



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

November 2016

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



A day at the Marymount Maker Fair. Photo: Tim Crawford.

THE NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Our speaker for the November General Meeting will be Keri Bean from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. Her topic this evening will cover NASA's ambitious Dawn mission to the asteroids Vesta and Ceres.

OUTREACH SUMMARY

Since the last newsletter, AU outreaches Peter Angeloff, Farshad Barman, Tim Beccue, Mike Chibnik, Tim Crawford, Michael Dilley, Joe Doyle, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Ron Herron, Jürgen Hilmer, Sean Kelly, Ken Kihlstrom, Chris Larson, Adrian Lopez, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Janet & Martin Meza, Kim Miller, Bruce Murdock, Max Neufeldt, Peggy O'Rork, Javier Rivera & Victoria & Quasars, Dianne & Russell Ruiz, David Salvia, Gary Schneider, Cez & Tom Totton, Chris Ulivo, John West, Luke Whalen, Tom Whittemore, Jerry Wilson, and Paul Winn showed the night sky to 945 astronomy tourists.

NOVEMBER OUTREACH EVENTS

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

The Telescope Workshop meets on Tuesday evenings at 7:30 PM at the Broder Building at SBMNH. Contact Tim Crawford at tcrawf3@cox.net for information.

Listen to the AU on the radio at KZSB 1290 AM at 9 AM on the second and fourth Monday of each month.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, SETUP 6 PM

Telescopes for an Astronomy Night at Peabody Charter School, at 3018 Calle Noguera in Santa Barbara. We set up on their blacktop, with entry at the SW corner of the campus.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, SETUP 5:30 PM

Telescopes for a Science Night at Foothill School, 711 Ribera Drive in Goleta. We set up on their blacktop, with entry at the NW corner of the campus.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 7 PM

Monthly AU meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. Hear about the Dawn mission to Vesta and Ceres.

Sunday, November 6 - Daylight Saving Time ends!

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, SETUP 5:30 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at Coastline Christian Academy, on Cathedral Oaks at the NE side of the intersection with Fairview.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, SETUP 7 PM

Telescope Tuesday at the Camino Real Marketplace in Goleta. We set up in the plaza by the theater.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, SETUP 5:30 PM

Slide show and scopes for an Astronomy Night at Notre Dame School, at 33 East Micheltorena Street. We come in through a gate on Anacapa.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, SETUP 5 PM

Telescopes for NUTS (Night Under The Stars) at Santa Ynez Elementary School, at 3525 Pine Street. We set up in their central plaza.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, SETUP 5 PM

Telescopes for a school campout at Carpinteria State Beach, at the GRAC group site in the Anacapa Loop (sites 102-126).

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 5 PM

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

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 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.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, SETUP 6:30 PM

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

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, SETUP 6 PM

Telescopes for Bacara Resort and Spa. We set up on the lawn by Angel Oak Restaurant.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, SETUP 6 PM

Telescopes and slide show for Santa Barbara Junior High School. We set up behind Marjorie Luke Theater on the campus, and get in via the gate on the East Ortega and North Quarantina intersection.

Looking Back

Editor's note: It is often enlightening to take another look at books we enjoyed when we were just getting into amateur astronomy. In this light, when space permits, I would like to share with you excerpts from some books that inspired me a long time ago. This month's installment comes from "Starlight Nights" by Leslie Peltier – an ardent variable star observer and comet hunter. This selection is taken from Chapter 1 – "A Starry Night."

There is A CHILL IN THE AUTUMN AIR AS I WALK DOWN THE PATH that leads along the brow of the hill, past the garden and the big lilac, to the clearing just beyond. Already, in the gathering dusk, a few of the stars are turning on their lights. Vega, the brightest one, now is dropping toward the west. Can it be that half a year has gone since I watched her

April rising in the east? Low down in the southwest Antares blinks a red-eyed sad farewell to fall while just above the horizon in the far northeast Capella sends flickering beacon flashes through the low bank of smoke and haze that hangs above the town. Instinctively I turn and look back toward the southeast for Capella's co-riser. Yes, there it is, Fomalhaut, the Autumn Star, aloof from all the others, in a sky made darker by the rising purple shadow of the earth.

