EDGEOO STAR PARTY AT NATURE PARK APPROACHES

by Melissa Kirk


Telescopes will be in a flat field, shielded from the highway light. The field is next to a pole barn where last year spiced apple cider was served. See the splendor of the Andromeda and M33 galaxies. Watch Perseus rise during the dark, moonless night. Observe, through telescopes, resolved stars of the M13 globular cluster.

To get to the park, take I-40 East to the Edgewood exit. Go under the freeway and turn left immediately past the access road. Follow this road approximately a mile to Wildlife West’s entrance. Park personnel will direct you to the site. Observing will commence at sunset. Pets are not allowed in the viewing area. For information, visit http://www.taas.org or call 254-TAAS. The party is free of charge and is open to the general public.

Work Begins on New Route to GNTO

by Karen Keese

After a long, hot, dry summer, the mesa finally received a good rainstorm, just before the Equinox Picnic. Although the rain made a mess of Twining Lane, it was just the moisture we needed to begin grading operations on the alternate route.

On September 28, the big rig from Jerry Rogers Rock Company rolled. After two days of grading, we exhausted the soil moisture content and had to suspend work. However, we made significant progress, and the new route is about halfway completed. When soil moisture conditions again warrant, we will continue with the road building project. Watch the Sidereal Times for updates.

Thank you to those members who are, with monetary support and sweat equity, helping us to blaze a new trail for the membership. If you would like to contribute to the project, please contact Karen Keese at skywriter@wildblue.net or 261-0040.

UNM Observatory Numbers Increase

by Robert Williams

The word is spreading, and the number of people who are attending each week is increasing, so we are going to be in need of help as the semester moves on. Because of UNM’s fall break, the observatory was closed October 12. The October 19 session should be a good one if it stays clear.

UNM Campus Observatory was a big success Friday night, October 5. We had about 60 people show up, mostly students, but about a dozen
The TAAS General Meeting program for October 27 is as follows:

Thomas Sanford will present a talk about “Solar Neutrinos...Where have they gone?”

The TAAS General Meeting is held at Regener Hall on the Main Campus of UNM. The meeting is free and open to the public. Start time is 7:00 p.m., with a social hour after the meeting. Please join us!

Coming next month:

On November 24, Mark Boslough of Sandia National Laboratories will give a first-hand account of “The Mystery of the Desert Glass.” He will discuss his 2006 trip to Egypt to explore the site of an explosive impact event that occurred about 30 million years ago. “Ancient Asteroid,” a documentary of the expedition, is shown frequently on the National Geographic Channel.

I want to personally thank all who volunteered at the Placitas Star Party and the Double Eagle Elementary School Star Parties. We had approximately 100 visitors at the Placitas event and at least that many, maybe 150, at the Double Eagle party. Both events were a success, not so much because of the weather, but instead because of great TAAS, Las Placitas Association, and Double Eagle support and dedication. Both star parties also had a common weather theme—clear, dark blue skies all day with clouds moving in right at sunset—ughhhh!

Those in attendance at the Placitas event were John Laning, Greg Dillon, Melissa Kirk, Dan Clark, Steve Welch, Steve Snider, Ed Juddo, Jim Sargeant, Shane and Becky Ramotowski, Patricia Rose, David Frizzell, and Shannon Mann. I also want to thank Elaine Sullivan of Las Placitas Association for her upfront planning and publicizing and Gene McLane of Placitas for his great Saturn sign advertising the event.

Those who helped with the Double Eagle event were Ed Juddo and daughter, Charlie Mullen, Bob Havlen, John Laning, and Shannon Mann. Finally, I want to thank Hy Tran and Jen Coston of Double Eagle for all their upfront planning and assistance!

THANK YOU!

Shannon Mann
TAAS Education Outreach Coordinator
“Road work has started!” is the report from our GNTO committee meeting on October 4. This news means your contributions are at work improving the route to GNTO. Road work is by a professional contractor using heavy equipment. Once the work is complete, we will have a much smoother drive to and from GNTO and a route that is easier to maintain. We hope to announce that the new route is available in a month or so.

