



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

September 2010

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### OUR SPEAKER FOR SEPTEMBER

Wayne Rosing has been involved as a key player in several landmark projects in the computing industry since the late 1970s. Gaining experience as an engineering manager at DEC and Data General in the 1970s, he became a director of engineering at Apple Computer in the early 1980s. There he led the Apple Lisa project, the forerunner to the Macintosh. He then went on to work at Sun Microsystems and headed the spin-off First Person. At Sun Labs, his team developed Java. Rosing served as Vice President of Engineering at Google from January 2001 to May 2005. He continues to serve as an advisor to Google and is now a senior fellow in mathematical and physical sciences at the University of California, Davis. As a hobby, Wayne grinds telescope mirrors and is currently the chief technical advisor for the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope.

### OUTREACH SUMMARY

August had a great turnout of both AU volunteers and the stargazing public. Since the last newsletter, volunteers Andy Allen, Bill Clausen, Karleen & Dennis Cowan, Jason & Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Ed Edwards, Mike Farris, Don French, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Jeremy Kerby, Justin & Tom King, Chris Larson, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Max Neufeldt, Edgar Ocampo, Mark Parker, Javier Rivera & the Quasars, Nancy Rohrer, Cez & Tom Totton, Tom Whittemore, Jim Williams, Jerry Wilson, Paul Winn, and Tim Wittenburg showed cool stuff in the sky to 1935 customers.

### OUTREACH FOR SEPTEMBER

AU monthly meetings start up again in September after the summer hiatus. Here are the events scheduled so far for the month. Outreach 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)

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 7 PM

Monthly AU meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. See a quick planetarium show, then hear a talk by Wayne Rosing, head honcho at LCOGT.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, SETUP 8 PM

Telescopes for campers at Cachuma Lake Campground. We set up on the grassy field at Dakota Plains.

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, SETUP 6:30 PM

Telescopes for Montecito Country Club. Contact Chuck if you're coming, for directions and to provide them with a count.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 6 PM

Monthly AU planning meeting at SBMNH, in the classroom next to Javier's office.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 7:30 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH, next to Palmer Observatory.

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, SETUP 7 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College, at their new observatory adjacent to the baseball field. If you're not at the AU campout, please help out at Westmont if you can.



At the welcoming table – Nancy and Pat. Photo: R. Gutierrez

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 (AFTERNOON) THROUGH  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 (MORNING)**

Annual AU campout at the Mohawk Shores group campsite at Cachuma Lake. The Saturday dinner will be a catered event at 5:30 PM. The number of cars we are permitted to have with the site is limited, so carpool or come early if you can. If we run out of permits, and you have to pay at the entrance gate, keep your receipt for reimbursement from the AU. Saturday is also **International Observe the Moon Night**.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, SETUP 7 PM**

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

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, SETUP 6:30 PM**

Telescopes for Starry Nights at the Biltmore, on their Monte Vista Lawn. Contact Chuck for details if you haven't come before.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 8:13 PM PDT**

Autumnal Equinox - It's Fall!

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, SETUP 7 PM**

Telescopes for children from Los Olivos School at the Sedgwick Reserve, at the end of Brinkerhoff Avenue in the Santa Ynez Valley.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, SETUP 7 PM**

Telescopes for campers at Carpinteria State Beach. We set up on the grass across from their ranger office, just to the right before the main entrance.

**AU Campout Cruises**

Be sure to reserve a place if you want to take the Cachuma Lake Wildlife Cruises on Saturday (10 AM to Noon and 3 PM to 5 PM) or Sunday (10 AM to Noon - meet at the marina 30 minutes before)! Climb aboard the "Osprey" for a 2-hour lake tour with a Santa Barbara County Park Naturalist. The cruise takes a look at area wildlife, wildflowers, and resident birds along the shore. Reservations: (805) 686-5050 weekdays, (805) 686-5055 weekends. \$15/adults; \$7/child 4-12 years old; *please, no children under 4.*

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

*R. Gutierrez*

Summer in Santa Barbara and the surrounding communities is as wondrous as you can get, with

the possible exception of the wonderful members of the Santa Barbara Astronomical Unit and the great folks at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. All the outreaches and community events the AU conducts would certainly not be possible without dedicated members. One such member who's always present to staff the front table and happily greet the many visitors at our monthly Star Party at the SBMNH is long time member Nancy Rohrer - pictured with Pat McPartlin on the front of this month's AstroNews. Nancy's consistent help and involvement with the AU is an important part of the success the AU has been enjoying. Thank you, Nancy! Another person who has worked diligently this past year with the AU is SBMNH staff member Samantha Thompson, who has sadly left her post with the museum. She will surely be missed.

