

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 45 No. 3

March 1, 2008

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 3, 2008

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

PROGRAM FOR THE MARCH 3 MEETING – MESSIER MARATHON

March is Messier Marathon month. Let's talk about the Messier and other catalogues this month. Bring pictures and observing tips along, to share.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, March 3 2008: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, March 7, 2008: Public Star Party at Brown Road Site, see below.

Sunday, March 9, 2008: Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 a.m. (Spring forward!)

Wednesday, March 19, 2008: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Monday, April 3, 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 March 7, 2008.

Star Parties will be held on the dates listed below. Star Parties are an activity where members and guests come together to view the skies. If you have a telescope, bring it; if not, come and look through someone else's. They are held at a site in the open desert south of Ridgecrest. To reach the 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. Signs and cones 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, March 7: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, April 4: Signs out at 8:00 p.m., Star viewing at 8:30 p.m.

Friday, May 2: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, June 6: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, July 4: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, August 1: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, August 29: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, September 26: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing 8:00 p.m.

Friday, October 24: Signs out at 7:00 p.m., Star viewing at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 28: Signs out at 5:30 p.m., Star viewing at 6:00 p.m.

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 324 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.

THE SKY IN MARCH by Roger Brower (Carroll Evans and Robert Shaw this time)

Mercury reaches greatest western elongation, 27 degrees from the Sun and two degrees from Venus on the morning of March 3. Mercury, although difficult to see in the light of dawn, will be within three degrees of Venus until March 30. Viewing is better from the Southern Hemisphere.

Venus will be just south of the Moon on March 5, as it gets closer to the Sun. Venus will disappear from the morning sky by mid-April and reappear as an evening object in July.

Mars leaves Taurus for Gemini on March 5. On the 15th it is 1.7 degrees south of the Moon, and on the 30th will pass by Epsilon Geminorum, a third magnitude star which it occulted in April 1976.

Jupiter is still brilliant in the southeast morning sky, rising several hours before the Sun. It is northeast of the Teapot in Sagittarius all month. On the morning of the 30th it will be three degrees north of the last quarter moon, offering the possibility for a daytime view of Jupiter.

Saturn dims a bit, but is visible all night long, near the star Regulus, during March. The rings are inclined about nine degrees at mid-month. On Wednesday the 19th Saturn will be three degrees north of the Moon. Late evening provides the best telescopic views.

TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE MOON by Carroll Evans

There was a total eclipse of the Moon February 21st; the next one won't be until December 21, 2010. One always says, "Weather permitting" when announcing an astronomical event to the public. And, to our pleasure, weather did permit. The China Lake Astronomical Society scheduled public viewing of the event at the Maturango Museum. Both local newspapers gave us good write-ups, and about 30 people came to look through telescopes and binoculars that we had set up for them. Chuck Morgan and Clint Spindler served as hosts at the dome and Gary Babcock and Carroll Evans hosted internet web cam pictures on the big screen in the Museum's multi-purpose room. Gary had researched several possible sites, but the only one that worked for us was the Asociacion Argentina "Amigos de la Astronomia." Their image refreshed every 60 seconds, and was remarkably like the real thing.

During totality it was easy to see Regulus and Saturn as companions of the Moon.

We were cloud free for 99% of the time, and the eclipsed Moon was a beautiful copper color. There was only a slight breeze, and only a few people opted for the warmth and comfort of the indoor presentation.

It is still our goal to present images from the Museum's Observatory on the big screen. Stay tuned...

A NEW EVENT FOR AMATEURS AND OTHERS

The Riverside Telescope Makers Conference, Inc will be sponsoring a new fall exhibition, the Pacific Astronomy and Telescope Show (PATS) September 13 and 14, 2008 at Pasadena's Conference Center and Pavilion. Judging from recent interest and inquiries it promises to be a grand event. More info is at rtmcastronomyexpo.org/PATS.htm.

More details will be available later, but mark your calendars now.

GOLDEN STATE STAR PARTY 2008--EARLY REGISTRATION by Bill Porte

Early Registration is in full swing, and it looks like there will be a great turn out at this year's Golden State Star Party on July 2 through July 6. The unrivalled new site near Adin, California, is as good as it gets, and has generated a lot of excitement in the astronomy community. GSSP now offers the darkest skies available to large groups in California, with virtually no light domes. The site features a huge observing field with minimal dust and no rocks, ideal for camping and equipment set-up. There are ample amenities and conveniences including showers, sanitary facilities, many nearby attractions, and on-site food service. RV's and imagers with their special needs can be easily accommodated this year. GSSP is non-profit and organized 100% by astronomers for astronomers. We believe that GSSP will rapidly become one of the best star parties in the country, rivaling the Oregon Star Party and the Texas Star Party.

All are welcome, including folks who are new to the hobby or don't have their own telescope. GSSP has many seasoned astronomers who would be thrilled to share views, knowledge, and their sheer joy of the night sky. The whole idea behind GSSP is simply to provide the best possible venue for the pure enjoyment of astronomy. The cost is \$45, which includes registration, camping, and site amenities (excluding food). Register now, since after April 15, the registration fee will increase to \$55. Your equipment can remain set up for the entire event. For registration and more information, visit our GSSP official website at <http://www.goldenstatestarparty.org> or contact info@goldenstatestarparty.org.

We hope to see all of you this summer at what promises to be the best TAC-sponsored star party ever. In the meantime, get out there and observe as often as you can!

IAYC 2008, July 20th - August 9th 44th International Astronomical Youth Camp, Sayda, Germany

Every year, for 39 years now, the International Astronomical Youth Camp (IAYC) takes place somewhere in Europe. About seventy people from many different countries live together for three weeks. They are aged between 16 and 24 years old and share the same interest: astronomy. The IAYC is different from most astronomical camps for two reasons: the international character and the fact that you do your own small research project, not just accepting facts but rather discovering them yourself. The IAYC is also not like a hotel where one follows a summer school or an astronomy course. Every participant with his or her own cultural background forms an important piece in the complex puzzle of camp life.

The IAYC is an international youth camp with participants from about 20 different countries. As a participant you work for three weeks in one of the eight working groups - together with other young people - on astronomy related projects. These projects are done in a working group of your choice and depend on your own interest. The working groups themselves will be led by young scientists from the IAYC team and concentrate on a specific field in astronomy. This year these are: Ancient Astronomy, Astrogenises, Basics of Astronomy, Compact Objects, Extragalactic Astrophysics, Observational Astronomy, Radio

More information about IAYC 2008 and the working groups is available on our website [<http://www.iayc.org/next_camp.php>](http://www.iayc.org/next_camp.php).

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 MARCH 3, 2008: “MESSIER MARATHON” 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/>**