



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

February 2003

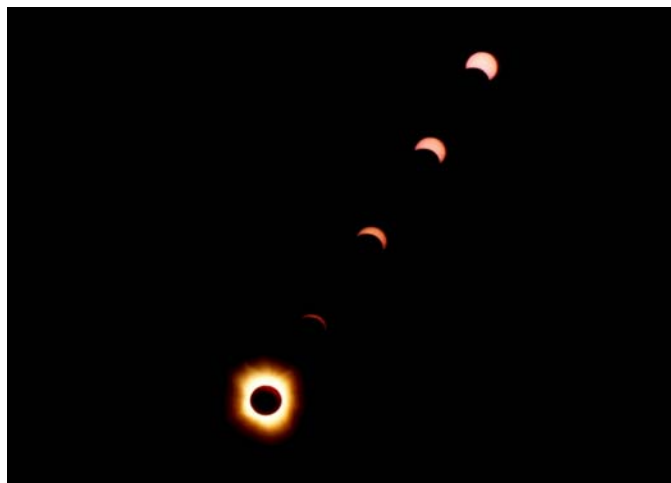
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Thanks, Dr. Wessen

Last month's speaker was Dr. Randii Wessen of JPL, who spoke on "The Future of U.S Planetary Exploration". Many thanks to Randii, who also sent us the following note of thanks. "I just got back in from Santa Barbara...and we had a great time! We did the Mission, the Natural History Museum, the beach, the pier, and the four-seater bicycle (twice). The only down side was that I couldn't convince either of my two kids nor my wife to do a two-seater parasail ride...maybe next time. I also had a great time with your group. You have a very lively and energetic club. Keep up the good work."

February's Speakers

For the February meeting, we'll hear from our own AU Secretary, Dr. Craig Prater. Craig, along with his wife and their 4-year old son, recently returned from seeing the total solar eclipse on December 4, 2002 in the Australian Outback. He will give a trip report from their adventures in Australia & New Zealand. The presentation will include stories and photos of highlights along the way (glaciers, waterfalls, wildlife, and the vast Outback) along with photos and video of the big moment of totality. A total solar eclipse is often described as the most dramatic event you can witness on planet Earth. During a total solar eclipse, the moon passes directly in front of the sun, casting a shadow on the Earth below. If you are standing in the path of totality, the moon completely covers and blocks the sun, making the center of the sun appear pitch black, like a hole in the sky. A ring of fire (the sun's corona) spreads out from and surrounds the center blackness. Once you see a total solar eclipse, it is easy to understand why these events terrified our ancestors as omens of impending doom. Despite the fact that total eclipses happens every 1-2 years on average, very few people on our planet will ever see a total solar eclipse in their entire lifetime. Below is one of Craig's composite photos of the eclipse.



This should be an interesting talk, since Craig has a reputation as quite a jokester. He obtained a Ph.D. in physics from UCSB in 1992. He has also been involved the research and development of atomic force microscopes and related techniques for the last 15 years. Besides being a member of the AU, he is currently the Director of Technology Development for Veeco Instruments, Santa Barbara.

After Craig's presentation, new AU member and UCSB Physics Lecturer Tom Whittemore will give a talk on mirror-making. At the top of the next page is a picture of a 10" scope that he built over the summer. He promises to bring it to many of the club's star parties.

January Outreach Volunteers

Since the last newsletter, volunteers John Boyd, Bob Brown, Bill Clausen, Joe Doyle, Dora Drake, Art Harris, June Kelley, Pat McPartlin, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, Craig Prater, Wayne Rothermich, Lee Smith, Tom Whittemore, and Jim Williams showed the night sky to **167** customers at AU events. It was a relatively quiet month.



AU Events for February

Saturday, February 1, all night – Dark Sky observing. Contact Paul Winn (strg8zn@cox.net) to find out where and when.

Tuesday, February 4, setup 6:30 PM – Slide show and Scopes #1 for La Patera School.

Wednesday, February 5, Setup 6 PM – Slide show and scopes for McKinley School.

Thursday, February 6, setup 6:30 PM – Slide show and scopes #2 for La Patera School.

Friday, February 7, 7:30 PM – Monthly meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. **Please note change from regularly scheduled meeting day.**

Saturday, February 8, 4 PM – AU planning meeting at SBMNH at Krissie's office.

Saturday, February 8, 6 PM – Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH.

Monday, February 10, setup 7 PM – Slide show and scopes for Ojai Elderhostel.

Thursday, February 20, setup 6:30 PM – Telescopes for Harding School.

Friday, February 21, 7:30 PM – Monthly Public Observation at Westmont College's Van Kampen Observatory.

Sunday, February 23, setup 7 PM – (TENTATIVE) Slide show and scopes for Ojai Elderhostel.