**Accessible Telescope**

As I mentioned in last month's issue, the AU has been involved in the development of a handicapped accessible telescope under the guidance of designer and AU member, Jim Williams. Jim has come up with a unique design of a hydraulically controlled telescope mount that will be capable of delivering a Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope to the exact position and height a wheelchair-bound star gazer would need. As you can see in Jim's concept pictured in this month's issue, the design is one that at least I have never seen and certainly will solve the challenge of providing access to all who want to look through a telescope and enjoy the wonders of astronomy. As you might guess, this unique telescope mounting system must be custom manufactured using special welding techniques and metals, with the cost reaching thousands of dollars. During the August Planning meeting, we started tackling this hurdle and are currently receiving bids as well as looking into possible funding sources. This is where you can help! Should you have an idea for a person, organization, or company willing to help the AU in this most important project, please contact me at [rubenavag@aol.com](mailto:rubenavag@aol.com). Your assistance will be very much appreciated!

**AU Campout and BBQ**

It's hard to believe Summer is almost over and Fall is upon us. Outreach Coordinator Chuck McPartlin and the many faithful AU assistants are looking at another busy school season of Science Nights, among the other monthly star parties throughout the

greater Santa Barbara area. However, one fun-packed and delicious event designed exclusively for AU members is the annual campout at Cachuma Lake. This three-day outing will take place September 17 through 19. As always, the premium Mohawk Shores camp site has been reserved for the AU by the Cachuma Lake staff in appreciation for the many star parties the AU conducts at Cachuma Lake throughout the year. Parking is also provided free of charge, but members are encouraged to carpool since there's only room for 20 vehicles. When you get to the gate, mention you're a member of the Astronomical Unit, and you'll be given a pass - if space remains. If not, you'll have to purchase a vehicle entry pass. Keep a receipt, and the AU will reimburse you. We will set up camp the afternoon of the 17th, enjoy a full day at the lake on the 18th, which will include a free delicious Bar-B-Q tri-tip, chicken, baked beans, and garlic bread dinner at 5:30 PM. We will break camp the morning of the 19th. All AU members are invited! There will be a sign up sheet at the September General Meeting so we know how much we have to order from the Country Meat Market. Please sign up and bring a side dish to share.

### **Monthly Meetings Start Again**

Keep in mind the AU will be starting a new season of monthly general meetings on the first Friday of each month, starting on September 3rd, at 7 PM, at the SBMNH. During this meeting there will also be a sign up sheet for those members who will be participating in the annual star party during the Carpinteria Avocado Festival. This all-day event will include solar observations and displays starting at noon, followed by a star party that evening. Last year we had over 1200 guests, so please sign up and show your support for the AU!

### **New and Renewing Members**

I'd like to welcome new members: Monica Harris, Holly Schalla, and Sharon Kantanen, and renewing members: Lorraine Cass, John and Anne Cotton and Family, John and Kelly Boyd and family, Dora Drake, and Sylvelin Edgerton. Your interest in the science of astronomy and participation with the Astronomical Unit is truly a most valuable part of our community!

### **In Memoriam**

On a very sad note I wish to acknowledge the passing of AU member, Don Dawson. I shall

always remember his enthusiasm for astronomy and the hot coffee and donuts he and his wife, Nollie Lei, brought to the setup crew on International Astronomy Day, 2010.