Ten of us attended the committee meeting to hear the welcome news, including Larry Cash, David Downs, Eric Edwards, Pete Eschman, Will Ferrell, Dee Friesen, Carl Frisch, Karen Keese, Melissa Kirk, and Bill Wallace. Carl and Karen provided some good photo coverage of the road work so far. Carl offered to finalize the encoder signal splitter that Bill's father had wired for us. The splitter will allow us to simultaneously run the NGC-MAX and Astrometric System on the Isengard, using the same pair of telescope encoders. Melissa and Will reported that the NGC-MAX is now working very well on the 16” GNTO loaner telescope. Tom Davies has completed installation of additional folding tables in the 10-foot dome. Thanks, Tom!

Pete reported that the shelf for the Guest Log book in the main dome has been expanded, and now has room for one of two “Donations Welcome” piggy banks. Pete indicated that the eyepiece case for the GNTO loaner telescopes has been reorganized to include several eyepieces that remained unclaimed from our lost and found area. We also received a nice donation from Dave Masera of a rare, mint-condition, Televue 17mm plossl for use on our GNTO loaner scopes. Thanks, Dave! Through the generosity of Dave Downs, Steve Welch, and Bill Wood, we now have a very capable set of eyepieces and accessories for TAAS members to use on these GNTO telescopes.

Our committee meeting concluded with a wide-ranging discussion on new priorities for GNTO as well as some discussion of the GNTO imaging program. Committee members have submitted “wish lists,” and Dee has offered to compile the various suggestions into one list from which we can make a prioritized master list. Once finalized, this new set of priorities will guide GNTO equipment and site enhancements for the near future.

Our September 15 “New Moon” event featured a good number of observers and fairly good sky conditions. We began with reasonably nice weather, clear skies, and a light breeze. Wind started to pick up later with some high, thin haze. We had 12 scopes in operation and around 20 observers.

Gordon Pegue opened the observatory for this event, and Pete Eschman was Isengard host for the evening.

We celebrated the Fall Equinox at GNTO on September 22 starting with an Open House in the afternoon, which was followed by our Fall Equinox Picnic, Training, and Eye Candy Sky Tours. Pete Eschman opened the facility, while Dee Friesen conducted the training session and served as Isengard host for the evening. The picnic featured great food and plentiful offerings. Larry Cash manned the grill, cooking up hamburgers and hot dogs for all to enjoy.

Dee's well attended training session was titled “An Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope.” Following the training, Karen Keese led a group on an interesting sky tour of constellations, asterisms, and other notable objects visible to the unaided eye. Robert Williams provided a great background in the mythology of some of the highlighted constellations, and Larry Cash used his green laser pointer to highlight celestial objects. Afterward, Larry conducted a detailed sky tour of objects using the Isengard telescope.

Steve Welch and Bill Wallace, with help from several other TAAS members, worked with our imaging equipment in the 10-foot dome. They worked at aligning the mount laser target and building a mount error model with the C-11/Losmandy/ST-9 setup.

All told, we had 10 telescopes in operation and well over 30 people in attendance. One family of four, new to TAAS, enjoyed using the 6” GNTO loaner scope. Their two girls had great fun finding stars and looking at a variety of objects. Big thanks go to all the folks who worked to make this event a great success, and especially to Bob Hufnagel and Ralph Thorman, who took the time to flag mud puddles along Twining Lane so that they could be seen on our way home in the dark.

On September 24, Steve Welch, Bill Wallace, and Pete Eschman logged a successful asteroid occultation at GNTO. In this case, asteroid #85 Io occulted star UCAC2 28048368, and both the star and asteroid were a bit fainter than 11th magnitude. The Isengard and other equipment functioned very well for this event, and we had a great time. Please see Steve Welch’s article elsewhere in this newsletter for more details.

Our GNTO events for November include a “New Moon” Observing session on November 10 and Observing
It was a busy night at GNTO on August 11. Every pad was used, and several people had to set up without one. The weather was warm, with most observers only wearing t-shirts and mosquito repellent. In addition to the usual delights we saw several spectacular Perseid fireballs. Photo by Eric Edwards

We witnessed an uncommon sight as the sun set at GNTO—180 degrees away from the setting sun, lower clouds cast shadows on the high thin clouds, producing these distinctive dark rays. Photo by Eric Edwards

Observer Ed Kist showing the strength of his home-built wide three-step ladder. He thinks this may make a nice addition to the JL 16" scope at GNTO. Photo by Eric Edwards

Will Ferrel happily awaits the Perseid meteor shower. Photo by Eric Edwards

Mesa yucca. Photo by Sy Santos

Ray Collins and Bob Hufnagel relaxing at the large dome while the sun sets. Photo by Eric Edwards
Donations to TAAS

