



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

March 2002

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

March Meeting

Our speaker for this month's meeting will be AU member **Paul Winn**, one of our more fanatic imagers. He's willing to travel long distances in search of a dark sky. The subject of his presentation will be "**Paul Winn and Friends Astronomical Excursions.**" He'll share stories and images of trips to Mount Pinos, Figueroa Mountain, Lake San Antonio, and the mountains of New Mexico.

Observatory Volunteer Day

Steve is looking for volunteers to turn out on Saturday, March 2, and Sunday, March 3, starting at 9 AM, to **help refurbish Palmer Observatory** at SBMNH. We need folks willing to help clean, sand, paint, and tinker! Call Steve at 682-4711 x316 to join fellow clubbies in grubbies and lend a hand.

Thanks, Volunteers!

Since the last newsletter, AU volunteers Gretchen & Greg Brinser (and friend Justin), Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Chey Hahn, Art Harris, June Kelley, Pat McPartlin, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, and Jim Williams showed the wonders of the winter sky to **398** customers.

The outreach schedules are subject to change, so to get the latest information, visit the web page and check the "Events" link, or contact Edgar or Chuck. Try to let one of us know ahead of time if you are planning to show up at an outreach event. It's always a lot of fun sharing the stars and planets.

February Meeting

Last month's presentation by AU member **Dale Lowdermilk** lured about **320** people into

Flesichmann Auditorium at the Museum for his cool talk on meteorites. All of the meteorite fragments and other assorted door prizes were given away to youngsters who answered questions (administered by Steve) based on the information presented that evening. You can catch the SB News-Press article about the talk at

www.newspress.com/lifestyles/012902meteors.htm

Here's one of the anonymous winners standing to answer his question:



Planning Meeting

All AU members are welcome to come to the planning meeting at 6 PM on Saturday, March 9 in the classroom adjacent to Steve's office at SBMNH.

Messier Marathon

It's time again for all **Extreme Astronomers** to gather for the annual AU Messier Marathon. On a New Moon night between mid March to early April you have a chance to see all 110 Messier Catalog objects in the course of one night. We had a blast last year, despite the miserable weather that drove us down the mountain into IHOP after only a couple of hours. This year, we'll even have four or five comets visible; a LINEAR, a LONEOS, and Pons-Winnecke, plus a chance at newly-discovered Ikeya-Zhang just after sunset. As usual, we'll have Messier observing handouts available to help you chase down your elusive quarry in the most advantageous order. See the event listing below for time and place.

AU Events for March

Friday, March 1, 7:30 PM – Monthly meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH.

Saturday, March 2, and Sunday, March 3 starting at 9 AM – Volunteers gather to work on Palmer Observatory.

Wednesday, March 6, setup 6:30 PM – School observation for second grade classes at Hollister School.

Friday, March 8, setup 6:30 PM – School observation for second grade classes at La Patera School.

Saturday, March 9, 6 PM – Planning meeting in the Education Classroom outside Steve's office at SBMNH.

Saturday, March 9, 8:30 PM – Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH.

Friday, March 15, 7 PM – Monthly public observation at Westmont College.

Saturday, March 16, starting at 5 PM and lasting all night – Annual AU **Messier Marathon** at the Winchester Canyon Gun Club Shotgun Range at the end of West Camino Cielo.

Wednesday, March 20, setup 5:30 PM – School observation for Laguna Blanca Elementary School.

Mount Wilson Star Parties

There are two upcoming public star parties on Mt. Wilson: March 23 and May 18. The observatory is planning to have a public star party at least every other month, and perhaps every month during the summer. Both of the scheduled dates include a tour of the observatory, from 4:30 PM to 6 PM, followed by observing, from 6 PM to 10 PM, in the upper parking lot behind the old food pavillion.

Go early and you should not have any problem finding the place. Even a first time visitor should be able to drive right to Mt. Wilson during daylight hours. You will see right away that it is indeed blatantly obvious and at the end of the only road in.

The parking lot is large and well marked. If you want to get familiar with the observatory area before you visit Mt. Wilson, the link listed below for the home page points to a tour page. The altitude at Mt. Wilson is a bit under 6000 feet so you should bring warm clothing despite the balmy lowland weather.

www.astro.ucla.edu/~obs/150_map.html
www.mtwilson.edu/

Although these are public star parties, there is a limit on attendance. Anyone wanting to attend should call the Mount Wilson Institute at (626) 793-3100 M-F ahead of time to avoid being turned away at the gate after the long drive up the mountain. There will be plenty of scopes set up by local clubs to view through for those that don't haul up their own.

Death Valley Star Party

It's star party season! There will also be a star party in Death Valley on the weekend of March 8 – 10. Visit www.astronomynv.org/dvsp/ for details.

RTMC Astronomy Expo

There will be a contingent of AU members going down to Big Bear Lake again this year for the annual astronomy gathering at Camp Oakes. See their web page at www.rtmc-inc.org for a downloadable PDF format registration form. It will be a full Moon weekend this year, but the view through the 36 inch "Yard Scope" should still be pretty nice. There are even rumors of a 69 inch scope this year. That sort of redefines "amateur telescope," doesn't it?

As usual, the Western Wing of the International Amateur-Professional Photoelectric Photometry group will be holding a symposium on Telescope Science on the Wednesday and Thursday before RTMC at Northwoods Resort in Big Bear. The symposium is meant for all you serious CCD astroimagers out there. See www.iappwest.org for information.

Siderial Clocks

Local "crackpot inventor" Bryan Mumford makes sidereal clocks. If you've always wanted to be able to tell at a glance, from indoors, when the Orion Nebula was overhead, even in cloudy weather and daylight, visit www.bmumford.com and follow the links under "horology." No, this isn't an Ocular Industries joke.

Astronomy Day

At the February planning meeting, we discussed what we were going to do for Astronomy Day this year (Saturday, April 20). We decided to try to hold the event this year at the Camino Real Marketplace (Big Box) in Goleta. We'll set up telescopes and displays all day long to try to hook unsuspecting passers-by on the joys of amateur astronomy. If we can't hold the event there, we'll set up on the beach again.

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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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Our address is:

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March 2002

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