

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 45 No. 1

January 1, 2008

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, January 7, 2008

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

PROGRAM FOR THE JANUARY 7 MEETING – GADGET NIGHT

About once a year we have “gadget night.” This is the program where you bring something for “show and tell.” You can bring hardware, or software, or even just a story. This is audience participation at its best. Perhaps you received a new toy at Christmas, or perhaps you have had something for years, and just want to share it.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, January 7, 2008: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 23, 2008: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Monday, February 4, 2008: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2008 SEASON: Public star parties resume in March 2008.

2008 ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY HANDBOOKS AND CALENDARS AVAILABLE

For many years the China Lake Astronomical Society has provided the RASC Observer’s Handbook to our membership. The retail price for a single copy (delivered) is \$31.95 US. We get them at a group rate, and share the savings with our members. For the past two years we have sold them at less than cost, as a service to members. However, prices have increased to where we must again cover costs. If you buy in person we are charging \$17.00 for the handbook, and \$10.00 for the calendar.

Most of you know all about the handbooks and calendars. Suffice to say that the *Observer’s Handbook* is 320 pages of astronomical data, which is presented as tables, charts and annual and daily information. The calendars also present useful information, along with great astronomical photographs.

SOMETHING FOR YOU TO LOOK AT, information from Gene Hunter

I would like to take a minute to invite you and all of your club members to www.astrophotogallery.org. Its a free website where each member gets a gigabyte of space to upload and manage his/her own photo gallery. You can also create as many albums as you like to organize your photos for easy display and you can upload animated gifs and wmv files.

FORTY-FOUR YEARS OF SERVICE TO OUR MEMBERS BY Carroll Evans

We are beginning our forty-fifth year of publication of Skywatchers. I still have a copy of the first issue, which was hand typed with several carbon copies. The process was repeated as many times as needed.

THE SKY IN JANUARY by Roger Brower

1. Venus remains in the morning sky month and rises in the east before sunrise.
2. Jupiter joins Venus in the morning sky this month. In fact, as the month goes on, Jupiter and Venus get ever closer together so that by the end of the month they will only be about 1 degree apart in the eastern sky.
3. Saturn rises about 9 p.m. on January 1st and will remain a nice late night object all month.
4. Mars is just past its Christmas Eve opposition and so will rise just before sunset and will be visible all night. Look for it in the east after the sun sets.
5. Mercury will put in a brief appearance in the evening sky. Look for it in the west-southwest from January 19th to the 26th.
5. Two Comets grace the evening sky this month. Comet Holmes remains visible in the northeast in the constellation of Perseus. Also, Comet Tuttle should be a nice binocular object. Look in the January Sky and Telescope issue for location.

STAR WATCH FOR JANUARY 2008 by Bob Stewart

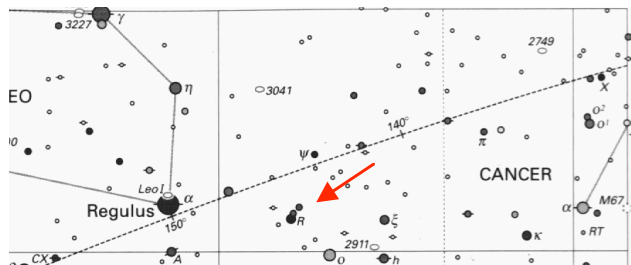
There is one very bright naked-eye variable star this month that we can see from Ridgcrest. Another is on the rise.

R Leo

Celebrate New Year's Day with a bright naked-eye variable. If you can find the Sickle of Leo you can find R Leonis, one of the brightest red long-period variables. This Mira-type variable brightens and fades between magnitudes 5 and 10 over a cycle of about 10 months.

Easy to find, it lies 5° west of bright Regulus, very close to the pair of 6th-magnitude stars, 18 and 19 Leonis, and at the south end of a little chain of three stars.

Another help in identifying R Leonis is its deep orange-red color. It contrasts vividly with bluish white 19 Leonis and golden yellow 18 Leonis. In mid-December it had brightened to mag. 5.9, easily visible in binoculars.



