. Despite attempts to get everybody moved into the database on the new website, one of those renewing members had not yet been moved over. Hopefully there are no more like that, but it's easily corrected when discovered.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eric Myers
Acting Membership Coordinator

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March's Night Sky Notes: Messier Maddness

By Kate Troche

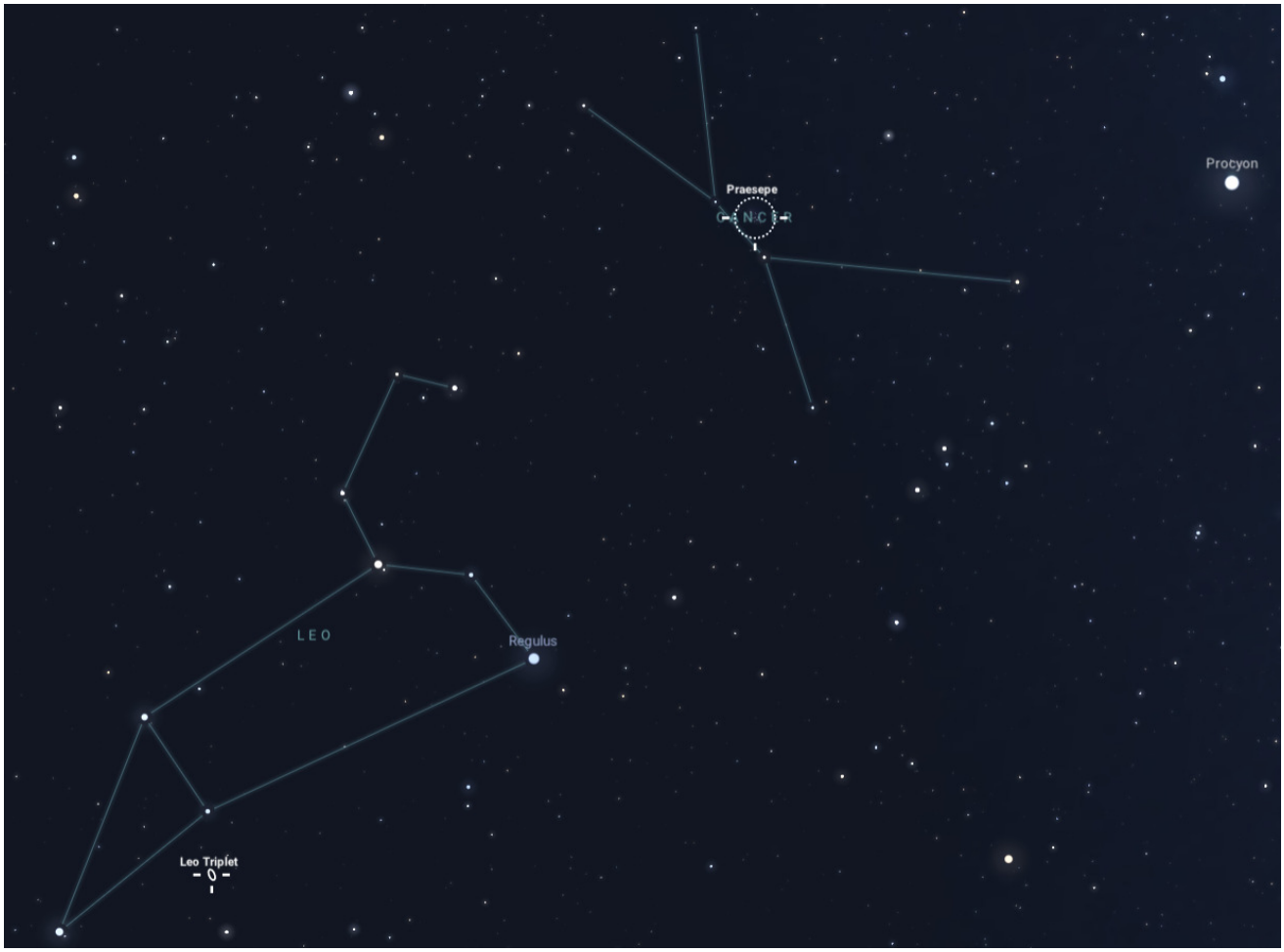
March is the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere; with that, the hunt for Messier objects can begin!

Showing a large portion of M66, this Hubble photo is a composite of images obtained at visible and infrared wavelengths. The images have been combined to represent the real colors of the galaxy. Credit: NASA, ESA and the Hubble Heritage (STScI/AURA)-ESA/Hubble Collaboration; Acknowledgment: Davide De Martin and Robert Gendler

What Are Messier Objects?

