Comet Discoverer Hale to Address TAAS
Earthrise Institute and Countdown to Five Hundred Comets
by Melissa Kirk

On November 24, Dr. Alan Hale, co-discoverer of Comet Hale-Bopp will be our featured speaker. Dr. Hale will discuss his work concerning his beloved Earthrise Institute and Countdown to Five Hundred Comets. Countdown to Five Hundred Comets is a comet observing program designed for comet enthusiasts of all ages. The recent brightening of Comet 17P/Holmes has created an outburst of activity. Dr. Hale will discuss Comet Holmes, all the comets he is currently observing, Earthrise Institute’s latest appearance and future with the X-Prize Cup at Holloman Air Force Base, and the Anousheh Ansari Campaign.

Make your plans now to see and hear about Earthrise Institute’s exciting programs for the coming years and how you can participate. Invite your friends, neighbors, educators, and students as this is an exciting opportunity to meet and hear from Dr. Hale. As always, a question-and-answer period will end our formal program followed by a social hour, which Dr. Hale will attend.

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. Join us!

Click this link for a Map of Regener Hall, UNM Main Campus in Albuquerque or see the back page of this newsletter.

**GNTO News & Views**

The new route to GNTO is open. New driving directions were distributed at the last general meeting, and you are welcome to contact me if you need detailed instructions. As a direct result of your financial contributions, we have a much smoother drive to GNTO, and a route that is easier to maintain. Financial contributions are still welcome for the second phase of grading work that will commence when soil moisture levels permit.

Our GNTO committee is continuing work on new priorities for GNTO. Dee Friesen volunteered to coordinate committee members’ individual “wish lists” and create a prioritized master list. Once finalized, this new set of priorities will guide GNTO equipment and site enhancements for the near future.

It saddens me to report that GNTO was recently vandalized. On October 10, Carl Frisch reported the Ortega Building and outhouse had been shot up. Carl counted eighteen bullet holes. It looked like all the shots came from the gate direction and .22 caliber shells have been collected. There was no damage to the domes, guest trailer, or PV panels or evidence that anyone came on the property. Carl, Steve Welch, and Bill Wallace removed the damaged window sections, and Carl covered the openings with heavy plastic sheeting for temporary weatherproofing. They also cleaned up broken glass from the interior of the building. Visitors are cautioned to keep their shoes on in the building, and to watch for any remaining small pieces of glass. We are evaluating the most cost-effective repairs, which may include

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“Join the Team!”
Earthrise Institute Team Members/Mentors (left to right) Judy Stanley - TAAS Vice President, NRAO/VLA Education Officer; Dr. Alan Hale - President Earthrise Institute, co-discoverer Comet Hale-Bopp; Vanna Bonta - Writer, Actress, and Producer; Melanie Templet - President of Rio Rancho Astronomy Club, Librarian, Rio Rancho Mid-High School.
installing new windows.

The damage to GNTO is not an isolated incident, since other parts of the nearby mesa have also been shot up, including facilities for watering cattle. The incident has been reported to the State Police, the Department of Game and Fish, and local mesa area residents.

We had a light turnout for our October 13 “New Moon” event, probably due to weather conditions coupled with the fact that a number of regular GNTO attendees were at the Okie-Tex star party. Steve Welch opened the facility with help from Bill Wallace, and both took turns hosting the Isengard telescope. Steve reported winds and some clouds for the first hour after sunset. Despite conditions, several personal scopes were in operation, as well as the Isengard, the 16” GNTO loaner scope, and the GNTO imaging gear. Carl Frisch assisted Steve and other TAAS members with drift alignment procedures for the imaging equipment mount. After a thorough instruction session, they got a good polar alignment and proceeded to take some images. Carl worked with Melissa Kirk to take some CCD images and to evaluate the mount alignment using CCDOps in track and accumulate mode. They also experimented with a PEC training run to remove periodic error from mount tracking.