### **FROM THE WORKSHOP...**

*T. Crawford*

Tiffany and Beatrice Meier are two of our latest participants at the Telescope Workshop at the Museum on Wednesdays. They are learning to build a Dobsonian telescope utilizing some of the many tricks from our own "Swami Tommy" - Tom Whittemore - Master telescope and mirror craftsman. Tiffany hopes to have a 6", f/7.8 Sonotube-type Dob completed and ready for the night sky soon. The workshop has recently expanded to include not only mirror making, but also telescope scope design, building and testing, hands-on experience, and even an open forum on CCD imaging. You may also want to know how to "star test" your own scope. There's a lot to learn. If you wish to know more or get involved, get on board the Wednesday Evening Express over at the Broder Building from 7:30 – 9PM. We usually meet every other Wednesday evening, depending on the AU's outreach schedule. If you are interested please let Tom Whittemore or Tim Crawford know so we can inform you – by email - when the classes will take place. See you there!



*Tiffany Meier and her mom, Beatrice, work on their 6" Dob at the Wednesday workshop. Photo: T. Crawford.*

### **Astrophoto Display**

AU member Bob Richard will be exhibiting prints of three astrophotos at the Cabrillo Pavilion Arts Center show beginning Sept. 1 and running through Sept. 27. The show is open to the public.

## THE “GHOST OF G SCORPII”

*T. Whittemore*

Many of you know that there are many accidental couplings in the night sky of foreground objects with distant ones. For example, Steve O’Meara’s “The Ghost of Mirach” is one such coupling of a nearby star -  $\beta$  Andromedae (Mirach) – having a magnitude of 2.1 with the elliptical galaxy NGC 404. This galaxy sits just 7’ NW of Mirach, but lies 8 MLY in the background. In fact, because of its proximity to Mirach, NGC 404 is often omitted from many atlases and is often reported as a new comet! The pairing is spooky and it is one I show to the public in the fall when Andromeda is high in the sky. This summer, as I was working on the stinger region of Scopus with my 8” telescope, I happened upon the variable star, G Scorpii, which is often called the “gateway to M7.” (M7, an open cluster, is commonly known as Ptolemy’s Cluster and is a spectacular object to show to the public during the summer.)

Very close to G Scorpii is the globular cluster, NGC 6441, which lies some 34,000 LY beyond G Scorpii. Glowing at magnitude 7.2, this cluster looks spooky and because of this, I call it the “Ghost of G Scorpii.” For me, these happenstance couplings are wonderful conversation starters at local outreaches: “Look. The light from G Scorpii takes 126 years to get to your eyes, but the light from NGC 6441 is a few “Ice Ages” away. Just think. If there is anyone on a planet orbiting G Scorpii – not likely – they are seeing the light from the globular cluster 126 years before we see it!”

## THE ARTS CORNER

On mornings like this, as hours before dawn  
I walk the dark hall of the road  
with my life creaking under my feet, I sometimes  
take hold of the cold porcelain knob  
of the moon, and turn it, and step into a room  
warm and yellow, and take my seat  
at a small wooden table with a border of painted  
pansies,  
and wait for my mother to bring me my bowl.

*Ted Kooser*

Older this morning, the moon  
hid most of her face  
behind a round gray mirror.

In a half-hour’s walk, I saw  
six shooting stars. Celestial notes,  
I thought, struck from the high end  
of the keyboard.

*Ted Kooser*

## LOOKING BACK...



*Hope School*



*Lopez Lake*



*RTMC – that's a 42"scope back there!*



*Astronomy Day*



*Westmont Observatory Dedication*

### **AU Information Box**

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### **AU Astronomy Information Pager**

**(Leave a short message) 564-9002**

### **SBMNH Astronomy Programs Manager**

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### **SBMNH Astronomy Program Tape**

Updated monthly 682-4711x405

**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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**September 2010**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 ☾	2	3 MONTHLY AU MEETING 7PM	4 CACHUMA LAKE 8PM
5	6	7	8 ●	9	10 MONTECITO CC 6:30PM	11 PLANNING MEETING 6PM SBMNH STAR PARTY 7:30PM
12	13	14 ☾	15	16	17 WESTMONT COLLEGE 7PM CACHUMA CAMPOUT	18 CACHUMA CAMPOUT
19 CACHUMA CAMPOUT	20	21 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	22 BILTMORE 6:30PM	23 ○	24 LOS OLIVOS SCHOOL 7PM	25 CARPINTERIA STATE BEACH 7PM
26	27	28	29	30 ☾		

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