



ASLC Information Packet

Welcome To The Astronomical Society Of Las Cruces

Greetings from the nearly 100 professional and amateur astronomers who comprise the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC). Whether you're new to astronomy or a seasoned veteran, we hope you'll find participation in the ASLC to be both enjoyable and fulfilling. The club was formed in 1951 by a group of dedicated astronomers including Clyde Tombaugh, who had discovered Pluto just 21 years earlier. For over 50 years, we've been sharing the universe with our community under our beautiful Southern New Mexico skies.



Several members of the club do astrophotography. This image of the Andromeda galaxy is by Dave Dockery



On Saturday evenings around the first quarter moon, club members and the public gather in front of The International Delights Cafe for our monthly Moongaze

ASLC has active observing, education and public outreach programs. We host a public Moongaze each month, offer adult education courses and support countless star parties for local schools, scouts and various organizations. In addition, we hold a meeting each month featuring a presentation by one of our members or an invited guest. ASLC members support clinics to help new telescope owners learn how to use their equipment. And for individuals who don't yet have equipment, we offer telescope making workshops. Many of our amateur members go beyond observing and collect scientific data on minor planets and variable stars. The opportunities are as endless as the stars.

The information contained in this packet should help acquaint you with our various activities including our regular meetings and events, our observing sites, and selected special events. There is also information regarding our publications, our education programs and workshops, and a variety of additional resources to help get your started. If you're interested in joining us, a membership application is also included. Additional information may be obtained on our club's website, aslc-nm.org, or by contacting any of the club officers (see pg. 5).

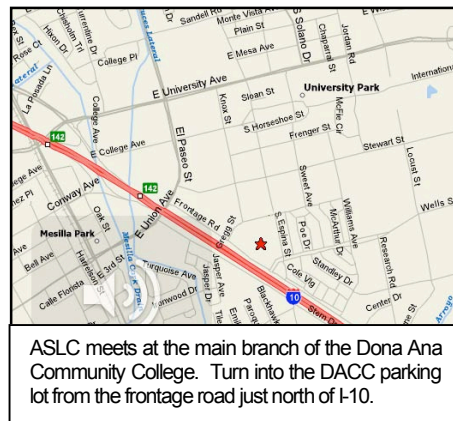
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Monthly Events

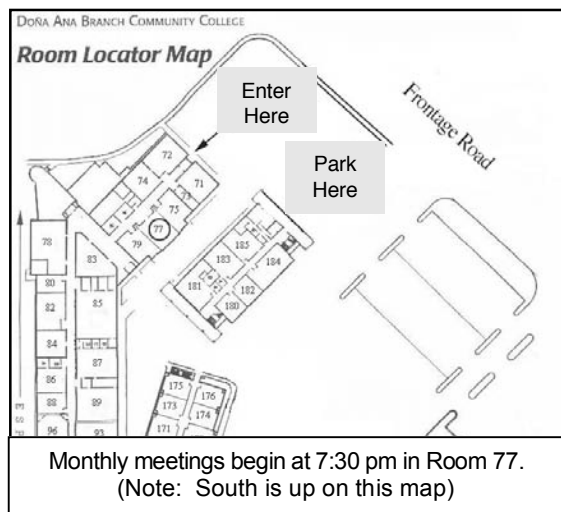
ASLC Monthly Meeting

Each month, the club conducts a meeting at the Dona Ana Branch Community College. We discuss recent and upcoming projects, share our experiences and adventures, and sometimes show off new projects or purchases. The meetings begin at 7:30 pm and are usually held on the fourth Friday of the month.

In addition to conducting regular club business, a featured speaker is invited to do a presentation on an astronomy-related topic. Over the years, several world-renowned individuals have done presentations for our club, including Howard Brewington, Alan Hale, John Dobson, John Dobbins, Fred Whipple, and J. Allen Hynek. Faculty members from the NMSU Astronomy Department are frequent speakers. Club members also do several presentations each year. We often have a post-TSP (Texas Star Party) report in May or June given by the members who attended the event. It's a chance to hear stories about the antics of our members during their week of sleep deprivation. The December meeting is our holiday banquet and consists of a review of all of the club's activities during the prior year. We also give away numerous door prizes at the holiday party.