Friday, February 28, setup 7 PM – Scopes out front at SBMNH for the lecture by Timothy Ferris, author of "Seeing In The Dark" (about amateur astronomers), and numerous other books on astronomy and cosmology.

Remember that outreach events often change at the last minute. Contact Edgar or Chuck for the latest developments.

Full Moon Names

Thanks to AU member Helen Osenga for writing the following article about the names of full moons. Members are encouraged to submit interesting items for publication in the newsletter. Please send your submissions to Ken Pfeiffer, Keagle10@cox.net.

Most of us are familiar with the term Harvest Moon and possibly Hunter's Moon for the full moons of September and October, but do we know the names of the other full moons of the year? I thought that it might be fun to find out what they are called. Well, what should have been a simple search on the internet turned out to be a real wild ride. After going through about 50 sites of the hundreds that are available, it became clear that there is no real consensus on this subject. Here in North America we use the Native American names for these full moons and the names varied from tribe to tribe. Following is a list of the most commonly used full moon names for each month, along with some alternative names.

January - Wolf Moon (Old Moon, Moon After Yule): In the middle of winter the hungry wolf packs would howl around the Indian villages.

February - Snow Moon (Hunger Moon, Wolf Moon): This is the time of the heaviest snow fall.

March - Worm Moon (Crow Moon, Sugar Moon, Crust Moon): As the weather begins to warm up, the earthworm casts appear and the Robins begin to fly in.

April - Pink Moon (Planter's Moon, Sprouting Grass Moon, Fish Moon): The name comes from the earliest of widespread flowers of spring, the wild ground phlox.

May - Flower Moon (Corn Planting Moon, Milk Moon): This

is the time of abundant wildflowers everywhere in North America.

June - Strawberry Moon (Flower Moon, Rose Moon, Hot Moon): This moon might also be known as the Short Moon, because it is on display for only about nine hours a night in the continental United States.

July - Buck Moon (Hay Moon, Thunder Moon): This is the month when most male deer begin to put out their antlers.

August - Sturgeon Moon (Red Moon, Green Corn Moon): The fishing tribes of the Great Lakes area easily caught the large sturgeon fish during this time of year.

September - Harvest Moon (Comanche Moon, Corn Moon): The Harvest Moon is the full moon that occurs closest to the autumnal equinox (about Sept. 22) so in some years it happens in October. When this happens the September full moon can be called Fruit Full Moon or Barley Full Moon.

October - Hunter's Moon (Comanche Moon, Travel Moon, Dying Grass Moon): The first full moon after the Harvest Moon is the Hunter's Moon. Now that the harvest is over and the leaves are falling it is the time to hunt game.

November - Beaver Moon (Frost Moon): This is the time when beavers are actively preparing for winter and when there is still time to set traps before the water freezes.

December - Cold Moon (Long Nights Moon): During this month winter cold starts to tighten its grip. It is also sometimes known as Moon before Yule.

Okay, so what about a Blue Moon? In the past it had several other meanings, but in recent times it has come to mean the second full moon in any calendar month.

Full Moon Astronomy

Many amateur astronomers cringe at the thought of a full moon, as most deep sky objects are completely obscured. Still, the brighter planets are clearly observable through telescopes. Even without optical aid, the sky presents some awesome wonders. The winter months are often crisp and clear, and can provide surprising joy just by looking skyward. January 17 was such a night, and may have reminded you of when you were a kid, first looking up at the bright, clear sky, laced with wispy clouds. Wow!

New Scope on Tax Day

For many, April 15th is not exactly the happiest day of the year, but don't say that to scientists at Caltech and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. That's when a telescope that's been 20 years in the making will be launched into orbit from Cape Canaveral. Called the Space Infrared Telescope Facility, the new device is designed to beam back images that cannot be photographed by other telescopes because of "space dust" and gasses. Scientists may now have a chance to view previously unseen stars, planets and other galactic marvels.

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AU AstroNews is the monthly publication of the **Astronomical Unit (AU)**, mailed to the general membership. Submit stuff by the 20th of the month! Current annual membership rates are:

Single \$15 Family \$25

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February 2003

							1 ● Dark Sky <i>Jupiter at Opposition</i>
2 <i>SUN</i> <i>Rise 6:50</i> <i>Set 5:24</i>	3	4 La Patera School	5 McKinley School	6 La Patera School	7 AU Meeting	8 AU Planning Meeting SBMNH Star Party	
9 ☉	10 Ojai Elder hostel	11	12	13	14 <i>Valentine's Day</i>	15	
16 ○	17 <i>Presidents' Day</i>	18	19	20 Harding School	21 Westmont Public Obs	22	
23 ☉ Ojai Elderhostel (?)	24	25	26	27 <i>SUN</i> <i>Rise 6:23</i> <i>Set 5:49</i>	28 Scopes/lecture at SBMNH		

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