

The Observer

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Member of The Astronomical League

<http://sbvaa.org/>



Volume #55, Issue 3

Since 1958

March, 2013

Meeting:

March 16, 2013

Location:

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

Pre-meeting Dinner, 5:00
p.m.,

The Sizzler
1800 So. Waterman
Ave.
San Bernardino, 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

It Fell To Earth



With the recent close passage of a small asteroid and the impact of a large meteorite in Russia, we'll present an episode from the "The Universe" series to enlighten everyone on the subject.

See where these bodies come from, what they are made of and how they have affected our planet through the ages. Whether it's a tiny "falling star" you make a wish on or a "killer asteroid," you'll be astounded by the immensity of fragments flying through space.



(Asteroid Gaspra. Photo credit NASA)

Join us for a great program that offers answers to many of your questions!

SBVAA Officers

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

March 9, Messier Marathon Star Party, at
GMARS site, Landers, CA

March 9, Star Party, Wildlands Conservancy at
Oak Glenn

March 16, Club meeting at the Museum

April 13, Star Party at Johnson Valley: Alternate is
Public outreach at Wildlands Conservancy,
Oak Glen

April 20, Club meeting at the Museum &
Astronomy Day

March 9 Star Party Options

By Chris Clarke

On Saturday, March 9, the club will have two locations for its monthly star party. The Riverside Astronomical Society will be holding its annual "Messier Marathon" at its GMARS Site out in Landers and we'll also be hosting a club only event at The Wildlands Conservancy up in Oak Glen.

We are always invited to be at the Riverside club event, but for those who wish to stay closer to home, the Oak Glen event is offered.

The Wildlands viewing will be held from 5:00 pm (setup) to around 11:00 pm. Sunset is just before 6:00 pm and it is the last day that we are on standard time, so the viewing is earlier in the evening. Members and friends may come to the Wildlands event. Next month, on April 13, we will be having a public outreach out there.

Whatever your choice may be, enjoy some quality time under the stars with like-minded friends!

Mt. SAC Community College Position

Julie Bray-Ali
jbray-ali@mtsac.edu

Our college will have astronomy tech position. I am not sure if anyone from your group may be interested in the position, but I would like a help with spreading the word that we have a position. The position is Astronomy Tech, but the huge part of the job is to take care of our new observatory on campus.

<https://hrjobs.mtsac.edu/postings/2346>

[Go to the listed URL above for a complete job description. Julie's e-mail address is in the header above or you can contact Human Resources at Mt. SAC.]

Whitewater - and Cloudy Skies

By Cliff Saucier

For the last year or so, some of our club members have been hauling out our telescopes to the Wildlands Conservancy's Whitewater site. It used to be the old trout ranch, which many of us have been to over the years. Fairly near by (Interstate 10 to Cabazon, then past the Dinosaurs...turn left at the windmills), they offer a number of activities over the year in a lovely natural setting, including some stargazing nights!

My initial involvement came upon stumbling across an announcement about a star party in the Canyon, leading to a phone call checking out what was planned for the evening. A query was made as to the need for another scope or two, and the reply was 'the more the merrier', which fits in with my personal observing philosophy. The event was to be held on a December evening, that afternoon being the club's Christmas party. Mike Ratcliff was the only other member interested in coming out at that time. We went, but never set up. The turnout was small and a little far to carry our scopes. A Schmidt-Cassegrain was in use, and enough for that night.

The event has grown since, usually including Cliff Bullock and Robin Hennen, and a few desert observers. This February 2 they had another stargazing night planned, and this time six club members showed up. Mike Ratcliff, Cliff Bullock, Robin Hennen, Jim Sommer, and Rue and Megan Countryman and myself rounding out our roster, even though clouds were forecast, and indeed showed up on schedule. Not a scope was unloaded and set up. A guest speaker provided an interesting program touching upon many astronomical subjects, including some stories of the constellations and the Messier and NGC catalogs. This was the first time we were scrubbed due to the weather, but it was gratifying that so

many of our little group care deeply about sharing our passion for the night sky.

Another event is being planned for late April, date to be set, and I would like to encourage club members to come out and enjoy Whitewater Canyon, whether bringing a scope or not. It's an idyllic setting on the near edge of the desert, with ponds holding large trout, grassy meadows and picnic areas, all at the base of a large cliff that often host a band of Bighorn Sheep. They are well worth seeing through binoculars, and the view through a telescope is equal to any of the wonderments of the dark sky.



