



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

September 2015

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



Max Neufeldt helps out at a recent outreach. Photo: T. Totton.

OUR SEPTEMBER SPEAKER

Our speaker for the Friday, September 4th, meeting will be Andy Norton who is currently a Postdoctoral Scholar at Stanford University, where he is working on Adaptive Optics for the Gemini Planet Imager and AO techniques for Biological applications and future high-contrast imaging systems. His talk is titled: "On a Giant Sphere, Looking Out and Looking Into Other Worlds using Earth's Largest Telescopes." Andy writes, "The electromagnetic field currently surrounding you has a component in it that was contributed from a planet orbiting a distant Sun (assuming you are outside, of course). Come see what happens when this light is captured by one of the world's most advanced ground-based optical and infrared telescopes, the Gemini Planet Imager. We'll also discuss how a key technology to this telescope, Adaptive Optics, has influenced the design of the exciting Thirty Meter Telescope." He is thrilled to be invited back to join the SBAU for another fun discussion!

OUTREACH SUMMARY

Since the last newsletter, AU volunteers Angela Bates & Abigail, Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Carlos Flores, Art Harris, Sean Kelly & SBCC students,

Ken Kihlstrom, Chris Larson, Zanna Lucy, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Janet & Martin Meza, Bonnie & Bruce Murdoch, Max Neufeldt, Edgar Ocampo, Rocio & Javier Rivera & Quasar Victoria, Timothy Rodgers, Sonia Rodriguez, David Salvia, Cez & Tom Totton, Chris Ulivo, Tom Whittemore, and Jerry Wilson showed sky goodies at outreaches to 2119 visitors.

OUTREACH FOR SEPTEMBER

September looks like a quiet month. For those planning ahead, the campout this year will be the first weekend in November, at Cachuma, and the November monthly meeting will be moved to the second Friday.

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

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 7 PM

Monthly AU meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. See a quick planetarium show, then hear a talk on adaptive optics.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, SETUP 8 PM

Slide show and telescopes for campers at Cachuma Lake Campground. We set up on the grassy field at Dakota Plains.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, SETUP 9 AM

Astro-Vaganza! all day at SBMNH. Solar scopes and astronomy activities during the day (10-3), and a star party in the evening (7-10). Come in an astronomical costume!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, SETUP 7 PM

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

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, SETUP 7 PM

Telescopes for campers at Refugio State Beach. We set up in the day use parking lot at the southwest corner of the park.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, SETUP 7 PM

Telescope Tuesday at the Camino Real Marketplace. We set up in the plaza next to the theater.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, SETUP 8 PM

Telescopes for UCSB Student Welcome day. We'll set up on the lawn between Anacapa and Santa Cruz residence halls. Contact Chuck if you plan to come with a scope, to get parking permits. Autumnal Equinox.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, SETUP 8 PM

Slide show and telescopes for Boy Scouts and campers at Cachuma Lake Campground. We set up on the grassy field at Dakota Plains.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, SETUP 6 PM

Total lunar eclipse (totality 7:13 to 8:22 PM). We'll be at the Sea Center on Stearns Wharf to get a good eastern horizon view and show it to the public! On the wharf, telescopes won't work too well, so bring binoculars.

Sir Arthur C. Clarke as I knew him... Part II

Jim Williams

Editor's note: Jim Williams visited the prestigious astronomer and writer three times: in 1997, 2001 and 2003. The following is Jim's remembrance of his 2001 visit. His 2003 visit will follow in the October issue of the AU AstroNews.

The best visit was in 2001; it was Arthur's year. My excuse for being in Sri Lanka was to attend the 2001 Planetarium Conference "Sri Lankan Skies and Sir Arthur".

Arthur was on an absolute high. All through the year he entertained a long string of interviewers about his thoughts on the epic film "2001 a Space Odyssey," the 1968 production for which he shared screenplay credits with Stanley Kubrick. When I arrived at his mansion he was in quite a good mood and said that he had just finished his announcement, "Live from Sri Lanka," of the Best Screenplay award for the 2001 Oscars. He confided to me with a laugh the great secret that it was in fact taped, for scheduling and reliability of the broadcast!

Arthur was always an impeccable host. He was friendly and could talk on any subject. But his favorites were Astronomy and Science Fiction. One night Valerie Ekanayake (the wife of Hector and mother of the 3 daughters that shared the house with Arthur) arranged a dinner of Chinese take-away (Aussie for take-out). It was the cook's night off. We were finishing up, and Arthur pointed his finger at me and said "Oh, you must come upstairs! I've GOT to show you something!" The "something" was newly released photos of the surface of Mars, showing dark streaks with thin branches like wispy trees that looked remarkably organic. Arthur was quite convinced, and remained thus forever, that these and other phenomena were signs of life - bacterial colony type things - but life nevertheless on Mars. He had friends in NASA that he shared his views with.

Sir Arthur, however, didn't subscribe to the "Face on Mars" and "ancient structure" theories that many people believe are found on rover and aerial photos. I had a little "victory" on that subject relating to the famous Face. He had many friends that (very) informally and cordially competed to email him interesting news items (very carefully selected to pique his interest). My "coup" was to be the first to send him the first detailed photo of the "Face on Mars," apparently showing an eroded mountaintop and not a sculpture by intelligent minds. Arthur's email comment was, "Wonderful! But the nuts will say NASA faked it!"

Under Dark Skies

Tom Whittemore

This past August I had the rare treat of watching the Perseids at their peak from one of the darkest skies in the United States. Vacationing near the little town of Boulder, Utah, I got up at midnight and set up with my binoculars on an open veranda that faced northeast. By this time Perseus, the shower radiant, was well up with the Little Dipper off to the left (west). All seven stars in the dipper stood out in what seemed to me to be a magnitude-7 sky. The Triangulum Galaxy (M33) was naked-eye, and when I drew the binoculars onto the Andromeda Galaxy, it stretched all the way across the binoculars' 5-degree field-of-view! I had not seen skies like these in some time since it had been more than 15 years since I had camped in the area. I put the binoculars down since they would get in the

way for the show to come. And, on this moonless night, the Perseids produced one of the finest shows I have ever seen! Meteor trails appeared more often than one-a-minute. Some of them left long-lasting streaks that stretched across the Great Square of Pegasus and into the Big Dipper, now low in the northwest. Bright whites, blues and greens shot across the sky.

I understand that it will be another three years when the New Moon will again be in synch with the Perseid peak. I will be ready. And, if I am lucky, I will once again be sitting in a comfortable chair, staring north at midnight, in Boulder, Utah.

In the news...

SBAU member and speaker, Iair (Ya-ir) Arcavi, will give a talk for the Café KITP at SOHo on Wednesday, September 9th. Details may be found at <http://tinyurl.com/pyst9ab>



"Oh, Boy! Not another scratch!" Photo: T. Totton.



"I think this is the end where the gunpowder goes." Photo: T. Totton

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September 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 SBAU GENERAL MEETING 7PM	5 CACHUMA LAKE 8PM
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 ASTRO- VAGANZA! SETUP 9AM 10AM-3PM 7PM-10PM
13	14	15	16	17	18 WESTMONT COLLEGE 7PM	19 REFUGIO STATE BEACH 7PM
20	21	22 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	23 UCSB WELCOME 8 PM EQUINOX	24	25 BOY SCOUTS AT CACHUMA SETUP 7:30 PM	26
27 STEARNS WHARF LUNAR ECLIPSE 6PM	28	29	30			

The Astronomical Unit

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