

January 17, 2004

Pawnee Grasslands

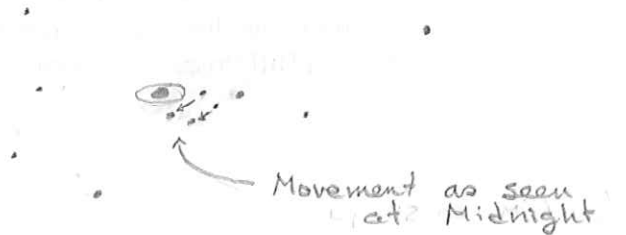
Arrived mid-afternoon. Setup everything and waited. High clouds were all over the sky. There was a high haze at sunset. It is already cold. There is a thin cloud haze circling all about the horizon.

Venus was bright. Almost a full disk.

5:30 PM. Slight wind from west.

Mars is a small disk, bright and red. A far cry from Mars of last August.

Saturn was crisp and awesome all night. 10 moons seen around the planet. Bands easily seen on disk and even around the polar region. Saw Saturn thru Gary's scope and these views were awesome. A pretty shading from inner edge of ring to Cassini's Division was nice. Never seen this before.



NGC 2403 6:22 PM



Low brightness. Large. Appears more circular than oval. Two field stars bound it on top right and bottom left. These stars are on top of the outer edge of the halo with one more field star in it, but is much fainter than the other two. Easy to see in the FOV though.

NGC 1961 6:33 PM

Very faint small oval smudge of light. Easy to see with AV. 2 maybe 3 VERY faint stars on top of this glow. Book said was faint and use AV and that is what I saw.

Comet C/2002 T7 6:39 PM

Bright fuzzy ball. Nucleus starts out bright and dims slowly into large coma. This was in Gary's 25 inch f/5 at 20mm. Appears to be lopsided on the right side of the nucleus. By midnight, noticed it moved with respect to the two stars.



Movement of nucleus
at Midnight

NGC 2655 6:40 PM Small, dim circular glow with a stellar point nucleus and the rest is the halo, which is uniformly lit.

Sky is steady and clear. It is awesome, what one dreams of having. Its really good right now. Stars are clear, crisp and steady.

6:49 PM Split Rigel easily into a double. See a 6 stars of trapezium easily. M42 is awesome as always.

NGC 1904 7:53 PM Small and dim yet easy to see. Brighter nucleus dims evenly into halo. Member stars easily seen. Small and compact. Class 2.

The Winter Milky Way is bright and awesome. Goes from SSE to NNW.

NGC 2419 8:10 PM Small, dim, circular uniformly lit smudge of light. Saw in David Dunn's 16 inch. Class 3. Called the Galactic Tramp.

NGC 2359 8:38 PM Thor's Helmet. Glowing gas forms this shape. Later in the evening, had lost this contrast and was not this easy to see. Saw in Bill Possel's 14 inch.




IC 342 9:02 PM Small, dim smudge of light. Bright stellar nucleus in center of the glow. 2 field stars on glow, left and right of center. Row of stars bounds the bottom.



Tried to find G1 in Andromedia. Couldn't see it. Also notices that the GC in Columba and Hol were about 5 degrees below the horizon. Too bad. Need to go further south to get these few above the horizon. Also tried to find the Eridanus cluster and didn't see it at all. Was in the correct part of the sky though.

Views of Saturn thru Gary's 25 inch awesome. Crisp and clear. See another brown band around polar region of top of planet's disk. There is a nice shading at the inner edge of the ring. Can tell there is something that is localized extending in just a bit into the bright ring. Cassini's Division is jet black.

NGC 2693 9:18 PM Very small, dim smudge of light with a bright stellar nucleus.

- | | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| NGC 2112 | 9:33 PM | Very large in 19mm but real dim. Approx 8 stars much brighter than the rest which are VERY dim yet most can easily be seen on top of their combined glow. Many dim stars makeup this OC. |
| NGC 2309 | 9:41 PM | 8 or so bright blue-white stars on top of a small, compact glow. These 8 stars match in magnitude of other stars in the area, which may also be part of this OC, but I think it's the glow underneath these 8 stars that is the OC I am looking for. |
| NGC 2182 | 9:54 PM | Many bright stars in the area have a halo around them yet you move a bit more away from this area and the halo around the stars are gone. This halo was quite noticeable. |
| NGC 2254 | 9:58 PM | 10-20 dime, same magnitude stars form this OC. Loose and large association of stars. 8 stars in the center of cluster forms a crescent shape. I would not have noticed this crescent shape if I had not read it in the guide. Once noted, I could see it but could have easily been overlooked. |
| NGC 2252 | 10:16 PM | 23+ stars forms a comma shape on its back with the long tail moving off to the right. These were bright, blue-white stars. Easy to see in the surrounding star field. |
| | |  |
| NGC 2302 | 10:50 PM | Approx 20 bright blue-white stars makeup this large, loose OC. Approx 8 stars on 4 o'clock side for a tighter grouping of stars than the rest. |
| NGC 2245 | 10:58 PM | Nebulosity around a bright, yellow colored star. |
| Mel 111 | 11:06 PM | This guy was naked eye. Used the 20x80 binoculars and it overwhelmed the field of view with bright, blue-white stars. Use the 7x35 and the cluster nicely filled FOV. This is a VERY loose association that forms a triangular shape, with the base across the top and it is then pointing down. There were about 5-8 more stars of the same magnitude and color streaming off to the lower right of the triangle point which are probably part of this cluster also. |

Was a beautiful night. Spent the rest of the evening visiting and looking through every else's scope. There were about 10 people here tonight, and 7 scopes. Some people left by

11:00 PM, Bill and David left about 2:00 AM. I went to be about 1:00 AM and woke up to a heavy fog that deposited a thick frost on everything. It was about 20 degrees most of the observing night and probably got into single digits before sunrise. It was cold, even in the sleeping bag.