



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

April, 2010

Meeting:

April 17, 2010

Location:

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

Pre-meeting Dinner, 5:00
p.m., **NEW!!!**

The Sizzler
1800 So. Waterman
Ave.
San Bernardino, CA

(See article on pg. 3)

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

The Aurora: Take Two

Last month, there was a sudden change in the program topic and the video presentation on the aurora was replaced by a pair of speakers who discussed the scientific and artistic aspects of Galileo and his approach to understanding the universe. This month, we will present the video on understanding the aurora. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused, but hey, sometimes the universe is chaotic and we get caught up in that!



If you already know and love the fabled 'northern lights,' or if you're simply curious about this fascinating atmospheric phenomena, then this video is a must see! With the advent of supersensitive real-time video cameras, we'll actually be able to see them as they naturally appear.

Once, they were only captured on film with time-exposures. Though beautiful, they lacked the subtlety of color and movement which made them a real visual experience. Now we are able to fully experience these exquisite, dancing and haunting lights in their natural splendor. What causes them? What gives them color? What makes them move and appear like rays, curtains, folds and flickers? How high up are they?

This video from the Aurora Television Project, University of Alaska at Fairbanks will answer all those questions and more!

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 17, Club meeting at the Museum

April 21, Outreach, Barton Elementary School

April 24, Moon Party outreach at the Museum

May 8, Saturn Party outreach at the Museum

May 22, Club meeting and Astronomy Day
outreach at the Museum

June 19, Club meeting at the Museum

Outreaches

By Chris Clarke

We have two outreaches this month. One is a school event; the other for the Museum. On Wednesday, April 21, we will set up our scopes for students and their families at **Barton Elementary School, 2214 Pumalo, San Bernardino** from 8:00 to 9:00, with setup at 7:30 pm. The moon will be at first-quarter phase and Saturn will be finely placed for viewing as well. Our previously scheduled viewing event for them was rained out in February, so let's hope that we have better weather this time.

On **Saturday, April 24**, we will have our first **"Moon Party"** of the year at **the County Museum**. We'll be viewing from 8:30 to 10:00 p.m. with setup at 8:00. The moon will be a nice waxing gibbous and Saturn will share the limelight as well. We will set up in the south area of the parking lot, where we have an unrestricted view of the spring ecliptic. Be sure to setup on the asphalt, as the lawn sprinklers have been known to come on at odd times!

These celestial encounters are always fun, so be sure to come, even if you don't have a scope. The

rugged terrain of the moon will jump out in three-dimensional detail while Saturn's rings will appear like tapered 'popsickle' sticks pointing away from each side of the disk. You'll hear lots of "oohs and aahs" as the public observe such sights. The joys of sharing these views will long remain in memory, I can assure you.

Hope to see you there!

Editor's Message

By Jim Sommer

April and May are the months when we can see two very special deep space objects from dark sky locations here in Southern California. These two DSO's are Omega Centauri (NGC5139) and Centaurus A (NGC5128). Omega Cen. is the largest and most massive globular cluster in the Milky Way spanning some 280 million light years. It is also one of the oldest objects in our galaxy, nearly as old as the universe itself. Patrick Moore describes Cen. A as "...the most dynamic and intriguing galaxy in the heavens ...by far the nearest and most violent Seyfert-type galaxy known...."

Trying a New Restaurant this Month!

By Chris Clarke

Following past meals at Home Town Buffet, several members have discussed the option of eating elsewhere. Citing ever-increasing costs, type and quality of food available, crowded conditions, many members have become ‘disenchanted’ with Home Town Buffet and rarely, if ever, attend. To overcome this lack of interest, we shall endeavor to try something different this month. We will eat at **The Sizzler restaurant located at 1800 S. Waterman Ave, in San Bernardino.** It is just off the I10 Freeway and is conveniently located with regard to the County Museum.

Sizzler has much to offer (salad bar, many entrees, etc) and it can easily accommodate our group. The “meet to eat” time is still 5:00 pm—hope to see you there!!

Lyrid Meteor Shower

By Jim Sommer

It’s always amazing to me that the dust and debris from some long past comet has the potential to create spectacular light shows in the form of a meteor shower. On the night of April 21/22, between midnight and dawn the Lyrid shower will peak with up to twenty meteors per hour. This year the Lyrid shower coincides with a dark moon so viewing them should be much easier. (January’s Quadrantid shower occurred during a waning gibbous Moon and the upcoming Eta Aquarid shower in May comes at the same time a last Quarter Moon.) Even so, the Lyrids are not the brightest meteors so you will see them best from a dark site.



This new NASA Hubble Space Telescope image of the Antennae galaxies is the sharpest yet of this merging pair of galaxies. During the course of the collision, billions of stars will be formed. The brightest and most compact of these star birth regions are called super star clusters. The new image allows astronomers to better distinguish between the stars and super star clusters created in the collision of two spiral galaxies.

Classified Ads

Selling some of your gear? Looking for something new to add to your gear? Why not let your editor know and I’ll run an ad for you for free. Just give me your name, a brief description, condition, price and a contact number. This way you can “keep it in the family.”

Who knows what bargains you might find.



Comet Possibilities

A look at the website *Heavens-Above.Com* revealed that there are two comets with magnitudes greater than 12.0 that we might be able to see from our SoCal location. Both are in the 9 to 11 mag range so a reasonably dark site will be necessary and the more aperture the better. However, often a good 4-inch class scope can pick out an 11 mag comet's fuzzy glow. The comets are 81P Wild 2, and C/2007 Q3 Siding Spring. Charts for finding them are below.

Even if your scope's aperture is small, give these a try. Under the right conditions a small scope can do quite well. And besides, bagging a DSO faint fuzzy can give you some "bragging rights" at the next club meeting or star party.

Comet 81P Wild 2

Right Ascension (J2000)
14^h 14.3^m

Declination (J2000)
-5° 44'

Constellation: Virgo

Magnitude: 9.4

Distance from Earth: 0.673 AU

Comet C/2007 Q3 Siding Spring

Right Ascension (J2000)
15^h 20.1^m

Declination (J2000)
61° 14'

Constellation: Draco

Magnitude: 11.3

Distance from Earth: 2.569 AU

