

# Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 46 No. 8

August 1, 2009

## **NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, August 3, 2009**

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

## **PROGRAM FOR THE AUGUST 3 MEETING – MEMORABLE MEDIA**

Bring your favorite DVDs, videocassettes, or books about astronomy, and share them with other enthusiasts. The intention is to talk about your item, not to show it on the big screen. Bring something useful, or interesting, and tell how it relates to your interest in astronomy.

## **DATES TO KEEP IN MIND**

Monday, August 3, 2009: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 20, 2009: Museum Observatory public viewing session, 8:30 p.m.

Friday, August 21, 2009: Next public star party, see details below.

Wednesday, September 2, 2009: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter.

Monday, September 14, 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 6.2 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 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 held at the Maturango Museum's observatory, on the Thursday evening just before the C.L.A.S. public star parties.

## **MAN LANDED ON THE MOON FORTY YEARS AGO, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?**

Apollo 11 was first, followed by five other Apollo landers. Twelve men set foot on the moon from 1969 - 72. Time Magazine for July 27, 2009 has as its cover story "Moonstruck," which is an excellent summary of the project. There are interviews with the surviving lunar astronauts, as well as an analysis of the entire enterprise.

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

1. Venus remains in Gemini in the morning sky this month. It rises in the east about 3 hours before the sun. By the end of the month, it passes into Cancer where by August 31, it will be 2 degrees from the beehive cluster.
2. Saturn begins to fade into the sunset this month. Look for it low in the southeast soon after sunset. The rings are closing (getting more edge-on) so they will become less brilliant throughout the summer.
3. Mercury returns to the evening sky this month. It will remain very low so not a month for viewing it. Look for it very low in the west soon after sunset the second and third weeks of the month.
4. Jupiter reaches opposition on August 14, so it will be visible all night. Look for it low in the southeast soon after sunset.
5. Mars rises about midnight. Look for it rising ever higher in the east after that.
6. The well-known Perseid meteor shower peaks on August 11 - 12. Look for it in the northeast all night long.

## **MARS VISITS, AGAIN, AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN. Carroll Evans**

I received the following email: “Carroll - Are you in the astronomy club? I was wondering if there was any public viewing with scopes planned for the close pass by Mars coming up soon. If you aren't the right person, do you know who I could ask? Exciting stuff, not to be missed.”

I replied, somewhat gently, that the writer was six years too late for this well hyped visit by Mars. I suppose Mars still excites the public, and every August this story surfaces again.

Back in 2003 Mars was technically closer than it had been in a very long time, and the public took it to heart. We had several telescopes set up, and long lines in the Museum parking lot.

## **TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE WITNESSED BY MILLIONS**

July 22, 2009 featured the longest solar eclipse of the current century, when a Chinese dragon swallowed the sun. The path of totality began in India and proceeded through Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma and China, finishing over the ocean, including a pass over the Japanese Ryukyu islands. Totality was up to 6 minutes 39 seconds. Mark your calendar now for July 11, 2010 on Easter Island.

## **HAVE YOU BLUFFED ABOUT THE COSMOS TODAY?**

Need a quick cosmic refresher to help you celebrate International Year of Astronomy events? Get the latest title in the five-million copies sold, bestselling *Bluffer's Guides* series, *The Bluffer's Guide to the Cosmos*<sup>®</sup>, by Daniel Hudon. Written with comically cosmic humor, this ninety-six-page guide will arm you with enough astro-ammunition to rocket you into bluffing stardom. *The Bluffer's Guide to the Cosmos*, ISBN: 978-1-903096-42-0, published by Oval Books (London, UK) is available through special order at local bookstores and through Amazon. Humorous video clips about the book can be found on YouTube at