ASLC meets at the main branch of the Dona Ana Community College. Turn into the DACC parking lot from the frontage road just north of I-10.



Thirty minutes prior to the beginning of our monthly club meeting, the club conducts a *Beginner's Corner* or an *Imager's Corner* (on alternating months). Experienced members present information on a variety of topics at a level that is appropriate for newer observers or imagers.

MoonGazes at International Delights Café

On Saturday nights near the first quarter moon, the club holds a public viewing event, *The ASLC MoonGaze*, in front of the International Delights Café on the NE corner of El Paseo and Idaho. The primary viewing target is obviously the moon, but if other bright planets are visible, then we'll usually have a telescope pointed at them too. It's a leisurely affair with people stopping by for a look throughout the evening. It's also an opportunity to catch up with friends, try out equipment and plan future activities. We start at dusk and usually observe for about 2-3 hours.



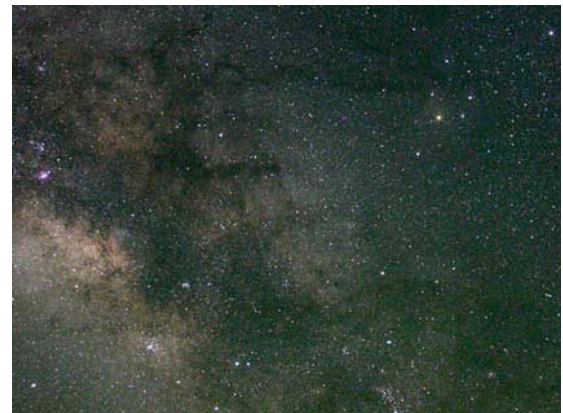
Public DSOs at Leasburg or The Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Occasionally, the club holds public dark sky observing at Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) or at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (CDNP). These are typically done on Saturdays near the third quarter moon. LDSP is located about 15 miles North of Las Cruces (exit 19, follow the signs). CDNP lies about 6 miles North of US-70, on Jornada Road. Both locations offer good dark sky viewing.

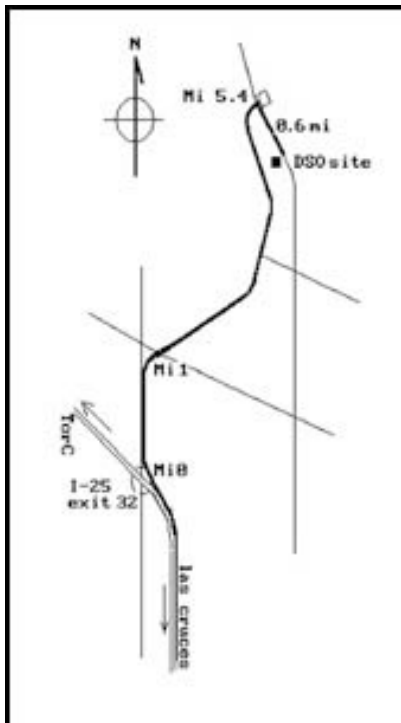
Observing with the ASLC

Upham - ASLC's Premiere Dark Sky Site

At least once each month (on Saturdays nearest the new moon), members of the club drive out to our Upham dark sky site for an evening of observing under skies nearly devoid of any traces of light pollution. What we lovingly call 'Upham' is really just a clearing in the middle of the desert about 35 miles north of Las Cruces. The pristine skies of this remote location in the Chihuahuan Desert has a limiting magnitude approaching 7.2 which allows the viewing and photography of faint nebula, galaxies and other objects that would be difficult to see or image in the 'glow' of the city. Getting to Upham requires you drive on a dirt road for around 6.5 miles. However, the road is usually very good (except after significant rainfall), and the views make the trip well worth the drive.



