

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 46 No. 4

April 1, 2009

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, April 6, 2009

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

PROGRAM FOR THE APRIL 6 MEETING – GALAXY SEASON

Spring is the galaxy season and our April meeting and star party land in the middle of it. Early spring is the best time to view the many impressive galaxies in the Virgo cluster, and impressive circumpolar galaxies are coming into prime time. Let's focus on spring galaxies this month. If you have pictures or observing tips, bring them along to share.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Saturday and Sunday April 4 and 5. Special astronomy events at the Maturango Museum see below.

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

Wednesday, April 22, 2009: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

Friday, April 24, 2009. Next public star party.

Monday, May 4, 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, 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.

SPECIAL ASTRONOMY EVENT AT THE MATURANGO MUSEUM

The China Lake Astronomical Society is inviting all members of the public to participate in the International Year of Astronomy (IYA 2009), a series of events being held worldwide to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first observations of the heavens through a telescope, as well as Kepler's publication of *Astronomia Nova*. This will be modern astronomy's quadricentennial, and the 2009 Year of Astronomy will be an international celebration of numerous scientific milestones.

Local observances will include events on Saturday April 4 and Sunday April 5, as part of the "100 Hours of Astronomy" marathon to be held in early April. The goal is to get as many people as possible to look through a telescope, especially those who are new to the experience.

Skygazing activities will be held at the Maturango Museum, and will be hosted by members of the China Lake Astronomical Society.

Schedule of events:

April 4th - Saturday

Solar viewing: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Star Party: Dusk to 10 p.m. or later near the "Dome"

Worldwide webcasts on the big screen in the gallery: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

April 5th - "Sun Day"

Solar viewing: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Worldwide webcasts on the big screen in the gallery: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

There will be astronomy and dark skies-related handouts for adults and children.

The Maturango Museum is located at 100 E. Las Flores Avenue at the intersection of Las Flores and China Lake Blvd. (across from Home Depot).

On the Web: <http://www.100hoursofastronomy.org/>

Sunday April 5 will again feature solar observations from 1:00 to 5:00, and webcasts inside the museum. We welcome everyone to come and observe the wonders of the sky as seen through a telescope, just as Galileo did 400 years ago.

TRONA SPRING FLING

On Saturday March 21, the community of Trona had their annual community event known as the "Spring Fling." The China Lake Astronomical Society provided views of the Sun. Members Ken Pringle, Earl Wilson, Chuck Morgan, and Mack Hope represented the club.

THE SKY IN APRIL by Roger Brower

1. Venus moves to the morning sky this month. Look for it very low in the east at the beginning of the month and higher in the east at the end of the month. By the end of the month, it rises about 1 hour 45 minutes before the sun. Around 5 a.m. on the morning of April 22, the crescent moon will occult Venus.
2. Saturn, just past its March opposition, will be visible high in the southeast soon after sunset throughout the month.
3. Mercury moves back to the evening sky this month where it puts on a fine display after the first week of the month. Look for it low in the west-northwest soon after sunset.
4. Jupiter is also in the morning sky this month where it rises about 5 a.m. at the beginning of the month and about 3:30 a.m. at the end of the month. Look for it low in the southeast for the entire month.
5. The Lyrid meteor shower peaks on April 22 where the best viewing occurs 2 or 3 hours before dawn, appearing to come from the constellation Lyra.

ASTRONOMY ON LINE

In February, we alerted you to a new series of YouTube videos “Welcome to the Universe”, produced by by AndromedasWake, a young astrophysicist in the UK. Part 2, dealing with the history of astronomy from Hipparchus to Galileo, has now been posted at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ju0aSRgCntA>

Also recommended is the newest and best of the several popular videos showing size comparisons of celestial objects. Excellent 4-min production which many stargazers will enjoy: “Planets, Stars, Nebulas, Galaxies” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FwCMnyWZDg>

The same author, Nixxon18, has also produced a video featuring a dazzling array of colorful deep sky objects, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3D0AAFkcbQ>

KEPLER WAS LAUNCHED

The Kepler Mission is an observatory in an earth-trailing solar orbit, designed to detect earth-like planets around other stars. It was successfully launched on 6 March 2009 at 22:49:57 UTC, and is expected to begin returning results in May.

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 Degraesse 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 Degraesse 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>

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)
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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 APRIL 6, 2009: “GALAXY SEASON” 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/>**