



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

May 2024

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



Setting up at Lake Cachuma. Photo credit: T. Totton

### CALL FOR PLANNING MEETING AGENDA TOPICS

Want to help steer the SBAU ship? You can submit discussion topics for the May planning meeting by emailing them to [secretary@sbau.org](mailto:secretary@sbau.org) no later than the Wednesday before the meeting.

### OUTREACH SUMMARY

Since the last newsletter, certified AU volunteers Brandy Ackerman, Andy Allen, Krissie Cook, Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, David Feinberg, Ron Herron, David Larson, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Bonnie & Bruce Murdock, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Tom Whittemore & Maureen O'Rourke, Lee Wilkerson, Jerry Wilson & Pat Forgey, John Winckowski & Sean Fox & Quasars & Museum Staff, and Andre Yew showed cool stuff in the sky to **2679** people, helped by Sonya & Carlos Flores, Dr. Jen Ito, Dr. Ken Kihlstrom, Joyce & Mark Schildhauer, Colin Taylor, and Diane Welcenbach.

*Thanks for all your help making the eclipse event a success.*

SBAU volunteers must have undergone the SBMNH background check, and conform with the SBMNH policies for dealing with the public, to participate in outreach activities. To get vetted, contact SBMNH Volunteer Manager Rebecca Coulter <[rcoulter@sbnature2.org](mailto:rcoulter@sbnature2.org)>. It's quick and painless.

### OUTREACH EVENTS

*Chuck will be recovering from minor surgery for 6 weeks starting May 9, and unable to lift telescope equipment. If you can come and help out at observations, please do!*

#### Friday, May 3, 7:30PM

Monthly SBAU meeting at 7:30 in Fleischmann Auditorium at SBMNH. This will be a hybrid meeting, also on Zoom. Watch your email or find the link on the SBAU web page. Our speaker will be Dr. Larry Martinez, speaking on satellites and space debris.

#### Saturday, May 11, 4:30 PM

AU monthly planning meeting on Zoom. Watch your email for the link.

#### Saturday, May 11, setup 7:30 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH, from 8:30 PM to 10 PM at Palmer Observatory.

#### Tuesday, May 14, setup 7 PM

Telescope Tuesday in the plaza by the theater at Camino Real Marketplace.

#### Thursday, May 16, setup 5 PM

STEAM Night at Montessori Center School, 401 N Fairview Ave # 1 in Goleta, 6 to 8 PM. We'll have Moon, and a grab & go dinner for volunteers.

### **Friday, May 17, setup 7 PM**

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont's Keck Observatory, next to the athletic fields.

### **Saturday, May 18, setup 9 AM and 7 PM**

**International Astronomy Day** at Camino Real Marketplace in Goleta. Solar and lunar viewing, plus astronomy activities from 10 AM to 4 PM, then a break for dinner, followed a star party at 7 PM.

### **Tuesday, May 21, setup 10 AM**

Solar scopes for Santa Barbara High School AP Physics students at the Westmont Observatory.

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

*Jerry Wilson*

The Devil Comet is heading south for their winter and our town is heading into the time of year often dominated by a thick marine layer. This period is described by the phrases: May grey, June gloom, July no-sky and Fogust. This is the weather pattern along the California coast that swerved my hobby of astro imaging into amateur telescope making and telescope building.

I first learned ATM in the basement of the Griffith Observatory. Class sizes were 6 to 12 people. Grinding stands were provided and there was a sturdy optical bench for mirror testing made from WWII surplus battleship decking. Solid Teak. This was 1962 and the director was Dr C. H. Clemenshaw. He'd show up frequently at our meetings and chat it up with the students. That optical shop is no longer there.

I made a 6 inch and an 8 inch Newtonian and a 6 inch Cassegrain. For imaging on film, I built a 4 inch f/6 astrograph from a surplus Aero Tessar lens made by Kodak. It was wide field and covered 4x5 inch cut film with excellent definition from corner to corner. The lens was designed to image on 9x9 inch film while being shot at. Using 4x5 in my back yard must've seemed boring for the lens.

At CalState Northridge the physics department owned a 12.5 inch Cave Optical Astrola telescope for education, but was not really capable of

supporting any research. That's when I switched to Solid State Physics.

Later at UCLA, as a graduate student in experimental physics, I was required to take a course in machining and built a 90mm f/11 refractor. I bought the doublet from a startup company called Meade Optical. The rest of the OTA I built as my class project.

After 37 years at Hughes Aircraft Company, Santa Barbara Research Center, and Raytheon's Santa Barbara Remote Sensing, but all at the same desk, I retired in 2006 and joined the SBAU. Tom Whittimore had started a telescope workshop where I started or completed two 10 inch Newtonians, a 10 inch Cassegrain, 14.5 inch Corrected Dall Kirkham (still in progress) and completed an 18 inch F/3.9 Newtonian.

During 2022 we remodeled our back yard and added a roll-off roof observatory. It was ready by December 2022. During the nearly the whole year of construction the skies were clear and rain free. However, since then we've two of the wettest years on record. Go figure.



*Looking back at a mirror-making workshop at the SBMNH's Broder Building.... Photo credit: Tom Totton.*

## ARTS CORNER

### **Falling a Little Bit in Love With the Dark**

by Margaret Renkl (excerpted from the December 21, 2022 NYT)

This year the winter solstice arrives on Dec. 21 in the shank of the dark afternoon. Officially the first day of astronomical winter, the solstice is better known as the shortest day of the year. I prefer to think of it as the longest night of the year, for I am making friends with the darkness.

For most of my life, I looked forward to the solstice because it signals a shift to longer days. I was never a fan of winter, and earlier sunrises and later sunsets always felt to me as a kind of compensation for the cold. But my heart has been thawing these past years, watching as winter becomes ever more fragile, its cold imperiled by the changing climate, its darkness by our own foolishness and fear.

With the arrival of LED lighting, which costs so little to burn, every house has become an island of illumination, every city a blazing forest fire of artificial light. In my own backyard, it's hard to enjoy the full moon because so many of our neighbors now leave their lights on all night long. And that's without the holiday displays, each one bright enough to guide an airplane from the sky and land it safely in the middle of our street.

This resolve to snuff out every shadow of night – I wonder how closely it might be linked to the metaphorical darkness of our age. Discord, suffering and sorrow are everywhere, all much darker than any winter night, and tilting Earth is not to blame for them. It's not hard to understand what's really to blame: Media and political figures alike profit when we are angry or afraid.

Literal darkness is simple by comparison, but people inclined to flood their own yards with light for safety's sake seem not to know how little safety they've provided themselves or what measures of actual safety they have closed off in the attempt. They will never know what dangers might lurk beyond their own little circle of light because they've created the very circumstances that prevent their eyes from adjusting to darkness.

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	<b>AU AstroNews</b> , the monthly publication of the <b>Astronomical Unit (AU)</b> , is mailed to the AU membership. For publishing consideration for the next month, submit astronomical items by the 20th of the current month!	
	<b>AU annual membership rate: \$20</b>	
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# The Astronomical Unit

c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

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MAY 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 AU MONTHLY MEETING 7:30PM	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 ZOOM PLANNING 4:30PM STAR PARTY 7:30PM
12	13	14 TELESCOPE TUESDAY 7PM	15	16 MONTESSORI CENTER SCHOOL 5PM	17 WESTMONT PUBLIC STAR PARTY 7PM	18 INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY 10AM-4PM 7PM-10PM
19	20	21 WESTMONT SOLAR FOR SBHS STUDENTS 10AM	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	