The Sidereal Times

General Meeting News

An Interpretive Tour of the Moon

Saturday, October 8, at Regener Hall at 7:00 p.m. See the map on the last page of this issue.

THE RAYED craters are among the best features on the moon, according to Andrew Paul Odell, who doesn’t put away his telescope when the moon is full.

Odell will share an interpretive tour of the only celestial body ever visited by humans at the TAAS General Meeting, 7 p.m. October 8, at Regener Hall. “I think we forget to bother looking at the moon, especially near full, when you can see some of the best features,” he says. He will cover what you can see with a

Astronomy 101: Build Your Own Telescope

Dave Pitonzo

THE GREAT thing about amateur astronomy is that there are so many different ways to enjoy it. Visual and photographic observing certainly come to mind as the most popular pursuits, but many get their enjoyment in other ways.

I’m sure all of you have, from time to time, considered “biting the bullet” and actually building your own telescope. Well, you’re in luck. This month’s Astronomy 101

continued on page 2...
Thanks for Saturday Night

Lisa Wood

I had the most wonderful “low tech” night at GNTO last Saturday at the Equinox Picnic. I had signed up to run the Isengard for visitors, but by the time it was dark I just wasn’t in the mood for eyepieces, filters, cords, or focusers. Granted, the big scope is amazingly easy to use compared to some of the setups on the field, but I still wasn’t looking forward to all that stuff. Thankfully, Gordon P. stepped up to fill the Motivation Gap, so I went outside and sat on a bench for an hour or two.

The sky was magnificent from start to finish. While only a glowing research balloon could be seen against the towering anvil clouds as the sun approached the western horizon, it was dazzling indeed, and I was inwardly smiling, thinking about all the UFO calls Albuquerque officials might be fielding in town.

LIGHTNING sparked the clouds from time to time and as the night progressed it cleared, as it usually does this time of year, to a sparkly dome of stars. The Cheshire grin of Capricornus lit up the southern sky from my vantage point and I remembered the first time I identified that constellation—from a rowboat on a lake in Southern Idaho with a copy of H.A. Rey’s star book on my lap. I was in college and my parents thought I was in Utah.

I had my usual argument with Kevin M. about the merits of my first constellation book, opposed posthumously sending Rey to a gulag in Siberia, chatted with a few new people, and enjoyed the occasional resounding chirps of some preteens who attended.

So, despite the plethora of food the picnic always produces, I skipped the burgers, dogs, and poisonous cupcakes (kidding, Carl) and just enjoyed the sky.

Sometimes I think GNTO stands for Got No Time to Observe—board and committee members know exactly what I mean—but on the 17th of September, it mostly was just a Good Night To Observe. Thanks to all who made it possible.

... General Meeting, continued from page 1

small telescope, then interpret those features in light of the Apollo program visits.

The presentation was well received in Prescott, Arizona, last year, and will be repeated there again this year.

Weather permitting, Odell will lead a post-meeting observing session of the 12-day-old moon.

ODELL holds a Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of Wisconsin (Madison). He taught at the University of Northern Iowa for five years before coming to Arizona. He taught at Northern Arizona University for 21 years. He now volunteers for Lowell Observatory’s Public Program and continues research in star and galaxy evolution.

On the Event Horizon

Ernie Pyle Middle School Star Party......Tue., October 4
ATM SIG Meeting.............................Wed., October 5
TAAS Board Meeting ......................Thu., October 6
Astronomy 101 .............................Sat., October 8
TAAS General Meeting .....................Sat., October 8
Edgewood Star Party .....................Fri., October 14
Open Space Star Party .....................Sat., October 15
ATM SIG Meeting .......................Wed., October 19
Placitas Star Party .....................Sat., October 22
Sidereal Times Deadline...............Fri., October 28
GNTO New Moon Observing .............Sat., October 29
Griegos Elementary Star Party ...........Tue., November 1
ATM SIG Meeting .......................Wed., November 2
IN SPITE of the best efforts of the weather gods, our September 17 Fall Equinox GNTO Open House, Picnic, Training, and Observing event was a big success last month. Considering that most people had to drive through heavy rain showers to get to the observatory, we had a great turnout of at least 40 people. We had rain on the picnic, but the skies were clearing as the sun set, and skies were mostly clear until midnight, when the “light pollution” from the waning gibbous moon chased the hardcore fans away. Because of conflicts with the Okie-Tex star party, we had our Equinox event a bit early this year, resulting in some moon interference, but I think the short night and the dramatic moonrise about 10 p.m. actually helped make the event a big success.