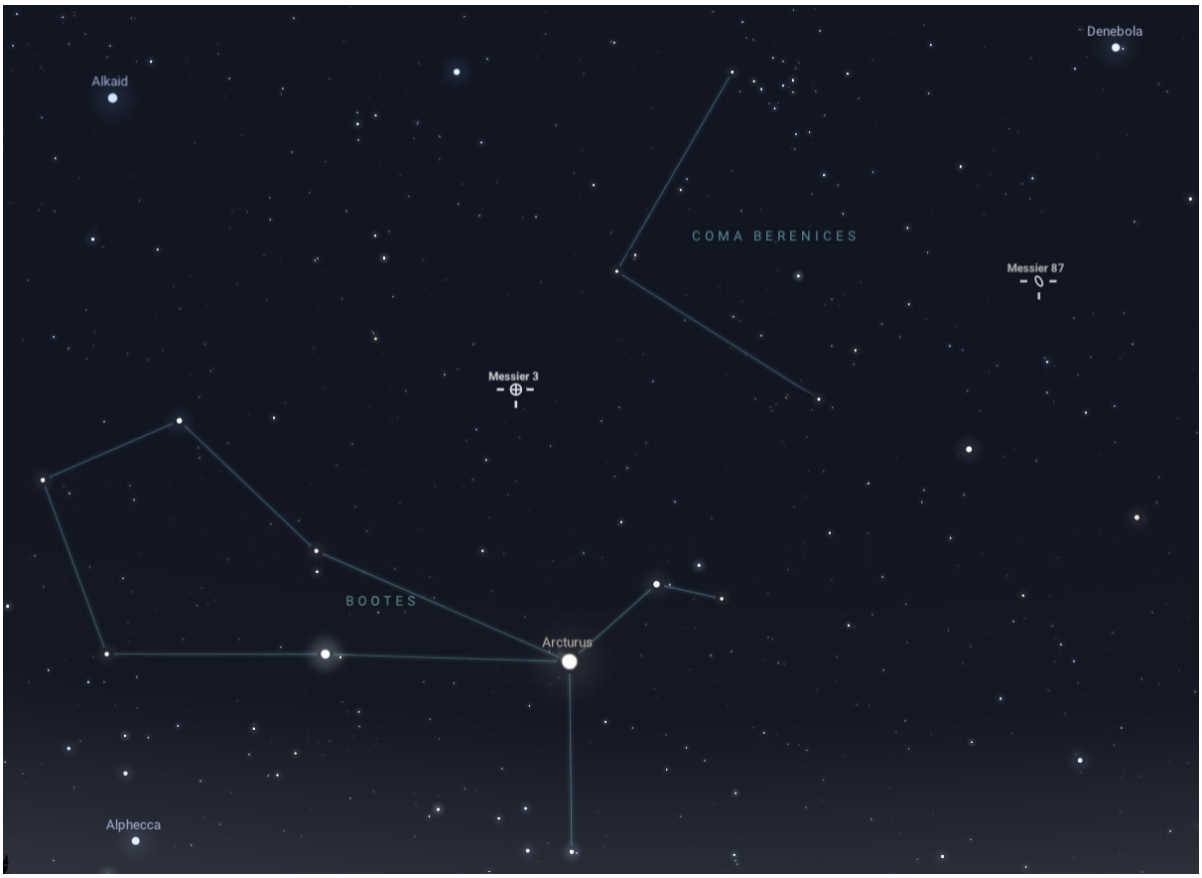
During the 18th century, astronomer and comet hunter Charles Messier wanted to distinguish the 'faint fuzzies' he observed from any potential new comets. As a result, Messier cataloged 110 objects in the night sky, ranging from star clusters to galaxies to nebulae. These items are designated by the letter "**M**" and a number. For example, the Orion Nebula is **Messier 42** or **M42**, and the Pleiades are **Messier 45** or **M45**. These are among the brightest 'faint fuzzies' we can see with modest backyard telescopes and some even with our eyes.

