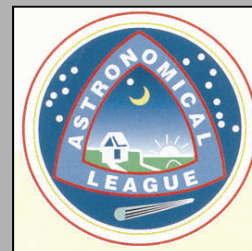




ASSET NEWSLETTER
STARGAZER



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH EAST TEXAS
 P O BOX 7943
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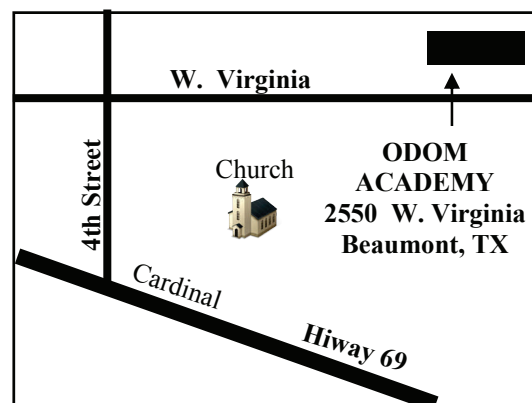
SEPTEMBER 2010 ISSUE

THE CLUB WEB SITE:
asset-astronomer.org

**ASSET MEETING ON FRIDAY THE 10TH, 7:00 PM
 ODOM ACADEMY LIBRARY**

**APPLEBEE'S FOR THE BEFORE MEETING DINNER,
 SEE ROGER'S ARTICLE FOR DETAILS**

**We will look forward to another Great Meeting,
 led by our President, Lonnie.**



Observing Report for Sat. the 14th of Aug.

Eddie and I took the short trip up to Bubba and LeeAnn's. We arrived there around 7:30 pm and set up for the evening. I brought my 10" dob and Eddie brought a pair of binoculars. It wasn't long till the moon and Venus came out. The skies were really clear and the view of Venus was the best I have seen. It looked like a smaller version of the half moon. Later we observed Saturn and as always it looked awesome. It was really low in the sky, so we didn't get much observing time.

Continued on Page 2 (Report)

**DO IT; STOP LIGHT POLLUTION:
 SAVE ENERGY, IMPROVE
 SAFETY AND SECURITY,
 PROTECT PLANT AND ANIMAL
 CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS AND
 RESTORE THE BEAUTY OF THE
 NIGHT---OUR HERITAGE!**

See CfDS on Page 3



ASSET Minutes of August 13, 2010 by Brenda

Roger gave a Treasurer's report. We have approximately \$2,300 in our account. At the September meeting be prepared to pay for the T-shirts you ordered. Bill said there are a few extra shirts-\$15 for long sleeve, \$7 for short sleeve. Also, if you would like a 2011 astronomy calendar for half price, \$6.50, Roger will be taking orders/money. I reported on a TV program, **Mars Rising**, that discussed the serious dangers to humans on the long trip to Mars. Lonnie told us that photons take 200,000 years to travel from the core of the Sun to its surface. Howard took us on a tour through Cygnus and Lyra.

Continued on Page 2, (Minutes)

THE OBSERVING CORNER - BY OUR MEMBERS



Hello All. I traveled to Bubba and Lee Ann's place to observe the Perseids with some of our club members on Saturday. It is a good dark sky location, and I want to thank Bubba and Lee Ann for their hospitality! We started the evening with views of Venus, Mars, and Saturn. I also observed Jupiter and a shadow transit of Io. Jupiter is still missing its southern cloud band! It was a wonderful view of Jupiter, one of the best I have seen. Bubba treated us to views of Uranus and Neptune late in the evening and Lonnie showed us the North American Nebula, the Ring Nebula, and the Witch's Broom Nebula! I observed 10 meteors, three of which left long trails in the night sky! It was a fun night of observing with friends!

Till next time, **Eddie T.**

Continued from Page 1 (Report)