Here are the GNTO Fall Equinox event highlights as reported (mostly) by Lisa:

Dale did a nice job of Isengard training. At least ten trainees. Several teens attended and enjoyed the view. The dramatic anvil clouds alone, lit up by sky-bound lightning would have been worth the drive. Nifty, slow-moving, research balloon, which Carl and others tracked long after sunset.

Pete and Steve broke the wireless focuser on the Isengard while upgrading its firmware (“You know those engineers, they just love to change things…”), but it worked fine in manual mode (some say much better). Gordon flew the Isengard.

Oddly, everyone seemed to enjoy eating under the eaves while it rained. Roads were exceptionally nicely graded (thanks so much, Carl Frisch). Everyone enjoyed the Director’s apple pie, which should have been served with an artery de-clogger—probably what made it so good. Larry Cash was in charge of the BBQ.

Once it cleared up, Capricorn made a dramatic appearance. Lots of people saw the supernova, and it was imaged with the GNTO CCD imaging gear (see picture below). When the telescopes came out, we had at least seventeen on the field, including two of our loaners, wielded by first-timers.

Several prizes were won. First-time visitors Alan Otterson and wife Katherine, who donated the grain silo top for the GNTO dome, both won prizes and Gordon vows to find a way to attach the chameleon red light he won to his hat, so watch for it.

A good time was had by all, and much great food was consumed.

On September 24, the day before Okie-Tex Star Party officially started, we had an impromptu GNTO new moon observing event. The weather was looking great and with so many clouded-out events this monsoon season there was a pent-up demand for dark skies. Karen Keese opened and I hear they had a good night.

Karen’s opener’s report noted this highlight, among otherst: Pooling resources, Karen Keese, Carl, and Kevin McKeown recovered Himalia, the 5th moon of Jupiter, and reportedly the only one other than the Galilean moons that amateurs can see. They observed the 15th magnitude speck in the 24-inch over a couple of hours to verify movement against the background stars.

Image of Supernova 2011fe in M101, taken on September 17, 2011, using the GNTO CCD imaging equipment (C11 11”, f/10 OTA on Losmandy G11 mount with Gemini controller). Average of three unguided 1-minute exposures at an airmass of over 4 (altitude of 23 Degrees). This type 1a supernova reached its peak magnitude of 9.9 on Sept 13, and by the time of this picture, it had faded to about magnitude of 10.1. This supernova and M101 are about 22 million light-years away from the earth.

continued on page 7 …
Ferrell’s Feral 40 Halloween Hunt

Lisa Wood

GNTO’s monthly New Moon event will be October 29 featuring a contest with Faux Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards. An assemblage of forty galaxies, nebulae, globular and open clusters taken from the TAAS200 will be created for all the competitive observers who can’t wait for the Messier Marathon to vie for Top Dog with their scopes.

Noncombatants are welcome to cheer contestants on or work on personal projects. The Isengard and all other amenities will be available (possibly excepting CCD work).

Our featured Eye Candy will be truly edible as you will also be awarded analogous candies for the objects you find. Here are the suggested mini-prizes:

globular clusters are popcorn balls, open clusters are skittles or M&M’s. Nebulae are (of course) cotton candy. Planetaries are jawbreakers. Galaxies are taffy, stretched into all shapes or maybe candy bars (even though the Milky Way is not in the forty). Dark nebulae are licorice.

Will Ferrell is sponsoring Ferrell’s Feral Forty and will post the list and additional information for the hunt here:

http://www.taas.org/newtaas/taas200scavenger.php

Next GNTO New Moon Events—
Saturday Nov.19  AND Saturday November 26.
( Maybe we’ll award live turkeys.)
### TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, October 8, 2011, 7:00 P.M.**

Regener Hall
University of New Mexico
(See map, back page)

**An Interpretive Tour of the Moon**

Dr. Andrew Paul Odell

**ASTRONOMY 101 AT 6 P.M.: INTRODUCTION TO TELESCOPE MAKING**

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**Notes**

Hotline 254-TAAS (8227).