Awesome views of the Milky Way and deep sky objects are possible from our 'Upham' dark sky site



Directions: From Las Cruces, drive north on I-25. The mile markers count up as you head north; the Upham exit is just past mile marker 32 miles north of town (You'll usually pass a Border Patrol checkpoint about five miles before the Upham off-ramp. At the bottom of the ramp, turn right. You'll immediately cross a cattle crossing. Proceed north on a usually good dirt road (if there has no appreciable recent rain). At 1 mile the main road veers off to the right. Somewhere around 3 miles you pass by a ranch and a big tower. At the 5.4 mile turnoff there is a small building with a phone wire attached. Turn right. Drive about 0.6 miles and look for a clearing on the right.

Observers typically arrive at Upham to set up a bit before sundown, and often remain well past midnight. Occasionally, people gather at the NE corner of the Lowes Home Improvement Center parking lot (on Main, just West of I-25) and drive to Upham together. The caravan leaves for Upham about an hour before sundown. If you're new to the area and wish to join this caravan, it's a good idea to contact the members using the aslcnm (Yahoo) listserver. Instructions for joining the listserver can be found on the aslc-nm.org website.

As with all dark sky viewing, it's important to minimize the use of white light. Please turn off your headlights and interior lights immediately upon arrival. Use red flashlights, and minimize light from laptop computers. Also - many of our members do astrophotography at Upham, so please check with everyone prior to turning your headlights on to drive home.

Some of the best viewing in the Southwest United States is available at Upham. Be sure to check it out.



Awesome views of the Milky Way and deep sky objects are possible from our 'Upham' dark sky site

Special Events and Outings

Aside from the monthly meetings and regularly-scheduled club events, ASLC members participate in a myriad of other activities. Some of our most popular functions are described below.

Astronomy Day: Astronomy Day is a grass roots movement to share the joy of astronomy with the general population - "Bringing Astronomy to the People." On Astronomy Day, thousands of people who have never looked through a telescope will have an opportunity to see first hand what has so many amateur and professional astronomers all excited. ASLC holds events during the day at selected locations. We set up several telescopes, display some of our astrophotography, and talk with people about the wonders of our hobby. During the evening, we have a public star party - occasionally in collaboration with the NMSU Astronomy Department.

Renaissance Faire: Each November, the Las Cruces Fine Arts Council hosts a Renaissance Faire at Young Park. The two-day event draws thousands of local residents. ASLC has been a participant the last two years. The club sets up telescopes through which individuals can safely view the sun. We also display astrophotography, demonstrate telescope building, and talk with hundreds of interested individuals about club activities (all the while wearing period costumes). In 2004, the club won an award for having the best costumed booth. Its great fun.



Participants view the sun and bright planets at ASLC's booth at the annual Renaissance Faire.

White Sands Star Party: Sponsored by the Alamogordo Astronomy Club, the White Sands Star Party is held each Fall at White Sands National Monument. Astronomers and their families can actually spend the entire weekend at the park (camping is not normally permitted, so it's a great opportunity to spend some time at a fabulous location). Friday night is for astronomers (and their families) only; the park's rural location offers great dark sky viewing. During the day on Saturday, there are numerous presentations about astronomy at the Space Museum in Alamogordo. Saturday night is a public event. Hundreds upon hundreds of visitors descend on the park to enjoy views through the telescopes.

Texas Star Party: The granddaddy of all star parties is only a four-hour drive from Las Cruces. TSP is a week-long event held each Spring at the Prude Ranch near Fort Davis, Texas. The ranch offers a swimming pool, and a meal plan (for those wishing it). Individuals may rent cabins or camp in the fields. There are even RV hook-ups. The pristine skies are near perfect for visual observing and astrophotography. TSP challenges its participants with several lists of objects to find - some



fairly easy, some definitely not. If you want to see some fancy hardware, this is the place to be. Many of the scopes you'll see at the TSP aren't measured by their aperture, but rather by how many SUVs it cost to buy them. Fancy as they are, nearly all participants are happy to share a view through their equipment. Dozens of vendors also attend the event, and there are educational presentations throughout the week.

