



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

May 2007

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

OUTREACH SUMMARY

Even though attendance at Astronomy Day was much smaller this year, we still had a decent outreach month. AU volunteers Andy & Bridget Allen, Jim Billig, John Boyd, Timma Buck, Chad Caprio, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook, Jason & Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Ed Edwards, John Gomm, Ruben Gutierrez, Laurence Harms, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Dale Lowdermilk, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Ron Nixon, Barb O'Grady, Edgar Ocampo, Jiri Polivka, Javier Rivera, Nancy Rohrer, Edward Tavernetti, Tom Whittemore, Jim Williams, and Paul Winn showed cool astronomy stuff to 667 customers. This year's telescope clinic was a success, with six families showing up for help getting their scopes working, and a crowd of AU volunteers eager to teach them.



Javier Rivera shows the public how to make a comet on Astronomy Day, 2007! Photo courtesy of T. Whittemore

OUTREACH FOR MAY

Here are the AU events scheduled so far for May. It looks pretty quiet so far, with some events that had been scheduled months ago having been canceled. To get the latest information on schedules, or directions, just contact Chuck at 964-8201 or macpuzl@west.net

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 7 PM

Start with a quick planetarium show, then Javier "El Magnifico" Rivera will speak about how we measure astronomical distances.

SATURDAY, MAY 12, 8 PM

Monthly Public Star Party, next to Palmer Observatory at SBMNH. With the time change, we'll start later.

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 7:30 PM

Telescopes for former SBAC member Dr. Alex Filippenko's talk at Fleischmann Auditorium at SBMNH. He speaks at 7:30, we'll have scopes outside for afterward, probably around 8:30.

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 8 PM

Telescopes for the monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College. The 24" telescope is now installed! For a tour of the new scope, please see: <http://homepage.westmont.edu/belliott/Telescope/>

SATURDAY, MAY 19

National Sidewalk Astronomy Night. Set up a scope somewhere and show off Saturn or the crescent Moon!

FRIDAY, MAY 26 - MONDAY, MAY 28

Annual RTMC Astronomy Expo at Big Bear Lake.

SUNDAY, MAY 27, 8 PM

Krissie and Javier would greatly appreciate some scopes for a sleepover night at SBMNH for a big Museum donor, so if anybody is skipping RTMC this year and can help out, let them know.

THURSDAY, MAY 31, 6 TO 8 PM

Telescopes for Harding Elementary School's Science Night. It won't be dark, but we can do solar scopes, and get Venus and maybe Saturn in a blue sky.



Tim Crawford demonstrates how to grind a mirror – Astronomy Day, 2007. Photo courtesy of T.Whittemore.

GRIFFITH TRIP

Well, gang, we're ready to blast off! All of you who sent an e-mail or telephoned Ruben Gutierrez have a confirmed boarding pass for the SBAU Starship and a ticket for the shuttle ride up to the observatory. Don't forget to keep an eye on your atomic clocks on the morning of **May 9th!** The computers have already charted the course, so we'll disembark from the AU Command Center (**Museum's parking lot**) right at **9:30 sharp**, so come early. We still have a couple of seats left so any last minute takers can call 682-0405 and squeeze in.



Einstein "draws a bead" on the Universe at the Griffith Observatory. Photo courtesy of Jim Williams.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE PLANETS?

The highlights for May: **Venus** and **Mercury** reach their highest of the year for mid-northern latitude viewers, and **Jupiter** nears opposition and all-night visibility. All month at sunset a viewer around 40° N will see Venus more than 35° high and in the same exact direction just north of due west. **Venus** will not set for more than 3 and one half hours after sunset! Watch especially for Venus on the evening of May the 19th when it passes within a degree of the crescent Moon. On the evening of May the 29th, Venus comes closest to Pollux – about 4°. **Mercury** leaps up from superior conjunction on the 3rd for its highest evening apparition of the year. From May 18 through June 12, Mercury will lie at least 10° above the western horizon. **Saturn** will arrive at east quadrature (90° east of the Sun) on the 9th, so all month its globe casts its shadow farthest east on the rings. Glowing at magnitude +0.5, the ringed giant will lie to the upper left of Venus. **Jupiter** keeps rising earlier each day, and appears very low in the southwest at dusk. This -2.5 magnitude world looms especially big in telescopes. **Mars** doesn't rise until about 2.5 hours before sunrise, but still does look spectacular shining at magnitude +0.9. Its disk, however, spans only 5.5".

ASTRONOMICAL ARTS CORNER

NIGHT CHORUS UNDER WINTER SKY

by Nancy Rohrer

Day is closing down
Night is opening up
Constellations and Stars take form
Orion, Pleiades, Caster, Pollux and Sirius
All ready for a friendly chat
I sit back and watch them
While the night chorus starts to sing
The chipping Sparrow starts
By singing Chip-chip, Chip-chip
Northern Mockingbird joins in
With his melodious tunes
While Yellow-Breasted Chat starts
With his clucks, whistles and squawks
It is all brought together by
The Great Horned Owl with his rhythmic
Whooh! who-who-who-who-who
What could be better?
Sit back and relax
Watch friends drift across the sky
And listen to the best of music.



A visitor examines the "big picture" at the Griffith Observatory. Photo courtesy of Jim Williams.

FOR SALE

10-inch f/5 Newtonian Reflector OTA. The primary mirror was recently coated with 96% enhanced coatings. The black metal tube housing the optics is 48.5" long with a side bearing kit but no Dobsonian rocker box – similar item in the Orion catalog with shipping and handling sells for \$565. Asking price is \$333 – or any nice offer. Please leave message at 805-964-4839.

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AU annual membership rates:





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

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

May 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 	3	4 Monthly Meeting 7PM	5
6	7	8	9 Griffith Trip	10 	11	12 SBMNH Star Party 8PM
13	14	15	16 	17 Dr. Filippenko SBMNH 7:30PM	18 Westmont 8 PM	19 National Sidewalk Astronomy Night!
20	21	22	23 	24	25 RTMC	26 RTMC
27 RTMC SBMNH Sleepover	28 RTMC	29	30	31 Harding Elementary 6 – 8 PM		

The Astronomical Unit

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