

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 44 No. 4

April 1, 2007

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, April 2, 2007

Maturango Museum, 100 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest, California

PROGRAM FOR THE APRIL 2 MEETING – OBJECTS IN VIRGO

Spring is the galaxy season, and it is the best time of the year to observe the plethora of galaxies and other objects in Virgo. Let's talk about Virgo at our April meeting. If you have pictures of favorite objects or observing tips, bring them along.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, April 2, 2007: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 13, 2007: Regular monthly Star Party, see details below

Wednesday, April 25, 2007: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

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

STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2007 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, April 13: Signs out at 8:00 p.m., Star viewing at 8:30 p.m.

Friday, May 18: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, June 15: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, July 13: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, August 10: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

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

Friday, October 12: Signs out at 7:00 p.m., Star viewing at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 9: Signs out at 5:30 p.m., Star viewing at 6:00 p.m.

STILL 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 APRIL (Roger Brower)

1. Venus is in the evening sky. Look for it in the west-southwest soon after sunset.
2. Saturn remains a fine evening object. Look for it in the east-southeast at sunset in the constellation of Leo near Regulus.
3. Jupiter, still in the morning sky, rises about 1 a.m. at the beginning of the month and about 11 p.m. at the end of the month. Look for it in the southeast after midnight.
4. The Lyrid Meteor shower peaks on April 22nd. This rather minor Meteor shower, only produces about 20 meteors per hour but this should produce an increase after midnight on both the 22nd and 23rd.

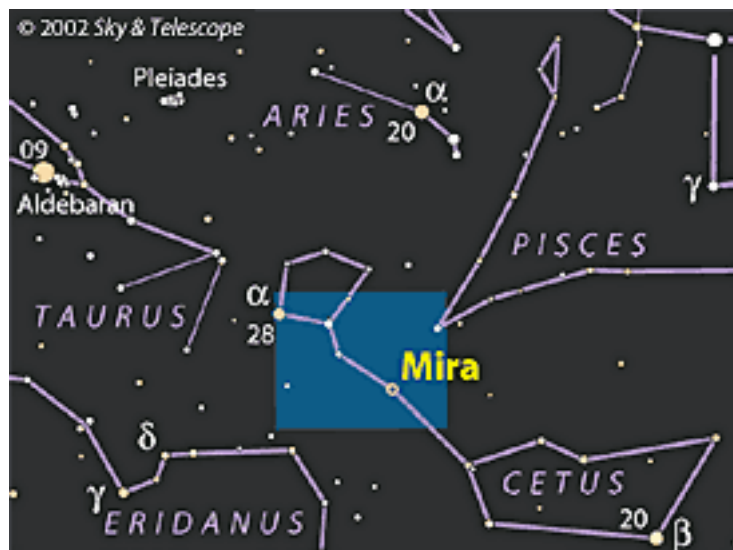
OUR PRESENCE ON THE WEB (Carroll Evans)

Bob Stewart and I have set up a domain name for the society. Check us out at <http://ChinaLakeAstroSoc.org> We will continue to upgrade the site, and will soon allow members to post pictures and comments.

STAR WATCH (Bob Stewart)

Here are some variable stars that you might want to keep an eye on in April. Better yet, take a series of pictures and watch the stars brighten and fade.

When it comes to pulsating giants we can hardly pass up Mira, Omicron Ceti. Mira has had an unusually brilliant maximum. At a typical peak of its cycle Mira reaches magnitude 3.4, but in March it reached second magnitude, the brightest star in the constellation of Cetus. Mira is the brightest of the red long-period variables, and it presents the most radical changes that can be seen with the naked eye beyond the solar system. Mira's period of 332 days means its maxima come one month earlier each succeeding year, so we should see it at its brightest for the next couple of winters. It reached its brightest March 8th but will be bright through April. Look for it in the western sky. For a comparison chart go to: http://www.aavso.org/charts/CET/O_CET/



R Leo: Within the constellation of Leo, the Lion, lies the bright Mira-type variable R Leonis, an ideal variable for beginners. If you can find the Sickle of Leo you can find R Leonis, one of the brightest red long-period variables, which lies just to the west of Regulus. It brightens and fades between magnitudes 5 and 10 over a cycle of 312 days, on average about 10 months. A small telescope or even binoculars are all the equipment you'll need. It was at its brightest on March 1st but still should be visible in April. For a comparison chart go to: http://www.aavso.org/charts/LEO/R_LEO/

V CVn: This star is easy to find near M 51 between the handle of the Big Dipper and Canes Venatici. It's an easy find, as it is the only bright red star in the area, just south of the Whirlpool galaxy. Its magnitude varies between 6.52 - 8.56 and it reached its brightest on March 26th. Find it in the east as the Big Dipper comes up in the evening. Unfortunately, there is no comparison chart for this star, but my Peterson's Field Guide to the Stars and Planets shows its location.:

T Cen: You'll need to get up early and have a good southern exposure to see this naked eye variable. T Centauri lies just above the Omega Centauri globular cluster, a spectacular object in its own right. I have seen it low in the southern sky from Ridgecrest and even as far north as Bear Valley, north of Yosemite, in the Sierras. It has a magnitude range of 5.5 - 9.0 and a period of 90.44 days. It should reach maximum brightness on April 22. For a comparison chart go to: http://www.aavso.org/charts/CEN/T_CEN/



Next Month: More variables plus some colorful doubles. And don't forget to send in your observations and pictures to the web site. (Ed. Note: In a future issue we will tell you how to post on the club web site.)

REPORT ON THE MARCH STAR PARTY (Bruce Churchill)

Our first star party of the year was held on Friday March 16, and it was one to be remembered. The skies were the clearest that we've had in several outings and it was the best observing we've seen in March in many years. This is the only star party we hold in the winter season so we took advantage of the opportunity to view some of the finer winter objects. This was also the time of year when the most Messier objects are observable on a single night. Venus was brilliant in the western sky after sunset and for a while it sat atop an impressive triangle of zodiacal light. After Venus set, the sky became even darker for deep sky objects. There were several newcomers in attendance including members of Ken Pringle's astronomy class at Cerro Coso College.

SAD NEWS

China Lake Astronomical Society member David A. Rosenthal died Friday March 16 at age 58. Dave was a multi-talented individual. His interests in astronomy included meteor showers, and Mayan astronomy, to name just two. He spoke at CLAS meetings several times. He is survived by his wife Donna McCrohan Rosenthal and other relatives. Our community has lost a great resource.

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	\$54.00 per year
Membership with Sky and Telescope magazine	\$53.00 per year
Membership with both S & T and Astronomy	\$87.00 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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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 APRIL 2, 2007: “OBJECTS IN VIRGO”
AT THE MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE.
CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www.chinalakeastro.org>
INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/>**