General: Jay Sullivan
Education: Silicon Valley Community Fund
GNTO: James Hickerson
Dark Sky: Kirstin Harriger, Carole Jones
Special Projects: James Hickerson

Welcome to New TAAS Members

BRUCE FAULKNER, KIRSTIN HARRIGER, RONALD GARDUNO,
RICK HILL, CAROLE JONES,
DIANNE MURRAY, JOHN REMALY,
JAY SULLIVAN, MARTIN WILLES

Location, Location, Location

- Chaco Canyon
  6185’ elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  36˚ 01’ 50”N  107˚ 54’ 36”W
  36.03’  -107.91’
  36˚ 1.83’  -107˚ 54.60’

- Oak Flat
  7680’ elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  34˚ 59’ 48”N  106˚ 19’ 17”W
  34.99’  -106.32˚
  34˚ 59.80’  -106˚ 19.28’

- UNM Campus Observatory
  5180’ elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  35˚ 5’ 29”N  106˚ 37’ 17”W
  35.09’  -106.62˚
  35˚ 5.48’  -106˚ 37.29’

To convert from Degrees, Minutes, Seconds:
Divide seconds by 60, then add minutes,
then divide by 60 again.

For security reasons, GNTO location is available by request only, so please contact Pete Eschman for GNTO information.

Note from Treasurer

Clarification of New Member and Renewal Policy
Renewal notices will be mailed out one month before expiration date. Renewals and new members will be dated on the first of next month no matter when during the month they arrive. This will help with the database reports and queries.

There will also be no grace period for renewals. Please make sure that you send in renewal information and your check before the expiration date. Renewal of magazines and new subscriptions will be sent in twice a month. All checks are to be made out to “TAAS”. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you have any questions or special needs pertaining to membership and/or magazine subscriptions, contact the Treasurer, Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org.

Membership Services for:
- Membership Inquiries
- Events Information
- Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Beverly Firth at membership@taas.org

Editor’s Note

Please note that the deadline for the November 2007 issue of the Sidereal Times is Friday, November 9. Please e-mail text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word. Please do not embed photos in text. Attach photos and illustrations separately. The e-mail address for the newsletter editor is editor@taas.org.

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581 Albuquerque, NM

Monthly Membership Report (September 2007)

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Cochiti Elementary School Star Party
Tuesday November 6, 2007 (6—8 p.m.)

Come join your fellow TAAS volunteers for a star party at Cochiti Elementary School. This great little school at 3100 San Isidro Road NW is not very far from Griegos Elementary in the North Valley. The event will be on our earlier, standard time schedule running from 6—8 p.m. Please arrive a little before 6 p.m. for setup and food. Again, thanks to all who helped with the Double Eagle event—great help from TAAS as usual! Please feel free to bring a telescope, demonstration, or just yourself to help.

For maps to the event follow these links:
Regional View  Closer View or go to maps.google.com
and type in “Chochiti Elementary School”.

Sincerely,
Shannon Mann
TAAS Education Outreach Coordinator
education_coord@taas.org
Solar Neutrinos...Where have they gone?

Thomas Sanford
**Meeting Minutes**

**TAAS BOARD MEETING**

September 27, 2007
UNM PandA Building

MEETING MINUTES

Officers present: Sy Santos (President), Dan Clark (Treasurer), Pete Eschman (GNTO Director), Directors: Steve Welch, Dick Fate, Bill Firth, Patricia Rose, Dee Friesen.

Judy Stanley (Vice President), Tom Graham (Secretary), Larry Cash, Bill Wallace, excused.

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Corrections to the August 23 Minutes:
None to report.

New Business:
Discussion was held concerning the Lifetime membership after 20 years of consecutive membership and or a one-time fee of $600.00. Dan, Dee, and Pete will create a cost analysis of membership per year and report to the board at the November meeting.

Pete reported that Dale is still in charge of the "loaner scope" program.

Pete moved and Sy seconded that Dan Clark invest $20,000.00 split in CD’s and a money market account and report to the board regularly on the performance of invested funds. The motion passed unanimously.

Pat Rose made a motion to make the Edgewood Star party (November 9) an Official Event. It was seconded by Steve, and passed unanimously.

A call was made for volunteers for awards and the officer nominating committee.