GNTO = General Nathan Twining Observatory
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 Building, Corner of Lomas and Yale

= School Star Party
SIG = Special Interest Group
TBA = to be announced

Blue Italic = Non-TAAS events
Cosmic Carnival Reaches Over 1000 Visitors

Dee Friesen

TAAS members Joanna Berman, Tom Davies, and Dick Fate greet visitors.

On Sunday, September 18, eighteen TAAS volunteers greeted over one thousand visitors of all ages to Cosmic Carnival 2011. The visitors enjoyed the activities of sixteen exhibitors, the telescopes of eight TAAS astronomers, and six planetarium shows during the four-hour event at the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum.

Dominic Conway

The winner of the 4.5 inch StarBlast telescope was seven-year-old Dominic Conway. He is a student at Double Eagle Elementary.

Albuquerque International Balloon Museum

For the second year, this event was in partnership with the City of Albuquerque’s Art-In-The-Park. It was again hosted by the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum. The museum is a great venue for the event with its two large exhibit halls, a large rotunda for the portable TAAS planetarium, and a large outdoor patio area for the solar telescopes.

Dr. Tom Prettyman speaking on Vesta

For the first time, three speakers presented talks. Dr. Tom Prettyman of the Planetary Institute presented the latest information on the NASA/JPL DAWN spacecraft mission to the asteroid Vesta. Loretta Hall and Ted Spitzmiller each discussed the various historical aspects of space flight, including early efforts in New Mexico. All three speakers expressed interest in speaking at the monthly TAAS meetings.

TAAS volunteers Charlie Mullen, Gordon Pegue, Isaac Newton, and Lynne Olson

Dave Dooling from the Sunspot Solar Observatory and visitor

Cosmic Carnival is TAAS’s celebration of National Astronomy Day. For five years it has brought exciting and interesting astronomical scientific activities to the children of our community. We all look forward to an even better event in 2012.
NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO VIEW JUPITER. It is higher in the New Mexico sky than it has been for seven years, and although it is highest at a very inconvenient hour – 3 a.m. – this is usually the time of the night when the atmosphere is most stable. Jupiter is also still close to perihelion in its 12-year orbit, and at opposition next month will be close to its maximum possible apparent diameter.

This image is a composite of 661 1/8 second video frames selected automatically by Registax 4 on the basis of sharpness from a total of 1200 that were taken at 4:20 a.m. MDT on September 24, during a short period of excellent seeing. Wavelet processing was used in Registax to greatly sharpen detail in the composite image. The Great Red Spot had passed Jupiter’s central meridian 15 minutes earlier. An Imaging Source DBK-21AU04-AS color planetary video camera was used, on an Orion 180 mm f/15 Maksutov-Cassegrain scope, mounted on an Orion Atlas mount. A Meade adjustable Barlow was used at ~2.5x, giving an effective focal length of 6750 mm.

—Skip Dearing

Steve Riegel posted a picture on Facebook that showed pristine clear skies near the end of twilight, and he reported there:

...Biggest instrument was [Carl’s] 24” Dob. The Swan was stunning through that. M101 was clearly visible, though the supernova was first to appear in the evening twilight. Comet Garradd was quite pretty with a short stubby tail, sort of like a shuttlecock...

Kevin McKeown records this in his observer’s report:

Carl turned his scope onto the Perseus galaxy cluster… It was awesome — I counted over 20 galaxies in a small region.

It was a memorable GNTO night — sorry I missed it! These sometimes last-minute-scheduled “Flash” deep-sky observing events are yet another great reason to join TAAS and be active GNTO-goers, but you have to be on the TAAS e-mail list (see instructions on our Web page) to find out about them.

GNTO committee meetings are open to any interested TAAS members. These meetings are a great way to get more involved with your observatory. Our last meeting was scheduled for September 22, but it was cancelled, due to (my) illness. Stay tuned to the e-mail list or e-mail me directly if you want to come to one of these meetings and become involved with the running of your observatory.