“Observing field” at White Water Conservancy.

(Photo credit, Robin Hennen)

[Editor’s note: This site is less than thirty miles from my home in Redlands. That makes it an easy drive to and from for a nice night under the stars.]

“Plan B” Observing

By Mike Ratcliff

For the February 9 2013 SBVAA star party, the weather prospects did not look good. Snow the previous night down to 2000 ft elevation, lower than Johnson Valley's 4000 ft elevation, with cold temperatures. After the "super-cold" January star party with temperatures in the teens, my enthusiasm for cold observing dimmed a bit. Various other phone calls and emails indicated similar feelings among several other members.

But wait! The Clear Sky Clock was indicating some hope. And in the afternoon, there were clear skies on the satellite pictures, with temperatures only in the upper 20's predicted with no major winds.

So I formulated a plan. Instead of Johnson Valley I would go to the Riverside club site at GMARS in Landers. They have a house on the edge of Landers with a kitchen, living room, and 2 bathrooms, all in red light, with plenty of heat to warm up if needed.

Turns out the conditions were a lot better than expected! No snow, no clouds, mild wind, temps in the low 30's. I still had to wear all of the cold weather gear but could use fingers to read charts and pick up eyepieces. And I did use the kitchen 3 times to warm up. A nice change from January. Seeing (steadiness of stars) was poor to fair, transparency OK. I stayed up until 1:30 a.m.

There were about 20 people there and I just missed out on the BBQ. But I did go in the house a couple of times to warm up. Most people were imagers, and I saw one other dob. The sky darkness is about the same as Johnson Valley or

maybe a little worse, not as good as Red Cloud, Afton or certainly Kelbaker or Grandview. One corner of the telescope field is illuminated by a grumpy neighbor's distant light. It's a good alternative site, however, if there is no regular star party and I'm not in the mood for staying out alone (which is hardly ever, yeah I'm a wimp). I did join the Riverside club just for these occasions.

I found a few new galaxies in the Eridanus area (near the bottom of Orion) and of course looked at some old favorites. The Orion nebula showed well but the Horsehead nebula didn't.

Our club's next star party in March is actually at the Riverside GMARS. I would encourage everyone to go. They will have a big dinner in the afternoon. The one thing they are extremely fussy about is headlights. (There are lots of serious imagers there.) Try to make it there before dark, and if you plan to leave during the evening park away from the telescope field and aimed away so it is easy to drive out without your headlights illuminating the field. There is parking away from the telescope field and 2 driveways out. The regular GMARS people have modified their cars to be able to turn off their headlights. In our own club, we are more tolerant, we just close our eyes or cover the cameras.

Several of the other SBVAA members have been to GMARS before. One time last fall there were several SBVAA folks and we had our own corner mini-star party going. The roads are unpaved the last 2 miles but are graded regularly and easily passable with no white knuckles.

Hope the weather is warmer in March!

GMARS

*(Photo credit,
Bob Stevens, RAS)*



For Sale

Monolux achromatic refractor. f/11.6, 60 mm, serial number 4369.

This is a “classic” scope from the golden years of Japanese small refractors. Includes a .965” diagonal, yoke alt/az mount on wooden tripod and several Huygens EP’s. (Not a plastic toy.)

Go to: www.astronomyhints.com/review_Monolux for a review of similar scope.

Contact Carl Lawson to make offer at:

Lawson_C@roadrunner.com

or call (909) 320-7205

Scope similar to photo below



Plan Ahead

2nd Annual Arizona Science & Astronomy Expo

November 16 & 17, 2013, Tucson, Arizona.

Last year’s inaugural expo was outstanding with top speakers and a massive vendor hall. For 2013, two stellar speakers have already signed: **Alex Filippenko**, world renowned astrophysicist and professor of astronomy, and **Timothy Ferris**, astronomer and author of twelve best selling books.

November 16th and November 17th 2013. Being held at the Tucson Convention Center Tucson AZ.

Scheduled Club Events for 2013

Club Meetings

Star Parties

March 16

March 9

April 20

April 13

May 18

May 11

June 22

June 7 - 9

July 20

July 6

August 10

August 3

September 21

September 6 - 8

October 19

October 5

November 16

November 2

November 30

December 7