



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

October 2001

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Last Month's Meeting

Thanks to Joan and Tony for a great narrative and photographic review of their visit to southern Africa to view the wildlife and the total eclipse.

This Month's Meeting

Our October meeting will feature a talk by **Lee Coombs** entitled "**Color Astrophotography for the Amateur.**" With the advent of greatly improved color films in recent years, photographing celestial events and objects has become a popular pastime for an increasing number of people. No longer is it necessary to use exotic processing techniques or elaborate and expensive equipment to achieve excellent results. Now, a roll of film may often have family or vacation photos mixed with some astronomical photos ready to be processed by a local photo dealer.

This presentation will describe equipment, film, and techniques used to photograph a wide range of astronomical subjects and events. Techniques will range from the use of tripod-mounted cameras to direct photography through a telescope. The results of such methods will be illustrated with actual photographs taken by the speaker using common off-the-shelf color films and without using any specialized processing or pre-treatment techniques. Some interesting projects will also be described in the hope of encouraging those that haven't to give astrophotography a try.

Lee Coombs recently retired after 32 years of teaching at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo. He received his Ph.D. in analytical chemistry from Purdue University in 1970 and has

been a Professor of Chemistry at Cal Poly since that time. He began doing astrophotography in earnest around 1972 and had his first photos published in Astronomy Magazine in 1974. Since then, he has had his work published in numerous magazines and in over 30 books.

In 1979, he co-founded the Central Coast Astronomical Society and was elected its first president. This amateur group has grown rapidly in membership and remains a very active organization. Lee enjoys fishing and travel with his wife Penny and sharing his love of astronomy with others.

Next Month's Meeting

Our November speaker will once again be cosmic ambulance chaser Chris Butler (the guy from ² Hydra), who took us on a guided tour of nearby spring stars last March. This time, he'll conduct an entertaining visit to the winter stars of our galactic neighborhood.

AU Auction Results

The silent auction of astro items at the September meeting generated \$156.00 for the club. Thanks to Bob Reis and John Boyd for their very generous donations of items. If there is sufficient interest, we will hold one of these events about every three months. If you have something astronomical you no longer need, let Tony know. The money goes into the club's treasury, and can be used for group events such as the holiday party, camping, or a field trip.

Thanks, Volunteers!

September (up to newsletter time) was a very quiet outreach month. We had only two events, both on

the same night, and they were clouded out. AU volunteers were still out there, though. The die-hards were Art Harris, Pat McPartlin, and Edgar Ocampo. We showed terrestrial views and gave handouts to **29** customers, one of whom was Lois Capps.

The outreach schedules are subject to change, so to get the latest information, check the web page bulletin board (under the “Observing” topic), or contact Edgar or Chuck. Try to let one of us know ahead of time if you are planning to show up at an outreach event.

AU Observations for October

Saturday, October 13, 8:30 PM – SBMNH Monthly Star Party in the pit by Palmer Observatory.

Saturday, October 13, 6:00 PM – “Starry Story Nights” at Santa Maria's Pioneer Park. We're sending a small group up to support this event, since their normal astronomer is away on vacation and they'd already advertised.

Monday, October 15, 7:00 PM - Outreach for Santa Ynez Valley Book Review Club (they're reading constellation lore) and the Womens Environmental Watch group at a ranch off of Highway 154. Contact Edgar or Chuck for details.

***** There will be no Westmont Observation in
*** October because of the AU Camping Trip.**

Friday - Sunday, October 19 to 21 - AU Annual campout and potluck at the Lopez Lake Recreation Area near Arroyo Grande.

Monday, October 29, 7:30 PM - Elderhostel outreach at Camp Ramah in Ojai.

Wednesday, October 31, dark – It's Halloween! Set up a scope in your driveway and treat your visitors to some astronomical views. Halloween has been proposed as a second National Astronomy Day each year. It's a Full Moon, so don't plan on faint fuzzies!

California Star Party

CalStar2 was a lot of fun. A contingent of eight AU members had three nights of good seeing under the dark (except for that motorcyclist) skies of Lake San Antonio. The area was teeming with amateur astronomers, magpies, quail, deer, and wild pigs, and between them and all of the fancy telescopes on the observing field, we must have seen a hundred sows and bucks worth. You can see some images, including Paul, Tony, and Joe at the CalStar Saturday swap meet, by visiting:

<http://www.svpal.org/~ptchamb/calstar2.html>

Annual AU Campout

The AU campout is all set for the weekend of October 19/20/21 at the Lopez Lake Recreation Area. We will be in the Live Oak Group Area, near Mallard Cove at lake level, which has a large barbecue, water, electricity, nearby restroom with hot showers, full shade, and good views. Daytime activities include boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, wind boarding, bicycling, and bird watching.

Lopez Lake is just ten miles east of Arroyo Grande off Highway 101. Within easy driving range are wineries, golf courses, shopping, historic sites, and Hearst Castle.

The Marina Store has groceries, fishing tackle, tee shirts, souvenirs, and a laundromat. Motorboats, paddle boats, kayaks, and hydro-bikes are available for rental.

It doesn't matter how many campers or day visitors we have at the site, but automobile access is limited. Our first six vehicles are covered by the reservation fee. An additional two vehicles may park at the group site for a \$12 per vehicle per night fee. Additional vehicles will pay the same fee, but must park in the overflow lot. The AU will cover the parking fees. Pets are an additional \$2 per day. Non-motorized watercraft are \$2.50 per day, and

motorized craft are \$5 per day, if you bring your own.

We'll have our usual potluck dinner on Saturday evening, and observing on Friday and Saturday nights. The Moon will be 3-4 days old, so we'll have plenty of dark sky to wander through, and the Orionid meteors may give us a little show.

For more information, visit their website at <http://www.slocountyparks.com/lopezlake/>

We'll have a sign-up sheet available at the meeting for camping and the potluck, or you can contact Pat & Chuck at MACPUZL@west.net or 964-8201.

Scope for Sale



Tony has a Celestron C90 (90mm Maksutov-Cassegrain) AstroTele outfit for sale, complete with tangent arm RA drive, a nice equatorial wedge, four eyepieces, two prism diagonals, counter and balance weights, and t-mount camera adaptor, plus the original manual. \$500.00 OBO. You can see more of the entire setup at: <http://www.dosgatos.com/c90at/> or contact Tony at 685-2188 or galvan@dosgatos.com

Holiday Party

It was such a blast last year, we're doing it again! Thanks to the efforts of Bob Michael, we will once again be having our annual holiday party at the Beachside Bar & Grill at Goleta Beach, on Thursday, December 6.

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Current annual membership rates are:

Single \$15 Family \$25

Our address is:

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On the Web: www.sbau.org

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