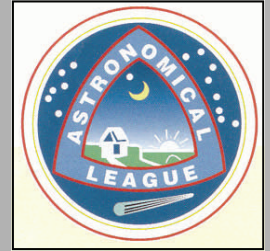




ASSET NEWSLETTER
STARGAZER



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APRIL 2010 ISSUE

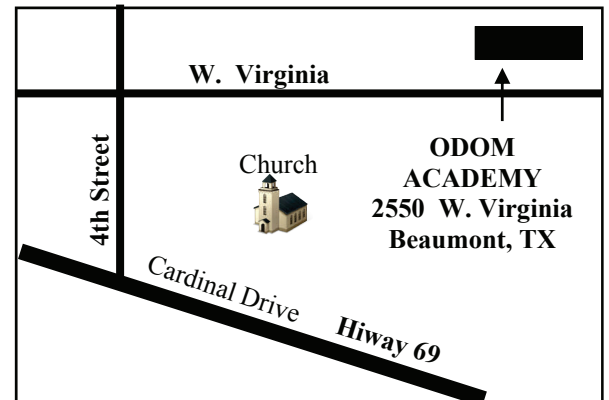


April 20th is the Shangri La Star Party this month. I will have the final details at our April meeting. You can use this and other star parties toward the completion of your Outreach Program award. Great observing weather is on its way! Already this month we have had some
(continued on page 3)



DON'T FORGET!
 APRIL MEETING BACK TO THE 2ND FRIDAY, THE 9TH, 7PM AT ODOM. LONNIE KEEPS COMING UP WITH GOOD PROGRAMS, AND WE HAVE GREAT TURNOUTS & REFRESHMENTS!

THE CLUB WEB SITE, LOOK AT IT WHEN YOU NEED TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT OUR CLUB
asset-astronomer.org



ASSET Minutes for March 19, 2010



Great turnout! Twenty-five members, including new members Sharon and Matt Rigsby. Sharon teaches at the BISD Planetarium. Marla Mitchell, Chris's sister, has joined after visiting with Chris several times. Welcome! Roger reported dues are down a little from last year. There will be a star party at Shangri La on Tuesday, April 20, from 7:30-9:30. We should be there by 6:30. Lonnie suggested that we do "star parties" differently. We can make ourselves available to organizations to do star parties. We've done that several times in recent years. One big advantage being not having the insurance expenditure. If you can think of ways to get the word out to people in SE Texas, let Lonnie know. We received an effusive email from Laurie Gordon praising our participation at their recent event in Mauriceville. Bill presented a solar report and Howard a constellation report on Lynx. Lynx contains a newly-named asterism called "Inchworm".
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 (MINUTES)



THE OBSERVING CORNER - BY OUR MEMBERS



Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2010 7:41 PM **Subject:** Observing Session

Just wanted to write about my stay with Bubba and LeeAnn. We went out 2 nights last week because it was spring break week for us at the District & I took the week off. We started Thursday night. I looked at the Clear Sky Clock and it showed a couple of good hours till midnight, then one bad hour and clear for the morning hours. We set the 20" up and waited. We didn't get a break in the clouds all night till 1:30 AM Friday when we picked up for the night. What was weird was that we got a rain storm that LeeAnn said was only over us, and radar showed clear everywhere else. We covered the scope with a tarp Bubba had. Later we got another rainstorm that LeAnn said was again only over us. Bubba and I rushed to the scope and repositioned the tarp that had blown off with the wind and fastened it with bungee cords. Then while we were in the garage, the hail started to fall. Bubba wanted to know if I wanted to pull my truck in the garage and I said that wasn't what I was worried about. Luckily, we were blessed with NO damage to the scope (whew!). Friday, we set up both our scopes and were ready by 7:00 PM. 15 minutes later we were observing. My head didn't hit the pillow till 4:50 Saturday morning. We saw some Herschel objects and I was proud to find NGC 2371 & 2372 easier than Steven O'Meara said he did in his book. I raised the magnification to 277x before I could split the nebula in its 2 parts. I ran into a difficult one for the Caldwell program, IC 405, the Flaming Star Nebula. I was surprised at how little of it I could see with a 20" scope! Bubba and I looked at some Messier objects. At 4:00 AM, the summer constellations came up. We were both in awe at how M13 and M92, both globular clusters in Hercules, looked in the 20" with the binoviewers at 329x. I have two good friends now; Bubba and LeeAnn, who treated me like a king while I was there. I also made good friends with their Yorkie dog and maybe the chicken too; I'm not sure. I now have 15 Caldwell objects and 21 Herschel 400 objects, a good start on both programs. Am spending more time on each object and it is worth it. That's all I can remember, but I know Bubba and I had a GREAT time.

