

# Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 45 No. 8

August 1, 2008

**NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, August 4, 2008**

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

## **PROGRAM FOR THE AUGUST 4 MEETING – STAR CLUSTERS**

The summer sky has a plethora of star clusters, so let's talk about observing both open and globular clusters this month. If you have pictures or observing tips, bring them along to share.

## **DATES TO KEEP IN MIND**

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

**Friday, August 1, 2008:** Public Star Party at Brown Road Site, see below.

**Wednesday, August 27, 2008:** Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

**Monday, September 8, 2008:** Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

Note: The September meeting is delayed for one week because of Monday the 1<sup>st</sup> being Labor Day.

## **STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2008 SEASON:**

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, 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.

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**This is your newsletter, please contribute an article.**

## **THE SKY IN AUGUST by Roger Brower**

1. Jupiter is just past its July opposition and so will be visible almost all night. However, it remains low as it crosses the southern sky so the best views will be at around midnight. Look for it to the left of the Teapot of Sagittarius.
2. Mars and Saturn remain in Leo near the star Regulus. However, Mars is now to the upper left of Saturn which is to the upper left of Regulus. Look for them all in the southwest after sunset.
3. Venus is still slowly returning to the evening sky. Look for it very low in the west after sunset.
4. The Perseid meteor shower peaks on morning of the 12th. Look for them in the northeast after midnight.
5. Two eclipses occur this month, but neither will be visible from our location. A total solar eclipse occurs on August 1st over parts of the Arctic, Siberia and northern China. On August 16th, a partial lunar eclipse will be seen over most of the rest of the world outside North America.

## **PASSINGS – ALEXIS SHLANTA AND LOIS BLAIR**

We are saddened to report the deaths of two long time friends of the China Lake Astronomical Society.

China Lake Astronomical Society member Alex Shlanta died June 29 at 8:40 p.m. The immediate cause of death was pneumonia, but Alex had been battling cancer for some time. His wife, Sondra, recently passed away unexpectedly. We extend our condolences to his children and other family members.

Alex will be sorely missed by several segments of our community. For the Astronomy Club, Alex was an active participant at meetings and star parties, and wrote many articles for our newsletter; he brought telescopes to public star parties. He was an excellent musician, who played the clarinet in several local musical groups. Alex was responsible for the establishment of the observatory at Cerro Coso Community College.

Lois Blair, wife of longtime CLAS member Bob Blair, passed away July 18, in Bakersfield. Lois accompanied Bob to many CLAS meetings over the years and was always supportive of Bob's interest in astronomy.

Bob and Lois had been married for over 70 yrs. and have a multitude of survivors. Memorial services are tentatively planned for the first part of Aug. in Lone Pine. Our sympathies go out to Bob and his family.

Bob and Lois have faithfully attended China Lake Astronomical Society meetings since the early 1960s. Lone Pine was their base, even when Bob worked elsewhere, such as in Alaska.

## **NEW PLUTOID – Fourth dwarf planet named Makemake**

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has given the name Makemake to the newest member of the family of dwarf planets -- the object formerly known as 2005 FY9 -- after the Polynesian creator of humanity and the god of fertility.

Members of the International Astronomical Union's Committee on Small Body Nomenclature (CSBN) and the IAU Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature (WGPSN) have decided to name the newest member of the plutoid family Makemake, and have classified it as the fourth dwarf planet in our solar system and the third plutoid.

Makemake (pronounced MAH-keh MAH-keh) is one of the largest objects known in the outer solar system and

is just slightly smaller and dimmer than Pluto, its fellow plutoid. The dwarf planet is reddish in color and astronomers believe the surface is covered by a layer of frozen methane.

Like other plutoids, Makemake is located in a region beyond Neptune that is populated with small solar system bodies (often referred to as the transneptunian region). The object was discovered in 2005 by a team from the California Institute of Technology led by Mike Brown and was previously known as 2005 FY9. It has the IAU Minor Planet Center designation 136472. Once the orbit of a small solar system body or candidate dwarf planet is well determined, its provisional designation is superseded by its permanent numerical designation (136472 in the case of Makemake).

The other three dwarf planets are Ceres, Pluto and Eris. However, Ceres is not a member of the distinctive plutoid group because its orbit is smaller than Neptune's (Ceres is located in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter).

The word Makemake is Polynesian in origin and is the name of the creator of humanity and the god of fertility in the mythology of the South Pacific island of Rapa Nui or Easter Island. He was the chief god of the Tangata manu bird-man cult and was worshiped in the form of sea birds, which were his incarnation. His material symbol was a man with a bird's head.

**ITEMS FOR SALE BY CLAUDE WOOD ( [cmwood@iwvisp.com](mailto:cmwood@iwvisp.com) 760-377-5558)**

**ST-2000XM** camera, 1600x1200 pixels at 7.4 microns, built-in autoguider, 5 second downloads. \$1500 firm.

**TELEVIEW EYEPIECES**

2" X 35mm	PANOPTIC	\$330	2" X 27mm	PANOPTIC	\$297
2" BARLOW		\$137	2" DIAGONAL	DIELECTRIC	\$183
1 1/4" X 40mm	PLOSSEL	\$100	1 1/4" X 24mm	WIDE FIELD	\$93

**CELESTRON EYEPIECES**

1 1/4" X 40mm	PLOSSL	\$50	1 1/4" X 17mm	PLOSSEL	\$40
BARLOW IF 2"=\$85	IF 1 1/4"	\$40	2" DIAGONAL	STAR	\$75
RADIAL GUIDER		\$65			

**MEADE EYEPIECES**

1 1/4" X 13.8mm	\$60	1 1/4" X 12mm	LONG EYE RELIEF	\$60
1 1/4" X 9mm	LONG EYE RELIEF	\$60		
OFF AXIS GUIDER	\$65	POLARIZED FILTER	VARIABLE	\$35

**ORION EYEPIECES**

1 1/4" X 5mm	\$25	12 mm ILLUM. RED.
\$50		

**THREE RED SPOTS ON JUPITER**

Take a look at this URL: <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.cfm?release=2008-136>

## 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](mailto:zearl.email@gmail.com))  
VICE-PRESIDENT – Bruce Churchill - 760-375-7247 (email [rbc605gem@yahoo.com](mailto:rbc605gem@yahoo.com))  
SECRETARY – Ted Hodgkinson - 661- 824-2738 (email [ghodkinson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ghodkinson@sbcglobal.net))  
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NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Carroll Evans Jr. - 760-375-5681 (email [clevans@ridgenet.net](mailto: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 AUGUST 4, 2008: “STAR CLUSTERS” AT THE  
MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE., RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA  
CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www.chinalakeastroc.org>  
INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/>**