



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

May 2020

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



Why we do outreach: a Telescope Tuesday gathering at the Camino Real Marketplace. Photo credit: Tom Totton.

### MAY GENERAL MEETING

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic our club's May General Meeting has been canceled.

### OUTREACH SUMMARY

No public telescope outreach occurred in April, as part of the social distancing efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19.

### OUTREACH EVENTS

Pat and I send our best wishes to everyone. We hope you are all staying safe and healthy, and adhering to the social distancing protocols that are the major weapon in fighting this COVID-19 pandemic.

I also hope everyone has been taking advantage of the clear nights to get out and (safely) observe alone. This is a good time for equipment maintenance, too.

The SBAU radio hour on KZSB 1290AM at 9 AM on the second and fourth Monday of each month will continue as a phone-in show, thanks to the dedication of Baron Ron Herron. Otherwise, there will be no SBAU meetings, public telescope outreach, or school events for a long time.

The annual AU Potluck scheduled for Friday, June 5, has also been cancelled. In the interest of everyone's health and safety, there will most likely be no astronomy gatherings for the rest 2020.

### ASTRONOMY IN A PANDEMIC

*Chuck McPartlin*

Social distancing is a powerful way to combat the worst effects of the pandemic. We're lucky as amateur astronomers, because we can still go out and look at the sky. But what about those cloudy nights, or days at home? The internet provides many sources of astronomy education and entertainment, plus a host of citizen science opportunities. Here are a few:

SBMNH - SBNature from Home

<https://www.sbnature.org/visit/sbnature-from-home>

Las Cumbres Observatory

<https://lco.global/everyone/>

IOTA <http://www.occultations.org/>

CosmoQuest <http://cosmoquest.org/>

Astronomy Homeschool Resources

<https://skyandtelescope.org/homeschool-resources/>

Astronomy in Isolation <https://tinyurl.com/ydbrkz52>

NASA at Home <https://tinyurl.com/u4rxmud>

Gravity Spy <https://tinyurl.com/j6srh4z>

LIGO E-lab

<https://www.i2u2.org/elab/ligo/home/project.jsp>

Einstein@Home <https://einsteinathome.org/>

Space Warps <https://tinyurl.com/y8ne6ud2>

Planet Hunters <https://tinyurl.com/yacorz8t>

AstroQuest <https://astroquest.net.au/>

Planet Four - Terrains <http://terrains.planetfour.org/>

Scope <http://scope.pari.edu/>

Globe at Night <https://www.globeatnight.org>

NASA Citizen Science projects  
<https://science.nasa.gov/citizenscience>

Galaxy Cruise  
<https://galaxycruise.mtk.nao.ac.jp/en/index.html>

A number of online resources can help you refresh or extend your astronomy knowledge. Here are some that could be of use:

“Astronomy” <http://openstax.org/details/astronomy>  
Free textbook aimed for introductory college-level astronomy. Senior authors include Andrew Fraknoi, David Morrison, and Sidney Wolff  
Made in collaboration with the OpenStax Project at Rice University

Cambridge University Press  
<https://tinyurl.com/w2z953p>  
Various higher education textbooks  
Free access online until the end of May 2020

Astronomy courses <https://bit.ly/39ezF9a>  
Most courses are free college-level courses online

Silicon Valley Astronomy Lectures  
<https://tinyurl.com/yd5fdegk>  
Well-known scientists discuss astronomy in everyday language

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Jerry Wilson*

It is the best of times and it is the worst of times. The worst first: the SBAU has not met or been active with public outreach for a month now and it's unclear how much longer this will go on. But for now, it's needed. I hope everyone is staying healthy. We are, after all, amateur astronomers, so being isolated in the dark is not necessarily a bad thing. Oh, and our June pot luck meeting will not be held this year.

The good news is that exciting things are going on in space science and technology. SpaceX will soon launch a manned Dragon capsule to the ISS, while

Russia is claiming their Soyuz launches are being unfairly out competed. Elon keeps stacking and welding the new Starship together. This'll be number 4 and is slated for a short hop.

In Science, a radio telescope has tracked the precession of a star around a supermassive black hole. The orbital precession is exactly as predicted by General Relativity. Finally, the diameter of the Milky Way has been redefined to nearly two million light years (counting the dark matter halo).

All of you stay healthy, and stay in the dark. Venus is up and nearly crescent! It is the best of times and it is the worst of times.



“What kind of crackpot question is that, Chuck?” Photo credit: Tom Totton.



“No fooling, Mike. I shot this galaxy in my back yard with a hand-held cell phone.” Photo credit: Tom Totton.



“Listen up, guys. When I blow through my hands I sound just like a real train whistle!” Photo credit: Tom Totton.



“Greetings, comrades!” Photo credit: Tom Totton.



“Bruce. Let me know if the scope moves if I yank on this wire.” Photo credit: Tom Totton.

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### AU annual membership rates:

Single = \$20 Family = \$25

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# The Astronomical Unit

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## May 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 TECH TALK KZSB (AM1290) 9-10 AM	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 TECH TALK KZSB (AM1290) 9-10 AM	26	27	28	29	30
31						