Correspondence:
None

Treasurer’s Report:
Account balances (as of the end of September):
- General Fund: $16,696.83
- GNTO Fund: $6,497.03

Total membership count (all categories): 297

Old Business:
Pete reported that the search for resolutions and motions needs to be resolved and that he needed help. Pat and Dee volunteered to help review and report back to the board.

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

**GNTO News & Views continued from page 3**

and Training on November 17. Sunset is at 6:00 p.m. on November 17, so we will begin our “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope” session at 6:00 p.m. This covers most of the equipment used at GNTO, from the Isengard 16” reflector down to our 6” and 16” loaner Dobsonian scopes. If enough people are interested, we will offer “An Introduction to GNTO Astro-Computing Resources” session following the first training session. This second introductory session covers computer hardware and astronomy-related software available at GNTO. Steve Welch plans to offer a CCD Imaging demonstration that will last throughout the evening, using equipment set up in our 10-foot dome.

Steve plans to have the imaging equipment available for all GNTO events when weather is favorable, so if you are interested in CCD imaging, please check with Steve. We will have the comfortable Robert Ortega Building open for all events. Our Guest Trailer is available for coffee, hot chocolate, and any snacks you might want to share. We’ve got a bunch of great equipment waiting for you at GNTO, so plan your trip to GNTO soon. Why wait?

GNTO committee meetings are open to any interested TAAS members, and they provide a great way to get more involved with your observatory. We need your help. Our next scheduled meetings are December 6 and February 7. We meet every other month at 6:30 p.m. at JB’s Restaurant on Eubank just north of I-40. If you have questions about GNTO, please contact me (Peter Eschman, gnto@taas.org, phone 873-1517).

I hope to see you soon at your observatory.
Dark Sky SIG  
David Penasa

Southwest Night Sky Conference, Taos
I wish some of you could have attended the Taos conference held Sept 14-15. Thanks to the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance’s Night Sky Program and sponsors for putting on a wonderful, inspiring event. The plan is for this to be an annual event. Location, date, and times for next year are still TBD.

IDA Membership—Great Offer, Great Cause
The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) is offering one-year memberships to astronomy club members at $10 off the regular price of $30. Follow this link to an item by Kelly Beatty on Sky and Telescope’s Web site that points out some excellent reasons to join: http://www.skyandtelescope.com/80/news/home/9585177.html. As an IDA Board member (full disclosure), I couldn’t agree more with Kelly!

Asteroid SIG  
Steve Welch

On the evening of September 25, we had another positive occultation observation from GNTO. Pete Eschman, Bill Wallace, and Steve Welch met at GNTO about 8:30 p.m. to attempt to observe the occultation of an 11.9 magnitude (V) star in Serpens by the 12.2 magnitude asteroid (85) Io. We saw a 7.32-second duration dimming in the brightness of the asteroid-plus-star when the asteroid passed in front of the star.

The weather was favorable: clear with very few clouds visible at sunset a couple of hours before the event. The altitude of the target asteroid (Io) during the occultation was only 11 degrees, so there was a little worry about problems with thin clouds or excessive scintillation (twinkling). Luckily, that didn’t seem to be a big problem. During the event, I didn’t think there was much scintillation at all. However, review of the videotape showed significant frame-to-frame brightness variations, making it difficult to get an accurate single-frame brightness. This is partly because the magnitude drop was so small at about .9 mags during the occultation. Still, it was obvious when the occultation happened—I’m just not sure my reported times are better than plus or minus a couple of video frames (each video frame is .033 seconds, so that’s still pretty accurate!).

This occultation was the first any of us observed where the asteroid and star were virtually the same brightness. We were set up on the target star about 40 minutes before occultation and could easily track Io as it slowly closed in on the target star. About 5 minutes before the occultation, the star and asteroid merged on the monitor. After a few minutes, the combined image of asteroid and star got a bit dimmer for 7.3 seconds (all three of us clearly saw it), and then five minutes later, they split apart again on the video monitor. It was quite exciting and suspenseful!

With our GNTO setup—the 16", f/6 Isengard scope, running with a focal reducer at about f/3.2 and my personal Water WAT-902H2 Ultimate video camera—we easily could have timed an even tougher occultation than this one. I’ll bet we could observe an occultation of a star as faint as 13th magnitude, even at an altitude of only 11 degrees. We could go fainter still using computer video analysis tools to get a quantitative brightness measurement. Finally, as we proved with the Pluto occultation earlier this year, by using an integrating video camera like TAAS’s recently acquired StellaCam 3, we can go down to 15th magnitude or lower by trading off time resolution for sensitivity.

