



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

March 2008

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### Outreach Report

Since the last newsletter, AU volunteers Andy Allen, Chad Caprio, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook, Jason & Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Ed Edwards, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Chris Larson, Dale Lowdermilk, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, Kathy & Ken Pfeiffer, Javier Rivera & Quasars, Nancy Rohrer, David Salvia, Tom Whittemore, Jim Williams, and Tim Wittenburg showed cool astro stuff, including the lunar eclipse, to **931** customers.

### March Outreach Events

Here are the AU events scheduled for March. Lots of school Science Nights coming up! To get the latest information on schedules, or directions, just contact Chuck at 964-8201 or [macpuzl@west.net](mailto:macpuzl@west.net)

#### Friday, March 7, 7 PM

Start with a quick planetarium show by Krissie, then club member, Jerry Wilson will speak about "The Physics of Detectors for Imaging Systems."

#### Saturday, March 8, 5 PM

AU planning meeting in the classroom next to Krissie's office. Anyone is welcome to attend and help plan your club's activities.

#### Saturday, March 8, 7 PM

Monthly Public Star Party, next to Palmer Observatory at SBMNH. Saturn will be the popular target.

#### Sunday, March 9, 2 AM

Don't forget to switch to Daylight Saving Time.

#### Tuesday, March 11, setup 5 PM

Telescopes for Mountain View Elementary School Science Night. Setup and pizza 5-6 PM, telescopes 6-8 PM.

#### Thursday, March 13, setup 5 PM

Telescopes for Hope Elementary School Science Night.

#### Wednesday, March 19

Spring starts at the Vernal Equinox at 10:49 PM.

#### Thursday, March 20, setup 5 PM

Telescopes for Brandon Elementary School Science Night.

#### Friday, March 21, 7 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College, just outside Carroll Observatory.

#### Saturday, March 29, all night

Annual AU Messier Marathon at the Gun Club. Extreme astronomy at its best!

#### Saturday, March 29, 8 to 9 PM

Lights Out America. Turn off all unnecessary lights!



*The public lines up for the recent lunar eclipse at Shoreline Park. Photo courtesy of Ken and Kathy Pfeiffer*

### February's Total Lunar Eclipse

*by Chuck McPartlin*

The weather was forbidding for much of eclipse day, but by 4:30 PM the clouds had mostly cleared. First of the AU to arrive at breezy Shoreline Park was (of course) Art, soon followed by Pat & Chuck

and President Tim. As they were setting up their scopes, it became clear that many of the people in the park were aware of the lunar eclipse, thanks to Krissie's efforts to get the word out to the media. Reporters from KEYT TV, the News-Press, the Daily Sound, the Montecito Journal, and the Daily Nexus dropped by.

A large AU contingent, with at least 9 telescopes and large binoculars, were assembled and ready to show off the sky. When a bright yellow blotch of Moon appeared above the mountain horizon, it was greeted with cheers. By the time the Moon had entirely cleared the horizon, an obvious circular bite of shadow was apparent on its lower left. The early stages up to full totality were reasonably visible, but then a film of high clouds developed which obscured much of the sky, with only an occasional glimmer to show the Moon.

There was a small break in the cloud cover after the end of totality, and the cold and wind induced most of the remaining spectators to head for home by 9 PM. Overall, it was a very successful night, with an estimated 525 customers. Local residents thanked the AU contingent for coming out with their equipment, and some even offered tea and cookies. Let's do it again in 2010 (although that one's at midnight)!



*A partially eclipsed moon rises over the mountains of Santa Barbara. Photo courtesy of Ken and Kathy Pfeiffer.*

## **SBAU T-SHIRTS**

Get your SBAU T-Shirts and show the universe our beautiful Club's logo that's displayed on the front as well as the backside! Sizes come in Medium, Large, and Extra Large. Cost to members is \$10.00. You can also special-order a sweat shirt. Call Ruben at (805) 450-7451.

