



The Observer

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Member of The Astronomical League

<http://sbvaa.org/>



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Since 1958

May, 2020

Meeting:

May 2, 2020

Location:

~~First Christian Church
2102 E. Foothill Dr.
San Bernardino, CA~~

~~7:00 p.m.~~

~~Pre-meeting Dinner,
5:00 to 6:30 p.m.,~~

~~**Jenny's Family
Resturant
7750 Palm Ave.
Highland, 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!*

Program

No Meeting This Month

Thanks to the possibility of the COVID19 contagion, there will be no club meeting this month.

A good way to follow the CDC's recommendation of "social distancing" is to practice a little "backyard astronomy." We've been fortunate to have some remarkably still nights lately — nights of near perfect seeing and transparency (at least from my hi-tech driveway location in Redlands). Light pollution, of course, remains a problem.



And remember the late Jack Horkheimer's admonishment to "keep looking up."

Also, in these times of unreasonable panic, be a helper not a hoarder.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

June 6, Club Meeting (we hope!)

June 17 -21, Grandview (we hope!)

June 26, Outreach, S.B. Cty. Museum

July 11, Summer Social, Sizzlers

July 18, Outreach, Oak Glen

Aug. 8, Annual Club BBQ

Aug. 12 - 16, Grandview

Aug. 29, Outreach, S.B. Cty. Museum

Sept. 19, Star Party/Outreach,
Oak Glen

Gentle Fascinations: Winter and Spring Skies

By: Scott Freeman, Martin Carey & Mike Ratcliff

On Thursday, April 16, Martin Carey, Mike Ratcliff, and I (Scott Freeman) did what no one from our astronomy club had done in a long time — We went observing — together!

After checking with our weather expert (Martin), we drove the 70-mile trek out to Pioneer Town. As the entry to the main conservancy area was locked, a friendly ranger granted us permission to observe in a large parking lot just outside the gate. There were no visual obstructions; it was a nice place to set up a scope! As an added bonus, there was a new moon.

What transpired that evening was quite a sight. Stuck indoors, we were becoming cave creatures, hungry to see the heavens. Overall, the seeing was average, and the transparency was good. Martin brought his 20", only to discover that he forgotten his counter weights. Martin was so grateful for Scott's 12.5" scope, he even let Scott look through it occasionally. Mike was using a 60mm refractor that Jamie lent to him. (Happy astronomers are those who appreciate what they have.)

What transpired that evening was a sight for eyes hungry to view—a feast of celestial objects! Stuck indoors for weeks, we were becoming cave creatures, craving the distant lights. We enjoyed the objects popular in the winter and spring skies, especially those Virgo galaxies.

Here is what Martin has to say about some of the gentle fascinations of the evening sky that we enjoyed: “We looked at NGC 4565, an edge-on galaxy. This is a thin wedge with a glowing nuclear bulge and a thin dust lane. We saw the cluster of galaxies in Markarian’s Chain in Virgo. We loved the Sombrero, Galaxy, M 104, also in Virgo. This galaxy looks like a sphere with a ring around it, a ghostly image of Saturn. In the constellation of Ursa Major, the pair of galaxies M81 and M82 were spectacular. M81 appeared like a bright oval cloud with a strong nucleus. M82 was also bright with its two irregular dark lanes visible. I also saw M13, the big globular cluster, rising low in the east. Towards the end of the evening, I also caught a view of M65 and M66 in Leo, with both 10x50 binoculars and Scott’s scope. We were reminded that night what a fine location Pioneer Town is for observing the deep-sky objects from their clear dark skies.”

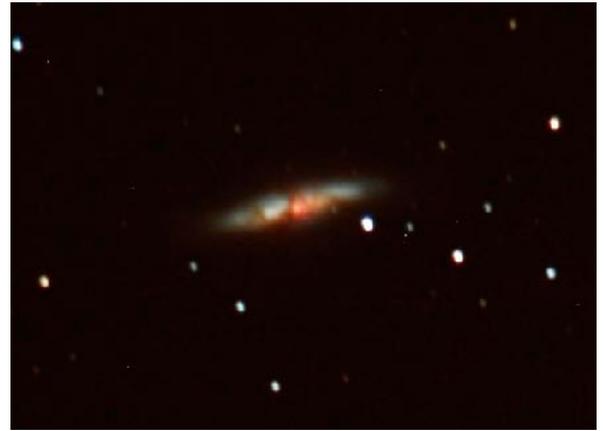
Mike had very productive evening looking through a 60mm refractor borrowed from President Jamie. A seasoned observer, Mike enjoyed views of many objects, including the Trapezium. This is a tight open cluster of stars of M42, in the heart in the constellation Orion the Hunter. M42 was originally discovered by Nicholas Peiresc, a French lawyer, in 1611. We pointed all our instruments at this object, and Martin was able to detect some greens and yellows in the clouds.

For those of you reading this that may be new to the hobby/science of Astronomy, a constellation is a group of stars that make up a pattern. There are number of ancient civilizations that identified these patterns by name and object; the Romans, kingdoms of the greater Middle East, the Greeks, Chinese, African and our own Native Americans. Learning them by their names and patterns enables us to find many wonderful objects in the evening sky. Constellations act like a road map to find galaxies, clusters, nebulas, and planets. It is also a fun thing to do.

Mike also saw many other objects, including the Galaxy M101, a large but dim object in Ursa Major, the Great Bear. He also enjoyed M104, the Sombrero Galaxy, and split a number of stars, such as Castor in Gemini the twin and a double star in the head of Draco. Mike said that he had a good time, and was glad that he came. His success using the 2.4” refractor shows us that once again you learn the sky, it isn’t necessary to have a large telescope to see deep sky objects! Also, Mike found a great advantage to a smaller telescope—it was ready to observe in under 5 minutes. (It takes Scott 20, and Martin more than 30.). And his whole set-up only weighed about 12 lbs. If you are new to astronomy, please know that no scope is too small. When we can all observe together again, we will be happy to help you get familiar with the use of your equipment. If you are thinking about what to purchase, we can help.

For your enjoyment, we have included some pictures of the winter and evening skies, courtesy of Jamie Countryman and Megan Huynh. While we do not see the detail in our scopes that we see in astro-photos, these images really enhance the enjoyment we get from the newsletter.

[Editor’s note: Please do not feel shy about submitting an article or photo to the newsletter. All are welcome. Article ideas include, but are not limited to, new equipment, observing tales, maintenance tips, et. al. Articles and photos are a great way to share our love of astronomy with your fellow club members. And it’s a great way to keep in touch during the quarantine. You don’t have to write like Hemingway or Faulkner. Just write it and e-mail it to your editor. Include your phone number just in case I need to clarify anything. Thanks, Jim S.]



Things to See While in “Quarantine”



Late April and into May will be a great time to see Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in the early morning hours. Venus is shining brightly high in the evening western sky: A meteor shower produced by debris from Halley's Comet, asteroids named after dinosaurs and a "blue moon" on May 18th.