Even if this is all Greek to you, asteroid occultation observing can still be fun! We’re always looking for new recruits for this interesting and scientifically valuable work. It really can only be done by amateurs because the asteroid shadow tracks are so narrow and random. Come on out! As Becky Ramotowski pointed out in her Sidereal Times article last month about the Internamnia occultation, you don’t need to know anything about video or CCD astronomy to observe asteroid occultations.

Upcoming events

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We are looking for volunteers for the November 1 events, Elektra and Newtonia. Elektra will be only 9 degrees above the horizon. Bill Wallace will do the Newtonia from his home observatory.

Messier SIG  
Dee Friesen

The Messier 2007 SIG is moving its observing activities back to Albuquerque for the remainder of the calendar year. Now that the days are shorter, we can begin to observe at an earlier time. All activities will be at Dee Friesen’s house in the far northeast part of Albuquerque in the Sandia Heights area.

Because of the earlier onset of darkness, it is possible to have the observing on a weekday evening. The drive to Dee’s house is much quicker than the drive to the summer observing sites. This provides an opportunity for everyone to participate. Complete details are available at www.messier2007.org.

UNM Observatory, continued from page 1

general public came to enjoy the clear skies (a bit windy at times). There were lots of UNM astronomy students working on their astronomy labs, but we also had a bus full of Valencia County high school students who came up for the Fractal Friday at LodeStar Astronomy Center and then decided to come out to the observatory afterward.

Patricia Rose, Kevin McKeown, and myself were the astronomy people who showed up. A grad student from UNM worked in the dome to show many wonderful objects while down in the parking lot, Pat, Kevin, and myself used my scope and Kevin’s to show objects.
TAAS Sky Quality Meter

TAAS has a Unihedron Sky Quality Meter available for use by members. You can borrow this meter from David Penasa at (505) 277-1141 (W) or (505) 275-2480(H). The SQM may be reserved on a first come, first served basis for durations up to one week. Compare the sky brightness at your favorite viewing site with other sites. TAAS events such as school star parties, Messier SIG, and GNTO take priority. The following links give information on checkout and operating procedures for our SQM.


Free Telescope Offer

What’s that? Did you say Free? That’s right FREE! Any TAAS member can use this coupon to borrow a TAAS telescope. Contact Dale Murray at telescope_loans@taas.org or 296-2479 and receive a loaner telescope absolutely free. You can choose from scopes with apertures ranging from 6” to 13”.

Some restrictions apply. Offer valid for current TAAS members. Offer is first come first served. Late comers will be put on a waiting list.

Neither TAAS nor the telescope curators will be held liable for any lost sleep or other problems arising from the use of TAAS scopes. Borrowers are required to enjoy the telescopes.

FOR SALE

Takahashi 5-inch refractor telescope with mount, tripod and extra lenses in new condition

Takahashi FS-128 5” f/8.1 Fluorite Apochromat Refractor with EM-200 Mount (equatorial motor mount with remote control, polar alignment telescope, and counter weights), wooden tripod SE-L, 7 x 50 Takahashi finder scope with holder, diagonal prism (1.25), and 5 oculars. Oculars: MC LE 5 mm, MC LE 7.5 mm, MC LE 18 mm MC LE 30 mm and Teleview 2X Barlow. All equipment (except tripod) in original boxes. Used twice due to personal eye damage. A Rolls Royce of scopes in perfect, new condition. Price: $7,950 OBO

Contact Stan Schmidt at (505) 856-1592.

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Contact Stan Schmidt at (505) 856-1592.
## 2007 TAAS Board of Directors/Staff

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<th>Position</th>
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<th>Email</th>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Sy Santos</td>
<td><a href="mailto:president@taas.org">president@taas.org</a></td>
<td>890-1982</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Tom Graham</td>
<td><a href="mailto:secretary@taas.org">secretary@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Director/Observatory Director</td>
<td>Pete Eschman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gnto@taas.org">gnto@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Director</td>
<td>Richard Fate</td>
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<td>Vice President/General Meeting Coordinator</td>
<td>Judy Stanley</td>
<td>Judy Stanley</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vp@taas.org">vp@taas.org</a> 515-5780</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Dan Clark</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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### Staff

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<td>Pat Appel</td>
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