At the center of the little clearing the path ends abruptly for here, right at the top of the low hill, sit two stark-white structures. One of these is small and squat, no higher than my head, no wider than my outstretched arms. The other, standing boldly out against the sky is, by comparison, quite imposing. All day long they sit there side by side – these two – in sun, in rain, in snow, without a sign of life about them. It is only when the stars come out that they begin to stir. Then, like some snowy owl and owlet waking for a night of dark marauding, they spread apart about in all directions. The prey they seek is hidden somewhere in the skies – for these are my observatories.

To the casual eye they would appear simply as a couple of oddly shaped buildings constructed of quite ordinary wood and metal, concrete and stucco. To me, these observatories and the telescopes housed within them are vital and alive, for they are compounded of the visual delights, the unexpected thrills, the lasting friendships, the expressions of good will and the multitude of kindred blessings that have come to me, all mixed with starlight, from the skies of three score years.

It is not yet dark enough to start the night's observing but I raise the windows and open wide the shutters of the dome to let the warm air trapped within escape. When I neglect to do this at the end of a sunny day the star images, which should be small and round and steady, will seethe and boil and frustrate until the cooler night air flows inside and makes them simmer down. Tonight, I notice that something more than just the daytime warmth is imprisoned in the dome. It also holds the daytime smell, the smell of fall, the smell of burning leaves.

To anyone who closely holds communion with the earth, each of the mild months of the year must have its own distinctive smell. To me April smells like freshly plowed ground; May recalls lilacs; the aroma of strawberries brings back long June days; July melon, chrysanthemum, and lastly, of course, October's pungent scent of burning leaves. These

are all heady, potent smells and I close my eyes and inhale them deeply – with one exception. New-mown hay is one smell-of-the-month that I cannot abide...

It now is eight o'clock, just dark enough at this time of year to start my prowling among the stars. Tonight the sky is clear, the stars are brilliant, and the definition, that all-important factor, should improve steadily hour after hour as the darkened earth gives up its store of accumulated heat. Already, even though some laggard light still lingers in the west, the southern Milky Way is flooding around its murky midstream islands while here and there about the sky other kindling fires begin their silent clamoring for me to turn my telescopes on them.

I am fortunate in having two good telescopes at my disposal for this very purpose. One of these is a 12-inch refractor sixteen feet in length; the other, a mere midget in comparison, is a 6-inch instrument just four feet long. The 12-inch is thus about four times more powerful than the 6-inch for its lens has four times the surface area of the latter. However, each telescope has its own particular sphere of usefulness. Each one can perform its own specific duties much better than could the other one so there is really no cause for any rivalry between the two and I, for my part, have always done my best to insure domestic tranquility by allotting them equal observing time.

On a night such as this, with its exceptional transparency, a special effort is made to look for those objects which have eluded me on previous nights of only mediocre seeing. Tonight I glimpse an old and now long-quiescent nova at slightly below sixteenth magnitude and then I faintly glimpse a recently reported outburst of another star in a stellar universe far removed from ours. My next effort is even more successful as I watch a close pair of faint pulsating stars in Cassiopeia sparkling side by side as sharp and distinct as two tiny diamonds set against the velvet of the sky.

With the 6-inch I search for comets for nearly an hour low in the eastern sky where the late-rising moon will soon be coming up. It now is nearly midnight and so, as a final curtain to a gala spectacle, I let the scope glide slowly upward until, guided more by habit than by conscious help from me, it comes to rest on a misty little group of stars. Once again, as on uncounted other nights, I see:

“... the Pleiads, rising through the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies

Tangled in a silver braid.”
So clear and sparkling is this autumn night that, with averted vision I can see quite readily the wraithlike wisps of nebulosity that festoon and enmesh this entire little cluster. Something else I see too. Something wrapped in wisps of memory. Something that I always see each time I look at the Pleiades. I see a small Ohio farmhouse, a little boy, and a tall kitchen window that faced the east.

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

November 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 PEABODY CHARTER 6PM	4 AU GENERAL MEETING 7PM	5
6 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS	7 COASTLINE CHRISTIAN 5:30PM	8 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	9 NOTRE DAME SCHOOL 5:30PM	10 SANTA YNEZ ELEMENTARY 5PM	11 CARPINTERIA STATE BEACH 5PM	12 PLANNING MEETING 5PM STAR PARTY 7PM SBMNH
13	14 TECH TALK KZSB (AM 1290) 9-10AM	15	16	17	18 WESTMONT COLLEGE 6:30PM	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 BACARA RESORT 6PM
27	28 TECH TALK KZSB (AM 1290) 9-10AM	29 SB JUNIOR HIGH 6PM	30			

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