



THE OBSERVER

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Member of The Astronomical League

2009, International Year of Astronomy

<http://sbvaa.org/>



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Since 1958

October 2009

Meeting:

October 10, 2009

Location:

San Bernardino County
Museum, 7:00 p.m.
Redlands, CA. California
St. exit, I-10 Fwy.

Pre-meeting Dinner, 5:00
p.m.,
Hometown Buffet, Loma
Linda, CA

After the meeting telescopes
will be set up for viewing
and members will be
available to answer
questions. Bring your
telescope to observe with us.

*No telescope is too humble,
and beginners are always
made welcome!*

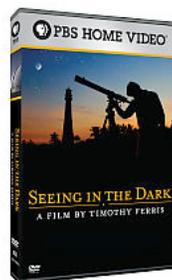
After viewing the group will
head for Coco's in Redlands,
Tennessee exit, I-10 Fwy.

Program

Seeing in the Dark

We'll be presenting a PBS produced video entitled, "Seeing in the Dark." The presentation based on the popular book of the same title by renowned astronomer Timothy Ferris. It is meant to introduce viewers to the wonders of the night sky, making casual star gazing or serious amateur astronomy a part of their lives.

"Ferris takes us inside a major revolution sweeping astronomy, as lone amateur astronomers, in global networks linked by the Internet, make important discoveries that are the envy of the professionals. His ability to describe the wonders of the universe is simply magical, and his enthusiasm for his subject is irresistible."*



Timothy Ferris, called "the best popular science writer in the English language today" (*The Christian Science Monitor*), is the author of ten books, including the bestsellers *The Whole Shebang* and *Coming of Age in the Milky Way*. A frequent contributor to *The New Yorker*, he lives in San Francisco and stargazes from his personal astronomical observatory on Sonoma Mountain in California's wine country.*

Join us for a fascinating look at our own hobby as we enjoy the wonders of the universe!

* Comments from Simon & Schuster, the publisher of *Seeing in the Dark*.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

October 10, Club Meeting at the Museum

October (date to be announced) public outreach at the Asistencia in Redlands. WATCH FOR IT!

October 17, Star Party, Afton Canyon (see article below)

November 7, Club meeting, at the Museum

Outreach at the Asistencia!

By Chris Clarke

On Tuesday, October 27, the club will set up our telescopes at the Redlands Asistencia to share views of the first-quarter moon and Jupiter. Viewing will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Sunset is at 6:00, so setup will be around 5:30 pm. The moon should exhibit a wealth of detail while ol' Jove will dazzle us with his belts and moons.

The Asistencia is located on Barton Road, just east of California St. We set up on the front lawn and parking is available on the street and in a nearby lot. Restrooms are available. This is the last of our Museum-related outreach programs for the year. We always have a great time, so come on out for the fun, even if you don't have a telescope.

Hope to see you there!



The Eskimo Nebula NGC2392, in the constellation Gemini.

Distance: About 5,000 light years.



Editor's Message

By Jim Sommer

Okay now, I know that some of you take astro-photos -- and good ones too! So how about sharing them with the club? The same goes for photos taken at outreaches and other club events. Send them to me at: k75jim@aol.com. Got a new piece of gear... say a new Ethos? How about writing up a little article with you impressions, what kind of scope you used it in, etc. Got some gear to sell? Again, send me the info and I'll include it in the newsletter.

Don't worry too much about style or form; that's what editors are for. ;-) Just write them up and e-mail to me at the above URL.

Afton Canyon and the end of the Warm Weather

By Cliff Saucier

The upcoming October star party, the weekend of the seventeenth, is going to be a special one on a couple of levels. First, we will be traveling to Afton Canyon, a site that a few of us have been using for a while now. Located about thirty miles past Barstow off I-15, the campground is about the same distance as Cottonwood Springs in Joshua Tree, but more room (Cottonwood has been packed the last few years), and even presenting a darker sky. Yes, darker! The second, we will be joining HiDAS, the High Desert Astronomical Society, based in Apple Valley. Their club is about the same size as SBVAA, and I expect each club will be represented by seven to ten telescopes. The more the merrier, I say!

The campground itself has some water, tables with shading roofs, and pit toilets. All in all, it is very similar to the camping at Grandview or Owl Canyon, which most of us know. A small market is at the freeway offramp. Due to the distance, many will be staying overnight, with several planning on coming up Friday. Possibly a few even Thursday night, if the sky looks to be that good! A truly dark sky is a resource to be savored, and this may be the last hurrah of our temperate weather before the chill of the winter takes us up in its frigid embrace.

Afton Canyon is a very scenic spot, with many hikes up side canyons yielding a wealth of pretty rocks for us collecting types. A college geology instructor may be coming along, and for a change I'll know just what these pretty things are. He has interests in astronomy and also birding. This area is famous as a pinch point for migrating birds, with the Mojave River rising to the surface at this place in its journey to an end in the sands further downstream. This was also a spot that travelers in the early days of the West would rest and refresh their supplies of water. One down note, water means life in the desert, and this also means mosquitoes! Plan accordingly. There will be plenty of bug deterrents on hand, if you haven't brought your own favorite. It's the only spot I've been to with this

problem, and it helps me sympathize with the difficulties that our brother astronomers in other parts of the country have to deal with on a regular basis. The mosquitoes are a bloodthirsty lot, being descended from those that used to torment Indian raiding parties, Cavalrymen, Chinese railroad workers, and now off-road types and astronomers.

