

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 43 No. 12

December 1, 2006

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, December 4, 2006

Maturango Museum, 100 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest

PROGRAM FOR THE DECEMBER 4 MEETING – THE “THE STATUS OF PLUTO”

In August, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) rocked (pun intended) the astronomical world by reclassifying Pluto as a dwarf planet. Let's talk about Pluto's status at our December meeting. Earl Wilson will share some of his gatherings on the subject, and Peter Eiserloh will present results of his orbital studies. If you have opinions, evidence or pictures bring them along.

NOTICE OF ELECTIONS

The annual Election of Officers of the China Lake Astronomical Society will be held at the December meeting. The officers are President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, December 4, 2006: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m., including election of officers.

Wednesday, December 27, 2006: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Monday, January 8, 2007: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

Star Parties will resume in March 2007

NOW AVAILABLE!

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Observer's Handbooks and Calendars for 2007 have arrived, and will be available at the meeting. We will hold the price line for one more year, at \$15.00 each for the Handbooks and \$10.00 for the calendars. Please call Roger Brower at 375-1181 to arrange for purchase if you can't make the meeting.

THE SKY IN DECEMBER (Roger Brower)

1. Venus is now in the evening sky but still close to the sun. However, it should be visible low in the west-southwest by the end of the month.
2. Saturn is in the evening sky rising at 10:00 p.m. at the start of the month and by 8 p.m. at the end of the month. Look for it rising in the east in the constellation of Leo near Regulus.
3. Mercury, Mars and Jupiter form a tight grouping in the east-southeast at dawn during the second week of the month. The grouping, however, is low and will probably require binoculars to be seen well.

4. The Geminid meteor shower peaking on the night of December 13th and 14th should present a good show due to the fact that it occurs during the waning crescent moon. Look for them in the east-southeast after 9 p.m.

ASTRONOMICAL BBQ & STAR PARTY (Alex Shlanta)

Cerro Coso Community College (CCCC) and the Cerro Coso Community College Foundation teamed up to sponsor the first ever Astronomical Barbecue & Star Party. This was held at Cerro Coso Community College on 27 October 2006 as a fundraiser for the Observatory at the College. Supporting this event were Cerro Coso College Faculty, Staff, and Students. Members of the Ridgecrest City Council and the China Lake Astronomical Society assisted as well. The barbecue dinner was held from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. on the College Library's front lawn. The Star Party that began at 7:00 p.m. followed this. About 450 – 500 people attended the event and all had a fun time.

The chefs for the BBQ were Mayor Chip Holloway, Vice Mayor Dan Clark, and Rich Retterer, husband of the CCCC President Dr. Mary Retterer. Chancellor of the Kern College District Dr. Sharon Serrano attended the event as well. The CCCC Band under the able direction of Dr. Tom Foggia provided musical entertainment during the dinner. The band played selections that were a preview of the Band's upcoming 9 November Fall Concert. This was followed by folk music for the 60's and 70's performed by Yesterdaze, a popular local musical group with Cerro Coso's own Dr. John Stenger-Smith. A raffle of about 20 prizes was held as well.

For the Star Party there were two venues running in parallel, an astronomical slide show and viewing through telescopes at the Observatory. Successive 30 minute slide presentations "Exploring the Night Sky" were given by Peter Eiserloh in Room 604 of the Library at the College. This presentation was an Introductory Overview of the Universe. The presentation started with the Sun and worked through the Solar System. The presentation then moved on to deep space covering our galaxy and external galaxies.