The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC)...

...is dedicated to expanding members and understanding of the wonders of the universe. ASLC holds frequent observing sessions and star parties, and provides opportunities to work on club and public educational projects.

Members receive The High Desert Observer, our monthly newsletter, membership in The Astronomical League, including AL's quarterly publication, The Reflector. Club dues are \$35 per year. Individuals opting to receive the HDO electronically qualify for a \$5 membership discount. ASLC members are also entitled to a discount on subscriptions to Sky and Telescope magazine.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ASLC's Board of Directors
<Board@aslc-nm.org>

President:
Nils Allen
<President@aslc-nm.org>

Vice President:
Jerry Gaber
<VP@aslc-nm.org>

Club Secretary:
John McCullough
<Secretary@aslc-nm.org>

Treasurer:
Janet Stevens
<Treasurer@aslc-nm.org>

Director:
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Director:
Kirby Benson
<Director2@aslc-nm.org>

Past President:
Bert Stevens
<PastPresident@aslc-nm.org>

Director Emeritus:
Walter Haas
<haasw@zianet.com>

Education, Special Clinics, Field Trips

The club has an active education program, which includes regular features in the monthly bulletin as well as public outreach courses, field trips, and clinics.

Once or twice each year, ASLC sponsors a basic astronomy class. Several members of the club are involved in the instruction.

The course includes information about observing, telescope selection, deep sky objects and many other astronomy topics. Participants are encouraged to join the club to continue their education.



Very Large Array manager, Dr. Rick Perley, leads a tour for the ASLC from atop one of the VLA's dishes.



Participants in a recent imaging workshop conducted by ASLC members Dave Dockery and Steve Barks.

Most years, the club conducts a telescope making workshop under the direction of our resident telescope-making expert, Nils Allen. Participants build a 4.5" Dobsonian telescope using a cardboard mailing tube, precut plywood and supplied optics. A nominal fee is charged to

cover supplies. Nils also works with club members on larger telescope making projects as well as on repairs or upgrades to their scopes.

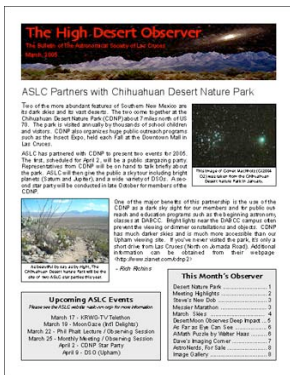
Occasionally, the club holds more advanced courses, workshops or field trips. Recent examples include a webcam astrophotography workshop, an intermediate astronomy course, a short course on optics and observing techniques, a 'behind-the-scenes' tour of the Very Large Array, and a guided tour of the solar observatory at Sunspot. Check the club's website, aslc-nm.org for upcoming club events and the latest news.



New telescope owners and the scopes they produced at one of the telescope making workshops.

Publications, Member Websites

The High Desert Observer

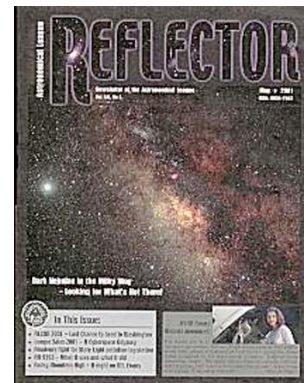


The High Desert Observer (HDO) is our monthly club bulletin. It contains news, announcements, feature articles, upcoming events, star charts, and other items of interest. The HDO is also the place to get information about upcoming club presentations.

