



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

April 2005

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

April Meeting

The topic at our April meeting will be "Latest Results From The Spitzer Space Telescope." Dr. Luisa Rebull of the Spitzer Science Center (JPL/Caltech) will discuss some of the early results from the Spitzer Space Telescope (formerly known as SIRTf), NASA's fourth and final great observatory. Spitzer observes in infrared light, so the Universe it sees looks very different than what we (or Hubble) see in visible light. Spitzer studies very old and distant galaxies, very young nearby stars, and very dusty things all over the Universe (from nearby comets to distant dusty galaxies).

March Outreach

Since the last report, even with drippy and gloomy skies, AU volunteers Art Harris, Dale Lowdermilk, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, and Edgar Ocampo managed to show cool astronomy stuff to 427 customers.

April Events



A scene from last year's Astronomy Day at the SBMNH

Friday, April 1, 7:30 PM

Monthly meeting in Farrand Hall. Hear about the Spitzer Space Telescope.

Saturday / Sunday April 2 / 3 all night

2005 Messier Marathon and potluck dinner at the Gun Club. Extreme Astronomy at its best! This year, we lose an hour to the Daylight Saving Time change, so it's even tougher! We also get to see Jupiter at opposition, Comets Machholz and T4 LINEAR, and Mars in the morning sky. Chuck McPartlin will have the checklists for the Messier Marathon with a suggested order and finder charts / coordinates available at the April meeting and at the Gun Club the next evening.

Saturday, April 9, 7:30 PM

SBMNH monthly Public Star Party.

Saturday, April 9, all night Dark Sky.

Contact Joe Doyle or Paul Winn for details.

Tuesday, April 12, setup 5:30 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at Laguna Blanca School (San Ysidro Campus). We'll have the Moon and Jupiter even before dark.

Thursday, April 14, setup 7:30 PM

Telescopes for Hollister School.

Friday, Tax Day, 7:30 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College.

Saturday, April 16, 10 AM to 10 PM

Astronomy Day at SBMNH. We'll be set up with solar viewing, a telescope giveaway (to a child), astro garage sale, and information during the day, and a public observation in the evening.

Monday, April 25, setup 6 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at St. Raphael School.



Pat McPartlin and June Kelley at last year's Astronomy Day at the SBMNH

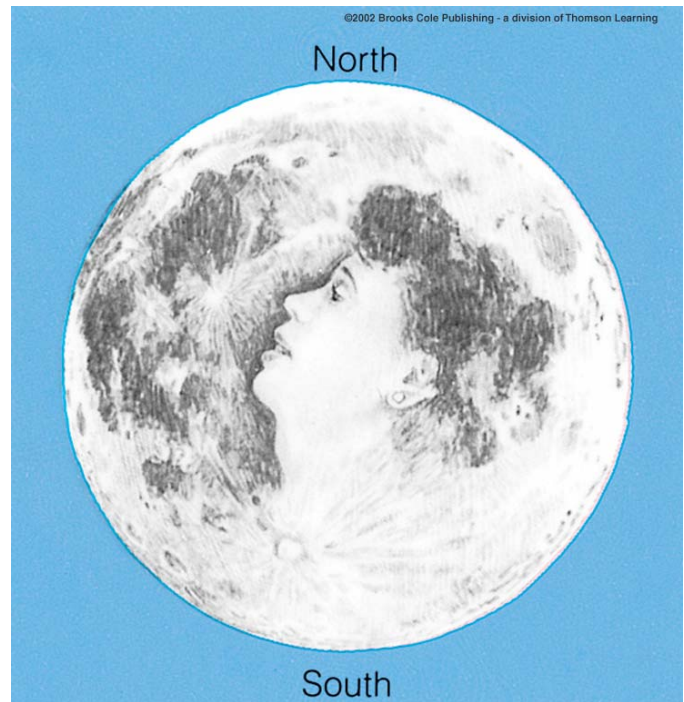
National Astronomy Day!

We're all getting excited for our biggest day of the year, National Astronomy Day. It's a great chance for local astronomy enthusiasts to come together and get the public engaged and involved in astronomy. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is thrilled to be cooperating with the AU and the Women's Environmental Watch again for yet another fantastic Astronomy Day here at the Museum.

We really appreciate all the support from the AU members. Imagine, if you will, Astronomy Day with the AU...you'd see Krissie in front of the Museum, trying to launch a set of pop rockets while showing people sunspots. Then you'd see her rushing off to hand out some flyers to passersby on her way to start the comet-making demonstration. If you stuck around long enough, you'd actually see her head explode as she screamed, "It's just too much astronomy for one person!"

The point is, we're so pleased to be able to continue to offer so many fun and educational booths, activities and demonstrations, and we couldn't do much without the AU. Last year the AU received honorable mention in Sky and Telescope's National Astronomy Day contest. Maybe 2005 is the year we'll make history and receive first place!

If you'd like to be involved in Astronomy Day, please contact an AU officer or Krissie. Many of you have already signed up to help in a variety of capacities, and we're grateful for your enthusiasm. See you on the 16th!



BEAUTIFUL MOON

by Nancy Rohrer

The night sky ever so dark
 In the East a bit of light
 Sliver of New Moon debarks
 Wonders of a beautiful sight.
 Miracles happen every month
 Moon starts as silver sliver
 And continues to grow
 'Til it reaches its gibbous.

Another few nights the moon
 Will grow to a round orb
 Silver bright he roams the sky
 Man sits comfortably inside.
 Moon has reached full Wane
 Time to start wax away in vain
 Moon gets smaller until
 Full circle silver sliver again.

What to do with the moon?
 Many myths have been told
 Years an object of wonder
 As it Waxes and Wanes.
 We cannot get along, or
 Would not exist with no moon
 Moon slowed Earth's rotation
 Stabilizes the Precession.
 Gives us our ocean tides
 And our calendar
 Most important
 Moon gives us beauty at night.



Spring is Here!

By the time this issue reaches your mailbox, spring will be upon us, having arrived promptly at 4:33 AM PST on Sunday, March 20, 2005. In Santa Barbara the change in the weather may be subtle, but for those of us who watch the skies, this is the season of the galaxies! At this time of the year the Milky Way peppers the horizon, so that when you look toward the zenith you are looking out of the plane of the galaxy we call home. Here comes Markarian's Chain of galaxies in Virgo, easily captured in an 8" optic. Further to the west are the two magnificent triplets of galaxies in Leo: M65, M66 and NGC 3628, a few degrees south of Theta Leonis; the other trio is located south of the belly of the lion: M95, M96, and M105. Can you detect a fainter galaxy, NGC 3384, only 8' east of M105? And who could forget the Big Dipper now hanging high in the spring sky? Near the bowl of the dipper is perhaps the finest galaxy pair in the heavens: M81 and M82.

By no means does the previous list exhaust the amazing variety of galaxies that you can see in the spring sky. But, they are waiting. So, turn your scope to the heavens and enjoy a true coming of spring!

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AU annual membership rates:


Single = \$15 **Family = \$25**

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April 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 AU Monthly Meeting	2 Messier Marathon 
3	4	5	6	7	8 	9 AU Planning Meeting/SBMNH Dark Sky/ Public Star Party
10	11	12 Laguna Blanca School	13	14 Hollister School	15 Westmont Public Observing	16 Astronomy Day at the SBMNH/ 10 am - 10 pm 
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 	25 St. Raphael School	26	27	28	29	30

The Astronomical Unit

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