

# Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 43 No. 03

March 1, 2006

**NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 6, 2006**

Maturango Museum, 100 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest

## **PROGRAM FOR THE MARCH 6 MEETING**

Think Big! At recent meetings we have focused on our solar system. Let's expand our horizon to the entire universe in March. Clint Spindler will lead a discussion of cosmic expansion. This is a controversial topic, and Clint has offered to share his gatherings on the subject.

## **DATES TO KEEP IN MIND**

Monday, March 6, 2006: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, March 31, 2006: Public Star Party. See below.

**Wednesday, March 22, 2006: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter**

Monday, April 3, 2006: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

## **STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2006 SEASON:**

Star Parties will be held on the dates listed below. Star Parties are an activity where members and guests join together to share views of the skies. If you have a telescope, bring it. If not, come and look through someone else's. Star parties are held at a site in the open desert south of Ridgecrest. To reach the star party site from Ridgecrest, go south on China Lake Boulevard 6.5 miles from its intersection with Ridgecrest Boulevard. Continue straight across Highway 395 and you will be on Brown Road (Old Highway 395). Follow Brown Road as it curves to the right and goes west. After 2.3 miles there will be a 30-inch orange cone on the left. Turn left and follow the dirt road marked by 12-inch cones. The CLAS Star party is 0.5 miles along this road. Watch for signs and cones, which will be put out about a half hour before viewing starts. Call Carroll Evans 760-375-5681, or Bruce Churchill 760-375-7247, for more information.

**Friday, March 31: Signs out at 6:30 p.m., Star viewing at 7:00 p.m.**

Friday, April 28: Signs out at 8:00 p.m., Star viewing at 8:30 p.m.

Friday, May 26: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, June 23: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, July 28: Signs out at 8:00 p.m., Star viewing at 8:30 p.m.

Friday, August 25: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, September 22: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing 7:30 p.m.

Friday, October 20: Signs out at 7:00 p.m., Star viewing at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 17: Signs out at 6:00 p.m., Star viewing at 6:30 p.m.

## **THE SKY IN MARCH (Roger Brower)**

1. Venus is in the morning sky but remains brilliant despite being very low. Look for it low in the southeast before dawn.
2. Mercury can be seen very low in the west for just the first few days of March.
3. Jupiter rises about 11p.m., so by morning it is clearly visible high in the south.
4. Saturn is still well placed for observation most of the night. Look for it in the east at sunset and watch it move across the sky as night progresses. It is located in the constellation of Cancer just west of the beehive cluster of stars.
5. Mars continues to dim throughout the month but remains brighter than any stars around it. Look for it high in southwest after sunset.

## **SPECIAL NOTES (Carroll Evans, Editor)**

First, a reminder that Skywatchers is YOUR club newsletter, and we need your input. Why not write an article? The best way to send articles to me is as Word attachments to email. However, I will even transcribe from your nearly indecipherable handwriting, if that is what it takes to get some fresh material for the newsletter.

Second, the newsletter is available as hard copy, mailed to you. Additionally it can be received via email, as Word and PDF attachments. You may receive either or both versions. Please let me know if you want to be added to the email list. If email alone is enough, and you are currently receiving a hard copy, please let me know.

As mentioned on the last page of the newsletter, my email is [clevans@ridgenet.net](mailto:clevans@ridgenet.net)

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## **OBSERVERS HANDBOOKS AND CALENDARS ARE STILL AVAILABLE**

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## **THE FOLLOWING IS PRESENTED FOR YOUR INTEREST, WITHOUT ENDORSEMENT**

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Subject: Niger; a new destination      13 of March 2006

“An extensive landscape, incredible sand dunes, black volcanic mountains, green oasis, waterfalls, fairy-tale desert cities... Niger is the land of mystery and romance where you find the Sahara, the biggest, most beautiful desert in the world, the last giraffes of West Africa and an enormously hospitality of its inhabitants”.

Dear Sir/Madam,

From all the Saharan countries, Niger releases a very great personality.

They is here that is most majestic rivers of the black continent, Niger River and one of the most beautiful desert of the world, Ténéré.