On October 18 we held a meeting of the GNTO area road committee at GNTO, which was attended by Larry Cash, Pete Eschman, Carl Frisch, Karen Keese, Gordon Pegue, Steve Welch, and local mesa area residents. Bob Hufnagel had planned to attend, but when we met him on the road after the meeting, he indicated he had been delayed by an emergency responder call. Bob was headed to the observatory to deliver refurbished parts for the GNTO road dragger. At the meeting we discussed details of the new route to GNTO, including signage, reflectors, headlight shielding on turns near the observatory, and future road work. We decided to open the new route to TAAS members, since it offers a smoother drive than Twining Lane. We will do additional grading to crown the road and provide any necessary side ditches when soil moisture conditions permit.

Steve Welch and Pete Eschman visited GNTO for WiFi network testing on October 19 and 23. We have concluded that we can get a good signal to travel six to eight miles north of GNTO. Despite this success, a current lack of high speed Internet access on the mesa top probably eliminates this routing for GNTO.

On October 31, Steve Welch and Pete Eschman set up the Isengard and related video equipment in the hopes of logging the Newtonia asteroid occultation at GNTO. Although the equipment functioned very well, we recorded a miss for the asteroid. Steve left early to get his own equipment up and running at his house in Los Lunas, so Pete monitored the event and then shut down the observatory. Despite the recorded miss, it was a fun time. Bill Wallace also recorded a miss at his observatory in Belen.

We tried to have several locations running for this event because data from different offsets from the predicted centerline help to refine the characteristics of the asteroid. In the occultation business, a miss can still contribute valuable information that can be used to refine the size, shape, and orbit of the asteroid.

Will Ferrell opened up GNTO on November 3 for an unofficial GNTO observing session. Will indicated his interest in observing that night by posting a message to our TAAS-L listserv. Will reports that at least 7 observers were present and 4 scopes were in operation, including one brand new refractor. Will said that Gordon Pegue counted around 21 stars in the great square of Pegasus, a testament to good skies.

Our remaining GNTO event for November is Observing and Training on November 17. Sunset is at 5:00 p.m. on November 17, so we will begin our “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope” session at 5:00 p.m. This introduction 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.

Our single event for December is a “New Moon” observing opportunity on December 8. Our first training session for 2008 will take place on January 5, with observing events scheduled for the following two Saturdays, January 12 and 19.

Steve Welch 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 and heated for all winter 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.
Asteroid SIG

On Halloween night, after the trick-or-treat crowd went home, 12:37 a.m. MDT, Pete Eschman, Steve Welch, and I attempted to capture the occultation of a star by an asteroid (662 Newtonia). Around 9:30 p.m., Pete and Steve went to GNTO and set up so that Pete could observe the event. Steve used the opportunity to train Pete in setting up all the necessary equipment. After the GNTO setup was complete, Steve went home to set up. Because of the time crunch he imposed upon himself, Steve was not able to complete his home setup in time to make the observation.

The moral of his story is: Be completely prepared. I had technical glitches also, but I had sufficient time to correct them and was tracking the star and asteroid nearly two hours before the event.

Even though it was a miss, Pete and I were able to record the pass on video and with still images. I have included two pictures that show Newtonia's approach. I use a Celestron 14, Meade F/3.3 focal reducer and a Mallincam integrating video camera. In the pictures below, north is at the bottom, east is to the right, and the asteroid is moving mostly west and a little to the south.

The next event that appears to have as good a chance as Newtonia's is 1795 Lorbach on November 30. Current observation opportunities are posted on our Web site: http://complex.org/~bwalls/.

Clear skies!

Dark Sky SIG

IDA Seeking Volunteers to Check Out Lighting at Local Home Improvement Stores

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) is seeking volunteers on a project to help find out the types of lighting and luminaires/fixtures for sale in our local home improvement stores. This includes the "big box" home improvement and convenience stores, e.g., Home Depot, Lowes, Target, Wal-Mart, as well as neighborhood hardware stores, e.g., Ace Hardware. The information you provide will be used to help create the new IDA Homeowner's Guide to Quality Outdoor Lighting.

