



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

November 2025

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



This year's International Astronomy Day at the Camino Real Marketplace. Photo: Tom Totton.

OUTREACH SUMMARY

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>. It's quick and painless.

Since the last newsletter, and despite weather cancellations, certified SBAU/SBMNH volunteers Brandy Ackerman, Andy Allen, Dave Brehl, Tim Crawford, Ila Jade Komasa & Maggie & Quasars, Brian Green, Art Harris, Ronnie Herron, Sean Kelly, Tessa Flanagan, David Larson, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Janet & Martin Meza, Javier Rivera, Michael Robertson, Tom Totton, Diane Welcenbach, Tom Whittemore, Lee Wilkerson, Jerry Wilson, Greg Wittmann, and Andre Yew showed the sky to **1236** guests. David Feinberg also helped out.

OUTREACH EVENTS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, SETUP 7 PM

Telescope Tuesday at Camino Real Marketplace, in the plaza by the theater. **For 2026, Telescope Tuesday will shift to the third Tuesday of each month.**

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 6 PM

AU monthly meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. SBAU merchandise sales at 6 PM. Quick planetarium show at 6:30, AU business meeting (**Elections!**) at 7, then at 7:30, our Members' Night speakers will be Matt Hall (Astrophotography, some AU history) and David Grossman (Sonification of astronomical data). We end promptly at 9 PM. This will be a hybrid meeting, also on Zoom. Watch your email or find the link on the SBAU web page.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6. SETUP 5 PM

Telescopes for an Astronomy Night at Midland School, 5100 Figueroa Mountain Road in Los Olivos. Dinner for volunteers at 6 PM. Dark skies!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 5 PM

SBAU Holiday Party at the Hilton Garden Inn, 6878 Hollister Avenue in Goleta.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 4 PM

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, SETUP 6 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH, at Palmer Observatory from 7 to 10 PM. Geminid meteor shower peaks.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 6 PM

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 07:03 AM PST -

Winter Solstice for the Northern Hemisphere

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jerry Wilson

"Ammonite" is not a planet, but a newly discovered trans-Neptunian object (TNO) officially designated 2023 KQ14, located in the outer solar system beyond Neptune. Nicknamed for its unusual, elongated orbit, it is classified as a "sednoid," and its discovery challenges existing theories about the solar system, particularly the "Planet Nine" hypothesis. The discovery of Ammonite (2023 KQ14), described as a "cosmic fossil", could rewrite our understanding of the solar system's history. For years, the "Planet Nine" hypothesis has proposed a large, unseen planet was responsible for the clustering of certain distant objects.

Ammonite's orbit does not fit the expected pattern predicted by the presence of Planet Nine, which decreases the likelihood of the hypothesis as currently understood. The object's unique orbit has prompted scientists to consider other possibilities for shaping the outer solar system's structure:

1. A past stellar flyby.
2. The capture of objects from other stars during the sun's formation.
3. A rogue planet that has since been ejected from the solar system
4. Future research: Astronomers are conducting further observations to better understand Ammonite's physical properties.
5. Upcoming surveys, like the one from the [Vera C. Rubin Observatory](#), are expected to find many more distant objects that could help resolve the mystery.

URBAN TWILIGHT

Suzanne Spillman

The best time of day
to take a drive on the freeway
is at dusk
with rhinestones on the left

and rubies on the right.

Meandering through the city
a destination is not required.

If one drives long enough,
Venus will come into view
creating magic with a sliver of moon;
the best of urban delights!

SBAU CACHUMA LAKE EVENT 2025

Diane Welcenbach

The annual Cachuma Lake Event was held Oct 24th – 26th 2025. The weather was comfortable with mostly clear skies and light wind. The view of the lake with mountains in the background was breathtaking. It is a beautiful setting to relax and enjoy the planet.

The Mohawk campsite is quite large allowing for plenty of space for campers to spread out. Members set up their tents and had their scopes ready to view the night sky. Tom Totton had his scope set up on Friday afternoon aimed at the Sun. Ron Nixon was playing some nice music on his ukulele. Many people went on hikes enjoying nature and getting exercise.

The potluck was held on Saturday and started at 4pm which worked out really well. Starting a little earlier allowed more time for socialization and allowed time for clean up before it got dark. Members that drove up from Santa Barbara could also drive back before it got fully dark.

SBAU paid for the main course of tri-tip, chicken, grilled vegetables, and garlic bread. This year the tri-tip was carved at the campsite instead of precut which allows the meat to hold its flavor.

Members brought delicious appetizers such as various cheeses, crackers, and olives. Side dishes included arugula salad, Caesar salad, vegetable salad, Brussel sprouts and many desserts, pumpkin pie, cheese cake, brownies, donuts, and cookies to name a few.

Matt Hall brought some Gainey wine to share. He worked at the vineyard and was involved with development of two of the wines that he brought.

Cachuma Lake donates a campsite to SBAU as a thank you for the outreach outings led by Chuck McPartlin held on the grounds during the year. Thanks to all the super stars that helped make this event a great success.



Photo credit: Diane Welcenbach



Photo credit: Diane Welcenbach

AU Information Box

President: Jerry Wilson 252-2206
jerryawilsonphd@gmail.com

Vice President: Ronnie Herron
vicepresident@sbau.org

Secretary: Tessa Flanagan
sbau.secretary@gmail.com

Treasurer: Pat McPartlin 964-8201
treasurer@sbau.org

Equipment: Tom Totton 562-8795
equipment@sbau.org

Outreach: Chuck McPartlin 964-8201
outreach@sbau.org

Newsletter: Tom Whittimore 687-2025
kometes@aol.com

Webmaster: Tom Totton 562-8795
webmaster@sbau.org

Events: Diane Welcenbach
Events@SBAU.org

Merch Manager: Pat McPartlin 964-8201
Merchmgr@sbau.org

SBMNH Astronomy Programs Manager

Ila Jade Komasa 682-4711x164
ijadekomasa@sbnature2.org

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 rate: \$20

AU mailing address:

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

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

The Astronomical Unit

c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

2559 Puesta Del Sol Road

Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998

DECEMBER 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	3	4 FULL MOON	5 GENERAL MEETING 6PM	6 MIDLAND SCHOOL 5PM
7	8	9	10	11 LQ MOON SBAU HOLIDAY PARTY 5PM	12	13 ZOOM PLANNING MEETING 4PM STAR PARTY SETUP 6PM
14	15	16	17	18	19 NEW MOON WESTMONT 6PM	20 WINTER SOLSTICE 7:03AM
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 FQ MOON
28	29	30	31			