Clear Skies, Terry

Very good article, Terry. You all had a great time and our members should take note, and buddy up. Your observations are a lot of fun when you get to share experiences during the night. Give a call to someone.

Lonnie writes; Saturday 27 March 2010

I made an adapter for my 6" F8 dob to be able to use my solar filter. Between the clouds I got a few peeks and WOW. There is a sun spot on there that looks huge. It is teardrop shape and there are several layers of black and gray in it. It is by far the largest spot I have seen. Along with that spot I saw 2 more. The view with my 6" scope was really crisp. I was surprised it would be that sharp. I had been using a 5.5" Mak. It would never really sharpen up. A few more modifications and the 6" is going to be the scope I use for solar viewing. If you get the chance to SAFELY view the sun you will be surprised at the activity.

I cant wait till these clouds depart us. **Lonnie**

Will writes; Monday, March 29, 2010

Hey Howard! Just wanted to send a report. Haven't had much time to do so. I finally got my scope, a 12 inch Lightbridge. It's amazing so far. Been observing the moon and some star clusters. I'm seeing more stars in Orion's nebula than I ever have from my location. The moon is very nice and detailed as well. My fiancée is making me a light shroud and its looking really good so far. I told her maybe she could start a shroud making internet business. Hah! If anyone is looking to get hold of the club's scope, let me know. I can meet up with you, or someone who wants it whenever. Anyway can't wait for the next Claiborne SP.

clear skies, Will

April 2010 ASSET Treasurer's Article



Greetings everyone. What a great idea Lonnie presented at our last meeting in regard to public star parties. Not only will it save the club money by not requiring purchase of insurance, it will also give us more exposure and create good will in the process. Of course the next one is April 20 at Shangri La so make plans to be there that Tuesday. We had a great turnout last year and this year should be even better.

We will be sending the ASSET membership list to the Astronomical League later this month. They will use it to add members to the mailing list for the quarterly Reflector publication. The June issue is the next one ASSET members should receive. We'll put a note in a later newsletter to remind you to look for the next issue of the Reflector.

This month our pre-meeting get together for dinner will be at Cheddar's Restaurant, 3815 IH-10 South in Beaumont. Meet us there about 5:15 PM on Friday, April 9.

Hope to see you at the dinner or the April meeting.

Clear Skies! Roger

(MINTUES) CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Those who went to Hodges Gardens had a great time. It was Will Young's first such event, and he seemed to thoroughly enjoy it, even though his sleeping accommodations left a lot to be desired! Lonnie showed what looked like a potato floating in space. Actually, it was Phobos, one of Mars, two moons, the other being Deimos. In the Greek, Phobos means *fear*. Think phobia. The other Mars moon is Deimos, a figure in Greek Mythology representing *dread*. I reported on "Hubble 3D" at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. This is a new 3D movie about space using Hubble images. It is **definitely** something I have to see. Check out their website for times/dates. Thanks Donna and Roger for refreshments.

Brenda Tantzen; ASSET Secretary

(Continued from page 1, Lonnie)

really good seeing conditions. Get out and observe from your home. There is plenty for you to see. Even if you have a lot of neighborhood lights, you can still observe the moon or the planets (Now Mars, Saturn, Venus and Mercury). The moon is a great object to study, and it's amazing what you can see with just a little time studying each object. Notice the many different shapes and sizes of craters. Some craters have many craters inside, some have peaks in them, and some have riffs and ejecta surrounding them. Can you find Rupes Recta? How about the Crater Catharina? What craters nearby form a very notable feature? How many craters are visible on the moon from Earth? What is the largest crater visible from Earth? There could be a test at the next meeting. The greatest thing about observing the moon is the changing views you get from hour to hour and from night to night.

Have you looked at our GREAT web site!! It is very good and offers a lot of useful information for you to use. Let's help keep it current by letting Eddie know of items of interest you would like to see in it. We have a lot of room, so much more content can be added. I really like the pictures page, so if you have pictures to share, get them to Eddie so he can do his magic. Thanks Eddie!!

I hope you can make it to the April meeting.

Lonnie

Deadly Planets

By Patrick L. Barry and Dr. Tony Phillips

About 900 light years from here is a rocky planet not much bigger than Earth. It goes around its star once every hundred days, a trifle fast, but not too different from a standard Earth-year. At least two and possibly three other planets circle the same star, forming a complete solar system.