## **To the AU membership:**

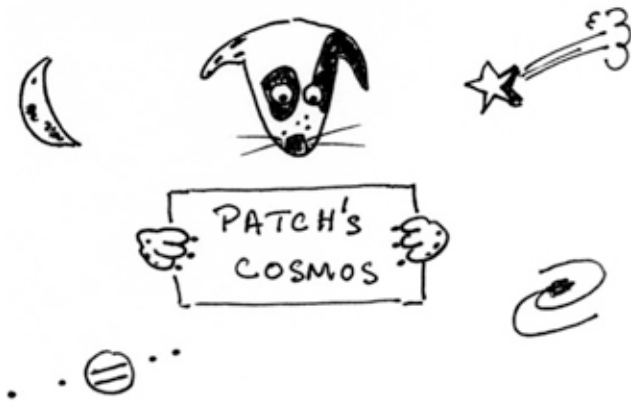
The new year has begun. And that means a rapidly approaching Astronomy Day show. Those who attend this event try to expose the public to things of interest both at the museum and at the AU's demonstration tables. One (make that "two") of the tables are used to hold offerings of donated items which the club will not be using for its own ends. I am fixed with the task of selling off these items to club members and to those of the public who may be interested enough to take these things away. These sales provide the club with funds which are used to purchase things like the recently acquired camera and monitor (just wait until you see how wonderfully these show the heavens), and many other items. Without funds, we do not get to enjoy items like these.

I am not asking for money...what I am asking for is your old and no longer valuable (to you) astronomy equipment. Telescopes, tripods, lenses, mirrors, anything which can be of use to an astronomer – the sort of stuff you have been tripping over in your garage or work room, and just don't need anymore. Just call me and let me know that its being donated - I'll take care of the rest.

Thanks,  
Arthur Harris, AU Equipment Manager, (805) 968-4017

## **Astronomy Essay Contest**

Thanks to the efforts of AU member Dale Lowdermilk, an astronomy essay contest for students is now in place. It's national in scope, and made it to the Sky & Telescope news page. For more information about this contest, please see: <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/community/skyblog/newsblog/15946027.html>



**March** “comes in like a lion, goes out like a lamb” – this saying refers to blizzards and mild weather, but perhaps the images came to mind because in the March evening sky Aries is setting as Leo approaches the zenith.

The **Ursa Major Cluster** of stars is so near to us that its outskirts spread over a hemisphere of our sky; so it can be seen as a whole during March evenings. The core of this cluster is the Big Dipper, excluding the two end stars (Dubhe and Alkaid); other possible members are Gemma in Corona Borealis, Zosma in Leo, Menkalinan in Auriga, Cursa in Eridanus, and even Sirius!

### The Constellation Orion

*by Ted Kooser*

I'm delighted to see you,  
 old friend,  
 lying there in your 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.

### AU Information Box

- President:** Tim Wittenburg 969-6945  
[black10@aol.com](mailto:black10@aol.com)
- Vice President:** Chad Caprio 570-506-5378  
[capwil87@netzero.net](mailto:capwil87@netzero.net)
- Secretary:** VACANT
- Treasurer:** Ruben Gutierrez 450-7451  
[rubenalvag@aol.com](mailto:rubenalvag@aol.com)
- Outreach:** Chuck McPartlin 964-8201  
[macpuzl@west.net](mailto:macpuzl@west.net)
- Webmaster:** Paul Winn 886-2319  
[strg8zn@cox.net](mailto:strg8zn@cox.net)
- Refreshments:** Tim Crawford 962-3619  
[tcrawf3@cox.net](mailto:tcrawf3@cox.net)
- Newsletter:** Tom Whittemore 687-2025  
[kometes@aol.com](mailto:kometes@aol.com)

### AU Astronomy Information Pager

(Leave a short message) 564-9002

### SBMNH Astronomy Program Coordinator

Krissie Cook 682-4711x173

[kcook@sbnature2.org](mailto:kcook@sbnature2.org)

### 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:

Astronomical Unit  
 c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History  
 2559 Puesta Del Sol Road  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998

**On the Web:** <http://www.sbau.org>

**March 2008**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7 AU ● Meeting 7PM	8 Planning Meeting 5PM SBMNH Star Party 7PM
9 DST begins!	10	11 Mountain View Elementary 5PM	12	13 Hope Elementary 5PM	14 ●	15
16	17	18	19 Vernal Equinox	20 Brandon Elementary 5PM	21 ○ Westmont College 7PM	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 ● AU Messier Marathon: Gun Club
30	31					

**The Astronomical Unit**  
 c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History  
 2559 Puesta Del Sol Road  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998