The Cerro Coso College bus provided transportation from the dining area to the Astronomical Observatory. Solar lights for those who wished to walk to the Observatory lighted the route. When people arrived at the observatory Dr. Shlanta using a green laser pointer gave them a tour of important constellations and stars in the fall night sky. Then the people went inside the observatory compound where twelve stations were waiting for them set up with telescopes to view the various celestial wonders in our fall night sky. Manning the telescopes and explaining the celestial views were China Lake Astronomical Society members Jay Chun, Calvin Clayson, Scott Fuller, Dick Johnson, Kiran Mehra, Chuck Morgan, Ken Pringle, Jerry Ott, and Bill Weiss with telescopes ranging in size from from 10" diameter to 14" diameter. Also assisting at stations at the observatory were Richard L'Hommedieu, Jim Morford, and Terry and Greg Mussinger.

For the astronomical viewing there was the special sight of Comet C/2006 M4 (SWAN). This comet came from outside our solar system. Viewed also were a crescent to quarter phase waxing Moon, M31 the famous Andromeda galaxy, the blue and gold binary stars Albireo, M13 the million star Great Hercules globular cluster outside the plane of our galaxy, M57 the ring planetary nebula, M27 the dumbbell nebula the brightest planetary nebula, the Perseus Double Cluster NGC 869 & NGC 884, and M45 the large Pleiades open cluster.

CLAS STAR Party 11/17/06 (Alex Shlanta)

The last CLAS star party for 2006 was held on Friday 11/17/06. Five telescopes were out at the Star Party site manned by Jerry Ott, Bill Weiss, Neal Barry, Roger Young, and myself. We had three guests at the site along with Peter Eiserloh. The general weather was nice with temperatures in the 50's and low wind speed. However, clouds were a factor that limited seeing. Especially noted were thin clouds to the west that got worse as the evening progressed. As a result most viewing was done toward the east. A popular celestial item was M31 Andromeda galaxy and its companion galaxies M32 and M110 seen in the same eyepiece

field-of-view. We were able to see Comet SWAN (C/2006 M4) near the constellation Aquila but it was rather faint. M57 the Ring Nebula was seen earlier in the evening but it became more difficult to find as time went on. Other items that were viewed were M45 Pleiades, Caldwell 41 Hyades, M15 the Pegasus globular cluster, and later on when the constellation Orion came up the Great Orion Nebula M42. Even though it was close to the horizon we were able to resolve the trapezium in the Orion Nebula. Something I learned recently from Greek Mythology was that the Pleiades and the Hyades were half sisters. They had the same father, Atlas, but different mothers.

TELESCOPE FOR SALE

A Meade LX200GPS 8" telescope with GPS and UHTC and all sorts of accessories in essentially new condition (unused) is for sale. The price new was \$4972.00, and is offered for \$3500.00 Call Karen Stiff at 760-375-3612 for details. I don't know if this scope is still available, but I apologize for the price error last month. At \$35.00 it would have been a tremendous value. Still a pretty good deal.

A NEW ASTRONOMY STORE

I received the following email. It is a bit of a drive from Ridgecrest, but no harm in knowing about it.

Hi Carroll,

I would like to let your members know about new astronomy store in the NW.

Aurora Astro Products
11419 19th Avenue SE #A102
Everett, WA 98208
www.auroraastro.com
425-337-4384
425-337-4358 FAX
Email: infoauroraastro@aol.com

Store is opening November 7th and Store hours Tues-Fri 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sat 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sun 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Closed on Mondays.

I am Jim Bielaga the owner. I host the Orion Nebula Star Party at Table Mountain every fall.
<http://www.seattleastro.org/orionnebsp.html>

I have been an astronomer since 1983 and been in retail sales from 1994 on. I have also been past President of Everett Astronomical Society 1992-1994. I am author of The Multiple Deep Sky Observing List-347 sets of more than one object in the same field of view, Laminated Meteor Card, and new Off the Beaten Messier Path Telrad Finder Charts. I have personally seen over 1000+ deep sky objects and over 30 Comets. So you can rest assured you are buying from a fellow astronomer and not just a customer service rep.

Thank you for helping to promote my new venture.

Clear skies,

Jim Bielaga

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.

**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 DECEMBER 4, 2006: “The Status of Pluto”
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/>**