



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

November 2010

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### OUR NOVEMBER MEETING

Instead of our normal Farrand Hall meeting, there will be a **special meeting** on Friday, November 5, at the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope office. Their office is located at 6740 Cortona Dr. Suite 102, in the industrial park in Goleta. We will have a short meeting beginning at 7PM followed by a tour of LCOGT facilities.

### OUTREACH SUMMARY

Since the last newsletter, AU outreaches Andy Allen, Mike Bennett, Bill Clausen, Karleen & Dennis Cowan, Tim Crawford, Carolyn & Ed Edwards, Mike Farris, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Jeremy Kerby, Marcia Kuplerski, Chris Larson, Zanna Lucy, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Max Neufeldt, Edgar Ocampo, Mark Parker, Bob Richard, Nancy Rohrer, David Salvia, Colin Taylor, Tom Totton, Tom Whittemore, Jim Williams, and Tim Wittenburg showed the night sky to **833** customers, despite three events that were clouded out.



*A gathering of stars at the Avocado Festival in Carpinteria this past October. Photo: R. Gutierrez.*

### OUTREACH FOR NOVEMBER

Here are the AU events scheduled so far for November. Remember, events are subject to change, so to get the latest information on schedules, or directions, just contact Chuck at 964-8201 or [macpuzl@west.net](mailto:macpuzl@west.net)

#### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, SETUP 6 PM

Telescopes to Westmont for a group from SBMNMH and Westmont students.

#### THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, SETUP 5 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at Adams Elementary School, on Las Positas near Earl Warren Showgrounds. We'll set up on the grass just south and west of their auditorium.

#### FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 7 PM

Our **REGULAR MEETING** at SBMNH is replaced this month by a **SPECIAL MEETING** at the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope office at 6740 Cortona Dr. Suite 102, in the industrial park in Goleta.

#### SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 5:30 PM

Star party and tour of the large LCOGT telescope at the Sedgwick Reserve, at the end of Brinkerhoff Avenue in the Santa Ynez Valley.

#### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2 AM

Daylight Saving Time ends. Fall back an hour, so it's dark sooner for astronomers!

#### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8, SETUP 6 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at Coastline Christian Academy, in Goleta on Cathedral Oaks just northeast of the Fairview intersection.

#### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, SETUP 6 PM

Telescopes for Santa Ynez School Science Night, at 3525 Pine Street in Santa Ynez.

### **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, SETUP 6 PM**

Slide show and telescopes for an astronomy night at the Goleta Public Library, on Fairview Avenue. We'll set up in the small lot behind the library.

### **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 5 PM**

AU Planning Meeting in the classroom outside Javier's office at SBMNH. Come help plan your club's activities.

### **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 7 PM**

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH. Bring a scope and have fun showing goodies in the sky outside Palmer Observatory, or just show up and enjoy looking at them.

### **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, SETUP 7 PM**

Telescope Tuesday at the Camino Real Marketplace in Goleta. We set up in the plaza between Borders and the theater.

### **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, SETUP 6:30 PM**

Slide show and telescopes for La Colina Junior High School in Santa Barbara, off Foothill near 154. We always get a lot of students coming out for this event.

### **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, SETUP 7 PM**

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College, at the new observatory next to the baseball field.



