

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 43 No. 10

October 1, 2006

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, October 2, 2006

Maturango Museum, 100 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest

PROGRAM FOR THE OCTOBER 2 MEETING – ASTRONOMY ROAD SHOW

I, Carroll Evans, ancient amateur astronomer, and the current editor of this very newsletter, will show the latest version of my Traveling Astronomy Slide Show. There will be several of you in the audience who would be able to present a better set of slides, or a better narration to go with my slides. However, management has selected me as your speaker. So, come join in, and we will see what I have for show and tell.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, October 2, 2006: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 25, 2006: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Friday, October 20, 2006: Public Star Party. See below.

Monday, November 6, 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, 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.

Star Parties will resume in March 2007

THE SKY IN OCTOBER (Roger Brower)

1. Venus, although still in the morning sky, is slowly sinking into the morning twilight. Look for it low in the east-southeast before dawn.

2. Saturn, also in the morning sky, is heading the opposite direction and is rising earlier (3 a.m. at the start and 12:30 a.m. at the end of the month). Look for it in the east-southeast before dawn.

3. Jupiter is in the evening sky but, also, is getting lower in the sky as the month goes on. Look for it in the southwestern sky after dusk.
4. Mercury and Mars remain too close to the sun to be easily visible this month.
5. The Orionid meteor shower peaks on the night of October 21st and should present a good show due to the fact that it occurs right at the new moon. Look for them in the southeast after midnight.

PUBLIC STAR PARTIES AT THE MATURANGO MUSEUM, 2006 SEASON

The China Lake Astronomical Society has hosted 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 was open, of course, and CLAS members brought extra telescopes to set up in the vicinity.

We have extended our scheduled programs into September, on the 21st and 28th. So please bring a telescope or two for these added dates. Call Carroll Evans for details.

You might like to know how we did so far this season. For the first star party, we had several telescopes, and exactly one guest. For the second one, a week later, we had four times as many people. We attribute this low participation to the massive crack that things fall into once in a while, thus the lack of newspaper coverage. For the third scheduled Star Party, the newspaper coverage was not much, if any. However, the sky was fully covered, so we cancelled. For the fourth we got excellent write-ups in both local papers, and we had about 40 guests. The next two had 30 guests at each presentation.

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. The update has not yet been accomplished.

STAR PARTY FOR THIRD GRADE GATEWAY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS (Alex Shlanta)

A Star Party was held at the Cerro Coso College Observatory on Friday 15 September 2006 for the 3rd grade classes of Virginia Weisz and Paige Sorbo. About 50 students and parents attended the event and they were an enthusiastic group. The weather defied the forecast and presented a real challenge for the outing. It was 63 deg F, partially cloudy, with a wind WSW at 25 mph, and gusts into the 30's. Needless to say, the wind precluded the use of telescopes. I was thinking about canceling the Star Party when the Gateway elementary group appeared at the College. But, I noticed they all were so eager and I just couldn't let them down. So, a variation on the star party theme was carried out and it proved to be effective. China Lake Astronomical Society members Chuck Morgan and Peter Eiserloh assisted me with this somewhat different kind of Star Party.

The Star Party commenced with my using a green laser pointer and pointing out some of the primary Constellations that could be seen. Indicated were the big dipper in Ursa Major, Cassiopeia, the Summer Triangle of stars, Northern Cross in Cygnus, the Square of Pegasus, and the Andromeda Constellation. A few stories and anecdotes accompanied this sky tour. Then the group was walked through a model of the solar system with stakes in the ground spaced to represent the relative distances between planets. When we stopped at each stake the group was told some of the characteristics of that planet. We talked about there being only 8 planets now with Pluto, Eris (2003 UB 313), and Ceres being in the Dwarf planet category. Finally we walked over to the 3 domes that were open in the observatory compound and let the 3rd graders take an up-close look at

the telescopes inside the domes. Chuck demonstrated how to use the Orion 12-in Dobsonian mount reflector and had them look down at the mirror. Then he went to the Meade 12-inch LX200 Schmidt Cassegrain telescope on a fork mount. The students particularly liked it when he controlled the motion of the LX200 with the hand controller. Peter then demonstrated the Cave 10-inch reflector on an equatorial mount and the use of a finder.

The teachers Virginia Weisz and Paige Sorbo told me that they were pleased with the Star Party. Now that their students had some background they would like to come back with them again in the springtime to do some actual looking through telescopes at celestial objects.

NOW IT HAS A NAME (Carroll Evans)

Name the planets in our Solar System! We all thought we could, starting with Mercury, and progressing to Pluto. Now that the International Astronomical Union (IAU) has “demoted” Pluto to the status of “Dwarf Planet,” maybe we have only eight planets. However, it seems to me that we should not discriminate against dwarfs. A dwarf planet is just “size challenged.”

But it does get complicated. Other far out objects of the general nature of Pluto have been discovered. One such had the unglamorous name of B313, and had been nicknamed Xena by its discoverers. Now the IAU has given it the name of Eris, the mythological Greek Goddess of chaos and strife. Eris’ moon has been named Dysnomia, the daughter of Eris, the spirit of lawlessness. Eris is a quite fitting name for an object which has upset a lot of astronomers and people with an interest in astronomy.

CERRO COSO COLLEGE & FOUNDATION SPONSOR ASTRONOMICAL BBQ & STAR PARTY

Cerro Coso Community College and the Cerro Coso Community College Foundation are teaming up to sponsor the first ever Astronomical Barbecue & Star Party!!! **Mark your calendars** for this fun-filled fundraiser, which is a benefit for the “Dr. Alex Shlanta Astronomical Observatory” at Cerro Coso. The fundraiser is scheduled for **Friday, October 27** with the barbecue dinner from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on the College Library’s front lawn (with chef’s Mary Retterer and her husband Rich) and the Star Party beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Observatory.

“Yesterdaze” a popular local band (with John Stinger-Smith) and the CERRO COSO COMMUNITY BAND (with Tom Foggia) will both be providing musical entertainment during the dinner. Presale tickets are adults: \$8.00, children \$6.00, and family four-pack \$25.00. Tickets are available at Lou’s Hallmark, Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce, and the Cerro Coso Business Office. Come and enjoy the fun!

FIELD TRIP TO GOLDSTONE DEEP SPACE FACILITY – FRIDAY OCTOBER 20, 2006

The China Lake Astronomical Society has scheduled a field trip to JPL’s Deep Space Communications Complex at Goldstone Dry Lake. This is southeast of Ridgecrest maybe 50 miles as the crow flies. However, the crows are not flying. You have to go to Barstow and then back up north to the facility. We will join a scheduled tour at 9:00, so we must leave Ridgecrest at 6:00 a.m. Meet at the Maturango Museum parking lot at 6:00 a.m. if you want to car pool. The last time we went there was ten years ago, and we just drove right there. No so any more. The facility is in the middle of Fort Irwin. Thus you first have to check in at the Fort Irwin gate, with a picture I.D., and if you are the driver, proof of insurance. This takes time. There is now a gate at the facility, too. More information is at <http://deepspace.jpl.nasa.gov/dsn/>

New since our last visit is a Museum, which is where our tour will begin. We will then go in caravan to the various sites.

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)

SECRETARY – Ted Hodgkinson - 661- 824-2738 (email longeyes@antelecom.net)

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, which is the case in September.

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 OCTOBER 2, 2006: “Astronomy Road Show”
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/>**