Stargazers can catalog these items on evenings closest to the new moon. Some even go as far as having "Messier Marathons," setting up their telescopes and binoculars in the darkest skies available to them, from sundown to sunrise, to catch as many as possible. Here are some items to look for this season:



M44 in Cancer and M65 and 66 in Leo can be seen high in the evening sky 60 minutes after sunset. Credit: Stellarium Web

Messier 44 in Cancer: The Beehive Cluster, also known as Praesepe, is an open star cluster in the heart of the Cancer constellation. Use Pollux in Gemini and Regulus in Leo as guide stars. A pair of binoculars is enough to view this and other open star clusters. If you have a telescope handy, pay a visit two of the three galaxies that form the Leo Triplet - **M65** and **M66**. These items can be seen one hour after sunset in dark skies.



Locate M3 and M87 rising in the east after midnight. Credit: Stellarium Web

Messier 3 Canes Venatici: M3 is a globular cluster of 500,000 stars. Through a telescope, this object looks like a fuzzy sparkly ball. You can resolve this cluster in an 8-inch telescope in moderate dark skies. You can find this star cluster by using the star Arcturus in the Boötes constellation as a guide.

Messier 87 in Virgo: Located just outside of Markarian's Chain, M87 is an elliptical galaxy that can be spotted during the late evening hours. While it is not possible to view the supermassive black hole at the core of this galaxy, you can see M87 and several other Messier-labeled galaxies in the Virgo Cluster using a medium-sized telescope.

Locate M76 and M31 setting in the west, 60 minutes after sunset. Credit: Stellarium Web

Messier 76 in Perseus: For a challenge, spot the Little Dumbbell Nebula, a planetary nebula between the Perseus and Cassiopeia constellations. With an apparent magnitude of 12.0, you will need a large telescope and dark skies. You can find both M76 and the famous Andromeda Galaxy (M31) one hour after sunset, but only for a limited time, as these objects disappear after April. They will reappear in the late-night sky by September.

Plan Ahead

When gearing up for a long stargazing session, there are several things to remember, such as equipment, location, and provisions:

- **Do you have enough layers to be outdoors for several hours?** You would be surprised how cold it can get when sitting or standing still behind a telescope!
- **Are your batteries fully charged?** If your telescope runs on power, be sure to charge everything before you leave home and pack any additional batteries for your cell phone. Most people use their mobile devices for astronomy apps, so their batteries may deplete faster. Cold weather can also impact battery life.
- Determine the **apparent magnitude** of what you are trying to see and the **limiting magnitude** of your night sky. You can learn more about apparent and limiting magnitudes with our Check Your Sky Quality with Orion article.
- When choosing a location to observe from, select an area you are familiar with and bring some friends! You can also **connect with your local astronomy club** to see if they are hosting any Messier Marathons. It's always great to share the stars!

You can see all 110 items and their locations with NASA's Explore the Night Sky interactive map and the Hubble Messier Catalog, objects that have been imaged by the Hubble Space Telescope.

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Star Party Schedule

Date	Arrival Time	Civil Dusk
Mar 28 2025	7:00 PM	19:44 EDT
Apr 25 2025	7:30 PM	20:17 EDT
May 23 2025	8:00 PM	20:49 EDT
Jun 20 2025	8:30 PM	21:08 EDT
Jul 25 2025	8:30 PM	20:53 EDT
Aug 22 2025	7:30 PM	20:14 EDT
Sep 19 2025	7:00 PM	19:25 EDT
Oct 17 2025	6:00 PM	18:38 EDT
Nov 21 2025	4:30 PM	16:59 EST

Directions To The Star Party Site

Lake Taghkanic State Park is in the town Ancram, NY. The park entrance is on the Taconic Parkway 10 minutes north of the exit used for Wilcox park.

Star Parties at Lake Taghanic are held in the West Parking lot, next to the beach. The skies are darker than in Wilcox, with less stray light to deal with. The horizon is also much lower, especially to the south and east, making many more targets possible.

IMPORTANT: all events at Lake Taghkanic State Park require an **RSVP** which includes license plate number of the car you are bringing (please do so via Meetup). The park is patrolled by state police, and all non registered cars will be ticketted and risk our use of the park.

General Information:

- Dates listed for star parties are the primary dates. The rain date is the following night unless otherwise noted. Only one session is held for a given weekend, usually on the primary date, Friday, unless postponed (usually due to inclement weather) to the backup date, Saturday. Exceptions to this are noted in the "Scheduled Events" section above.
- All outdoor events are FREE! All are welcome. If you bring small children, it is **your** responsibility to keep a close eye on them. Please do not bring white-light flashlights. Instead, bring a red astronomer's flashlight or an ordinary flashlight covered with several layers of red cellophane. If in doubt about the weather, check the status of the event at www.midhudsonastro.org.