Later when the skies darkened we started to get to the observing. I saw a few meteors and was hoping for more, but all I saw was around 5 or 6. Chris and his daughter showed up a little after dark, so we had a good crowd in Bubba's front yard. Bubba and LeeAnn, their grandson, their granddaughter and Eddie and me. I had a great time and saw several objects I have never seen with my telescope. After Howard's good program on the sky overhead, I thought I would try a few of those objects. With an OIII filter we observed the North American Nebula. It was really faint but the coasts of Texas and Mexico were easily seen as well as the coast of California. I found the Witch's Broom, part of the Veil Nebula, and with the OIII filter it was really bright. The double star Albireo was a nice object. Next we saw the Dumbbell and Ring Nebula. Bubba showed us the blinking nebula and it was really working. I was looking around the area where the Veil Nebula is located and saw something no one was able to explain. It looked like a satellite but it was blinking very steadily. Also it was moving very slowly across the sky. We followed it for around ten minutes and it never went very far. I don't think it was an airplane, and I don't think it was a tumbling satellite because its blinking was too regular. UFO I guess!! We observed the Andromeda galaxy as well as M33. I observed two globular clusters in the same field of view. They were off the tip of the spout of Sagittarius. Later when Jupiter came up we started observing it. The seeing conditions were great. Jupiter looks funny with just one equatorial belt showing. Europa's shadow was transiting and later we could even pick out Europa when it was transiting. We just missed the great red spot as it had transited around 6 pm. We stayed till around 1:30 and had a great time. The skies were really clear and the Milky Way was great. Thanks Bubba and LeeAnn for the invitation. **Lonnie**

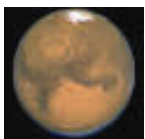
Continued from Page 1 (Minutes)

Eddie demonstrated the huge distances in our solar system using a soccer ball, peppercorns, and Will, Chris, and Roger. Bill encouraged us to keep up with the activity on the Sun by going to spaceweather.com. We learned about the James Webb infrared space telescope is due to be launched in 2014. We dismissed after viewing *Tonight's Sky*. Attendance: 19

Brenda Tantzen ASSET Secretary

GUESS WHAT! AUGUST 27TH BROUGHT BACK THE "MARS HOAX"

You probably got your annual Mars message on the internet; Mars is going to be so close it will be as large as the Moon? The origins of the Hoax can be traced back to 2003 when Mars really did swell to unusual proportions. On August 27th of that year, Mars came within approximately 35 million miles of Earth—the nearest it has been in 60,000 years. People marveled at the orange brilliance of Mars in the night sky and crowded around telescopes for clear views of the planet's towering volcanoes, ruddy plains and glistening polar ice caps. At the height of the display, Mars was about 75 times smaller than the full Moon. That's when "the virus" was born. Someone,



somewhere, reasoned as follows: If Mars is 75 times *smaller* than the Moon, then magnifying it 75 times should make it *equal* to the Moon. Early versions of the Hoax encouraged readers to get out their telescopes and insert a 75x eyepiece: "At a modest 75 times magnification," the message stated, "Mars will look as big as the full Moon to the naked eye."

Soon, the Hoax was vectoring around the internet, making copies of itself and mutating. Advanced versions of the virus, sleeker and less wordy than its ancestors, omitted the magnification and simply stated, "Mars will look as big as the full Moon to the naked eye!" Before long, the year was omitted, too. August 27, 2003, became August 27, and the Hoax became immortal. Indeed, years of stories contradicting the Hoax have failed to stamp it out.

Tolerant readers point out that the Mars Hoax is not really a hoax, because it is not an intentional trick. The original composer probably believed everything he or she wrote in the message. If so, even the name of the Mars Hoax is wrong!

Stargazer - September 2010



It's almost time for the **Okie-Tex Star Party** which will be Saturday, October 2 to Sunday, October 10. The pre-registration deadline is September 17, 2010 so register on-line or mail your registration by that date. The deadline for meal requests is the same date. Go to <http://www.okie-tex.com/> to register online or for more information.

You may also want to start considering the **Eldorado Star Party**. It will be from November 1 to November 7 although some will come as early as October 30. The pre-registration deadline for this star party is October 10, 2010. Go to <http://www.texasstarparty.org/eldorado.html> to register online or for more information.

As was mentioned at the last meeting, we can order Astronomy Magazine 2011 calendars for half price or \$6.50 each. We will be at Okie-Tex on the October meeting date so all orders will need to be placed and prepaid at the September meeting. Please give us \$6.50 in cash or check by the September meeting for each calendar you want.

Wonder if anyone is aware of the transit of Venus across the sun in 2012? This is a lot of notice but this is such a rare event you will not want to miss it. It has occurred only 81 times in the last 6,000 years (that's an average of once every 74 years!).

Prior to this century the last time this transit occurred was in 1882. But this century there are actually two transits. The first one, in 2004, was not visible from our location. But the second one, June 5, 2012, will be visible from our location just after 5:00 PM when first contact will occur. The transit will be visible until sunset.

The next transit after 2012 is in 2117. So barring extreme advances in medical science, 2012 will be the last chance for most of us.

Let's plan to meet for **dinner at 5:30 PM at Applebee's** before our September 10 meeting. The address is 4375 Dowlen Road in Beaumont. We look forward to seeing you there and at the meeting.

