



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

May 2005

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### May Meeting

A free public lecture will be given by Dale Lowdermilk, a local meteorite collector, in the Fleischmann Auditorium at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History at 7 PM on May 6th. He'll discuss many interesting facts about meteorites, how they may have "jump started" the Iron Age, where they're found, and scientific methods used to age-date the oldest matter you'll ever see. Learn how to distinguish between a meteorite and "meteor-wrong" and some of the strange things which have been found in these rocks from space. In a fast-paced presentation, you'll also learn some amazing trivia about bacteria, the "Tunguska Event", salamanders, galaxies, nucleosynthesis, stars, volcanoes, recent cosmic discoveries, asteroids, telescopes, time, ice worms, comets, and grains of sand.

There will be hands-on displays with several varieties of meteorites, tektites, and fossil items, including a very small fragment of both the Moon and Mars. See a thin slice of stromatolite (marble) formed by 3.2 billion year old cyanobacteria whose descendants still thrive in Australia. Dinosaur fans will be able to touch some real "paleo-poop" and fragments of the K/T boundary layer (clay from Spain), which marked the end of the Age of Dinosaurs. If there are any "future" astronomers, geologists or scientists in your family, this is a "must see" event.

At the end of the presentation members of the SBAU will be available to answer your astronomy and science questions. Drawings will be held for an assortment of "door prizes" including fragments of stony meteorites, tektites, pieces of the K/T boundary layer, and Family Memberships to SBMNH (\$60 value) & SBAU (\$25 value).

### April Outreach

Since the last newsletter, the AU outreach crew has been having a busy springtime with lots of school events and National Astronomy Day at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. AU outreachies helping out at April events were Andy Allen, Robert Bernstein, Warren Bitters, Ed Bookin, John Boyd, Bob Brown, Joe Brown, Timma Buck, Bill Clausen, Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Tony Galván, Ruben Gutierrez, Laurence Harms, Art Harris, Mike Jogoleff, June Kelley, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Max Neufeldt, Edgar Ocampo, Barb O'Grady, Jiri Polivka, Jeremy Schmit, Ellen Waddell, John West, Tom Whitemore, Paul Winn, and Tim Wittenburg. Our tally of customers shown cool astronomy stuff added up to a fantastic **1,490** people! A big thank you to Krissie, Javier, Ray, Angel, and all the folks at SBMNH who helped to make Astronomy Day so nice for all of us.



The proud winner of an Orion Starblast telescope poses with her father at this year's Astronomy Day at the SBMNH

## **Messier Marathon 2005**

We held our annual Messier Marathon a bit late this year, on April 2, but it still didn't forestall the traditional coming of the clouds, cold, and wind. Everyone was home by 10 PM. Ron Pembleton saw 15 Messier objects, making him the official champion this time. If there is ever a documentary film made about the AU Messier Marathons over the years, it will have to be titled "Astronomers in the Mist" (with apologies to Dian Fossey).



Polar-aligning at this year's Messier Marathon!

## **AU Events for May**

### **Friday, May 6, 7 PM**

Monthly meeting with a special talk on meteorites by AU member Dale Lowdermilk at the Fleischmann Auditorium at the SBMNH. Please note the earlier time and location!

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

Telescopes for Refugio Beach State Campgrounds.

### **Saturday, May 7, all night**

Dark Sky. Contact Paul Winn or Joe Doyle to find out when and where.

### **Thursday, May 12, setup 7:30 PM**

Telescopes for Hollister School. Also Montessori School campout at Refugio Beach group campsite.

### **Saturday, May 14, 6 PM**

Planning meeting in the classroom at SBMNH. You're all invited!

### **Saturday, May 14, setup 7:30 PM**

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH.

### **Friday, May 20, 8 PM**

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College.

### **Saturday, May 21, setup 7:30 PM**

Slide show and telescopes for Cachuma Lake Campgrounds.

### **Friday, May 27 to Monday, May 30**

RTMC Astronomy Expo at Big Bear Lake!

## **June Potluck Has Been Moved!**

The annual potluck has been moved to June 10th. That is the Second Friday in June. The sign up list will be available at the next meeting on May 6th. This is the meeting in Fleishchmann Auditorium. Look for Tim Crawford at one of the meteorite tables after the meeting to sign up. In the event you are unable to attend the meeting, you may e-mail what you intend to bring to the potluck to Tim at [TCrawf3@cox.net](mailto:TCrawf3@cox.net). We'll see you there!

