Comet Hale-Bopp, March 6, 1997. Hypered Tech Pan, 5 minutes 8 inch f/1.5 Schmidt, Dan Laszlo

The Objective View
Newsletter of the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society
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Meetings first Thursday of each Month
Next Meeting: April 3, 1997 Discovery Center, Fort Collins
"The Universe' Missing Mass," by Ken VanLew
** Bring your scopes to share comet views, 7-7:30 pm, IF ITS CLEAR **

April 3 NCAS Meeting Directions
Discovery Center, 703 E Prospect Rd, Fort Collins
From Loveland go North on US 287 to Prospect Rd in Fort Collins, go East about 0.5 miles. Look for the Discovery Center sign on the South side of the street.
From I-25, take Exit 268, head West into Fort Collins. Continue past Lemay Ave about 0.5 miles and see the Discovery Center on the left.

Next NCAS Starparty
April 5: Pawnee Grasslands
Take Colorado Hwy 14 East from I-25. At 17 miles East of Ault, just after milepost 170, take Road 65 (dirt) North one mile. At the curve West, stop. Go through the gate on the right (no road), close gate and set up on the prairie. There are no facilities, and beware of the cactus!
Call Gerry Reynolds with questions about the star party status, site or dates, 226-0705, or Email gerry@fc.hp.com.

NCAS Events, from Randy Moench, Vice President
April 3  Ken VanLew, The Universe' Missing Mass
May 1    John Lamprey
June 5   Tom Teters

Recent Events
March 6 Meeting: Enjoying Comet Hale-Bopp
by Dan Laszlo
A gift of the Larousse Encyclopedia of Astronomy in the 6th grade sparked Dan's interest in skywatching. The chapter on comets featured dramatic illustrations of great comets, with tails arching across the sky, and complex head structure. It seemed like great comets were a fixture of the past, and Halley's comet offered the only promise in the future, over 15 years away. Over the years since, Comet West in 1976 was the only truly spectacular comet. Since such fine comets are so rare, Dan challenged everyone to take advantage of every chance to see Comet Hale-Bopp. Great comet or not, it is making a superb show. It is like lesser comets in most respects, composed mostly of ices and dust, displaying a dust tail and an ion tail as it approached the inner solar system. It is unique as the most distant of comets discovered by amateurs, further from the Sun than Jupiter in July 1995. It was recognized as an interloper among the globular clusters of Sagittarius during casual observing by Alan Hale and Thomas Bopp. It is unusually large, with a 25 mile nucleus. Its size and distance at discovery favored predictions of an excellent show. Dan demonstrated a bubbling, misting cocktail of water and dry ice, and recruited volunteers to play the sun, inner planet and a comet in its eccentric orbit. He encouraged viewing, whether by eye, binoculars, or telescope. Viewers were encouraged to sketch their views. Photography tips included seeking a dark site, selecting sensitive film, ISO 1000 or higher, and trying a series of exposures. He passed around a simple "barn-door" star tracker constructed of 2x4's, a hinge, and a long bolt. He also showed a telephoto lens piggybacked on a telescope with clock drive. He then showed a series of slides illustrating views of the comet with a normal camera lens, a 300 mm telephoto, and an 8 inch Schmidt camera. Favorite film for most photos was Kodak Ektachrome Professional P1600 ( EPH ). Others have successfully used Kodak Royal Gold 1000, Fuji Super G 800, Kodak PPF and Professional P1600 ( EPH ). Others have successfully used Favorite film for most photos was Kodak Ektachrome Professional P1600 ( EPH ). Others have successfully used Kodak Royal Gold 1000, Fuji Super G 800, Kodak PPF and Professional P1600 ( EPH ).

Executive Committee Meeting March 13
Brad Jarvis, Doug Moench, and Dan Laszlo met. Tom Moench presented advice on improvements in club bylaws, regarding rules for expenditures, terms of officers, and the timing of dues collection. Articles of Incorporation are ready (Thanks, Doug!). Copies of these will be available for your input at the April meeting. Jamie MacArthur demonstrated a 10 inch Telekit at the March meeting, and a poll of members at the meeting favored purchase of the kit for the club scope. Fundraising for this was discussed. Scope payments can be made over 6 months. Your officers recommend a dues increase to $15 a year, and donations are welcome. Per our bylaws, a formal vote on these items is planned for the May 1 general meeting. Any other fundraising ideas are welcome. The Little Thompson Observatory at Berthoud High School was announced, and NCAS members are invited to assist. It will have an 18 inch Tinsley Cassegrain, with telescope automation by Tom Melsheimer.

Best Looks
Moon    Near Jupiter Apr 3
        Thin crescent eve of Apr 7
Venus   Aldebaran occultation Apr 10 2246 MDT
Mercury Low in W, eves
Mars     Solar glare; Superior conjunction Apr 2
Jupiter Low in SE, am
Saturn   Very low in SE, dawn, end of April

Comet Hale-Bopp is superb over the Front Range. Find a dark Northwestern sky for the best comet views through April 8. After then, when the Moon begins to interfere with the fainter parts of the comet, try for telescope views of the complex coma. Closest approach to Earth was Mar 22, closest approach to the Sun is night of March 31. Take every chance to look, sketch, photograph with a barn door tracker:

Simple star tracker platform. Attach camera with a tripod head or backpacker minipod clamp. Mount platform on a tripod with the 1/4 - 20 teennut in the middle. Try ISO 1000 to 3200 film, 50 mm lens, f/2 to f/4, exposures 1 to 10 minutes. For more information see Sky and Telescope, October and November 1985.

From:
c/o Dan Laszlo