Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 43 No. 08 **August 1, 2006**

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, August 7, 2006

Maturango Museum, 100 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest

PROGRAM FOR THE AUGUST 7 MEETING – STAR CLUSTERS

The summer season is the most prolific time for star clusters, so let's talk about observing both open and globular clusters this month. If you have pictures or observing tips, bring them along to share.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, August 10, 2006: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, August 30, 2006: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter
Friday, July 28, 2006: Public Star Party. See below.
Monday, September 11, 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, 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 AUGUST (Roger Brower)

1. Venus is in the morning sky and rises about 5AM local daylight time. Look for it low in the east-southeast before dawn.

2. Saturn joins Venus in the morning sky. Look for them in the east-southeast before dawn.

3. Jupiter and Mars are in the evening sky although this will be the last month to see Mars. Look for them in the southwestern sky after dusk.

4. The Perseid meteor shower peaks on the night of August 12/13 however their brightness will be diminished by the nearly full moon. Look for them high in the northeast 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.

VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE ASTRONOMY DEPARTMENT VISIT (Alex Shlanta)

At the RTMC Exposition Anthony Heninzman, Astronomy Instructor at Victor Valley Community College (VVCC) extended an invitation to me to visit and see their Astronomy Facilities. David Meyer, the Planetarium Facilitator at the College, served as the host when I visited the College on 10 June 2006. VVCC has about 14,000 students at the Victorville Main Campus. Their size is significantly larger than CCCC, which has about 5,000 students total on all campuses. VVCC has a much larger population to draw from that includes adjacent communities of Victorville, Hesperia, Adelanto, Apple Valley, and Lucerne Valley that have a total population of over 250,000 people. Dave Meyer was a most gracious host and I enjoyed talking with him and visiting the various facilities that have an association with the College.

At VVCC they offer a Descriptive Astronomy class ASTR-101 right now and usually have 2 or 3 classes of 50 students each semester. They utilize their Planetarium for their classes and an association they have with the Lewis Center for Educational Research. For a text they are using Fraknoi, Morrison, & Wolff, "Voyage Through the Universe", 3rd edition, Thompson Pub. They have three telescopes for their department: a non-GPS 10-inch Meade LX-200 Schmidt Cassegrain GOTO telescope, an older 8-inch non-computerized Celestron Schmidt Cassegrain, and a homemade 6-inch Dobsonian Reflector. The high level of light pollution from the campus precludes any serious observations from taking place on the campus.

The Planetarium is attached to the Science building at VVCC and it is very nice. The 30 ft diameter Planetarium dome houses 50 seats and a Zeiss Skymaster Star Projector. In addition to using the Planetarium to meet their classes, they put on about 16 shows for the public during the year. They have two different shows

for the public, one of these emphasizes constellations and the other, which is canned, deals with the solar system. Dave Meyer said they have hopes to upgrade the Planetarium digital system.

The VVCC Astronomy Department has a working agreement with the Lewis Center for Educational Research, which is located in Apple Valley. Dave Meyer took me to the Lewis Center for a visit and briefing. The Lewis Center is a K-12 Charter School that is endowed by several sources and has a very dedicated faculty. A main thrust of the school is to provide special education for students in the sciences. The school has a partnership agreement with NASA and JPL to use 3 of their 17 deep space tracking radio telescopes at the Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex on the southern end of Fort Irwin. These antennas are used to provide communications with spacecraft exploring the Solar System. When these antennas are not used for spacecraft tracking they are released for institutional research. The Goldstone Apple Valley Radio Telescope (GAVRT) Project is associated with the Lewis Science Center where middle and high school students operate and control a 111-foot 500-ton deep space radio telescope from the Kline command flight center at the school. The students collect and analyze the astronomical data under the guidance of faculty and JPL Scientists. These data go into a database that is used by professional scientists worldwide. At the school, studies are now being carried out currently on Jupiter, Uranus, Black Holes, and the Sun. Various elementary, middle, and high school teachers from other schools throughout the world receive radio telescope training at this facility. Small remotely operated planetary rovers are also being developed at the Lewis Center. To visit the Lewis Center the contact is David MacLaren or Kelli Cole. For a visit to the Goldstone deep space radio telescope facility the contact is Carla Warner (760) 255-8688.

Next Dave Meyer took me to visit the LUZ Optical Observatory. The original site for the Lewis Center, which has grades K-3, also houses the observatory. Luz, the original developer of the Solar Electric Generating System at Kramer Junction, was one of the benefactors of the Lewis Center. The observatory is operated and maintained by the High Desert Astronomical Society (HiDAS). The 5-meter diameter dome observatory has three capable telescopes on the same David Redosovich (of Garden Grove) mount. The telescopes are a C14 Celestron 14-inch Schmidt Cassegrain, a 4-inch Takahashi apochromatic refractor, and an 8-inch Russian made Masutov-Cassegrain telescope. The telescopes are all computer controlled at the observatory. The astronomy students from VVCC have the opportunity to attend star parties, after the monthly HIDAS meeting at the Observatory, and receive extra credit if they do so.

The bottom line from this visit is that I highly recommend that the China Lake Astronomical Society members should seriously consider a visit to the Planetarium at VVCC, the Lewis Center for Educational Research, and the Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex.

STAR PARTY FOR GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH (Alex Shlanta)

A star party was held on Wednesday 12 July 2006 at the Cerro Coso Astronomical Observatory for members of Grace Lutheran Church. 64 people attended the star party with ages ranging from 8 to 80. The star party was held after sundown from 9:00 pm to 10:30 pm. The sky was clear and we were able to do deep space viewing quite well until the Gibbous Phase Waning Moon rose at 10:15 pm. During the star party the temperature was about 85 deg F and wind speed 12 mph. Although the wind affected astronomical seeing a bit it helped cool things down so conditions were rather nice. The group was very enthusiastic and many good questions were asked. Cookies, iced tea, and lemonade were served to the participants during the viewing.

The star party for the group began with an introduction to the night sky constellations using a green laser pointer. Then the group was free to wander between the 6 telescope stations set up for viewing celestial phenomena. CLAS members Jay Chun, Roger Brower, Peter Eiserloh, Kiran Mehra, and Chuck Morgan who very ably manned telescope stations assisted me at the star party. Some of the highlight viewing was Albireo, Jupiter with 4 moons visible, Planetary Nebula M27 (Dumbbell) and M57 (Ring), Whirlpool galaxy M51, Globular Clusters (M4, M5, M22, and M13), Lagoon Nebula M8, and the Butterfly Cluster M6. Toward the end of the session the rising moon was viewed as well.

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**)
VICE-PRESIDENT – Bruce Churchill - 760-375-7247 (email **bchurchill@atsecure.net**)
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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

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FIRST CLASS

NEXT MEETING: 7:30 p.m., MONDAY AUGUST 7, 2006: "Star Clusters"
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/