

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 46 No. 3

March 1, 2009

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 2, 2009

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

PROGRAM FOR THE MARCH 2 MEETING – MESSIER OBJECTS

The time for Messier Marathons is coming. Let's talk about the Messier and other Deep Sky Catalogs at our March 2 meeting. Which are your favorite Messier objects? Bring your pictures and observations for us to share.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

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

Sunday, March 8, 2009: Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 18, 2009: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Friday, March 27, 2009. Next public star party.

Monday, April 6, 2009: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2009 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, March 27: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, April 24: Signs out at 8:00 p.m., Star viewing at 8:30 p.m.

Friday, May 22: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, June 19: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, July 17: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, August 21: Signs out at 8:30 p.m., Star viewing at 9:00 p.m.

Friday, September 18: Signs out at 7:30 p.m., Star viewing 8:00 p.m.

Friday, October 16: Signs out at 7:00 p.m., Star viewing at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 13: Signs out at 5:30 p.m., Star viewing at 6:00 p.m.

Some public star parties are to be held at the Maturango Museum's observatory, the dates will be announced later.

THE SKY IN MARCH by Roger Brower (Ghost written this month by Robert Shaw)

The Moon is at first quarter on the 4th, becomes full on the 11th, with last quarter on the 18th, and is new on the 26th.

Venus remains brilliant in the western evening sky at the beginning of the month, sinking lower until passing eight degrees north of the Sun on March 27th, when it rises just before sunrise. The crescent phase of Venus is easily seen in binoculars as it approaches the Sun.

Saturn, prominent in the night sky in Leo, will be at opposition on March 8th, when it rises at sunsets, transits at midnight, and sets at sunrise.

Jupiter is a morning planet. Its distance from the sun increases rapidly during March.

Mars is still a morning object, rising 25 minutes before sunrise on the 25th.

Mercury is visible in the morning twilight and passes less than a degree south of Mars on March 1.

Ceres, the largest asteroid, and smallest dwarf planet, can be found with binoculars in the constellation Leo Minor. Consult the Observer's Handbook for the exact location of this 7th magnitude object.

TELESCOPES ARE 400 YEARS OLD!

Public Television (PBS) will celebrate the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first use of the telescope. It will air a special, hosted by Neil Degrasse Tyson, on April 10, at 10:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Check program listings, and I leave it to you to find PBS on your television.

PBS talk show host Tavis Smiley interviewed astrophysicist Neil Degrasse Tyson, who promoted the upcoming documentary. Dr. Tyson discusses his new book, "The Pluto Files: The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet." You may watch this interview at

<http://www.pbs.org/kcet/tavissmiley/archive/200902/20090213.html>

KEPLER MISSION (From NASA)

The Kepler mission is an Earth orbiting telescope designed to discover Earth-like planets around other stars.

Kepler is scheduled to launch from Cape Canaveral on March 5 at 10:48 p.m. EST. It is the first mission with the ability to find planets like Earth -- rocky planets that orbit sun-like stars in a warm zone where liquid water could be maintained on the surface. Liquid water is believed to be essential for the formation of life. To date the tally of extrasolar worlds is 340 planets orbiting 288 stars.

BOLD MISSIONS PLANNED TO JUPITER AND SATURN (From MSNBC)

Both missions involve multiple spacecraft sent to explore the gas giants

By Tariq Malik

NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) are pushing ahead with proposals to send a pair of ambitious missions to explore Jupiter, Saturn and the many moons that orbit both planets, the two space agencies announced Wednesday. Both missions include sending multiple spacecraft to the Jupiter and Saturn systems to explore the gas giant planets and their unique satellites, such as Jupiter's ice-covered Europa and Saturn's

shrouded moon Titan.

The first mission to fly would be aimed at Jupiter. Dubbed the Europa Jupiter System Mission, it would send two orbiting spacecraft to study the planet and its large moons Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto in unprecedented detail, NASA officials said.

RECEIVED VIA EMAIL

Hello.

My name is Chris Carosa and I've just launched an IYA 2009 project at AstronomyTop100.com <www.astronomytop100.com>. Image what would happen if you combine the factual awe of Carl Sagan's /Cosmos /with the viral excitement of Fox's /American Idol/ - That's AstronomyTop100.com. In creating an interactive web-site reality game that will rank the top 100 greatest images and imaginations in Astronomy and Space Exploration, its purpose is to invigorate a passion for the stars and beyond.

Before I invest a lot of my time communicating with you, I want to be sure I have the correct contact for your club. Your e-mail was listed on the IYA2009USA site. Please e-mail me back if you are not the correct e-mail contact so I can update my records. Be sure to give me the name of your e-mail (so I know which one to delete), the name of the club (as a double check with my records), as well as the name and e-mail of the correct person.

In the meantime, feel free to check out the site, follow AstronomyTop100 on Twitter ("AstronomyTop100"), join the FaceBook Group ("Astronomy Top 100") or the LinkedIn Group ("Astronomy Top 100").

In a few days, I'll e-mail you how your club might benefit from the free publicity this site can generate for you. At the same time, even without the PR opportunity, it'll sure inspire some interesting debate among your members.

Thanks, and keep looking up!

-- Chris

BELOW: IMAGES OF M82 AND M31, IN HONOR OF OUR MARCH MEETING TOPIC



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 2, 2009: “Messier Objects” 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/>**