Date: 2006 February 25

Time: ~20.00 -> 02.30

Location: Ekerö, Sweden

Temperature: -5°C.

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Observation report #13

This night I had the chance to finally try my new Meade LXD-75 N6 with Autostar out. I just hoped that the optics were good and that the mount would be working fine (with GOTO and all stuff). So, together with Leif I set the scope up and did a very fast polar align. I set up the autostar controller, did the 2-star align and entered Saturn as my first object to slew to. With a 8mm eyepiece it was within the field of view, so the goto seemed to work well. The stars looked very bright and pinpoint so everything was just like it was supposed to be.

After that, I helped Leif set up his huge 12" LX200, which as long as he wants to set up it in ALT-AZ, is not so hard to do. Another thing is when we will start to set up that monster on the superwedge ☹ After that, I slewed around at various objects testing the GOTO and it was always in the FOV of the eyepiece. One object I honestly never had heard of was the double cluster (NGC 884 and NGC 869). They together are truly a magnificant view, and with this short focal length of the telescope (760mm) I could get them both up in the same field of view. For those of you that had not seen this double cluster yet, you don't know what you are missing. I'm really amazed that no-one actually has never told me about this wonderful double cluster. I was so amazed about the view that I went into the house to get my girlfriend (which was watching TV, she doesn't share my interest of the heavens ☺) just so she could see it. The double cluster looked great both in the 6" newtonian and Leifs 12" schmidt. Watching thru the 12" with a 31mm UWA and f/0.63 FL reducer made it feel like watching thru a spaceships window. I just wish it could be possible to get a picture of how it is excactly looking thru the eyepiece, it would be neat.

M13 (First read DSO image ever) captured with a DSI and a LXD75 6 inch newtonian. One exposure (around 10 sec).

I finished of the evening with trying out the DSI for the first time. The first object I tried to image was (of course) the double cluster. At first I could not get any decent picture on the screen, trying all various exposure settings for the LIVE-exposure. Then Leif came up with the brilliant idea that I maybe should try to focus ☺ Well, that pretty much fixed everything, and after a few minutes I were off taking my firsts (real) deepsky images. With the small CCD of the camera, it was impossible to get both clusters on the CCD. I however managed to get a picture that at least showed the cluster. It was not however nothing more than it showed a couple of stars. After that I (or the computer) slewed to M13. When I had the cluster on the CCD I captured some frames and saved them to disk. The color balance was way off (I've however now know how to get the colours right), the focus and tracking are not either the best in the world but at least it was my first step in deepsky imaging.

As a great final Leif slewed to Sombrero galaxy (as we both thought was only visible from the Southern hemisphere), and even with a 12" telescope it was just a VEEERY dim elongated lightstrim. But that didn't matter, as I knew I was watching a galaxy which was 28 million light years away from me and which I thought was impossible to see from these altitudes. It was so

low in the horizon we both were barely able to distinct it from the surrounding space. And just minutes before we would start packing everything down Leif said "Hey! Isn't that the Zeh Jupiteh!??" (making silly french translations to everything, he meant Jupiter). And there it was, the first time I saw it in many many years. I knew that the air was not perfect (though the transperancy was perfect) so we pretty much didn't see anything more than a boiling ball with the 12" SCT. But still, it was nice to see the great giant.

This truly was a great night which I had been waiting for, for a long time!