A large iron truss bridge dominates the view. The train traffic has slowed with the faltering pace of our economy, but they are still pretty impressive. The bridge is beautifully illuminated at night, but the train's headlight doesn't sweep the campground, so it's not too objectionable unless you are imaging. Now that's an unknown field to me, so I can't say how that would work out.

Hopefully this will be just the first of many club trips to this beautiful site, often called the Grand Canyon of the Mojave. It's a little too far for regular use, but just like Grandview, it would be wonderful to make a journey there once or twice a year.

Outreaches Abound in September

By Jim Sommer

On September 26, our club put on no less than three public outreach programs. The first at the San Bernardino County Museum. This was a resounding success as evidenced by over 400 curious parents, children and individuals coming to see the Moon, Jupiter and whatever else could be found.

The second: Tom Lawson and several others put on a semi-private star party for some friends of Tom's up in the high desert.

The third: I volunteered to put on a star party in conjunction with the Redlands Conservancy's "Star Shine and Wine" fund raiser. This was an event limited to 20 people and was a sell out as a fund raiser. It was also a great opportunity for me to show exactly what light pollution does to the sky.

A New Way of Seeing the Starry Vistas

By Cliff Saucier

Last May I was out for first light of my new telescope at the RAS site in Landers. It was a third quarter moon, and only four or five of us were out there. Just right for my plans to cozy up to the cosmos on the eighteen-inch's shakedown cruise, or so I thought. It was getting dark, and the mirror was fairly stable; time to get with it. A shout comes up from the field, "that SUCKS!", so naturally I had to go over and see what the commotion was about. One of the guys had a scope set up with a digital eyepiece and a monitor. On the screen was a large galaxy, full color and filling the screen. The complaining party spends hours acquiring images, which are wonderful, but this was awfully close with an exposure time of less than a minute. Pretty cool, but back to my new baby. Again, "that REALLY sucks!". I can't resist going over again. The Ring Nebula in full color, the reds, greens, blues just like in the photographs, complete with the central star. Now I'm getting impressed and ask questions. The device is called a [Mallincam](#), a tweaked digital camera that can be set to record and stack the images in times of a few seconds to a little less than one minute. Almost real time views! Even though the monitor was blowing out my dark adaptation badly, I kept drifting over for every new image. So much for first light, but this was really something. Not cheap, a little over one thousand dollars I believe, but glorious!

Now jump ahead in time to the weekend that the club went up to Grandview. Too much work for me to get away that long, so back to Goat Mountain for a little observing. As it happened, Yucca Valley was having their yearly Starry Nights Festival. Speakers during the day included David Levy and Dennis Mammana, and the night show was going to be the [SCDVA Southern California Desert Astronomers](#).

Rather than running shuttles to telescopes in a darker spot, as in the previous years, the group brought their scopes to the parking lot outside. Outfitted with Mallincams, the images were piped into the auditorium and projected on screens. The hippies have aged, and are back with some fantastic cosmic

light shows! No standing in lines for a view of a dim gray smudge that, while it makes our hearts beat faster, truthfully leave most of the public a little underwhelmed. These images are bright, large and detailed. They were shown on the dome structure of the Integratron in Landers, projected on the rocks in Joshua Tree, even lighting up the side of a white van (wow, is that really Stephen's Quintet?).

Now at our own outreaches at the Museum, we've all seen the crowds around Mike Klein's video setup. Many can view at once, and the video format really hooks in the kids. The moon looks pretty good, and Jupiter and Saturn not too bad. Well, this is the next step. Just because we can't view the deep sky objects through the light pollution, these items aren't off limits to us with this technology. A medium sized goto telescope that tracks reasonably well and you're off to the races. Maybe we can't be directly under the parking lot lights, but I can say that I've seen the future of public outreaches, and it's called the Mallincam. Checkout the product on the Mallincam link, and see what those guys in Joshua Tree are up to with their projects.



In this 1994 Clementine spacecraft picture, the Moon is illuminated solely by light from the Sun that is reflected from the Earth. This "earthshine" occurs near the new Moon. The Sun is just behind the Moon, creating the glow. Venus is at the top of the frame.



Public Star Parties

Free public star parties are held monthly with the assistance of the Los Angeles Astronomical Society and the Los Angeles Sidewalk Astronomers at the Griffith Observatory from 2:00 p.m. to 9:45 p.m. They are a chance for the whole family to look at the sun, moon, visible planets, and other objects, to try out a variety of telescopes, and to talk to knowledgeable amateur astronomers about the sky and their equipment.

Public Star Parties remaining for 2009

October 24

November 21

December 19

CALENDARS

The 2010 “**Deep Space Mysteries**” calendars from Astronomy Magazine are here. It will be available for sale starting with the club meeting on September the 12th. We will have 30 for sale on a first come first served basis. The retail for this calendar is \$12.95 plus \$1.00 tax or \$13.95 altogether. Your cost, through the club this year, is \$8 a savings of \$6.

See Fidel, the club treasurer, at the back of the room before or after the meeting to make your purchase. Reservations are accepted.



This trio of galaxies located in the constellation of Capricorn -- photographed by the Hubble Space Telescope -- is pictured here engaged in an intricate "dance" orchestrated by mutual gravitational forces acting between them. This collection, named the Hickson Compact Group 87, is made up of one large spiral galaxy, an elliptical galaxy and at least one smaller spiral.