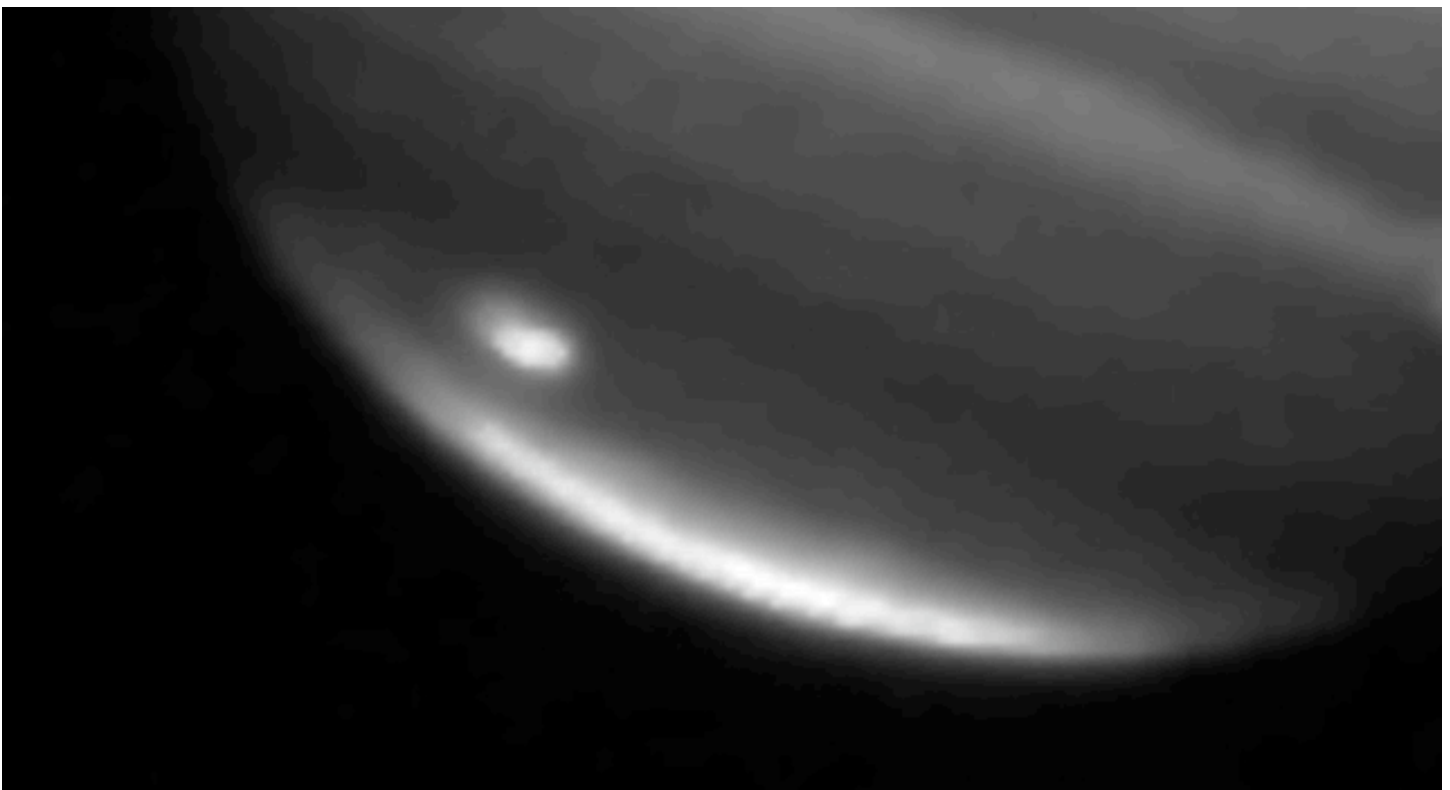
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**NEW NASA IMAGES INDICATE OBJECT HITS JUPITER** – Information from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory website <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.cfm?release=2009-112>

**July 20, 2009**

Scientists have found evidence that another object has bombarded Jupiter, exactly 15 years after the first impacts by the comet Shoemaker-Levy 9. Following up on a tip by an amateur astronomer, Anthony Wesley of Australia, that a new dark "scar" had suddenly appeared on Jupiter, this morning between 3 and 9 a.m. PDT (6 a.m. and noon EDT) scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., using NASA's Infrared Telescope Facility at the summit of Mauna Kea, Hawaii, gathered evidence indicating an impact. New infrared images show the likely impact point was near the South Polar Region, with a visibly dark "scar" and bright upwelling particles in the upper atmosphere detected in near-infrared wavelengths, and a warming of the upper troposphere with possible extra emission from ammonia gas detected at mid-infrared wavelengths. "We were extremely lucky to be seeing Jupiter at exactly the right time, the right hour, the right side of Jupiter to witness the event. We couldn't have planned it better," said Glenn Orton, a scientist at JPL. Orton and his team of astronomers kicked into gear early in the morning and have not stopped tracking the planet. They are downloading data now and are working to get additional observing time on this and other telescopes. This image was taken at 1.65 microns, a wavelength sensitive to sunlight reflected from high in Jupiter's atmosphere, and it shows both the bright center of the scar (bottom left) and the debris to its northwest (upper left). "It could be the impact of a comet, but we don't know for sure yet," said Orton. "It's been a whirlwind of a day, and this on the anniversary of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 and Apollo anniversaries is amazing." Shoemaker-Levy 9 was a comet that had been seen to break into many pieces before the pieces hit Jupiter in 1994. Leigh Fletcher, a NASA postdoctoral fellow at JPL who worked with Orton during these latest observations said, "Given the rarity of these events, it's extremely exciting to be involved in these observations. These are the most exciting observations I've seen in my five years of observing the outer planets!" The observations were made possible in large measure by the extraordinary efforts of the Infrared Telescope Facility staff, including telescope operator William Golisch, who adroitly moved three instruments in and out of the field during the short time the scar was visible on the planet, providing the wide wavelength coverage. JPL is managed for NASA by the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.



## 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))  
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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 3, 2009: “MEMORABLE MEDIA” 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/>**