

Be Vewy, Vewy Quiet... We are Hunting Constewations!

By Brian R. Martin

Perhaps you've been to a star party or other congregation of fellow astronomers and noticed some of them sporting various pins on their hats and lapels. The odds are good that those pins are indicative that the wearer has completed one of the Astronomical League's Observing Clubs! Perhaps one of these clubs has caught your interest and you're interested in completing it. Perhaps, like me, you've tried and didn't get very far in the past. The good news is that you don't have to start with a hard one.



What you need is the Constellation Hunter club! According to the Astronomical League's description, "The purpose of these programs is to provide an orientation to the sky for novice astronomers. They require no special equipment (other than a planisphere and a reference for the brighter star names), and no prior knowledge. The objective is to provide a forum for the novice observer to become more familiar with the constellations and brighter stars, to begin to learn to navigate among the stars, and to provide a solid foundation for moving on to other observation programs such as the Messier Club." For further details on the requirements for completing the club, refer to the Club web page at <http://www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/consthunt/const.html> There you will find a checklist of the constellations and a description of what needs to be done. The primary goal is to sketch the constellation and identify the named stars and objects within its boundaries.

Towards the goal of having as many NEKAAL members as are interested be able to complete the club, we are going to help each other, weather permitting, on NEKAAL club observing weekends and open house nights at Farpoint. In addition, a form has been

prepared that contains everything you need to complete for each constellation. You will find it on the Yahoo Group site under Files > Resources entitled Observing Sheet.pdf . Print as many as you need and bring them to Farpoint, along with a red light, your favorite folding chair and a good surface to sketch on (clipboard, binder or your favorite sky atlas?) As a group, we'll be identifying the constellations and helping each other sketch and identify the stars within them.