Interested? Don't be. Going there would be the last thing you ever do.

The star is a pulsar, PSR 1257+12, the seething-hot core of a supernova that exploded millions of years ago. Its planets are bathed not in gentle, life-giving sunshine but instead a blistering torrent of X-rays and high-energy particles.

"It would be like trying to live next to Chernobyl," says Charles Beichman, a scientist at JPL and director of the Michelson Science Center at Caltech.

Our own Sun emits small amounts of pulsar-like X-rays and high energy particles, but the amount of such radiation coming from a pulsar is "orders of magnitude more," he says. Even for a planet orbiting as far out as the Earth, this radiation could blow away the planet's atmosphere, and even vaporize sand right off the planet's surface.

Astronomer Alex Wolszczan discovered planets around PSR 1257+12 in the 1990s using Puerto Rico's giant Arecibo radio telescope. At first, no one believed worlds could form around pulsars—it was too bizarre. Supernovas were supposed to destroy planets, not create them. Where did these worlds come from?

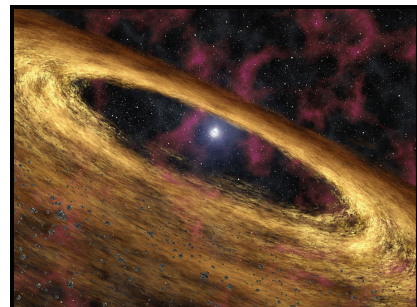
NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope may have found the solution. In 2005, a group of astronomers led by Deepto Chakrabarty of MIT pointed the infrared telescope toward pulsar 4U 0142+61. Data revealed a disk of gas and dust surrounding the central star, probably wreckage from the supernova. It was just the sort of disk that could coalesce to form planets!

As deadly as pulsar planets are, they might also be hauntingly beautiful. The vaporized matter rising from the planets' surfaces could be ionized by the incoming radiation, creating colorful auroras across the sky. And though the pulsar would only appear as a tiny dot in the sky (the pulsar itself is only 20-40 km across), it would be enshrouded in a hazy glow of light emitted by radiation particles as they curve in the pulsar's strong magnetic field.

Wasted beauty? Maybe. Beichman points out the positive: "It's an awful place to try and form planets, but if you can do it there, you can do it anywhere."

Find more news and images from Spitzer at <http://www.spitzer.caltech.edu/>. In addition, The Space Place Web site features several games related to Spitzer and infrared astronomy, as well as a storybook about a girl who dreamed of finding another Earth. Go to <http://tiny.cc/lucy208>.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Artist's concept of a pulsar and surrounding disk of rubble called a "fallback" disk, out of which new planets could form.

New Comet Machholz: Don Machholz of Colfax, CA, has spotted an 11th-magnitude comet low in the morning sky in the constellation Pegasus. He was using his 18½-inch reflector at 77x. In reporting the find to the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams (CBAT), Machholz described the comet as having a 2' coma and no tail. But when he'd first caught sight of it on March 23rd, twilight was coming on so fast that he could not tell which way it was moving. After an agonizing three days, he again located it, still in Pegasus but now 6° farther east. *Watch for updates on this one.*

Discovery Fit to Fly on April 5

Fri, 26 Mar 2010 04:41:27 PM CDT

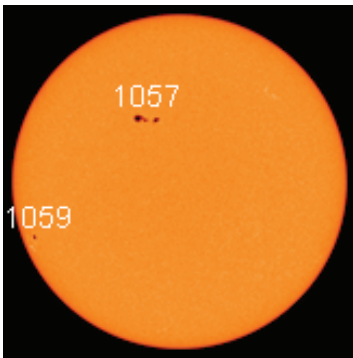
NASA managers gave space shuttle Discovery the "go" for an April 5 launch date for the STS-131 mission to the International Space Station. After an all-day Flight Readiness Review meeting, there were no unresolved issues that would prevent Discovery and crew from flying a safe and successful mission. Discovery will carry a multi-purpose logistics module filled with science racks for the laboratories aboard the station. The mission has three planned spacewalks, with work to include replacing an ammonia tank assembly, retrieving a Japanese experiment from the station's exterior, and switching out a rate gyro assembly on the S0 segment of the station's truss structure.



A NOTE FROM BILL, T-SHIRTS AND SUN SPOTS

Hey Everybody, we need to get the T-Shirt order put together; long sleeve, short sleeve, and sizes? If you can't make the meeting, get hold of Lonnie, Howard or myself so we can complete the list. A lot of you have wanted shirts for sometime, so now it is time to order yours!