The HDO is published monthly (around the 10th of each month) and emailed as an Adobe pdf file to club members. Members may elect to receive a printed copy through the U.S. Mail for a nominal additional fee (to cover printing and postage). Club members are highly encouraged to submit articles of general interest for publication.

The Reflector

ASLC members receive automatic membership in the Astronomical League (AL). AL membership has many benefits including participation in the many observing clubs that AL offers (for example, The Messier Club, The Lunar Observing Club). Another excellent benefit of AL membership is The Reflector, AL's quarterly magazine. The Reflector is published in March, June, September and December and contains news and features from throughout the world of astronomy.



Sky and Telescope



Sky and Telescope is written for the knowledgeable amateur astronomer and includes articles on space science, astronomy, observatories, planetariums, telescopes and celestial events. S&T is widely read by professional astronomers and is probably bought by more amateur astronomers world-wide than any other astronomy magazine. ASLC members receive a discount on the subscription price for S&T. Check with the Club Treasurer for the latest price and to subscribe at club rates.

Club Member Websites

In addition to the main club webpage (aslc-nm.org), several ASLC club members maintain their own web sites containing information and/or images. Links to the sites may be found on the club's website, aslc-nm.org

- Astrophotography by Dave Dockery**
- Desert Moon Observatory**
- Enchanted Skies**
- Budget Astronomy**
- Jerry Gabers Astronomy Page**
- Bert Verstraete's Astrophotography Page**

- Barkosoftware**
- Jornada Observatory**
- Steve Smith's Astronomy Site**
- Imaging the Heavens**
- George's Astrophotography**
- The Big Eye**

ASLC New Member Profile

Please take a few moments to tell us about yourself and your astronomical interests. Please mail the completed form and a \$35 check (\$30 if you choose to receive electronic editions of the club bulletin), payable to ASLC to: PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004. Alternatively, you can bring the form and check to any monthly club meeting

Your Name: _____

Your Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number (home): _____ (work): _____

Is it OK to publish your home phone number in our member directory? yes no (circle one)

Your email address: _____

Is it OK to publish your email address in our member directory? yes no (circle one)

Are you or have you been a professional astronomer?? _____

How long have you been active as an amateur or professional astronomer? _____

Do you own a telescope? _____ Make/Model: _____

What types of astronomy are you interested in (check all that apply):

Visual Astronomy _____ Astrophotography _____ Variable Star Observing _____

Occultation Timing _____ Minor Planet Observing _____ Telescope Making _____

Archeoastronomy _____ Public Outreach _____ Education (classroom) _____

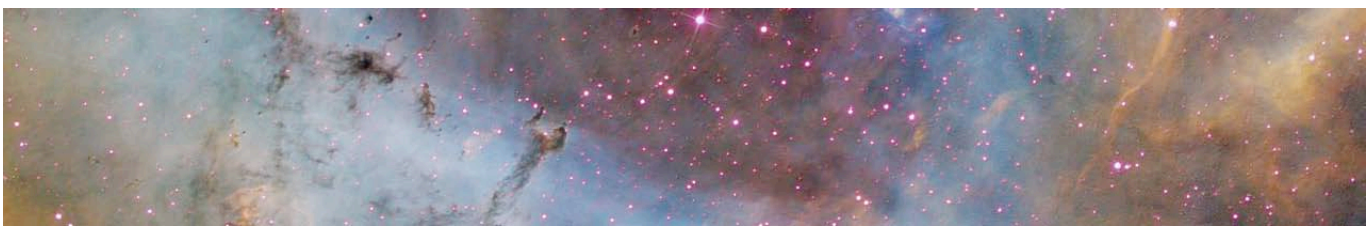
Spectroscopy _____ Other (please list) _____

What equipment do you own?

What can the ASLC do to enhance your astronomy experience?

ASLC IMAGE GALLERY

(all images taken by aslc members)



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
of Las Cruces, New Mexico
PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004



*ASLC - Sharing the Universe
With Our Community for
Over 50 Years*