The following criteria can be used as a guide:

1. Full Cutoff fixtures: These fixtures encase the light source completely allowing for little to no glare and little to no light produced above the horizon.
2. Low Wattage Fixtures: Look for fixtures that are designed to be low wattage. Remember, the less light you use, the less light there is to waste.
3. Shielded or Directional Security Lights: Using a security floodlight is ok, when done so in a sensitive manner. Try to look for security floodlights that are directional, so that they can be aimed downward to the ground. Also make sure that there is a motion detector attached to the fixture.
4. Motion Detection: The best way to cut back on energy use and provide dark sky protection is to only use the light when it is needed, and motion detectors do just that. When set to truly be a motion detector (that is, the light switches off after say two or three minutes) a motion detection system can be very dark sky friendly.
5. Time Sensors: There's nothing more wasteful than leaving your outdoor lights on through all hours of the night. A simple time control device allows lights to be shut off at a specified time, like 11 p.m. That same sensor can be set to turn your lights on prior to leaving for work, say 6:30 or 7:30 a.m., if any light is needed.
6. Specified Mounting Directions: A fixture that is full cutoff and mounted upside down can hurt the nighttime environment more than your average bare bulb. Therefore, it is important that luminaires have specified mounting directions.

It is also asked that you compare the prices of incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) in the same store for similar wattages. That is, examine and compare the price of a 60 watt incandescent to a 13 w CFL, or a 100 w incandescent to a 28 w CFL.

Please use the following format when submitting answers to ida@darksky.org:
- Name of Store: (example: Home Depot)
- Location of Store, Street Address or Cross Streets and City (store number if available): (6701 W Alameda Ave, Lakewood, CO) We are asking for this range of specificity because different store locations under the same general name often have different products depending on their location and demand for that location.
- Date of Visit/Inspection: (October 25, 2007)
- Dark Sky Friendly Luminaires Available:
  - Here please list:
    - Manufacturer
    - Make/Model
    - Full Cutoff, Low Wattage, etc. (please list all that apply)
    - Price for the fixture
    - Does the fixture have the IDA Fixture Seal of Approval?
      - Does the fixture have some other “dark sky friendly” term or seal on the packaging? If yes, please list:
    - Any bulb comparisons you may have.

As a Board member of the IDA, I thank you for taking the time to assist us in our attempt to determine what is widely available to the public. It is asked that you submit your findings to ida@darksky.org by Monday, October 29, 2007, or as soon thereafter, as possible.

Lights Out America—March 29, 2008

Lights Out America is a nationwide energy conservation event on March 29, 2008. On this night, they invite the entire nation to turn off all nonessential lighting for one hour. Participating cities: Atlanta, Boston, Boulder, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC. Show your support for starlight wherever in the world you are! LOA Web site—http://www.lightsoutamerica.org/.
The Sidereal Times
November 2007

November 2007

Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday

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4 | 5 | 6 Cochiti Elementary School Star Party | 7 ATM Meeting | 8 | 9 Sidereal Times Deadline | 10 GNTO NM Observing

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14 | 15 Board Meeting | 16 | 17 GNTO Training

18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 TAAS General Meeting

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School Star Parties

A big “Thanks” to those TAAS members who helped with our last event, Cochiti Elementary. Those folks were Charlie Mullen, John Laning, Jewel Karpel, Tom Graham, Will Ferrell, and myself. We had one indoor demonstration—Comet Making, and four scopes outside. The neatest part about this event was that after the indoor comet demo, the students could go outside and actually see one through the scope! Comet 17P/Holmes did not disappoint! We probably had 50 students and family members, a couple of interested teachers, and lots of great questions.

Our next event is scheduled for Tuesday, December 4, at Apache Elementary.

Meeting Minutes

TAAS Officers Meeting
October 25, 2007
Flying Star Restaurant
10700 Corrales Road

Officers present: Sy Santos (President), Tom Graham (Secretary), Dan Clark (Treasurer).

Judy Stanley (Vice President) excused.

Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Corrections to the September Minutes:
None to report.

New Business: Nominating committee is formed with Judy Stanley being the board member. Sy and others are firming up plans for the December Banquet.

Correspondence: None

Treasurer’s Report: To be reported in the Sidereal Times.

Committee Reports: All committee reports will be published in the Sidereal Times. (Note: All committee chairs will send their reports directly to the Newsletter Editor, Gary Cooper.)

Official Calendar Update: No changes.

