



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

January 2021

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



Low light at the Ritz-Carlton Bacara before a club outreach.  
Photo credit: Tom Totton.

### OUTREACH SUMMARY

Because of the ongoing pandemic, there was no public telescope outreach in December. Please stay safe and healthy by wearing masks, washing your hands frequently, and practicing physical distancing.

### OUTREACH EVENTS

The SBAU radio hour on KZSB 1290 AM at 9 AM on the second and fourth Monday of each month will continue as a phone-in show, thanks to the dedication of Baron Ron Herron. Otherwise, there will be no SBAU meetings, public telescope outreach, or school events.

On Wednesday, January 13 at noon, the Science & Engineering Council will be having an online meeting and Q&A with a speaker from JPL on the Perseverance rover and future Mars missions. The meeting will be free. Check <https://www.scieng.org> for the Zoom link.

### THE SKY FOR JANUARY

This will be a quiet month for astronomy, but the long nights are perfect for backyard observing and bright Winter constellations. At 5:51 AM PST on Saturday, January 2, the Earth will be at perihelion, its closest point to the Sun in its orbit. This is also

the time when we are moving the fastest in our orbit, so the daylight will seem to lengthen rapidly as we head into the new year and toward Spring. There is definitely light at the end of the tunnel - better days are ahead. Be mindful, stay healthy, and get vaccinated when you can.

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jerry Wilson

The year 2020 has been a difficult and challenging year for all. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been financial, emotional, and certainly around physical health. Though the SBAU has temporarily suspended our in-person public outreach events, we have found ways to safely continue our outreach and education mission.

In November, we re-launched the weekly Tuesday Telescope Workshop. We get together on Zoom, 7:30 to 9:00 pm., with the use of an account generously shared by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. We start out with a couple of planned topics and always welcome questions from members or the community. If you would like to join us, please go to the website [www.sbau.org](http://www.sbau.org) where you will find the webmaster's contact information. See you "there!"

Other ways to stay connected to learning about astronomy and being involved with SBAU include an opportunity to listen to a semi-monthly radio show on the second and fourth Monday of each month from 9:00 to 10:00 am on station KZSB (AM 1290.) Chuck McPartlin, Tom Totton, Bruce Murdock, Tom Whittemore, and I (Jerry Wilson) gather remotely, but on-air, to talk about astronomy topics, including cosmology, physics, and astrophysics, as well current events such as the missions to Mars with landings planned for February 2021. Ron Herron, our Vice-President, a radio personality in town and known to many as the Baron Ron Herron, is the radio host and keeps us all on topic!

Chuck McPartlin, in his role as SBAU Outreach Coordinator, has been involved with the local school districts, providing a tele-outreach through videos and presentations. Chuck always develops a compelling and interesting way to inspire the interest of his audience.

Major events this year that sparked followers' interest included the NEOWISE comet in June, as well as the more recent Jupiter and Saturn conjunction, along with the spectacular Geminid meteor shower.

We were fortunate to have excellent weather conditions for all three events. Images taken of these events and many others, in fact virtually everything we do, are linked to our website by our resident photojournalist and webmaster, Tom Totton.

We continue to be contacted by people for advice and information about telescopes, purchasing, observing, imaging and various aspects of astronomy. We were pleased to learn that a high school science teacher, who now resides in the Bay Area, purchased a Meade LX90 8" telescope recommended by Paul Winn to use in the classroom. To honor Paul's memory the telescope is named "Winny." Paul's legacy of being a deeply informed expert, as well as a person who enjoyed sharing information and knowledge with others, continues.

As we enter 2021, human space exploration has entered an exciting new chapter with several credible plans for return to the Moon and a colony on Mars, in addition to new frontiers to be achieved in astronomy and astrophysics. We're optimistic about the many developments that we will be able to witness, learn about, and share with the community.

We look forward to gathering together again, when possible. In the meantime, stay safe and wear a mask.

#### FROM JOHN BOYD...

I received Chuck's email regarding outreach, and he suggested that we could let the members know that the new Solar Cycle is ramping up...even with a new sunspot this week. Since we are all in quarantine, members with solar filters, and H-Alpha

scopes, can get in some good viewing. The sunspot activity seems to be dominant in the southern hemisphere of the Sun at the beginning of this cycle (Cycle 25). Here are some pics I've taken over the months during quarantine.



#### ARTS CORNER

Miss Murphy in first grade wrote its name in chalk across the board and told us it was roaring down the stormtracks of the Milky Way at frightful speed and if it wandered off its course

and smashed into the earth  
there'd be no school tomorrow.  
A red-bearded preacher from the hills  
with a wild look in his eyes  
stood in the public square  
at the playground's edge  
proclaiming he was sent by God  
to save every one of us,  
even the little children.  
"Repent, ye sinners!" he shouted,  
waving his hand-lettered sign.  
At supper I felt sad to think  
that it was probably  
the last meal I'd share  
with my mother and my sisters;  
but I felt excited too  
and scarcely touched my plate.  
So mother scolded me  
and sent me early to my room.  
The whole family's asleep  
except for me. They never heard me steal  
into the stairwell hall and climb  
the ladder to the fresh night air.  
Look for me, Father, on the roof  
of the red brick building  
at the foot of Green Street –  
that's where we live, you know, on the top floor.  
I'm the boy in the white flannel gown  
sprawled on this coarse gravel bed  
searching the starry sky,  
waiting for the world to end.  
(Author unknown)



"You asked for it, Ron. I'll draw us up a Tic-Tac-Toe grid."  
Photo credit: Tom Totton.

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### AU annual membership rates:

**Single = \$20 Family = \$25**

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# The Astronomical Unit

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## January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 PERIHELION
3	4	5 ZOOM TELESCOPE WORKSHOP	6	7	8	9
10	11 TECH TALK KZSB (AM1290) 9-10 AM	12 ZOOM TELESCOPE WORKSHOP	13 SEC MARS ZOOM AT NOON	14	15	16
17	18	19 ZOOM TELESCOPE WORKSHOP	20	21	22	23
24	25 TECH TALK KZSB (AM1290) 9-10 AM	26 ZOOM TELESCOPE WORKSHOP	27	28	29	30
31						