

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 46 No. 1

January 1, 2009

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, January 5, 2009

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

PROGRAM FOR THE JANUARY 5 MEETING – GADGET NIGHT

About once a year, we have “Gadget Night,” a 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 5, 2009: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 21, 2009: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Monday, February 2, 2009: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2009 SEASON: Public star parties resume in March 2009.

2009 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 \$32.45 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 \$20.00 for the handbook, and \$15.00 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.

FORTY-FIVE 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.

ELECTIONS

The annual election of officers for the China Lake Astronomical Society was held at the December 1 meeting. All officers will continue to serve for 2009. However, Bruce Churchill is taking time off from being Program Chairman. President Earl Wilson will see to it that there are programs.

THE SKY IN JANUARY by Roger Brower

1. Brilliant Venus remains in the evening sky. Look for it in the southwest soon after sunset.
2. Saturn moves to the evening sky and will rise about 10:30PM on January 1 and 8:30PM on January 31. Look for it rising in the east.
3. Mercury remains close to Jupiter in the evening sky and remains there for about the first 10 days of the month. They will both then rapidly fade into the sunset and be gone by about the 20th.
4. On January 22 look for Uranus just 1 and 1/2 degrees south of Venus.
5. The Quadrantid meteor shower peaks on the night of January 2-3rd. Look for them high in the morning sky off the handle of the big dipper. The Quadrantids are quite unpredictable, and may produce as many as 120 meteors per hour. Then again, they may not. Peak intensity is very sharp; your chances for a good view are best centered on 4:50 a.m. the morning of January 3. It is worth a try.

THE THANKSGIVING TRIPLE CONJUNCTION OF 2008 by Derek Wallentinsen

A lovely visual feast for late November sky-watchers was the beautiful apparition of the Moon, Jupiter and Venus in the evening sky. With the moon new on Thanksgiving morning and Venus closing with Jupiter from the west, everything was set for a triple conjunction over the holiday weekend.

Saturday, November 30: I caught the trio from the backcountry of Joshua Tree, coming back in dusk from a hiking adventure. The tri-light beckoned in twilight leading us to the trailhead.

First photo: Joshua Tree, 5:37 p.m., Saturday 11-29-2008, f/5, 35mm true focal length, ISO 400, 5 seconds. Note the lovely earthshine moon above the Little San Bernardino Mts. Three solar system objects strewn among the stars of Sagittarius.



Monday, December 1: I left Torrance at sunset. Marine layer fogs were swirling across South Bay. The odds looked poor for a good photo on the night of the tightest grouping of the 3X conjunction. In San Pedro, my strategy was to go up the hill, hoping to beat the fog to the top.

I drove up 9th Street, passing a man setting up a tripod and camera on a dark corner. No fog there yet, but not the vantage point I wanted. I stopped at Friendship Park. I got out my gear and ascending the hill on foot, came to a high bench with a 270-degree view of LA, the mountains and Catalina Island. I actually hiked up through the fog to get there. On top, I looked down on the mists about 100-150 vertical feet below.

Second photo: Monday, Dec. 1, 2008, 547PM, San Pedro, CA. Above the fog illuminated by orange high-pressure-sodium lights in the city. F/4, 17mm true focal length, ISO 400, 6 seconds. The moon has brightened considerably in two days and forms a beautiful right triangle with Venus and Jupiter.



TELESCOPE MOUNT WANTED

Ted Hodgkinson has recently acquired the optics for a 14-inch Celestron telescope. He is looking for an older design mount to use with it. If you know of such, please contact him at 661-824-2738 (email ghodkinson@sbcglobal.net)

FROM THE WORLD WIDE (INTRA-PLANETARY) WEB

Hubble Telescope photographs Ganymede: <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2008/42/image/a/>

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 ye
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)
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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 5, 2009: “Gadget Night” AT THE
MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE., RIDGECREST, CA
CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www.chinalakeastrosoc.org>
INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/>**