



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

November 2006

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

The AU Campout

The annual AU campout at Cachuma Lake had a great turnout of AU members, joined by some friendly folks with scopes from the Ventura County Astronomical Society. For once the weather was beautiful, and we were treated to a splendid display of Orionid meteors, fragments of Comet Halley, in the wee hours of Saturday morning. The food was delectable, the company was the best, and a good time was had by all. A big thank you to all the nice folks at the park who not only let us have the Mohawk Shores campsite for free, but turned off lights in our vicinity. The Creepy Creatures animal display at the Nature Center on Saturday was a highlight, too.

AU Outreach Summary

The month since the last newsletter was another good one for outreach, but we lost our #1 position for number of Night Sky Network events in the last six months. We're down to #3 at the moment, but we'll keep up the pace and make those other two clubs perspire! Volunteers helping out were Bridget & Andy Allen, David Anfenson, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook & her Quasars, Jason & Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, Kathy & Ken Pfeiffer, Javier Rivera, Nancy Rohrer, Jim Williams, Paul Winn, and Tim Wittenburg. We showed the sky to 312 people.

November AU Events

Here are the November events on the schedule so far. Remember, outreach events are subject to change as additions and cancellations do occur. To get the latest information, or directions to an event, please contact Chuck at 964-8201 or macpuzl@west.net.

Wednesday, November 1, 6 - 8 PM

Telescopes for Peabody Charter School.

Thursday, November 2, setup 6 PM

Slide show and scopes for Franklin Elementary School.

Friday, November 3, 7:30 PM

Monthly AU meeting in Farrand Hall. Our November speaker will be club member, *Craig Prater*, who will tell us about his trip to see the total solar eclipse earlier this year from the Sahara Desert in Libya! As part of his talk on the eclipse, Craig will include photos taken by club members Dale Lowdermilk, and Marv and Janie Johnson. Craig will also report on some amazing archeological sites that he visited in the region, including Pompeii and Leptis Magna.

Wednesday, November 8, 11 AM to 4 PM

Transit of Mercury observing from SBMNH. Show school kids and the public views through h-alpha and white light filtered scopes.

Wednesday, November 8, setup 6:30 PM

Slide shows and scopes for La Colina Junior High School. With the transit event, this will be a busy day, so anybody who can't make the SBMNH daytime event, but can come to La Colina, will be greatly appreciated!

Saturday, November 11, 5 PM

AU Planning Meeting in the classroom outside Krissie's office. Anyone is welcome to come discuss future AU activities and consume pizza!

Saturday, November 11, 7 PM

Monthly Star Party at SBMNH. Show off the nighttime sky.

Thursday, November 16, setup 6:30 PM

Slide show and telescopes for Cleveland Elementary School.

Friday, November 17, 7 PM

Monthly Westmont Public Telescope Night. Still no big scope, so bring your own, but the big one is getting close! You can get up-to-date information on the progress of the new scope at <http://physics.westmont.edu/observatory/index.html> - proposed upgrade.

Saturday, November 18, setup 7 PM

Telescopes at SBMNH for an overnight stay by families from Peabody Charter School. Maybe some Leonid meteors.



Although there are no bright planets easily visible this month, *Mercury* puts on quite a show by dawn and by day. Mercury crosses the face of the *Sun* on the 8th and in the next few weeks charges up for a fine dawn display for viewers at mid-northern latitudes. Rising more than an hour and a half before the Sun, she reaches greatest elongation of 17° from the Sun on November 25th. *Saturn* rises near midnight at the beginning of the month, and by month's end, appears on the horizon at about 10PM. Watch for this gas giant's close approach to Regulus as it passes just under 5° from the Lion's heart this month! On the 17th, Saturn reaches west quadrature and thus casts its shadow farthest to the side, giving the ball of the planet a real 3-dimensional look. By month's end, Saturn will dim to magnitude +0.6 as the rings close down to less than 15° from edge-on. But, it will still be a magnificent sight in telescopes! *Mars* just might be glimpsed at the end of the month, rising very low in the southeast, well below Mercury about 45 minutes before sunrise. *Venus* and *Jupiter*, unfortunately, are too close to the Sun this month to be viewed easily. There will be two meteor showers this month! The first, the *Taurid meteors*, peak during the first week of November, but a full *Moon* on the 5th will severely reduce the number of "falling stars" seen. However, don't forget the *Leonids*! Peaking in the predawn hours of the 17th and 18th, this famous shower will not be hindered by a bright Moon this year. For those of you who like a challenge, look for the minor planet, *Iris 7*, which will shine at the unusually bright magnitude of +6.8 on November 12th, and comes closer to Earth than at any other time between 1990 and 2020.