Old Business: None.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Tom Graham

continued on page 5
School Star Parties
continued from page 4

School. This event will run from 6—8 p.m. so plan on arriving as close to 5:45 p.m. as possible for setup and food. The school is located at 12800 Copper Street NE in the far “Heights” close to Tramway Boulevard. Bring your telescope, demo, or just yourself—I enjoy the company.

Click on the links below for maps or go to http://maps.google.com/.

- Regional View
- Closeup Map

Shannon Mann
Education Outreach Coordinator
education_coord@taas.org

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## December 2007

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### TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, November 24, 2007**

7:00 P.M.

Regener Hall

University of New Mexico

(See map, back page)

**Earthrise Institute and Countdown to Five Hundred Comets**

**Dr. Alan Hale**

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**Notes**


GNTO = General Nathan Twining Obs.
GNTO Training = GNTO Observing and Training.
GNTO NM = New Moon Premium Observing Night

UNM = University of New Mexico Observatory. Call the TAAS hotline @254-8227, or the UNM hotline @277-1446 to confirm, or unm_coordinator@taas.org.

ATM = Amateur Telescope Making. Call Michael Pendley for information @296-0549, or atm@taas.org.

P & A = UNM Physics and Astronomy. Corner of Lomas and Yale.
Donations to TAAS

General: Alison Schuler, Jim Seargeant, John Sochinski

Education: John Sochinski, Griegos Elementary School

GNTO: Alison Schuler, John Sochinski, William Wallace

Dark Sky: Charles Gregg, Esteban Muldavin, Katherine Rust, Alison Schuler

Welcome to New TAAS Members

JERET SNYDER, SARAH GLEASON, FRED MENDENHALL, ANNE MERKLEY, ALAN MICHAEL, JOHN RUST, JUSTIN RUST, ANN AND JIM SEARGEANT, HY TRAN

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.

Monthly Membership Report
(October 2007)

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Thank You

Welcome to New TAAS Members

JERET SNYDER, SARAH GLEASON, FRED MENDENHALL, ANNE MERKLEY, ALAN MICHAEL, JOHN RUST, JUSTIN RUST, ANN AND JIM SEARGEANT, HY TRAN

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Editor’s Note

Please note that the deadline for the December 2007 issue of the Sidereal Times is Friday, December 7. 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 Bill Firth at membership@taas.org

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

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The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
MEMBERSHIP: You may request a membership application by sending e-mail to membership@taas.org or calling (505) 254-TAAS(8227). Applications may also be downloaded from the Web site. Annual dues to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society are $30/year for a full membership and $15/year for a teacher or student (grades K-12). Additional family members may join for $5/each (teacher, student and family memberships are not eligible to vote on Society matters). New member information packets can be downloaded from the Web site or requested from the TAAS Membership Services Director at membership@taas.org. You may send your dues by mail to our newsletter return address with your check written out to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society or give your check to the Treasurer at the next meeting.

ARTICLES/ADVERTISEMENTS: Articles, personal astronomical classified advertisements and business card size advertisements for businesses related to astronomy must be submitted by the deadline shown on the Society calendar (generally the Saturday near the new Moon). Rates for commercial ads (per issue) are $120 per page, $60 per half page, $30 per quarter page, $7 for business card size.

The Newsletter Editor reserves the right to include and/or edit any article or advertisement. E-mail attachments in Microsoft Word; 11-point Palatino, justified, no indent at paragraph beginning, one space between paragraphs is preferred. ASCII and RTF are acceptable. One column is approximately 350 words. Contact the Newsletter Editor at editor@taas.org for more information.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Note that the Sidereal Times is mailed at a first class mail rate. As a result, the newsletter may be forwarded to your new address should you move, or it may not!! Please provide the Treasurer (treasurer@taas.org) with your new mailing address or e-mail address to ensure that you receive your newsletter.

TAAS LIBRARY: Please contact the Librarian at librarian@taas.org or 890-8122 to check out a book or make a contribution.

The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
P.O. Box 50581
Albuquerque, NM 87181-0581

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TAAS Astronomy Links: 
www.taas.org/links/
TAAS 200: 
www.taas.org/taas200/

Map to Regener Hall (Not to scale)