

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 43 No. 07

July 1, 2006

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, July 10, 2006

Maturango Museum, 100 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest

PROGRAM FOR THE JULY 10 MEETING – RIVERSIDE REVISITED

The Riverside Telescope Makers Conference is an annual event, which now takes place at Big Bear, and is a premiere event. It had its beginnings in downtown Riverside, California, as the brainchild of Cliff Holmes. The initial concept was of a 24-hour conference, noon to noon, to serve amateur telescope makers within a few hours driving range. Those were good events, but the organizers wanted to include observing, which was not possible from the Riverside location. The event was moved to Idylwild, at the dark of the moon. Then the decision was made to utilize the Memorial Day weekend, regardless of the phase of the moon. The conference has grown in stature and scope ever since that decision.

For our July meeting President Earl Wilson has joined with Alex Shlanta and Chuck Morgan to give us the highlights of the most recent RTMC, including the Western Amateur Astronomers activities, which have been integrated into RTMC.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, July 10, 2006: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 26, 2006: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Friday, July 28, 2006: Public Star Party. See below.

Monday, August 7, 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, 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 JULY (Roger Brower)

1. Venus is in the morning sky and rises about 5 a.m. local daylight time. This month it is located near the Hyades star cluster in Taurus. Look for it low in the east-southeast before dawn.
2. Mercury can still be seen in the western evening sky at the beginning of July but moves to the morning sky by the end of the month. Look for it in the east-southeast before dawn.
3. Jupiter joins Saturn and Mars in the evening sky. Look for them all in southwestern sky after dusk.
4. The Delta Aquarid meteor shower peaks on July 28th. Look for them in the south after midnight.

PUBLIC STAR PARTIES AT THE MATURANGO MUSEUM, 2006 SEASON

The China Lake Astronomical Society will host public viewing at the Museum's Observatory on the following Thursday evenings: June 22, June 29, July 20, July 27, August 17, and August 24. The dome will be open, of course, and CLAS members are requested to bring extra telescopes to set up in the vicinity. Call Carroll Evans for details.

TILLIE CREEK PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The Forest Service is continuing its series of "Campfire Talks" at the Tillie Creek Campground amphitheater. Astronomy will be the subject on three Saturday evenings, June 24, July 29, and August 26. This year the Kern River Valley Astronomical Society, under the leadership of Rich Burdge, is coordinating the programs. A whole new set of slides has been prepared, and they will be projected as PowerPoint in the modern way. CLAS members are still invited to bring telescopes for the public viewing before and after the talk. Call Rich at 760-376-1291 (Work) or 760-376-6290 (Home) for details. We look forward to another great season.

CLAS SKYWATCHERS ARCHIVES – Carroll Evans

Ever since the dawn of the Internet (1997 in Ridgecrest) CLAS member John Bush has archived the electronic version of this newsletter. I thank him for his faithful efforts for all these years. It has become necessary for him to relinquish this task, and his archives have been transferred to my own personal web space. For the moment his exact web page is now available at <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/> I will continue the archive, and make minor updates to the page.

RTMC Astronomy Expo 2006: A First Impression by Alex Shlanta

On 27-29 May 2006 was my first time to attend the RTMC Astronomy Expo and it exceeded my expectations. There was so much to see and do that I couldn't do everything I wanted to do in the time allotted. I noted there were about 1,100 friendly people with a common interest at this event. While at the Expo I saw CLAS members Earl Wilson, Chuck Morgan, Jim Leonard, Rick Rynne, and Rick Crocket. I also got to talk to Earl Towson. I appreciate receiving his FYI ASTRO information E-mails. They are interesting and helpful for teaching. The weather for the Expo was not real cooperative on Friday and Saturday evenings. Friday was windy and partially cloudy. Saturday was clear but really cold in the evening. But, the weather conditions didn't dim the excitement of the whole experience. This write up contains highlights from my experience.

I headed to the vendor tents/booths when I arrived at Camp Oakes near Big Bear City mid Friday afternoon. In between times at the Expo I returned again to the Vendor area. The vendors had some of the latest and greatest in astronomical equipment on display. Some of my highlights from the Vendor area follow.