For a comparison chart go to: ftp://www.aavso.org/charts/standard/LEO/R_LEO/

Mira Watch

Mira continues to brighten from its minimum of 9.4. It now shows as a faint red star, easy to pick out in binoculars. In mid December the AAVSO reported its magnitude at 7.6. For a comparison chart go to: http://www.aavso.org/charts/CET/O_CET/

ELECTIONS

The annual election of officers for the China Lake Astronomical Society was held at the December 3 meeting. All officers will continue to serve for 2008. We look forward to another good year.

THE NEXT (REALLY) BIG TELESCOPE by Carroll Evans

I was given a story from the Los Angeles Times, which alerted me to the plans to build a 30-meter (nearly 100 feet) optical telescope. When I was first interested in astronomy the 200-inch (5 meters) for Mt. Palomar was under construction. Because light gathering power is proportional to the square of the ratio of diameters, this new telescope will capture 36 times as much light from an object as does the Mt. Palomar mirror. It would be fun to imagine such a telescope mirror built of solid (or even honeycombed) glass, emulating the Mt. Wilson and Palomar giants. If built like Mt Palomar's mirror, the 30-meter mirror would be something like three meters thick. That is so impractical as to be impossible, and modern telescopes are not built that way. This new telescope will have 492 separate hexagonal mirrors each about 1.5 meters (4.8 feet) across, with a thickness of about 4.5 cm (1.8 inches),

By the use of adaptive optics the telescope will have a resolution better than the Hubble Space Telescope. This is no backyard telescope; in fact it is bigger than most backyards. The price tag is about \$300 million, and many of you have unwittingly contributed a portion of the amount. The founders of Intel, Gordon Moore, and his wife Betty have committed \$200 million to the project. This gives new meaning to the advertising phrase "Intel Inside."

The California Institute of Technology, the University of California, and the Association of Canadian Universities jointly manage the project for Research in Astronomy (Acura). The final design should be complete by March 2009, and completion is expected in 2017. There are five sites under consideration, three in Chile, one in Baja California, and one on Mauna Kea on the island of Hawaii.

There is more information at www.tmt.org. There you can find the esoteric list of Key Science Topics. How about Kuiper belt object surface chemistry? Or star-by-star dissection of galaxies out to 10 Mega-parsecs.

OBSERVATORY FOR SALE by Claude Wood

Complete observatory for sale. Can be set up for remote robotic operation:

Celestron CGE 1100 w/enhanced coated optics, Astro pier pedestal (also tripod), SGIG ST-2000 XM CCD camera, Telrad Finder, Robofocus robotic focus drive, Televue 35 mm 2" Panoptic, Televue 27 mm 2" Panoptic, Televue 2" Dielectric Diagonal, Televue 2" Barlow, Nine miscellaneous 1.25" eyepieces, 12.5 mm illuminated Plossl, Filter holder, Miscellaneous filters, Meade axis guider, Celestron radial guider, Telescope control PC and software, Camera control PC and software., Pentax K1000 35mm film camera, Televue 2" T-Adapter for camera

Over \$10,000 invested. Asking \$7000. Claude Wood, 377-5558

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE by Jim Leonard

I am at it again. Selling out more stuff: (1) Pentax K 10 D SLR Digital Camera. In original box with all the goodies. Charger, USB cables, books, software, 4 GB memory chip, T-Mount adapter, remote cable switch, 18-55 mm F3.5-5.6 AL zoom lens, and a Vanguard Wave photo/video bag.

Original cost was around \$1400.00 and will part for \$900.00. Let's talk?

Jim Leonard ex OCA now China Lake Astronomical Soc.

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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 rbc605gem@yahoo.com)
SECRETARY – Ted Hodgkinson - 661- 824-2738 (email ghodkinson@sbcglobal.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 JANUARY 7, 2008: “Gadget Night” AT THE
MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE., RIDGECREST, CA
CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www.chinalakeastroc.org>
INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/>**