Clear Skies! Roger

Will has tied the knot! Congratulations to Will and Courtney Young, who were married August 21st in Bridge City. The ceremony was unique with bagpipes playing as Will and Courtney walked down the aisle. It ended with the Star Wars theme. There was a large group of family and friends present who enjoyed a tasty wedding feast. Julie Choate and Howard and Jane Minor attended from our club.

The Turbulent Tale of a Tiny Galaxy by Trudy Bell and Dr. Tony Phillips

Next time you hike in the woods, pause at a babbling stream. Watch carefully how the water flows around rocks. After piling up in curved waves on the upstream side, like the bow wave in front of a motorboat, the water speeds around the rock, spilling into a riotous, turbulent wake downstream. Lightweight leaves or grass blades can get trapped in the wake, swirling round and round in little eddy currents that collect debris. Astronomers have found something similar happening in the turbulent wake of a tiny galaxy that is plunging into a cluster of 1,500 galaxies in the constellation Virgo. In this case, however, instead of collecting grass and leaves, eddy currents in the little galaxy's tail seem to be gathering gaseous material to make new stars.

"It's a fascinating case of turbulence [rather than gravity] trapping the gas, allowing it to become dense enough to form stars," says Janice A. Hester of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. The tell-tale galaxy, designated IC 3418, is only a hundredth the size of the Milky Way and hardly stands out in visible light images of the busy Virgo Cluster. Astronomers realized it was interesting, however, when they looked at it using NASA's Galaxy Evolution Explorer satellite. "Ultraviolet images from the Galaxy Evolution Explorer revealed a long tail filled with clusters of massive, young stars," explains Hester. Galaxies with spectacular tails have been seen before. Usually they are behemoths—large spiral galaxies colliding with one another in the crowded environment of a busy cluster. Tidal forces during the collision pull gas and stars of all ages out of these massive galaxies to form long tails. But in IC 3418, the tail has just young stars. No old stars.

"The lack of older stars was one tip-off that IC 3418's tail isn't tidal," says Hester. "Something else must be responsible for these stars"

Hester and eight coauthors published their findings in the June 10, 2010, issue of *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*. The team described the following scenario: IC 3418 is speeding toward the center of the Virgo cluster at 1,000 kilometers per second. The space between cluster galaxies is not empty; it is filled with a gaseous atmosphere of diffuse, hot hydrogen. Thus, like a bicyclist coasting downhill feels wind even on a calm day, IC 3418 experiences "a stiff wind" that sweeps interstellar gas right out of the little galaxy, said Hester—gas that trails far behind its galaxy in a choppy, twisting wake akin to the wake downstream of the rock in the babbling brook. Eddy currents swirling in the turbulent wake trap the gas, allowing it to become dense enough to form stars.

"Astronomers have long debated the importance of gravity vs. turbulence in star formation," Hester noted. "In IC 3418's tail, it's ALL turbulence."

To many astronomers, that's a surprising tale indeed.

See other surprising UV images from the Galaxy Evolution Explorer at <http://www.galex.caltech.edu>. Kids (and grownups) can play the challenging new Photon Pileup game at <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/galex/photon/> .

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



NEWS UPDATE ON HOUSTON'S A-DAY & THE ALL CLUBS MEETING

Aaron Clevenson reported that a speaker has been approved for the "All Clubs Meeting", on Friday, October 15th. He is **Dr. David Talent** talking on a broad topic of the ***Modifications To The Space Surveillance Telescope on Mount Haleakala in Maui and the Near Earth Asteroid Tracking Camera (NEAT)***. Even though a mouth full, it is an interesting subject.

Aaron also hoped the clubs will be able to help in any way and make a small contribution to help cover refreshments and some door prizes.

Be sure to schedule yourself for the *Greater Houston A-Day and All Clubs Meeting* in October!

ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE NEWS

It should be noted that the A L puts out a monthly newsletter on the web. Briefly the contents include a call for volunteers with specialized skills to help out your League, a discount offer on the 2011 Astronomical Calendar and the Sky & Telescope link to the online article that includes the 2010 League Youth Award winners.

The President-Elect is Carroll Iorg. And it is requested that you check out the newsletter "WHAT'S UP" on the website (www.astroleague.org).

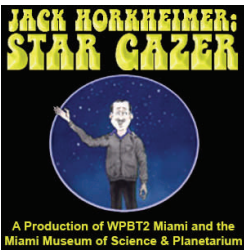
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SAD NEWS NOTE: Jack Horkheimer, Public Television's "Star Gazer," died of a respiratory ailment, according to a spokesman for the Miami Museum of Science and Space Transit Planetarium. Born June 11, 1938, he was 72.