I enjoyed the Meade Display, especially seeing the 12, 16, and 20-inch RCX 400 Ritchey-Chretien reflectors on display. The mount for the 20-inch was a masterful construction just by itself. I didn't manage to get any viewing time on that telescope because of the long lines and the limited viewing time. Being interested in the 12-inch diameter Meade Light Bridge truss tube Dobsonian, I spent some time with that telescope. This telescope comes apart into 4 sections and very transportable for star parties. At the Expo I found that JMI had developed Encoders for this telescope (cost \$275). I also found that a Sky Commander or NGC-Max computer could be used with the Light Bridge to give it a push-to capability. I didn't care much for the red dot viewfinder on the telescope.

Because of an interest in solar astronomy I found the Coronado Display very interesting. Their Calcium K scopes have the ability to look down lower into the Chromospheric atmospheric level of the Sun to show sunspots clearer and identify magnetic structure in the vicinity of sunspots. H-alpha scopes looking higher into the Chromosphere and part of the Corona are thus better for observing prominences. Looking through the \$15K Solar Max 90 (90 mm diameter) H-alpha telescope with double stacked filters took my breath away. When looking through a Solar Max 40 no distinguishing structure could be seen. But looking through the Solar Max 90 all kinds of structure jumped out with great leaping prominences, plagues, and many dark filaments.

Star Chasers, Inc had a mobile observatory with a Meade RCX 400 14-inch telescope mounted in the back of a SUV type vehicle. When in operation it had a large flat viewing screen mounted on the side of the vehicle and the whole thing was spectacular. At the Celestron booth I enjoyed seeing the Celestron Professional Computerized (CPC) line of telescopes including the impressive CPC 1100 XLT.

I spent some time and made some purchases at Oceanside Photo and Telescope, Woodland Hills Telescopes, Lumicon, and Stellarvue Telescope booths. JMI had a Meade Light Bridge fully equipped for push-to operations. I particularly enjoyed the Telescope Warehouse booth where they had a large assortment of used, surplus, seconds, etc. of telescope accessories.

In a field adjacent to the dorms there were many hand built telescopes set up for viewing. Some of them were rather large, like 14-inches in diameter. The Swap Meet on Saturday morning was fun. Even though they were still expensive I picked up nice samples of iron and stony meteorites for show and tell. I also purchased a document entitled "Finder Charts of deep Sky Objects for small to Medium Size Telescopes for the Northern Hemisphere Observer" by Walter E. Thomas. For novice observers or an astronomy teacher this document appears to be very useful.

During the Expo, talking and listening to other astronomers, I picked up all kinds of interesting tidbits of information on astronomy and equipment. An example is something I didn't know about and that is the application of adaptive optics for large telescopes these days is done with respect to changing the shape of the secondary mirror and not the primary mirror. I learned that the James Webb telescope, the planned replacement for the Hubble Space Telescope, might have less resolution capability than the Hubble. The James Webb, even though supposed to be more than twice the size, is to be optimized in the IR while the Hubble is optimized in the ultraviolet. I also met Tony Heinzman who teaches astronomy at Victor Valley College (VVC). He invited me to visit him at VVC and see their planetarium and observatory and to have a discussion about their developing a lab class for their astronomy curriculum.

The door prize drawing Saturday evening had heavy participation. About 100 prizes were given away, half of them to young people. The two biggest prizes were a computerized Celestron CPC 1100 XLT and a Meade 12 inch LX-200 with UTC.

The keynote speaker for the RTMC Astronomy Expo was Dr. Michael Brown from Cal Tech and he was great. The title of his talk was "Beyond Pluto: Discovery of the 10th Planet". Mike Brown along with Chad Trujillo and David Rabinowitz discovered 2003 UB 313. This Kuiper Belt Object (KBO) and its moon are known also by the nicknames given by the finders as Xena and Gabrielle respectively. Dr. Brown outlined the history leading up to the discovery and the surrounding controversies. The International Astronomical Union (IAU) is struggling with these controversies right now. Since Xena is believed to be 1 _ times as large as Pluto currently and is farther out from the Sun, there is a question as to whether it is a KBO or a 10th planet. If it is decreed a KBO then the status of Pluto as a planet is in jeopardy and that would upset many people. Then again, the IAU would need to define "planet" which is difficult.

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)
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TREASURER – Roger Brower - 760-375-1181 (email brower@iwvisp.com)
NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Carroll Evans Jr. - 760-375-5681 (email 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
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FIRST CLASS

**NEXT MEETING: 7:30 p.m., MONDAY JULY 10 (Delayed), 2006: “Riverside Revisited”
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/~clevans/clas/>**