

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 46 No. 6

June 1, 2009

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, June 1, 2009

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

PROGRAM FOR THE JUNE 1 MEETING – JET PROPULSION LABORATORY OPEN HOUSE

Let's talk about the NASA/JPL open house at our June meeting. Their annual open house is held in May of each year, and many of us have been able to attend them. If you went this year, or in previous years, and you have items to share, bring them along.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Monday, June 1, 2009: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 18, 2009: Museum Observatory public viewing session, 8:30 p.m.

Friday, June 19, 2009: Next public star party.

Wednesday, June 24, 2009: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter

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

STAR PARTY SCHEDULE FOR THE 2009 SEASON

Star Parties are scheduled for 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. Star Parties 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, 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, on the Thursday evening just before the C.L.A.S. public star parties.

THE SKY IN JUNE by Roger Brower

1. Venus remains in 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.
2. Saturn remains a fine evening object and will be visible high in the southeast soon after sunset throughout the month. The rings are closing (getting more edge-on) so they will become less brilliant throughout the summer.
3. Mercury moves to the morning sky by the second week of the month. It will remain very low, so this is not a good month for viewing it. Look for it very low in the east-northeast soon before sunrise.
4. Jupiter is also in the morning sky this month where it rises about just after midnight at the beginning of the month and about 11 p.m. at the end of the month. Look for it in the south before dawn for the entire month.
5. Mars remains near Venus but is 160 times fainter. Look for it about 10 degrees to the lower left of Venus.
6. The Bootids meteor shower peaks on June 27th. Look for them high in the south after midnight.
7. The comet Kopff appears on the border of Capricornus and Aquarius near Jupiter for all of June. Look for the finder chart in Astronomy magazine.

STS-124, THE HUBBLE SERVICING MISSION

The aging Hubble Space Telescope has been in orbit for 19 years, sending back spectacular images of the cosmos. Over time, some components have failed. As this issue of Skywatcher is being prepared for publication, the Hubble Space Telescope has finished nearly a week attached to the Shuttle Atlantis, and the thoroughly upgraded and refurbished telescope has been released back into orbit. Four astronauts, working in pairs on five separate EVAs, have given the telescope a total extreme makeover. Some new instruments replaced aging ones, and components that had failed were replaced. New gyroscopes have been installed, along with new batteries. New insulating heat shields were put on the exterior of much of the telescope.

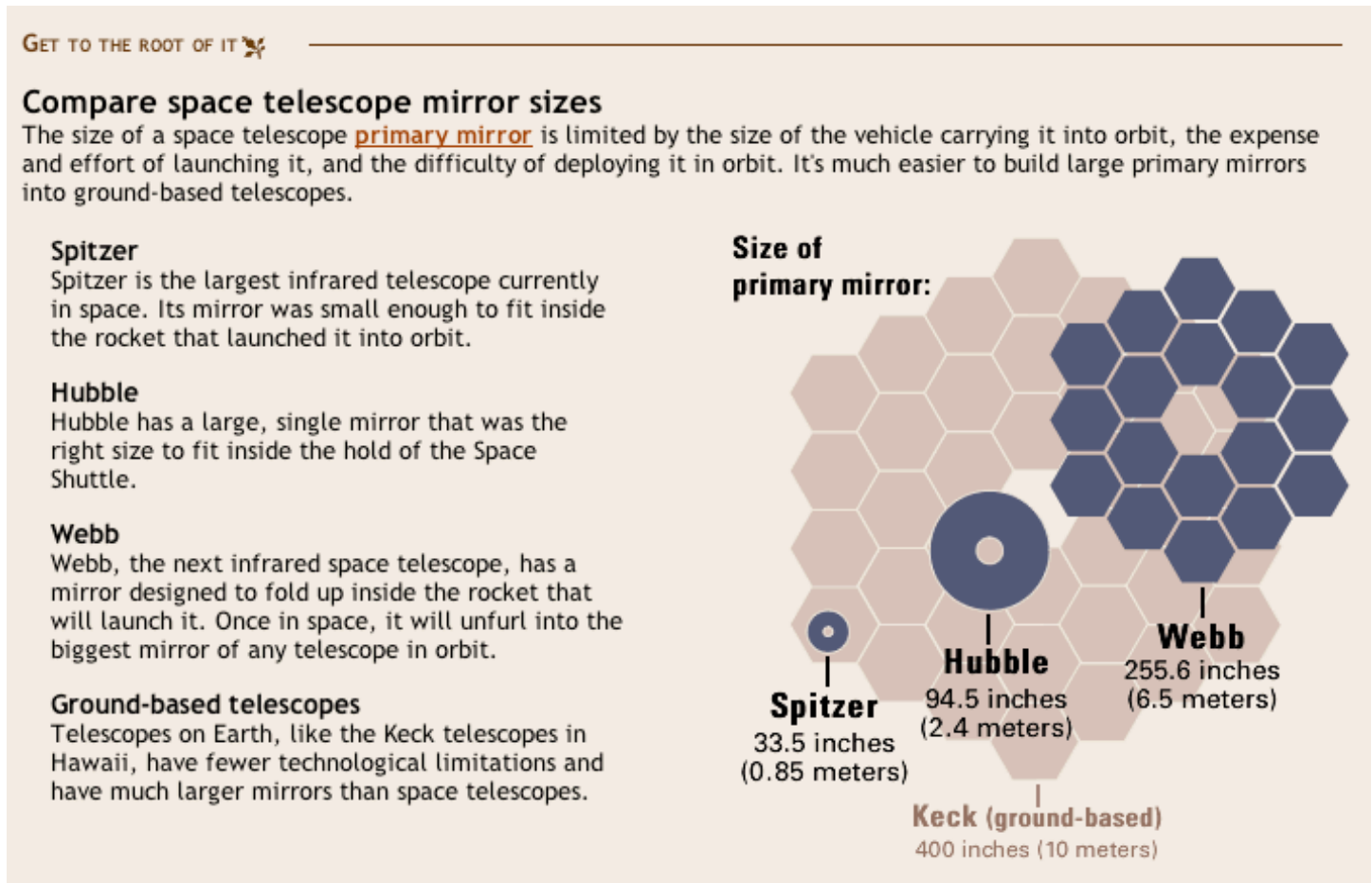
It was a lot of painstaking work which mostly went as planned. This picture shows the telescope as it is about to be released from the shuttle and resume independent orbit.



See the comprehensive Wikipedia entry about Hubble at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubble_space_telescope

TELESCOPE SIZE COMPARISON

Many of you no doubt followed the successful mission by the Shuttle Atlantis to upgrade the Hubble Space Telescope, which will allow it another decade of high quality performance. The James Webb Telescope, which will employ a large segmented mirror, will eventually succeed Hubble, and is scheduled for launch in 2014. This graphic compares the mirror sizes for the Spitzer Infrared Telescope, the Hubble, and the Webb, superimposed on the 10-meter Keck Telescope on Mauna Kea on the island of Hawaii. The Keck is currently the largest fully operational optical instrument on the Earth's surface.



SPEAKING OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE

See pages 14-15 of the National Geographic for June 2009. They feature a terrific overhead photograph of Endeavour on the back of a Boeing 747 in flight over some part of our Mojave Desert, as it heads out on a return trip to Florida.

FOR YOUR IPHONE OR IPOD

<http://www.corecoders.com/CoreCoders/planetarium.html>

ASTRONOMY ONLINE

Try this for general astronomical information: <http://www.astronomycast.com/>

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.

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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 JUNE 1, 2009: “JPL OPEN HOUSE” AT THE
MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE., RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA**

**CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www.chinalakeastro.org>
INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/>**