



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

October 2018

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



Near sunset at a previous Cachuma Lake campout. Photo credit: Tom Totton.

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

Our October speaker will be Dr. Joey Chatelain, a Post-Doc Fellow at Las Cumbres Observatory. Dr. Chatelain has a PhD in Astronomy from Georgia State University, where he works with Tim Lister doing follow-up observations on Near Earth Objects. His talk this evening is titled "Space Rocks!" In his own words: "From Apollos to Oort we will take a tour of the many and diverse groups of minor bodies scattered throughout the Solar System. Discover the variety of different orbits, compositions, and bizarre naming conventions for asteroids, comets, and "other" objects swarming around us that represent possibly both the greatest potential threat and the greatest potential benefit to life on Earth."

OUTREACH SUMMARY

With the end of summer outreach and Astrovanza, AU outreach volunteers Farshad Barman, Winslow Barnwood, Jason Barrios, Warren Bitters, Leia Carvalho & Charles Jones, Adrian Conrad, Krissie Cook, Tim Crawford, Zak Dafaallah, Joe Doyle, John Edkins, Carolyn & Ed Edwards, Mike Farris, Tessa Flanagan & Duff Kennedy, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Baron Ron Heron, Jürgen Hilmer, Sean Kelly, Chris Larson, Adrian Lopez, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Janet & Martin Meza, Bonnie & Bruce Murdock, Max Neufeldt, Edgar Ocampo, Peggy O'Rork, Celeste & Gustavo Ritterstein, Javier Rivera, Dianne &

Russell Ruiz, David Salvia, Colin Taylor, Tom Totton, Tom Whittemore, and Patricia & Jerry Wilson showed cool astro stuff to 2340 visitors.

OCTOBER AU OUTREACH

Here are the outreach events scheduled so far for October. Events are subject to change and cancellation, so contact Chuck at macpuzl@west.net or 964-8201 for the latest information.

The Telescope Workshop meets on Tuesday evenings (except third Tuesdays of the month) at 7:30 PM at the Broder Building at SBMNH. Contact Tim Crawford at tcrawf3@cox.net for information. Listen to the AU on the radio at KZSB 1290 AM at 9 AM on the second and fourth Monday of each month.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 7 PM

Monthly AU meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. Hear a talk by Dr. Chatelain of LCO.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, SETUP 5 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at Kellogg School, 475 Cambridge Drive in Goleta. Pizza for volunteers at 5.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 5 PM

Monthly AU planning meeting at SBMNH, in the classroom next to Javier's office.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 7 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH, next to Palmer Observatory.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, SETUP 7 PM

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

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, SETUP 6:30 PM

Telescopes for fifth graders at Hope School, 3970 La Colina Road. We'll set up on their blacktop playground out back.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, SETUP 6:30 PM

The monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont Observatory, next to the baseball field.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

International Observe the Moon Night.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31

Halloween! Show the sky to trick-or-treaters wherever you are. Astronomical eye candy won't hurt your teeth!

Up and running...

Tom Whitemore

After being out of commission for about 8 months, Westmont's scopes are now up and running. Over the course of five long days, DFM engineer Mark Kelly installed and tested a new computer system for Westmont's two telescopes. On the last evening of testing, Mark tweaked his pointing model to an accuracy of about 10". He used a CMOS ZWO camera to test the precision of the 24" telescope to move precisely in Hour Angle. I was really impressed with the pinpoint accuracy of his model. We all look forward to bringing Westmont's Dynamic Duo – the 24" reflector and 8" refractor – back online for the public!

From the President

Jerry Wilson

Last night during public viewing at Westmont College the sky presented five bright objects in a line spanning the ecliptic from the western horizon nearly to the eastern. This dramatic display consisted of: Venus near its brightest as a crescent; followed by Jupiter, with all four Galilean satellites visible; then Saturn; and Mars; and finally the waxing moon, just a few days after first quarter. Neptune and Uranus completed this lineup to the east but are not naked eye objects and would not rise until after midnight.

