



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

December 2007

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Outreach Report

The last month was fairly busy, and despite several cloud-outs, we still managed to bring some astronomy to 751 customers. The AU volunteers who made that happen were Chad Caprio, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook, Jason & Tim Crawford, Carolyn & Ed Edwards, Mike Farris, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Chris Larson, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, Javier Rivera, John West, Tom Whittemore, Jim Williams, and Tim Wittenburg. We were also joined at the November Star Party by Terry & Hal Jandorf from Moorpark.

This was a great year for outreach, and there will be a summary of our events in the January 2008 newsletter.

December Events

Here are the AU events scheduled so far for the rest of the year. To get the latest information on events, or directions, just contact Chuck at 964 8201 or macpuzl@west.net.

Thursday, December 6, setup 6:30 PM

Telescopes for Santa Barbara Junior High. We'll set up behind the Marjorie Luke Theater on campus.

Friday, December 7, 7:30 PM

AU monthly meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. Annual AU election of officers, followed by member's night speakers. Hear about the Porter Garden Telescope.

Saturday, December 8, 5:30 PM

AU Planning Meeting in the classroom outside Krissie's office at SBMNH. Come help plan your club's activities.

Saturday, December 8, 7:30 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH. Bring a scope or just come by for a look at Comet Holmes, Comet Tuttle, and maybe a peek at Mars.

Thursday, December 13, 6 PM

Annual AU Holiday Party at the Beachside at Goleta Beach.

Friday, December 21, 7:30 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College, at the Carroll Observatory, next to Van Kampen Dormitory. Mars will be the big target. The big scope won't be open, but we'll be there with our scopes.

Astronomical Unit T-Shirts

The Astronomical Unit T-Shirts are now available! These first edition T-Shirts are in light Venus Cloud grey with the AU Club logo in shades of Midnight to Neptune Blue. The logo is beautifully displayed on the upper left front, and also in full on the back of the T-shirt. The sizes are in Saturn Large or Jupiter Extra Large, with a limited number of Earth Mediums. The cost for AU members is only \$10.00, and for non members \$13.00. Wow, what a deal! You can purchase your shirts when they make landfall at the next AU meeting on Star Date 12/07/07. But, if you just can't wait, you can call Ruben at (805) 450-7451 and get yours today!

What's Up With the Planets?



Mars comes closer to Earth this month than it will be until 2016. At the beginning of December it

rises after the end of astronomical twilight. Although our red neighbor is at opposition on the 24th, it is closest to Earth on the 18th when Mars' diameter reaches 15.9". It is at its maximum brightness, -1.6, between those two key dates, and is only dimmed to -1.5 by the end of the month. Watch Mars perform retrograde motion (westward motion with respect to the stars) this month! It will move through about 11° during December, traveling across Gemini's border into Taurus on December 30th. **Saturn** rises in mid-evening by month's end. On December 15 the rings are the least tilted from edgewise – 6.6° – that they have been in a decade. On December 20, Saturn halts prograde motion (eastward motion with respect to the stars) and begins ever so slowly to go into retrograde motion, moving toward Regulus which it will nearly reach in the spring. **Venus** appears much lower in the sky at morning twilight by the end of the month, but it still rises some three hours ahead of the Sun. The full **Moon** will scrape by Mars on the 23rd. But it is not close enough to Mars on this evening to offer an occultation. The **Geminid meteor shower** peaks on the night of December 13-14 and is not bothered by moonlight after the lunar crescent sets in the evening. At this writing, **Comet 17P Holmes** is still visible to the naked eye in the constellation of Perseus. It has moved to the upper right of **Mirfak**, the central star in the arc of the Hero. In the opinion of this author, binoculars still bring out the best in this wonderful periodic visitor! Finally, speaking of comets, **Comet 8P/Tuttle** passes about 0.25 AU from Earth in late December and may shine as bright as 6th magnitude.

For Sale

Stellarvue TMB 105 f6.2 triplet in 22" 14# tube. 2" Feathertouch focuser, sliding dew shield. Excellent condition, includes rings, plate, red dot finder, 1.25" adapter, aluminum cover, and padded aluminum case. Fantastic views! \$2000. Email keagle10@cox.net or call Ken (805) 207-5469.

Meade 32 mm Series 4000 Super Wide Angle eyepiece. \$175. Contact Paul Winn.

4.5" (900 mm focal length) Tasco reflector. Old Japanese equatorial mount. Make offer. Contact Joe Brown: (805) 965-6750.

The Year in Pictures

From the Lopez Lake outreach:



From a Refugio Beach State Park outreach:



Observing at Mount Pinos:



From the mirror-making workshop:



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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**

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On the Web: <http://www.sbau.org>

December 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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2	3	4	5	6 SB Junior High 6:30 PM	7 AU Meeting 7:30PM	8 Planning Meeting 5:30PM SBMNH Star Party 7:30PM
9 	10	11	12	13 AU Holiday Party 6 PM Beachside Restaurant	14	15
16	17 	18	19	20	21 Westmont College 7:30 PM	22
23	24 	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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