



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

August 2006

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### Outreach Summary

Since the last newsletter, we've been busy! AU volunteers Bridget & Andy Allen, Warren Bitters, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook, Jason & Tim Crawford, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, June Kelley, Danny Kury, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, Javier Rivera, Nancy Rohrer, Tom Whittemore, and Tim Wittenburg showed the night sky to *1011* people at outreach events. As of this report, *the AU is #2 in the nation for Night Sky Network public outreach events*. Congratulations to all of you hard-working outreachers who give so generously of your time to these activities.

### August AU Events

Here's what's scheduled so far for the dog days of August, when Sirius blazes in the sky with the Sun. Outreach events are subject to change as additions and cancellations occur. To get the latest information, or directions to an event, just contact Chuck at 964-8201 or [macpuzl@west.net](mailto:macpuzl@west.net).

### Saturday, August 5, setup 8 PM

Slide show and telescopes for campers at Cachuma Lake.

### Friday, August 11, setup 8 PM

Slide show and telescopes for Nature Night at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. If you're coming to help with the outreach, and arrive by 6 PM, you'll get fed, too. Let Chuck know if you're planning to come for dinner, so he can give the Botanic Garden folks a count. They moved their event to this night specifically so they could have the AU come with scopes, so it would be nice if we could have a big turnout.

### Saturday, August 12, 8 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH. We just may get to see some Perseid meteors, too.

### Friday, August 18, setup 8 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont, on the lawn outside Carroll Observatory. The new scope isn't in yet, so bring a scope to set up.

### Saturday, August 19, setup 8 PM

Telescopes for Refugio State Beach.

### Saturday, August 26

Annual AU Starbecue at the Gun Club!

### Saturday, August 26, setup 8 PM

Slide show and telescopes for campers at Cachuma Lake.

### Wednesday, August 30, setup 8 PM

Telescopes for Refugio State Beach.



Although *Jupiter* burns brightly in the southwest at the beginning of the month, by the end of August it sets only three hours after sunset. Continuing to move eastward among the stars, this Jovian giant will come within  $2^{\circ}$  of Alpha Librae (Zubenelgenubi) on the last day of the month. On August the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Jupiter moves into east quadrature, which means that its shadow falls farthest to the side, making eclipses of its Galilean moons much easier to observe. Mars falls further and further into the Sun's glow as the month progresses, and by

month's end finds itself setting only 45 minutes after the Sun. *Neptune* is at opposition on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month and lies in the zodiacal constellation of Capricornus. Although glowing at 8<sup>th</sup> magnitude, Neptune will be brighter and slightly larger than it is at any other time of the year. *Mercury* and *Saturn* join *Venus* in the morning sky this month! During the first week of August, Mercury rises higher and higher and comes to greatest elongation from the Sun on August the 7<sup>th</sup>. The best time to see Mercury with the unaided eye is on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August about 45 minutes before sunrise. On August the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, Mercury and Venus are only about 2<sup>o</sup> apart. Moving very slowly due to its distance from the Sun, Saturn gets passed by both Mercury and Venus this month. But watch for Saturn in the morning sky on August 20<sup>th</sup> when it rises about an hour ahead of the Sun and is only 1<sup>o</sup> below Mercury. At magnitude +0.4, Saturn will appear dim compared to Mercury, shining at magnitude -1.3, but noting the rapid movement of Mercury with respect to Saturn will be well worth getting up early for! The *Moon* will be a large waning gibbous one from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, and will thus interfere with the *Perseid Meteor Shower* when this annual shower peaks on the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month. However, as if to make up for this indiscretion, the Moon will join Venus in a breathtaking pairing on the dawn of August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Mirror-Making Workshop Continues!**

Tom Whittemore and Tim Crawford have resurrected the mirror-making workshop that many of you enjoyed a couple years ago. Although the current focus is to help those who started mirrors from Tom's previous class, we welcome any club members who would like to come and see if they, too, would like to take on the adventure of making a mirror from scratch. If you have a mirror that you would like diagnosed, please bring it to the workshop. Or, if you are just curious about what is involved in making a mirror or designing a telescope, please come! We meet every Wednesday from 7:30 to 9:00 PM at the Broder Building on the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History campus.



*Nathan Schmit shows his dad how to craft a 6" mirror.*

## **Astronomical Arts Corner**

### **The Constellation Orion**

*By Ted Kooser, U. S. Poet Laureate*

I'm delighted to see you,  
old friend,  
lying there in you hammock  
over the next town.  
You were the first person  
my son was to meet in the heavens.  
He's sleeping now,  
his head like a small sun in my lap.  
Our car whizzes along in the night.  
If he were awake, he'd say,  
"Look, Daddy, there's Old Ryan!"  
but I won't wake him.  
He's mine for the weekend,  
Old Ryan, not yours.

From the desk of Nancy Rohrer

## VENUS

The Moon and many Stars  
In the Heavens above  
Sends gleeful glows to me.  
One Star shines brighter  
than all the rest.

Only it is not a Star  
It is Earth's Sister Planet  
Named for Goddess of Love  
And Beauty, Planet Venus  
Always with us beaming bright.

It is second Planet from the Sun  
Merely a short .72 AU away  
Almost as big as Earth  
With a similar make up  
Yet, very different

870 Degrees discourages visitors  
Brave Mariner 2 visited in 1962  
There have been many visits since  
Huge volcanoes were found and  
Thick covering of poisonous gas.

All is convincing to stay at home  
With our rolling oceans  
Forest of fluttering leaves swaying  
In the fresh soft breeze  
On beautiful, comfortable Earth.

3-10-06



## Just a Reminder...

Don't forget the *AU's 3rd Annual Star-B-Que* at 6 PM on Saturday, August 26. We will meet at the Winchester Gun Club which is located at the end of West Camino Cielo. For the past two years we have met at the Gun Club for a summer gathering under the stars. Here we share food and stories, followed by an enjoyable evening picking starlight out of the night sky. We hope you will be able to make this great event. It is one of the best of the year!

## AU Information Box

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## AU Astronomy Information Pager

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## SBMNH Astronomy Program Tape

Updated monthly 682-4711x405

**AU AstroNews**, the monthly publication of the **Astronomical Unit (AU)**, is mailed to the AU membership. For publishing consideration for the next month, submit astronomical items by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the current month!

## AU annual membership rates:





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

## AU mailing address:

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## August 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 	3	4	5 <b>Lake Cachuma 8:00PM</b>
6	7	8	9 	10	11 <b>Botanic Garden 8:00PM</b>	12 <b>SBMNH Star Party 8PM</b>
13	14	15	16 	17	18 <b>Westmont College 8:00PM</b>	19 <b>Refugio State Beach 8:00 PM</b>
20	21	22	23 	24	25	26 <b>AU Annual Starbecue 6:00PM</b>
27	28	29	30 <b>Refugio State Beach 8:00PM</b>	31		

### The Astronomical Unit

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