

# Skywatchers

Newsletter of the China Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 47 No. 1

January 1, 2010

## **NEXT MEETING 7:30 p.m., Monday, January 4, 2010**

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

## **PROGRAM FOR THE JANUARY 4 MEETING – GADGET NIGHT**

About once a year, we have “Gadget Night,” a program where you bring something for “show and tell.” You can bring hardware, software, or even just a story. This is audience participation at its best. Perhaps you received a new toy at Christmas, or perhaps you have had something for years and merely want to share it.

## **DATES TO KEEP IN MIND**

Monday, January 4, 2010: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 19, 2010: Deadline for next Skywatchers Newsletter.

Monday, February 1, 2010: Regular CLAS Meeting at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, 7:30 p.m.

## **STAR PARTIES WILL RESUME IN MARCH 2010**

## **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT - 2010 ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY HANDBOOKS AND CALENDARS ARE NOW AVAILABLE**

For many years, the China Lake Astronomical Society has provided the RASC Observer’s Handbook to our membership. The retail price for a single copy (delivered) is \$32.45 US. We get them at a group rate, and share the savings with our members. If you buy in person from C.L.A.S., we are charging \$20.00 for the handbook, and \$12.00 for the calendar. Calendar and Handbook will be sold together for the combined price of \$30.00. If you picked up calendars at the December meeting, your handbook can be discounted.

Most of you know all about the handbooks and calendars. Suffice to say that the *Observer’s Handbook* is 356 pages of astronomical data, which is presented as tables, charts and annual and daily information. The calendars also present useful information, along with great astronomical photographs.

The publications will be available at the January meeting, or contact Carroll Evans at 760-375-5681 or Roger Brower at 760-375-1181 to pick up a copy locally.

## **THE ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS WAS HELD AT THE DECEMBER MEETING**

Earl Wilson, Ted Hodgkinson, and Roger Brower will continue as President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Selection of the Vice-President was deferred.

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

1. Venus remains hidden in the sun's glare all month.
2. Saturn remains in the evening sky this month. It rises about 11:30 a.m. on January 1st and 9:30 p.m. on January 31st. The rings will continue to open rapidly.
3. Mercury moves back to the morning sky this month where it will be visible in the southeast after January 15th.
4. Jupiter remains in the evening sky. Look for it in the southwest soon after sunset at the start of the month but lower each night as the month goes on.
5. Mars reaches opposition on January 29th and so will be a bright all-night object throughout January and February. Look for it rising in the east around sunset.
6. The Quadrantid meteor shower peaks on the morning of January 3rd.

## **TELESCOPE WANTED by Roger Brower**

I am in the market to buy a reflector telescope, about eight inches in diameter, please call me at 760-375-1181, or email me at [brower@iwvisp.com](mailto:brower@iwvisp.com).

## **AN UNUSUAL SIGHTING by Carroll Evans**

December 19 seemed to be an ordinary Saturday. I needed to go to Lancaster, but I got away later than I had hoped. Thus, by the time I reached Mojave, I was ready for lunch. There is a secret place to eat there, the Voyager Restaurant at the Mojave Air and Space Port. Upon arrival, I seated myself at a table with a good view of the tarmac. It was soon obvious that today was not an ordinary Saturday. A flyer on the table announced that Plane Crazy Saturday was happening before my very eyes. The Mojave Transportation Museum is the sponsor. In view through the window was a beautiful 1947 Republic amphibian, and several other planes. Every so often, an almost alien looking airplane could be seen landing or taking off. After all, this is the home of Burt Rutan's Scaled Composites company, where spaceships are born.

After a while, a rather ordinary light plane taxied in and parked. The canopy opened and Santa Claus emerged. He walked over to the porch, where there was Museum activity, and disappeared from my view and my thoughts. After finishing lunch, I went outside to look around. No sooner was I out the door than I heard myself called by name. "Carroll Evans, what are you doing here?" I looked to the source, and to my surprise, it was Santa himself calling to me. Now I really should not be surprised that Santa would know my name, but it did take me aback a bit. In this case, Santa's alter ego is our very own China Lake Astronomical Society Secretary, Ted Hodgkinson, who lives in Mojave. Ted has been growing a genuine Santa style beard for some months now, and he really looks the part. Santa invited me to visit his observatory with its newly acquired 14" Celestron, but that visit had to be cancelled. I will be able to visit on some other third Saturday; you can be sure I will be there.

## **ASTRONOMY ON THE INTERNET**

### **Videos**

Two more episodes in the Sirius Stargazing series on YouTube, the first about the double cluster in Perseus:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88MZ7zEL5Ow&feature=sub>

Next, the Globular Cluster M15:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=un5xLqe\\_4WY&feature=sub](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=un5xLqe_4WY&feature=sub)

Solar Tsunamis are real, as seen in this video clip:

[http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2009/24nov\\_solartsunami.htm](http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2009/24nov_solartsunami.htm)

### **News items**

The Hubble telescope spots most distant galaxies:

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34328588/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-space/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34328588/ns/technology_and_science-space/)

UK's Vista telescope takes stunning images of space:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8407834.stm>

Looking for alien Earths? Here they come:

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34350505/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-space/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34350505/ns/technology_and_science-space/)

Expect announcement of first discoveries from the Kepler planet-hunting mission in January.

### **A PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS FOR 2010 by Carroll Evans**

Based on Bob Berman's "Strange Universe" column in Astronomy Magazine for January 2010, we will list some events of interest throughout the entire calendar year.

**Mars:** Mars will be closest to the Earth on January 27. Remember a few years ago when Mars was closest in August? This time, it is nearest in January, but the distance, some 60 million miles, is not really close. Mars will be pretty bright, as bright as Sirius, but even so, it is not the time to find your own canals.

**Moon:** Two nights later, on January 29, the full Moon will be at perigee, and closest for the year. It will appear near Mars.

**Saturn:** The rings still have a narrow, edge-on appearance, but on March 21, Saturn will be bright at opposition. The rings will then begin to open up, and we will see a brighter Saturn as the years go by.

**Mercury:** This elusive planet is not really hard to see, but you have to look at just the right time. During the first ten days of April, Mercury will be seen some 40 minutes after sunset, to the right of Venus, which will be shining brilliantly, in the western sky.

**Perseids:** This well-known meteor shower should be very good this year. There will be no Moon on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Jupiter:** Jupiter steals our attention in September. On September 21 the planet will be at opposition, shining brightly at magnitude -2.9, its brightest since 1963. You can use it as a beacon to find nearby Uranus, which is at opposition on the very same day.

**Moon:** This time, in December, on the 21st, there will be a total lunar eclipse, beginning at 10:32 p.m. Pacific Time. The eclipse will be visible in its entirety.

## **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))

VICE-PRESIDENT – Open

SECRETARY – Ted Hodgkinson - 661- 824-2738 (email [ghodkinson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ghodkinson@sbcglobal.net))

TREASURER – Roger Brower - 760-375-1181 (email [brower@iwvisp.com](mailto:brower@iwvisp.com))

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Carroll Evans Jr. - 760-375-5681 (email [Carroll.L.Evans@gmail.com](mailto:Carroll.L.Evans@gmail.com))

**WESTERN AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS WEB SITE <http://www.waa.av.org/>**

Meetings of the China Lake Astronomical Society are 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 JANUARY 4, 2010: “GADGET NIGHT” 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/>**