GNTO is open to all TAAS members and their guests and we have at least one or two observing night gatherings every month, weather permitting. With fall approaching, you’ll appreciate the warm and comfortable Robert Ortega Building. The Guest Trailer next to the dome is always open with coffee, hot chocolate, and any snacks you might want to share. Our 16” Isengard scope in the big dome, the Big Glass that the club’s “Old Guard” often bring to these observing nights and our four loaner Dobsonian scopes are just part of the great equipment waiting for you at your observatory. Please plan your next trip to GNTO soon. If you have any questions about GNTO or GNTO committee meetings, contact me, Steve Welch, e-mail: gnto@taas.org, 505-866-7668 (home) or 303-530-2661 (mobile).
Our first star party of the new school year was held at Edward Gonzales Middle School. This was a Category 1 star party with Starlab Planetarium presentations given by Amy Grochowski. Amy had five sessions of very eager students. Joanna delivered and set up the planetarium and had everything ready for Amy. Classroom presentations were given by Bob Havlen and Tom Grzybowski.

Bob put the solar system in perspective with his adder tape exercise to demonstrate the relative distances of the planets from the Sun. As always Tom’s comet-making demo was a hit and very informative.

Outside we had seven telescope presenters: John Lanning, Trish Logan, Bob Hufnagel, Pete Eschman, Mike Molitor, Joanna Berman, and Dee Friesen. John had a slide presentation running until dark.

We had a mix of total clouds and an occasional star and city lights and TV towers for our guests to see.

I would like to extend special thanks to our presenters, telescope volunteers, and also to Joanna Berman for Starlab delivery and support. Thanks to all teachers and staff volunteers for the great organization and support. In spite of the cloud cover we had a tremendous turnout of over 300 guests.

Our next star party is October 4 at 7 p.m. at Ernie Pyle Middle School.

These star parties are always a great opportunity to share our night skies with the young people of Albuquerque many of whom have never looked through a telescope. We often get over 100 people at these events. Come out and join us for the fun.

Thank You
Your TAAS Education Committee:
Tom Davies, Trish Logan, Tom Grzybowski

Placitas Star Party
New Location – Darker Skies

Shannon Mann

On Saturday, October 22, Las Placitas Association, the Placitas Community Library, and The Albuquerque Astronomical Society (TAAS) will host a free public astronomical viewing event at the Placitas Community Library. This will be the first star party held at the new library and, considering its altitude at well over a mile above sea level, we can expect dark, moonless skies making for fantastic viewing conditions.

The star party begins at 6:30 p.m. and will officially end at 10:30 p.m. Volunteers will be on hand to assist the public and astronomers with parking. Amateur and professional astronomers and anyone else wishing to bring telescopes are encouraged to arrive before 6:00 p.m. to set up in the paved parking lot along the southern side of the library. Visitors will be directed to park in the gravel area immediately west of the library.

On Saturday night, massive Jupiter will rise by 7 p.m. flaunting his four Galilean moons. The distant icy giant planets Uranus and Neptune will also be well placed for viewing. Much further beyond our solar system we can expect to see innumerable “diamonds on black velvet” stars bound within the great Hercules and Wild Duck Star Clusters. Further on, we also should be able to discern the tenuous wisps of the energized Dumbbell and Ring Nebulas. Well beyond our own galaxy we can trace the fuzzy edges and bright cores of sister galaxies within our own “local group” including Andromeda and her orbiting satellite galaxies Messier 32 and 110.

Be sure and stop inside the library too where astronomers will be presenting information on several current “hot topics” in astronomy. The library will also provide hot beverages to warm our bodies while indoor bathrooms will be available as well. Be sure to bring warm clothes as temperatures can really cool off by this time of year. Don’t forget your red flashlights as white light knocks out night vision needed to see stars and deep sky objects. Red cellophane works well to redden your white lights. This event is weather-dependent and will end by 10:30 p.m.

Clear Skies!
Donations to TAAS

GNTO
Davis Masera

DARK SKY
Marilyn Childs

Welcome to New or Returning TAAS Members

JAMES CHOW
HENRY FINNEY
RICK JOHNSON
TIM ROBERTS
DAVID SATTER

Location, Location, Location

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

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

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

Explanation of Dues and Membership Renewal Date

New memberships will be posted as beginning the first day of the month regardless of what day during that month the check is received. Notice of renewal will be sent out the month before the due date. You will have until the end of the month after your renewal date to send your membership check.

