

Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 46 No. 12

December 1, 2009

NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, December 7, 2009

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

ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS WILL BE HELD AT THE DECEMBER MEETING

PROGRAM FOR THE DECEMBER 7 MEETING - EXOPLANETS

Are there other planets like Earth? Technology may be available to answer that question. In the last two decades, 405 planets have been detected orbiting other stars. The National Geographic issue for December 2009 devotes its cover story to this topic.

Most are too big and/or too hot to harbor Earth-like life, but now there are serious efforts underway to identify planets the size of Earth in the temperature range of Earth. Let's talk about those efforts at our December meeting and what we might expect to find.

DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

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

Monday, December 21, 2009: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter.

Monday, January 4, 2009: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

STAR PARTIES WILL RESUME IN MARCH 2010

THE SKY IN DECEMBER by Roger Brower

1. Venus remains in the morning sky this month but will be lost in the sun's glare after the first few days of the month.
2. Saturn moves from the morning sky to the evening sky this month. Look for it high in the southeast before sunrise. The rings will continue to open rapidly and will become prominent by the end of the month.
3. Mercury moves to the evening sky this month where it will be visible in the southwest after December 9th.
4. Jupiter remains a fine evening object. Look for it high in the southwest soon after sunset.
5. Mars rises around 9:30 p.m. at the beginning of the month and about 7:30 p.m. at the end of the month. Mars will be in eastern Leo all month. Look for it rising in the east continuing to climb through the night.
6. The Geminid meteor shower peaks on the morning of December 14th. The more minor Ursids peak on December 22nd.

INFORMATION FROM SKY AND TELESCOPE by Roger Brower

Many C.L.A.S. members receive their Sky and Telescope magazines at a group subscription price as a result of their club membership. The word from Sky and Telescope is that if you renew by December 15th you will receive a Mars DVD, Messier and Caldwell guides, and a 2010 Skygazer's Almanac. It sounds like a good offer to take advantage of.

TELESCOPE WANTED by Roger Brower

I am in the market to buy about an 8" reflector telescope, please call me at 760-375-1181, or email me at brower@iwvisp.com.

OUTREACH AT THE COLLEGE by Carroll Evans

On Friday evening October 9, 2009 Cerro Coso Community College held its fourth annual Star Party and Barbeque. The event honored the memory of Dr. Alex Shlanta, C.L.A.S. member and professor of Astronomy at the college. The event started with a meal on the Library Lawn, with music by the CCCC Community Band. Also there was a raffle of donated items. An astronomical slide presentation by CLAS member Carroll Evans was given three times, inside the library. Following the slide show, most of the attendees went up the hill to the college observatory, where various CLAS members hosted the college's telescopes. It was a pretty good night for star gazing, with no wind and only some thin clouds. There were favorable reports about the experience.

C.L.A.S. President Earl Wilson spent the previous weekend at the second annual Pacific Astronomy and Telescope Show in Pasadena. He brought back a stack of Sky and Telescope and Astronomy magazines and pamphlets that were left over at the show. These were distributed free in the lobby of the college library.

Earl and I can remember the following C.L.A.S. members who participated. Our apologies if we have not listed you: Chuck Morgan, Mike Hardee and his wife, Jay Chun, Bill Weiss, Bob Zeisler, Roger Brower and Ken Pringle.

ASTRONOMY ON THE INTERNET

Videos

Sirius Stargazing series on YouTube

A young astronomy teacher from the United Kingdom, known as TK, whose YouTube series, "Welcome to the Universe", we alerted readers to earlier this year, has begun a new series on observational astronomy for beginners entitled "Sirius Stargazing." His YouTube channel is:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/SiriusStargazing>

Three episodes have been posted so far. The introduction is at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BRhrr9tTIs&feature=Playlist&p=F26C8E7634E115F5&index=0>

Part 2 takes a close look at the Pleiades, and Part 3 focuses on Alpha Persei and its associated star clusters. The graphics are high quality and common astronomical terms are defined at the end of each video. As new installments are uploaded, you can check the Sirius Stargazing channel to view them.

An excellent and informative video on dwarf planets, exploring their individual properties and the origin of this newly established category:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ6uSsWwI7U&feature=PlayList&p=2F00C7F848AF3A6C>

A short, well-done video comparing the sizes of stars:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVbjYc57-Ws&feature=PlayList&p=2F00C7F848AF3A6C>

A colorful video inspired by the Hubble Deep Field image:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcBV-cXVWFw&feature=rec-HM-r2>

Audio

A short audio clip of NASA astrobiologist David Morrison countering public fears of the nonexistent planet Nibiru, and its fancied apocalyptic effect on the Earth in 2012.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120436493>

News items

Scientists discover massive ring around Saturn.

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/space/10/07/space.saturn.ring/index.html>

A gigantic, previously unknown set of galaxies has been found in the distant universe, shedding light on the underlying skeleton of the cosmos. "Matter is not distributed uniformly in the universe," said Masayuki Tanaka, an astronomer with the European Southern Observatory (ESO) who helped discover the galactic assemblage. "In our cosmic vicinity, stars form in galaxies and galaxies usually form groups and clusters of galaxies:" Scientists discover massive ring around Saturn.

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33604646/ns/technology_and_science-space/

Asteroid explosion was a whopper for Earth. Experts say space rock blast may have been largest in more than a decade:

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33540411/ns/technology_and_science-space/ns/technology_and_science-space/

NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope has contributed to the discovery of the youngest brown dwarf ever observed -- a finding that, if confirmed, may solve an astronomical mystery about how these cosmic misfits are formed.

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.cfm?release=2009-174>

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/features.cfm?feature=2314>

Where are you hiding Planet X, Dr. Brown?

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33540411/ns/technology_and_science-space/ns/technology_and_science-space/

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 rb-churchill@live.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 Carroll.L.Evans@gmail.com)

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 DECEMBER 7, 2009: “EXOPLANETS” AT THE MATURANGO MUSEUM, 100 EAST LAS FLORES AVE., RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA

CLAS WEB PAGE <http://www.chinalakeastrosoc.org>

INDEX OF CLAS NEWSLETTERS <http://www.ridgenet.net/~clevans/clas/>