*Standing proud at a SBMNH outreach. Photo: R. Gutierrez.*

### **DARK SKY ADVENTURE**

*Ron Nixon*

For the September New Moon, I went to the sixth annual Central Nevada Star Party, organized by the Tonopah Astronomical Society. This event was held in the very interesting Monte Cristo Range about 35 miles West of Tonopah. The site is primitive; however, the society provided for 2 porta-potties and trash cans. In addition to exceptionally dark skies, the area is also situated next to some colorful canyons that provide for interesting daytime exploration. About 20-25 people showed up during the three nights that I was there. It took about 6 hours to drive from Bakersfield to the observing site, the last 2 miles being on dirt road, which did not discourage a couple of large motor homes. As soon as it started to become dark the first night, the wind began to blow. Rather than fighting it at all, I decided to cover things up and go to bed about 8 PM. I woke up almost exactly at midnight, and noticed the peculiar absence of the sound I had been hearing, the wind. Rolling out of my vehicle I discovered it to be dead calm, only a couple of people were observing, but they began alerting others to get up. It was really dark, with great detail throughout the Milky Way stretching from horizon to horizon overhead. The skies were black all the way down to the 360° low horizons, except for one very small (about 5°) but surprisingly noticeable light dome to the S-SE. This was Las Vegas - 200 miles distant. This first night may have been the best of the three because the seeing was also good. In addition to being able to observe at low altitude, the most exceptional thing was being able to see things well that have low surface brightness. I was very impressed with the extent of the Andromeda Galaxy arms, M33, the Helix Nebula, M74, M101, and even the California Nebula with a UHC filter. A couple of people had dark sky meters used to quantify the darkness of the sky. The best reading that night was a 21.87. The previous year a better reading of 22.05 was achieved. I learned that a perfect reading is 23, and that it is measured in magnitudes/square arc second. Starting about 3 AM the zodiacal light looked so bright to the East that it seemed to wash out all of that part of the sky. I went back to bed at 4 that morning, already pleased that I had made the drive.

The next two nights were calm and very clear, however the seeing was mostly average, sometimes entering the good range. A number of people drove

in from California for as little as one night. About half of the people spent the night imaging, the other half had mostly Dobsonians, ranging from 8 to 16 inches. I spent a little time trying to see how dim a star I could see unaided in the Little Dipper, using the Northern polar sequence of star magnitudes. I was consistently able to make out a 6.4 magnitude star in the bowl of the Little Dipper, and occasionally I could see a 7.1 magnitude star near Polaris. Everyone seemed to have a very good time. Dark adaptation was preserved for everyone, and many fine views were shared. I stayed up till 2 AM the next two nights, spending quite a bit of time observing with new friends, one of whom saw 20 bighorn sheep that day a couple of miles away from the site. I plan to go next year, and hopefully I will see some bighorns then as well.



*View of the Nevada Central Star Party. Photo: R. Nixon*

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN....**

*Ruben Gutierrez*

#### **Avocado Festival**

This year's Avocado Star Party in Carpinteria was as good a time as last year! With the assistance of numerous club members, and Michael Bennett pinch-hitting for travelling Astronomy Manger Javier Rivera, the many star gazers who came to take a look through our telescopes were very impressed. The excitement seemed to reach a fever pitch when over 40 GalileoScopes were handed out to almost all the children, and some adults, too. It was a further treat when the Park Rangers came by to thank the AU members for putting on such a great event. See you all next year at the Carpinteria Avocado Festival!

#### **Design Update**

I'm very happy and proud to announce that with the expert assistance of club member and designer, Jim Williams, the AU has finally finished the design of a workable and practical telescope viewing system for star gazers in wheel chairs, small children, and larger people. Yes, this telescope viewing system will give the message to those special needs people that "You can see, too." Hence, we've named this telescope viewing system the UC2. This system will truly be a jewel for the AU that will represent our commitment to bring the wonders of the universe to those who have not had the chance to look through a telescope due to various limitations. At this point we've begun looking into possible funding to construct the UC2 and welcome any suggestions. Should you have one, please contact me at [rubenalvag@aol.com](mailto:rubenalvag@aol.com).

#### **SBAU Holiday Dinner**

Believe it or not, the time has come to make your reservations for the SBAU's Annual holiday dinner party at the Beachside Cafe. AU members are invited to check out the special insert in this edition to get the juicy details. As was the case for last year, the AU will be subsidizing members' dinner tickets, which means you'll only pay \$30 for fine cuisine and holiday fun that will keep you smiling into next year. See you there!

#### **Special November Meeting Location**

For this month's General Meeting, and for the first time in a very long time, we will **not** be conducting the general meeting on the beautiful grounds of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Instead, club member John Martinez has invited the membership to the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network Headquarters located at 6740 Cortona Dr, Suite 102, in Goleta. Club members will get a presentation and tour of the facility after a short general monthly meeting. Please arrive by 7 p.m. Wow, what a treat!

#### **Special Sedgwick Reserve Viewing**

On Saturday night, November 6, the AU is invited to the Sedgwick Reserve in the Santa Ynez Valley to get a chance to peek through the LCOGT 0.8m (32") telescope. AU members are also invited to bring their scopes for this special event. Arrival time is 5:30PM. Please see the November outreach schedule of events for more information.