Also, there is a big Sun Spot 1057, and another 1059 on the face of the Sun. Get out and observe. But be sure your method is safe. Have the proper filter or projection screen. This is your warning! Now go look at it. By the way Lonnie has been sketching the Sun spots. He will show his first time attempts. He did well. Sketching gives you an excellent way to remember what you saw!



A REPORT FROM LIGHT POLLUTED SKIES?

"Where I live, 30 miles west of downtown Philadelphia (near historic Valley Forge, Pennsylvania), the glow of the nighttime sky is often bright enough that I can read my star charts without the aid of a red flashlight. Yet many deep-sky wonders can still be seen and enjoyed in a small telescope. In fact, some keen-eyed observers have even been able to glimpse the brightest quasar, 13th-magnitude 3C 273 in Virgo. Considering that the object is at a distance of around 2 billion light-years, it is amazing that it can be seen at all under such conditions, let alone with apertures as small as 5 or 6 inches!"

Note; I have seen that Quasar at Claiborne Park with my 17; not impossible for a smaller scope. Lets have good weather at Claiborne this month and see a bunch!.....Howard



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JUST IN: UPDATE FOR THE SHANGRI LA S P

Tuesday, April 20th: Arrival of Astronomy Club Members to set up—5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for set up. Those who haven't been there before will have time to tour the gardens if you arrive by 5:00 p.m. Dinner: 6:15 p.m. We need to know an approximate number by Friday, April 9th meeting night. You can bring guests. Star Party opens for the Public: 7:30 p.m. Many will arrive by 7:00 p.m. so we will be ready. Star Party for Public Ends at 9:00 p.m.

Lonnie

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH EAST TEXAS MONTHLY CALENDAR

~ April 2010 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2  GOOD FRIDAY	3
4 	5	6 LAST QUARTER 	7	8 Moon farthest from Earth, Apogee	9 ASSET CLUB MEETING 7:00PM	10 DARK SKY, <u>THE RANCH</u> STAR PARTY
11	12	13	14 NEW MOON 	15	16	17 CLAIBORNE PARK SP
18	19	20 SHANGRI LA STAR PARTY, ORANGE	21 FIRST QUARTER  LYRID METEORS	22 LYRID METEORS	23 LYRID METEORS	24 Moon closest to Earth, Perigee
25 HUBBLE LAUNCHED 1990	26	27	28 FULL MOON 	29	30	Notes:

The Solar System in April 2010 :



Mercury - A grand opportunity to view elusive MERCURY comes on the evening of April 8, about 45 minutes to an hour after sunset, when dimmer Mercury will be perched just to the right of (north) much brighter VENUS; using binoculars, locate Venus first, then scan slowly to the right and just a bit down toward the horizon. Equally impressive will be Mercury and the very thin crescent MOON paired up very low on the WNW horizon



about an hour after sunset. - in ARIES

Venus - Venus is now the dominant evening planet for stargazers. Watch the western skies from Jan. 15 through Jan. 17 as the very thin crescent moon glides from "below" to "above" bright Venus in a three day period. - in TAURUS

Mars - Mars, now rapidly receding from our vantage point on Earth, is still very near the bright twin stars in Gemini: Castor and Pollux. Note that Mars is intensely red and nearly equal in brightness to these two stars, but will be fading conspicuously as the month progresses. Be sure and watch Mars in mid-month when it passes just NORTH of the "Beehive Cluster", Messier 44 in the constellation of Cancer. - in CANCER

Jupiter - After spending several weeks in conjunction with the sun in early 2010, Jupiter has now re-emerged slowly into the dawn eastern skies; look for the mightiest of planets to rise in the east about an hour before the sun; but will increase its lure throughout the summer of this year and be a dramatic evening object in late Fall. - In CAPRICORNUS

Saturn - Just past opposition to the Sun on March 21-22, the ringed planet is now high in the western sky late in the evening, now located about halfway between the bright stars Regular and Spica. The rings are still angled very little to our line of sight, making the detail in the rings difficult to view - in VIRGO

Uranus & Neptune - These planets are just past conjunction with the sun and not visible in April - in PISCES & CAPRICORNUS

Pluto - Now in southern skies during morning hours, but only for a brief moment before dawn; a telescope is needed to view this 14th magnitude distant planet - In SAGITTARIUS

Just a note: The Hodges Gardens Star Party was very good this year. You never know with the weather for sure. With 2 nights of good observing it was a success. We need more to go next year. The golf for the guys, good facilities, RV camping, clean restrooms, pets were allowed, and that led to a wonderful time.