The Transit of Mercury

On Wednesday, November 8, we'll have a chance to witness the transit of Mercury. For astro-

newbies, that means that, from our point of view on Earth, Mercury will pass in front of the sun. Starting at 11:12 AM, a little black dot will begin to cross our view of the sun. By 4:10 PM, Mercury will have passed to the other side of the sun.

Transits of Mercury occur about 13 times every century, much more often than we'll see a transit of Venus. There will six other transits of Mercury visible from Santa Barbara in this century. The next transit won't be until 2016, so you won't want to miss this one! Because of Mercury's small size in comparison to the sun, you'll need a filtered telescope to see the transit. Several club members have volunteered to bring scopes to the Museum on November 8 to allow visitors to see the transit. We're also offering free programs to schools that day; in addition to a talk with me, the children will rotate through several different activities to learn about the sun, Mercury and our solar system. If you'd like to help with the scopes or the activities, please contact me at kcook@sbnature2.org or (805)682-4711 x173.

Whether you join us at the Museum or not, I hope you take the opportunity to observe this exciting celestial event. And to all of you who do plan on coming and helping, many thanks!

Krissie Cook

Astronomy Programs Coordinator, SBMNH

Electronic Newsletter!

Want to save your club some money and save trees too? Each copy of the paper newsletter you receive costs the AU about \$1.80 to print and mail, but to email you the electronic version (same great text and pictures) is free! To switch to the electronic newsletter, please send an email to AU Secretary Andy Allen: andrewstuartallen@yahoo.com

Annual Christmas Dinner

You are cordially invited to attend the Holiday Dinner at The Beachside Bar Café, at Goleta Beach on Thursday, December 7th starting at 6pm. The cost is **\$36 per person. This payment is due no later than Tuesday, November 28, 2006.** Please give your checks or cash to any AU officer. If you will be sending your payment by mail, please pay by Check only payable to "Astronomical Unit" and mail it to: Astronomical Unit c/o SBMNH, 2559 Puesta Del Sol Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998. There are four menu items this year to choose from (you may choose this the night of the dinner): California Chicken, Salmon Hollandaise, Fillet of Beef, or Portobello and Penne. More

information on the meals will be on a flyer that will be available at the general meeting or at your request. All entrées will include a Caesar Salad or New England Clam Chowder. All meals will be served with Sautéed Vegetables and Garlic Parmesan Whipped Potatoes. Hot Coffee and Tea is also available. Dessert will be available at an extra charge. It has been requested that we use cash for bar items. There will be an optional gift exchange. (Maximum \$10- in good taste, please.) We will exchange these after dinner, approximately 7:30pm.

Calendars for Sale!

The time has come to purchase your fantastically illustrated 2007 astronomy calendar! This new calendar is just full of beautiful high resolution photographs that will keep you wanting to look at the dates of the month throughout the whole year. It also has a full two page spread of the Earth that details the growing excessive light areas and where there's the best dark skies. Each month also features important astronomical information of the particular month and other dates of interest. This is an A U fund raiser that will directly help the Club with operating expenses. Your 2007 Astronomy calendar retails for \$13 if you buy it off the shelf but you can purchase one from AU for just \$10! We received 30 and they're expected to sell like hot cakes, so don't delay in contacting club Treasurer Ruben Gutierrez through the AU web site or buy one at the November general meeting.

900mm focal length TASCOS refractor: 70mm aperture Equatorial mount and tripod. No counterweights or eyepieces. \$20. Call Warren at 965-7076

More for Sale!

900mm focal length TASCOS refractor: 70mm aperture Equatorial mount and tripod. No counterweights or eyepieces. \$20. 700mm focal length TASCOS refractor with one 0.965" eyepiece and a 1.25" eyepiece adaptor Alt/az mount and tripod. \$25. Call Warren at 965-7076

80mm Meade Refractor (900mm f/11 - Achromatic) w/ guide scope. Two inch focuser. \$90. Perfect for the Mercury Transit! Call Tony 685-5387.

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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 20th of the current month!

AU annual membership rates:





Single = \$15 Family = \$25

AU mailing address:

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

November 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Peabody Charter 6 -8 PM	2 Franklin Elementary 6 PM	3 Monthly Meeting 7:30PM	4
5 	6	7	8 Mercury Transit! SBMNH 11AM – 4PM La Colina Jr 6:30 PM	9	10	11 Planning Meeting 5PM SBMNH Star Party 7PM
12 	13	14	15	16 Cleveland Elementary 6:30 PM	17 Westmont Star Party 7 PM	18 Peabody Charter 7PM
19	20 	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28 	29	30		

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