If you fail to pay and renew at that time, your membership will lapse. When you pay on a lapsed membership you will be reinstated in the month that the membership was originally due. (If dues were due in March and you did not renew until May or June or July, etc., the date of your renewal will be in March. If your dues are due in April and you pay in March, your membership will still be renewed in April.) In a nutshell, if you pay late or early your membership date stays the same and your next year’s dues will be due on that date next year.

—Dan Clark

Donations to TAAS

Editor’s Note

The deadline for the next issue of The Sidereal Times is Friday, October 28. The newsletter editor’s e-mail address is editor@taas.org.

Text: E-mail text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word or compatible format.

Photos: Caption and credit needed. Attach photos or graphics in separate graphics files. Photos or graphics in Word files are no longer acceptable.

Membership Services

for:
• Membership Inquiries
• Events Information
• Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Bill Firth at membership@taas.org

for:
• Membership Dues
• Magazine Subscriptions
• Address/e-mail changes

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581
Albuquerque, NM 87181

The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
Meeting Minutes

TAAS Board Meeting
Thursday, September 8, 2011

Directors present: Steve Snider (President), David Blair (Vice President), Art VanDereedt (Secretary), Dan Clark (Treasurer), Steve Welch (GTNO Director), Tom Davies (Education Coordinator), Daniel Zirzow (UNM Coordinator), Ray Collins (ATM Coordinator), Bob Havlen

Missing Members: Steve Riegel, Lynne Olson, Melissa Kirk, Dave Pitonzo

Meeting brought to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. Approval of Agenda – By acclamation

II. Approval of Minutes – By acclamation

III. Committee Reports

a. Education (Tom Davies)

There was a brief discussion about teacher who wants to give up a telescope he has had as a loaner.

b. Finance (Dan Clark)

August Treasurer’s Report:

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Yearly premium for liability insurance for TAAS is due. 14 Members have lapsed dues. 5 new members signed up.

c. GNTO (Steve Welch)

Committee met on August 27. Discussion about a magnitude 10 supernova that was visible. Minor computer work is needed at GNTO. There is interest in continued astrophotography training. Mention was made of the AED equipment at the site, as well as trained personnel there. Picnic open house coming up on September 17.

d. Membership

No one was present from membership committee

e. ATM/Special Projects (Ray Collins)

ATM received a donation of uncoated Coulter mirror.

IV. Current Activities

a. General Meeting (David Blair)

There will be a general meeting Saturday 9/10/11. A swap meet will take place. Melissa will give talk on different types of telescopes for the swap. Andrew O’Dell of Northern Arizona University will give a presentation on Moon. Mention about getting further information on the New Mexico Spaceport and more information will be coming on the topic. Possible future presentations include one on optical interferometry and another on the topic of science and reason.

b. UNM Campus Observatory (Daniel Zirzow)

Opened last week with nothing to report.

c. Oak Flat Discussion

The continuing problem of using Oak Flat, first being closed because of fire issues, and now lately heavy rains. Again the topic of making use of the Open Space Visitor Center instead.

V. Future Activities

a. Cosmic Carnival

Coming up on September 18 between 1–5 p.m. 16 organizations are participating at Balloon Fiesta Museum. Volunteers are needed with telescopes. Dee Friesen is POC for the event.

b. Banquet Planning

Discussion about forming an awards committee which could coordinate and help with advanced planning and about lining up speakers for the event. Possible volunteer names mentioned. There is a need for door prizes.

c. Maize Maze

TAAS will participating on both September 24 and October 29 are two possible nights with people at Rio Grande Community Farm. Dates need to be finalized.

d. Placitas Star Party

Will take place on October 22. Discussions with Las Placitas Association and the library. Telescope field on the south side and parking on the west side.

VI. Old Business

Strategic Planning

Preliminary discussion took place on future data management system using servers like SharePoint. Mention was made about digitizing our library.

VII. New Business

None

VIII. BOD Remarks/Discussion

None

IX. Adjourned at 8:05 p.m.
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