

Astronomy



Bob Allen, a writer for the Daily Non-Pareil, spoke at the Optimist Club about astronomy. Bob is retired, but has worked for the ski patrol at Crescent since 1975 and as a Red Cross volunteer for 35 years. He is a member of the Astronomical Society, which meets the first Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Durham Science Center at UNO.

Bob Allen started looking at the stars at age 14. He is now 75. There is always something new to see. He writes about things you can see in the sky without a telescope. He has a 6" reflecting telescope. It has a clock drive to follow objects in the sky. The other type of telescope is a refracting one. Bob recommends buying a telescope based on the optics, not on the magnification power. A good telescope will not deteriorate over time.

Bob has a wealth of knowledge about the stars. The sun is a star. A curious phenomena this year is the absence of sun spots, even though we are in a solar maximum where they should be most prevalent. In Council Bluffs you can see 1500-2000 stars. Away from the city lights you can see 50,000 stars. With his telescope he can see one million stars.

There are 88 constellations recognized by the Astronomical Association. 54 of them can be seen in

this part of the country. Only five constellations can be seen here throughout the entire year.

The brightest star in the Northern hemisphere is Sirius. It is directly overhead in September. Sirius resides in the constellation Canis Major, the Big Dog, and is commonly called the Dog Star. In ancient Greek times the dawn rising of Sirius marked the hottest part of summer. This is the origin of the phrase "dog days of summer."

The Space Station travels across the sky at 17,000 miles/hour. The Hubble telescope is 385 miles from the earth. Earth is 33 light years from the center of the Milky Way.