In an e-mail to staff, museum officials said they were "very saddened to have just learned that our resident Star Gazer, Jack Horkheimer, passed away today after being ill for quite some time. "Jack was executive director of [the] Planetarium for over 35 years and was an internationally recognized pioneer in popularizing naked-eye astronomy. He was also a recognized media celebrity, often being the foremost commentator on all astronomy related happenings nationwide. Horkheimer was best known as the creator, writer and host of public television's "Star Gazer."

The British Astronomical Association's "Campaign for Dark Skies"

There are other organizations out there fighting against *light pollution*. The **British Astronomical Association** is leading Europe's fight. The **CfDS** aims to preserve and restore the beauty of the night sky by campaigning against excessive, inefficient and irresponsible lighting that shines where it is *not* wanted nor needed. Here are their thoughts on lighting:

Light pollution - Light that shines where it is neither needed nor wanted!

Good lighting - Lighting that shines *only* onto the ground (where it is needed!)

Bad lighting - Lighting that shines outwards into homes (disturbing people's sleep), and upwards into the sky wasting money, and creating an orange "smog" in the sky.

Because astronomers are the most sensitive to the effect of light pollution, the **CfDS** is a sub-section of the British Astronomical Association, although their membership is made up of a wide range of people.

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH EAST TEXAS MONTHLY CALENDAR

~ September 2010 ~

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | | 1 LAST QUARTER | 2 | 3 | 4 THE RANCH STAR PARTY |
| 5 | 6 LABOR DAY | 7 Moon closest to Earth, Perigee | 8 NEW MOON | 9 | 10 ASSET CLUB MEETING 7:00PM | 11 |
| 12 | 13 Luna 2, 1st craft to impact Moon, 1959 | 14 | 15 FIRST QUARTER | 16 | 17 | 18 CLAIBORNE PARK SP |
| 19 | 20 | 21 Moon farthest from Earth, Apogee | 22 FIRST DAY OF FALL? | 23 FULL MOON | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 LAST QUARTER | Notes: | |

The Solar System in September 2010 :

Mercury - Mercury is going to be a easy target for a change for early risers. Look for the elusive planet on the eastern horizon about 45 minutes before sunrise, or about the advent of morning dawn from Sept. 16 through the 25. Note that during this period, the bright star REGULUS will be just above the planet and will be about the same magnitude. - In LEO

Venus - A wonderful tripling of the bright star SPICA with Venus and MARS occurs on the early dusky evening of September 1; Look for bright Venus first, above the WSW horizon....once spotted, use binoculars to find the star SPICA only 1.3 degree to the right of Venus; then move only 3 degrees more to the right and you will find MARS, the three objects making a beautiful line of celestial objects in the sky. - in VIRGO.

Mars - Mars and Venus will make up the "Evening Planet Show", which is described with Venus, above. Mars is far from Earth now and very difficult to view telescopically. By month's end, it will be little more than a reddish speck in all telescopes. - In VIRGO

Jupiter - Mighty Jupiter is at opposition on the night of September 21, the same night as another gas giant planet, URANUS, is at opposition; it will rise about the time the sun sets and be south of overhead for northern hemisphere observers around midnight, thus being in the sky for observation the entire night....this is an excellent month and year for viewing Jupiter, its largest appearance from Earth in several decades. NOTE that Jupiter and Uranus are within less than ONE DEGREE of each other during the nights of Sept. 17-19! In PISCES

Saturn - Is not visible this month, setting just behind the sun. - in VIRGO

Uranus - At magnitude 5.7, this distant world can be viewed in binoculars if one knows where to look! It will be at OPPOSITION on the night of Sept. 21, the same date as JUPITER's opposition. Uranus will rise only minutes before mighty Jupiter and will be quite close of the much brightern Jupiter all month. (see JUPITER, above) in PISCES.

Neptune - At a faint magnitude 7.9, the distant Neptune is high in our skies around midnight, following only one half hour behind mighty Jupiter, which outshines it hundreds fold; note that Neptune will rise shortly before Uranus this month- in CAPRICORNUS.

Pluto - Now just west of overhead and to the south the first week of this month as full darkness commences, this 14th magnitude distant planet is positioned favorably for early evening telescopic examination. Pluto will set about midnight local time but will be viewable throughout the early evening hours and will be nearly overhead at the end of evening twilight. However at least an 8- or 10-inch telescope will be required, as will good star charts. - In SAGITTARIUS