## **New and Renewing Members**

Now here's my favorite section – officially welcoming new and renewing members. I wish to give a star-blazing welcome aboard to new members: Kathryn Eisler LeMay and Jessica & Owen Barton and family. I also wish to give a supernova thank you to renewing members: Ramsey Harris, Colin Taylor, Zanna Lucy, Warren Bitters; and the following members and their families: Tom King, Rick Hibbs, Janie & Marv Johnson, Joan & Tony Galván and Barbara & John Ahlman. It is a pleasure for me to see how many people are interested in being part of this community-minded and fun-loving club!

## **ARTS CORNER**

### **He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven**

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet :  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

*William Butler Yeats*



*Summer Vandenberg Launch. Photo: D. Zagorodnov*

## **Come In**

As I came to the edge of the woods,  
Thrush music -- hark!  
Now if it was dusk outside,  
Inside it was dark.

Too dark in the woods for a bird  
By sleight of wing  
To better its perch for the night,  
Though it still could sing.

The last of the light of the sun  
That had died in the west  
Still lived for one song more  
In a thrush's breast.

Far in the pillared dark  
Thrush music went --  
Almost like a call to come in  
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars;  
I would not come in.  
I meant not even if asked;  
And I hadn't been.

*Robert Frost*

## **The Infinite Stars**

I stand at night and gaze up at the sky,  
A huge, inverted bowl above my head;  
Upon its blue-black concave surface spread,  
Unnumbered twinkling lights intrigue my eye.

A bit of conscious clay upon a speck  
Of age-cooled fire-mist, sun-warmed into life,  
With mortal eyes I glimpse a vastness rife  
With stars whose years no finite mind may reckon.

Across their background glows the Milky Way,  
The cradle-place of new born stars untold,  
Whose light shall shine adown eternity,  
When those now bright

    have long been dark and cold.  
And as I marvel at this vast array,  
My spirit bows in deep humility.

*A. C. Holm, 1925*

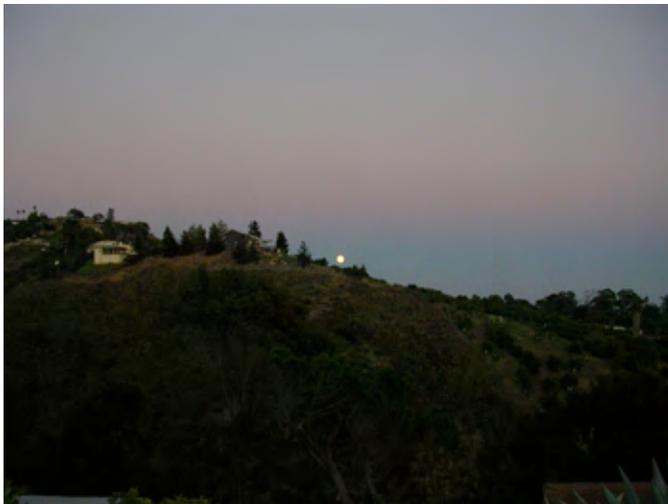
## Canis Major

The great Overdog,  
That heavenly beast  
With a star in one eye,  
Gives a leap in the east.

He dances upright  
All the way to the west,  
And never once drops  
On his forefeet to rest.

I'm a poor underdog,  
But to-night I will bark  
With the great Overdog  
That romps through the dark.

*Robert Frost, 1928*



*Summer Full Moon over Northridge Canyon. Photo: T. Whittemore*

## Mrs Moon

Mrs moon  
sitting in the sky  
little old lady  
rock-a-bye  
with a ball of fading light  
and silvery needles  
knitting the night

*Roger McGough*

### AU Information Box

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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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## November 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 WESTMONT 6PM	4 ADAMS ELEMENTARY 5PM	5 MONTHLY AU MEETING 7PM LCOGT	6 SEDGWICK RESERVE 5:30PM
7 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS 2AM	8 COASTLINE CHRISTIAN 6PM	9	10 SANTA YNEZ SCHOOL 6PM	11 GOLETA PUBLIC LIBRARY 6PM	12	13 PLAN MEETING 5PM SBMNH STAR PARTY 7PM
14	15	16 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	17 LA COLINA JH 6:30PM	18	19 WESTMONT COLLEGE 7PM	20
21 	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 	29	30				

### The Astronomical Unit

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