## **Planetarium Volunteer Opportunity!**

With the fantastic upgrade to our planetarium, we've increased our planetarium show schedule. However, we haven't increased the number of volunteers we have giving shows. With the need we have for dynamic people with a working knowledge of basic astronomy, it seems natural to look to the AU for some help. Krissie Cook, Astronomy Programs Coordinator for the Museum, will be offering a planetarium training class for people who are interested in becoming planetarium presenters. The class will cover basic planetarium operation, public speaking skills, developing content for planetarium presentations and techniques for increasing appropriate audience participation. The class will run from 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM on Mondays, including May 16, May 23, June 6 and June 13. This free class is open to astronomy enthusiasts of all ages. Please contact Krissie to reserve a space or to find out more. She can be reached by phone at 682-4711 x173 or by email at [kcook@sbnature2.org](mailto:kcook@sbnature2.org).

## **Why we Grind...**

*The following is a letter from Tim Crawford to the participants in Tom Whittemore's Wednesday evening mirror-making class.*

Hello all,

I hope you all had a wonderful Easter. I am writing you all to tell you how much I appreciate being involved in this mirror class. I spent a little time this weekend painting and putting things together. As I stepped back and looked at some of the end results, I am amazed at the achievements I have attained so far. I realize this may sound a little corny, but I don't think I could have done this without any of you. I don't know if I can explain it- it kind of looks like some one else did these things. I've learned a little about optics, found a way to put some woodworking to good use, found some new friends with great camaraderie, and regained a long lost passion in science. Above all, I found hope in a little corner of the world where I thought hope was just a dream you tell kids about. I hope to show you a finished product someday- and that you may share in the triumph of its journey to light.

## **For Sale:**

Nikon Coolpix 950 w/eyepiece projection ring. - \$150.00, manuals, CDs, cables  
25mm Ortho eyepiece, - \$25.00  
12.5mm UO ortho eyepiece, - \$40.00  
7mm Ortho Celestron, - \$35.00  
Orion Red Dot finder., - \$15.00  
Wacom 12X12 drawing tablet, PC and Mac cables, \$50.00

Tony Galván, 685-5387

## **AU Information Box**

<b>President:</b>	Chuck McPartlin 964-8201 <a href="mailto:macpuzl@west.net">macpuzl@west.net</a>
<b>Vice President:</b>	Tim Wittenburg 969-6945 <a href="mailto:black10@aol.com">black10@aol.com</a>
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<b>Outreach:</b>	Chuck McPartlin 964-8201 <a href="mailto:macpuzl@west.net">macpuzl@west.net</a>
<b>Webmaster:</b>	Paul Winn 685-5646 <a href="mailto:strg8zn@cox.net">strg8zn@cox.net</a>
<b>Refreshments:</b>	Tim Crawford 962-3619 <a href="mailto:tcrawf3@cox.net">tcrawf3@cox.net</a>
<b>Newsletter:</b>	Tom Whittemore 687-2025 <a href="mailto:kometes@aol.com">kometes@aol.com</a>

### **AU Astronomy Information Pager**

(Leave a short message) 564-9002

### **SBMNH Astronomy Program Coordinator**

Krissie Cook 682-4711x173  
[kcook@sbnature2.org](mailto:kcook@sbnature2.org)

### **SBMNH Astronomy Program Tape**

Updated monthly 682-4711x405

**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 20<sup>th</sup> of the current month!

### **AU annual membership rates:**

**Single = \$15                      Family = \$25**

### **AU mailing address:**

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**On the Web:** [www.sbau.org](http://www.sbau.org)

## May 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	☉				AU Monthly Meeting at 7PM	Refugio Beach 7:30 PM/Dark Sky
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	☀			Hollister School, Refugio 7:30 PM		AU Planning Meeting/Public Star Party
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		☾			Westmont Public Observing	Cachuma Lake Campgrounds 7:30 PM
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
					RTMC	RTMC
		☽				
29	30	31				
RTMC						

### The Astronomical Unit

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