



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

July 2008

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Outreach Report

Since the last newsletter, we've been busy! AU volunteers Andy Allen, Joe Brown, Chad Caprio, Marciano Chan, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook & her Quasars, Jason & Tim Crawford, Mike Farris, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Chris Larson, Dale Lowdermilk, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, Javier Rivera, David Salvia, Tom Whittemore, Jim Williams, and Tim Wittenburg showed the night sky to 1248 people.

July AU Outreach

July's a hopping month for outreach events. Come on out and join us for some fun showing off the sky! As always, events are subject to change and cancellation, so contact Chuck at 964-8201 or macpuzl@west.net for the latest information. Here's what's scheduled so far:

Telescopes at the Bacara Resort continues every Sunday at 8 PM. Contact Chuck if you want to participate.

Friday, July 4, setup 8 PM

Start the month off with a bang showing the sky to campers at Refugio Beach State Park, in the day use parking lot at the southwest end.

Tuesday, July 8, setup 8 PM

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

Friday, July 11, setup 8 PM

Telescopes for Los Padres National Forest Family Camp, at the Paradise Campground along the Santa Ynez River.

Saturday, July 12, 8 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, next to Palmer Observatory. Always fun!

Thursday, July 17, setup 8 PM

Telescopes for the kids at the Police Activities League campout at the Ocean Mesa campground on the mountain side of the freeway just west of the El Capitan Canyon Resort.

Friday, July 18, 8 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at the Van Kampen/Carroll Observatory at Westmont College. Look through the big scope!

Saturday, July 19, setup 8 PM

Telescopes for Los Padres National Forest Family Camp, at the Paradise Campground along the Santa Ynez River.

Friday, July 25, setup 8 PM

Slide show and telescopes for campers at Cachuma Lake Campgrounds. We'll be setting up in the field at Dakota Plains.

Saturday, July 26 – TO BE RESCHEDULED

The annual AU Starbecue, usually held at the Winchester Canyon Gun Club Shotgun Range, at the end of West Camino Cielo **WILL BE RESCHEDULED DEPENDING ON FIRE CONDITIONS! No decision will be made before August.**

A Night to Remember...

Tom Whittemore

On Saturday, June 28, seven of us met at Figueroa Mountain just east of the campgrounds to take advantage of the dark skies there. I had been at this site a couple of times before, and was impressed with the view to the South where, during the summer months, Scorpius and Sagittarius rise unobstructed into the skies. But I was not prepared for the quality of this particular night: very steady and transparent. It was spectacular! Ed Edwards, one of the observers, ranked it in his "top ten." Shortly after sunset, Mars, Saturn and Regulus formed a crooked triangle high over the West. In

the East the Summer Triangle woke up and some of the fainter stars in Cygnus appeared one by one. The Great Rift in the Milky Way was apparent even early in the night. To the South Ron Nixon trained his binoculars on the “False Comet” and some of the open clusters trailing Scorpius. I positioned my 12.5” scope toward the top of the sky and worked on some of the globular clusters in Hercules as Joe Doyle concentrated his attention on planetary nebulae. Tim Crawford leaned his homemade 10” Dob into the region above Sagittarius where the Swan Nebula jumped out of the background darkness. John Gomm helped a number of us set up and collimate our scopes earlier in the evening and served as a wandering observer, moving from scope to scope, and taking in the different objects each of us preferred. In the meantime, Dmitrii Zagorodnov brought his digital camera and piggybacked it onto his 8” Celestron SCT, capturing some amazing views of the Milky Way. Satisfied, we put our scopes to bed shortly before the Moon came up, and I believe that each of us not only appreciated the dark skies that this site offers, but also the joy of the camaraderie one feels when friends get together to share these skies.



Looking South at Figueroa. Photo: Dmitrii Zagorodnov



Moon, Mars and Fire from the Riviera: Dmitrii Zagorodnov

Remembering National Astronomy Day

Tim Crawford

There are so many people who poured their hearts out for this year’s Astronomy Day, I would not even presume to know how to thank them all. Since we were all so busy and committed there was no time to go around and see the exhibits for ourselves. We were swamped. Please allow me to name a few people, but I would like to preface this by saying that all involved were integral for making the day a success. Thanks to the Museum for hosting this event. Krissie Cook and Javier Rivera were absolutely indispensable. My son, Jason, told me he only wanted to help me get the ice and water to the Museum and he would return home and get some rest as he was not feeling well. He ended up spending the whole day and most of the night helping out. I can say for certain he helped me out when I really needed it. The unstoppable Tim Wittenberg, I believe, had a 19-hour day! The help from Timma (Nancy Buck) was incredible. She simply handled all our food for the day - that’s all! I get tired just thinking about it. I found Pat McPartlin lying down in the pit area for a small rest around 11:45 PM waiting to take supplies from the observatory to put away in Farrand Hall. Bill Clausen helped us all with doors and alarms all night (as usual). He is always around for us! Chuck and Pat McPartlin got home about 12:45 AM! Chuck was up the next day to do Planetarium shows. Last but not least were all of you. Without each and every one of you, it would not have come off. That is not simple conjecture, but fact. It truly is a “well done” for all! We gave away 30 small refractor telescopes (thank you Brother Laurence and Ron Nixon, several planisphere kits (thank you, Steve Collette and Jason Crawford). There were 11 other prizes and a grand prize of a 6” Dob given out

to many youngsters in attendance. For me, the reward may be the look of real excitement and enjoyment on the faces of the people in our audiences. There were many young ones out there this year and I playfully teased them into helping me grind on my mirror. A special moment for me, though, was when a youngster and his mom came over to me while the drawings for prizes were being done. I asked a few questions of the young lad like, "What's your name?" and "Do you know what I'm doing here?" After a moment I noticed he was a little despondent. I asked him if he won anything in the drawing. He got a dejected look on his face and said, "I didn't get a ticket. I arrived too late and the drawing had already begun." His Mom confirmed what he said and I asked if he built a scope at the table next to us. He said, "Yes." I asked if he got a planisphere and he said, "Yes." Then I asked if he wanted to help me make a mirror. He absently said he would. I grabbed his hands and led them to the mirror. We started to grind the mirror and I think he was kind of startled by my abrupt ways. As we ground on the mirror, I told him we were making a reflecting mirror using a very elegant process and tried as hard as I could to be somewhat positive. I know he was very dejected. After a short time, he asked me something about mirror making, and to be very honest I'm not really sure what he asked. I do remember telling him it was a very good question - one of the best I heard all day. I tried as hard as I could to answer all he was asking of me and in the end I added, "You know? You made my day!" Very slowly he looked up at me and a smile appeared on his face - not just a goofy one, but also a genuine smile - the kind of smile that you can see in his eyes that goes all the way to the heart. I realized it really did make my day. I guess you could say we are all about memories - we go about our daily lives and in the process we build memories that may last forever. In the end, they may be what it's all about - the real wealth of our lives may indeed be the memories we made as we

"passed this way." That day, I felt like a wealthy man.

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July 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 ●	4 Refugio State Beach 8PM	5
6	7	8 Camino Real Marketplace 8PM	9	10 ◐	11 Paradise Campground 8PM	12 Monthly Star Party SBMNH 8PM
13	14	15	16	17	18 ○ Westmont College 8PM	19 Paradise Campground 8PM
20	21	22	23	24	25 ◑ Cachuma Lake 8PM	26 Annual Starbecue TO BE RESCHEDULED
27	28	29	30	31		

The Astronomical Unit

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