A range of telescopes set up by the AU gave excellent views of each object. The most impressive to me was Mars. One polar cap was clearly visible as well as a dark region in mid disk. Most likely the dark region was Syrtis Major. These features were seen in several scopes, including through Bruce's 11 inch, (legacy Bob Richard), Celestron. Alas, I did

not see any canals though. Those seem to have disappeared just before the first spacecraft visited.

Other SBAU members showing this brilliant ecliptic to probably a hundred or more people were: Tom Totton using his Celestron on Westmont's permanent upstairs pedestal; our new club secretary Jason using his 110mm Newtonian, also on the upper level; Edgar set up on the ground level; Martin, and fearless leader, Chuck.

Mars was at opposition on July 31, presenting a disk 25" across. Last night the disk was down to about 17". Still big enough to show excellent details in good seeing.

Tom Whitemore was also there sharing his knowledge, though Westmont's large 24-inch Ritchie-Chretien telescope, which has been off line for several months, now was still not running. But, with a replacement control box just delivered, it is expected to be operational by next month's public viewing night.



"Say again, Tim. How long have you been pushing on this glass?" Photo credit: T. Totton

Looking Back

Editor's note: We take another look at a book I enjoyed when I was new to amateur astronomy. This month's installment comes from "Starlight Nights" by Leslie Peltier – an ardent variable star observer and comet hunter. This selection is taken from Chapter 28 – "Observatories."

The light has all but faded from the sky as I start along the hilltop path to the observatories. From somewhere in the shadows my big collie, Canis Major, noiselessly appears and trots along ahead. We round the big lilac and I pause for just a moment at the small observatory to throw back its lid before going on to open up the larger one. Spring and summer both have gone and there is more than just a hint of autumn in the air. The

tempo of the cricket's chirp is beating slower night by night and surely frost cannot be far away. Far to the south lone Fomalhaut is marking out a trail for winter stars to follow and through the eastward-opened dome I see the Pleiades. Even as I watch, the dome above me fades away and now its opened shutter is a darkened kitchen window through which I gaze in childish wonder at seven little stars that sparkle in a long-gone autumn sky.



“Are you sure these are the right instructions, Chuck?” Photo credit: T. Totton



“Now that’s what I call a bagel!” Photo credit: Tom Totton.



“Who told you the Moon was made of bleu cheese?” Photo credit: Tom Totton.

AU Information Box

- President:** Jerry Wilson 968-4056
jerryawilsonphd@gmail.com
- Vice President:** Baron Ron Herron
vicepresident@sbau.org
- Secretary:** Jason Barrios
secretary@sbau.org
- Treasurer:** Colin Taylor 967-8140
dancingmagpie@cox.net
- Equipment:** Art Harris 968-4017
n6is@cox.net
- Outreach:** Chuck McPartlin 964-8201
outreach@sbau.org
- Newsletter:** Tom Whittemore 687-2025
kometes@aol.com
- Refreshments:** Tom Totton
tomcez@cox.net
- Webmaster:** Paul Winn 886-2319
webmaster@sbau.org
- Merch Manager:** Pat McPartlin 964-8201
parsnip7@yahoo.com

SBMNH Astronomy Programs Manager

Javier Rivera 682-4711x173
jrivera@sbnature2.org

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AU mailing address:

Astronomical Unit
c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
2559 Puesta Del Sol Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998

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

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 Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998

October 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5 GENERAL MEETING 7PM	6
7	8 TECH TALK KZSB (AM 1290) 9-10 AM	9	10	11 KELLOGG SCHOOL 5PM	12	13 PLANNING MEETING 5PM STAR PARTY 7PM SBMNH
14	15	16 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	17	18 HOPE SCHOOL 6:30PM	19 WESTMONT COLLEGE 6:30PM	20 IOMN
21	22 TECH TALK KZSB (AM 1290) 9-10 AM	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31 HALLOWEEN!			