It is in this splendid desert between Bilma and Dirkou that will happen on next 29 March one from the natural phenomena more surprising: the total eclipse of the sun.

To make share this major astronomical moment, the Travel Agency Croix du Sud organizes a 8 days Tour around this event with an arrival at Agadez capital of Aïr. You will find in file joined the program of the Tour.

Extremely of our experience, (recommended in petit futée Niger; Partner of Chemin de sables in Paris, [www.cheminsdesable.com](http://www.cheminsdesable.com) and terre will natura in Belgium, [www.tierra.be](http://www.tierra.be)), we commit ourselves offering the best services to you by placing at your disposal a personnel and a service of quality.

Our internet site [www.croixdusud-niger.com](http://www.croixdusud-niger.com) will provide you with more information about Niger, our enterprise and our tours. But if you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

Oumarou Siddo  
(Manager Croix du Sud)

## **ASTRONOMY NEWS VIA EARL TOWSON**

**STARDUST SAMPLES UNDER STUDY IN LABORATORY:** Scientists at the University of Chicago are among the first ever to analyze cometary dust delivered to Earth via spacecraft. Scientists routinely examine extraterrestrial material that has fallen to Earth as meteorites, but never before NASA's Stardust mission have they had access to verified samples of a comet. <http://spaceflightnow.com/news/n0602/20stardust/>

As part of the first Sample Processing Cycle, the keystone of the first released particle was taken to the National Synchrotron Light Source at Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York and examined by the far-IR beam. The particle was shown to be definitely a cometary mineral and not secondary debris. As part of the second Sample Processing Cycle, the terminal particle - the particle at the end of the tract - was removed from the keystone for further analyses on Valentine's Day. To our surprise, we found the particle to be heart-shaped! Happy Valentine's to the world from Stardust! I have been assured that this is the real shape of the particle! Heart-shaped comet particle extracted from aerogel <http://stardust.jpl.nasa.gov/images/tsou060221.jpg>

**A READER'S COMMENT ABOUT THE SUN DYING:** Your note about the Sun going out and the world coming to an end worries me. I am putting my affairs in order. On the other hand, I saw a quote by Charles Schultz --"Don't worry about the world ending today---it is already tomorrow in Australia."

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Basic CLAS dues are \$20.00 per year, which includes the *Skywatchers Newsletter*. As a benefit of membership you may also receive *Astronomy Magazine* and/or *Sky and Telescope Magazine*. The fee schedule is as follows:

Basic membership	\$20.00 per year
Membership with Astronomy magazine	\$51.00 per year
Membership with Sky and Telescope magazine	\$53.00 per year
Membership with both S & T and Astronomy	\$84.00 per year

Send your check to: Roger Brower, Treasurer, China Lake Astronomical Society, P.O. Box 1783, Ridgecrest, CA 93556.

PRESIDENT – Earl Wilson – 760-876-5455 (email [zearl.email@gmail.com](mailto:zearl.email@gmail.com))  
VICE-PRESIDENT – Bruce Churchill - 760-375-7247 (email [bchurchill@atsecure.net](mailto:bchurchill@atsecure.net))  
SECRETARY – Ted Hodgkinson - 661- 824-2738 (email [longeyes@antelecom.net](mailto:longeyes@antelecom.net))  
TREASURER – Roger Brower - 760-375-1181 (email [brower@iwvisp.com](mailto:brower@iwvisp.com))  
NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Carroll Evans Jr. - 760-375-5681 (email [clevans@ridgenet.net](mailto:clevans@ridgenet.net))

**WESTERN AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS WEB SITE** <http://www.waa.av.org/>

Meetings of the China Lake Astronomical Society are held at the **Maturango Museum** at 7:30 p.m. on the first Monday evening of each month, except when the first Monday is a holiday.

## SKYWATCHERS

Newsletter of the

**CHINA LAKE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY  
POST OFFICE BOX 1783  
RIDGECREST, CA 93556-1783**

**FIRST CLASS**

**NEXT MEETING: 7:30 p.m., MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2006: “Expanding Cosmos”  
AT THE MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE.  
CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www1.iwvisp.com/brower/clas.html>  
INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~jebush/clas/>**