



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

May 2006

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Outreach Summary

Since the last newsletter, **607** customers were treated to neat sights in the sky by AU volunteers Andy Allen, Warren Bitters, John Boyd, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook, Tim & Jason Crawford, Joe Doyle, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Edgar Ocampo, Javier Rivera, Nancy Rohrer, Tom Whittemore, and Jim Williams.

May AU Events

Here are the May outreach events scheduled so far. 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.

Friday, May 5, 7 PM

Monthly AU meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. Current night sky planetarium show by Krissie at 7 PM, followed at 7:30 PM by our speaker, Mr. Julian Nott, a balloonist who is a consultant to NASA. Mr. Nott has been described by the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum as "the leading figure in applying modern science to manned balloon design over the last 20 years." He is currently working with NASA on proposals to fly balloons in the atmosphere of Titan.

Mr. Nott's lecture will cover the fascinating history of ballooning and some current applications of balloons in science, technology, and commerce. He believes we can learn much about the future of scientific exploration through the science and history of ballooning.

Saturday, May 6, 10 AM to 10 PM

Astronomy Day at SBMNH! Astronomy activities and observing all day long.

Thursday, May 11, setup 9 PM

Telescopes for an event at SBMNH for Pacific Bell.

Saturday, May 13, 6:30 PM

Planning meeting in the classroom next to Krissie's office at SBMNH. All members are welcome!

Saturday, May 13, 8 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH.

Friday, May 19, 8 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College. The new dome is up, but no big scope yet, so we'll be setting up our own scopes on the lawn.

Saturday, May 20, setup 8 PM

Telescopes for Refugio Beach State Campground.

Thursday, May 24, setup 8:30 PM

Telescopes for exoplanet lecture at SBMNH. Bring a scope, and get into the lecture (7:30 PM) free!

Thursday, May 26 - Monday, May 29

Annual RTMC Astronomy Expo at Camp Oakes in Big Bear! Star Party with 2000 amateur astronomers and shop and swap the vendors.

Currently on Display...

Here's a shot of the AU's April display at the downtown branch of the Santa Barbara Library. Thanks, Chuck and Dale, for doing such a wonderful job!



Astronomical Arts Corner

From the desk of Nancy Rohrer...

URANUS

A small star on dark night
Casting a pale blue light
Named for Greek God of Sky
Watch carefully as it goes by.

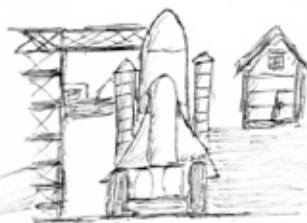
Seventh Planet from the Sun
Another frozen gassy one
Circle Sun once in eighty four years
Day faster, just over seventeen hours.

Bigger than Earth, fourteen times
Large mid waist places it third biggest
First seen as Comet, just another one
by Herschel in 1781, more to be won.

Finally found to be a Planet
in 1846 and with no bandits
Voyager in 1986 flew close by
Everyone came out to say 'Hi.'

Rings found of carbon rich rock
in place they are kept under lock
As careening about with many moons
more than there is really room.

There are twenty-seven moons around
as time goes by more may be found
Will there be room for them to bound
With all the rings and not be a crowd.



My trip to the moon!

By Bridget Allen

Earlier this month I attended the National Science Teachers Association annual convention in Anaheim, along with some of the teachers I work with at San Roque School. There were many interesting astronomy-related exhibitors including NASA, SETI, the California Space Authority and others. The exhibitors had lots of educational demos, gadgets, etc. One company (Starlab) even had an inflatable, portable planetarium! I spoke with a teacher who uses it at inner-city schools in Cleveland where there is a lot of light pollution and they can see only the brightest stars. After the conference, I had to travel a long way to get this photo of myself on the moon... but it was worth it for the AU Club! (Haha - photo was actually taken in NASA's exhibitor booth.) It was fun!



Bridget readies for takeoff!

Observers' Highlights for May

By Fred Schaff

Jupiter comes to opposition near Alpha Librae on May 4, rising around sunset and staying visible all night long. The planet is around this time its brightest of the year (magnitude -2.5) and biggest in telescopes (44.6" wide). On most nights when Jupiter gets fairly high, a good 6-inch or 8-inch telescope is capable of showing a number of darkish latitudinal "belts" and lighter latitudinal "zones" along with a few other features like "garlands," "festoons," and "spots"... **Saturn** and **Mars** are visible in the west to west-northwest each evening, the gap between the two growing slightly smaller with each passing night. Yellow Saturn shines almost 1.5 magnitudes brighter than slightly orange-gold Mars. On May 30, Saturn's separation is 9° to the upper left of Mars. That night, Mars itself is the left end of a marvelous line roughly 12° long which consists (left to right) of: Mars, Moon, Pollux, and Castor, each at nearly equal angular distance from the next. By month's end Saturn and Mars set around midnight... At month's end, **Mercury** shyly comes into view very low in the west-northwest about 45 minutes to an hour after sunset, bringing to four the total of naked-eye planets that

can be glimpsed at that time... **Venus** rises lovely but lonely in the east less than 2 hours before the Sun. By the end of May its phase in telescopes has grown to more than $\frac{1}{2}$ lit but its angular width has shrunk to less than 15" wide. The planet will be even a little smaller, rounder and less interesting in telescopes for the rest of the year... **The Moon** is a slender crescent rather far to the lower right of Mars at dusk on May 1 and rather far above Mars at dusk on May 2. A thicker lunar crescent is poised between Saturn and Pollux on May 3 and is well to the upper left of Saturn the following night. The next several nights the moon sets in the middle of the night, allowing viewing of the peak of the **Eta Aquarid meteor shower** in the last hours before morning twilight. On May 10, an occultation of Spica is at least partly visible after sunset in much of North America. A fat gibbous Moon is well to the upper right of Jupiter on the evening of May 11, and well below the planet the next evening. A waning lunar crescent is roughly 4° to the upper left of Venus at dawn on May 24. In North America on May 27, very low in the west-northwest about 45 minutes after sunset, and ultra-thin Moon (less than a day past New) may be glimpsed about 3° to the right of Mercury. The nearly perfect line of Mars-Moon-Pollux-Castor visible on the evening of May 30 is described under discussion of Saturn and Mars above. The Moon is only about 3° above Saturn the next night.



Dale Lowdermilk with students at Laguna Blanca School

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

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May 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5 AU Meeting 7:30 PM	6 Astronomy Day! ☾
7	8	9	10	11 Telescopes for Pac Bell @ SBMNH setup 9PM	12	13 AU Planning Meeting 6:30 PM SBMNH Star Party 8PM ☽
14	15	16	17	18	19 Westmont College 8PM	20 Refugio State Beach 8PM ☾
21	22	23	24 Telescopes @ SBMNH setup 8:30PM	25	26 RTMC	27 RTMC ●
28 RTMC	29 RTMC	30	31			

The Astronomical Unit

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