



President's Message - April 2010



Welcome to the first issue of the HDO for 2010. After a rocky start, the HDO will resume its monthly publication schedule. Since part of the idea of the HDO is to remind you to come to meetings, the HDO will be coming out on the weekend before the meeting. At least for the time being, I will be editing the HDO, so please get your articles to me at least a week before the meeting.

Ron Kramer has taken the reins as the public outreach coordinator and is doing a great job organizing the events and enlisting the aid of ASLC volunteers. Ron has been organizing one or two events per week, so we hope that if you have not come out for one of these events, you will consider doing so soon, since the demand will start to drop as we reach the end of the school year.

Speaking of outreach events, this Saturday, April 24, is Astronomy Day. The ASLC will be hosting some activities at the downtown mall and the Mayfield Soccer Fields. We will be joined not only by the Sun City Astronomers from El Paso, but NMSU as well. There will be solar 'scopes at the downtown mall during the Farmer's Market to not only show people the Sun, but promote the evening activities at Mayfield. Since there are also various sports activities going on at Mayfield, we will also have solar 'scopes set up there as well during the day.

In the evening, we will have various activities at the soccer fields by Mayfield High School on north Valley Drive. We will have a speaker and need lots of telescopes set up for people to look through at the event. We hope all of you will come and support this event. Even if you cannot bring a telescope, we will need people to provide support for those who can bring out a telescope. This is a major event, so please come out and let us know if you are coming by posting on the aslcnm Yahoo! Group, where you will also find the last minute plans for the event.

The Board of Directors also held its first meeting of the year and has taken a number of actions. One item was the creation of the Loaner Telescope Program, chaired by Janet Stevens. This committee will be responsible for tracking all ASLC equipment. We currently do not know where it all is, so if you have any society equipment under your control, please let her know. We will be putting inventory tags on the larger items. Minutes of the Board meeting will appear in the next issue.

Your Humble President
Bert Stevens



The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC)

is dedicated to expanding public awareness 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 A.L. Reflector. Club dues are \$30.00 per year, including electronic delivery. Send dues payable to ASLC with an application form or note to: Treasurer ASLC, PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004

ASLC members are entitled to a \$10.00 discount to Sky and Telescope magazine.

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Next Meeting

Our own Vince Dovydaytis will speak on Infrared Variable Star Astronomy and Instrumentation. The April meeting will be April 23 at 7:30 p.m. in room 77 of the Dona Ana Community College.

Events

ASLC hosts both a deep sky viewing and imaging at our dark sky location in Upham and a public in-town observing session for the public at the International Delights Cafe. Both sessions begin at dusk. For information on these and other events, please see the ASLC website.

[Http://www.aslc-nm.org](http://www.aslc-nm.org)

May Issue of the HDO

A note to all members, we need more contributors! Sharpen your writing skills, share your knowledge and help bolster our newsletter! Articles for future issues should be sent to Bert Stevens no later than one week prior to the monthly meeting. Text should be submitted as email (blslcnm@comcast.net) or as an attached Microsoft Word format document. All Images should be in gif or jpg format.

If you have any questions about submitting materials for publication in the HDO, please don't hesitate to contact Bert at 382-9131, blslcnm@comcast.net

Thanks in advance!



ASLC Public Outreach Programs

By Ron Kramer, Outreach Chair

I thought it might be a good idea to give a monthly review of our outreach programs as they are a very important part of what we do as a Society.

Public outreach is a mechanism used to inform and educate the general public, and frequently, specific groups on the wonders of astronomy. Many of these "events" are initiated by the Society, while others are requested by public schools, scouting groups, museums and other organizations in the region. Generally we concentrate on Las Cruces and Dona Ana County, but we have also done programs in El Paso and other areas. All of these events are done without compensation (other than the occasional sandwich or soft drink).

Programs include:

- Star parties
- Lectures & presentations
- Science fair judging
- Displays

Star Parties

These are often done at the request or invitation of a public school or civic organization. Our Society members set up telescopes and binoculars on school grounds (typically basketball courts or grassy fields) at sunset. School students, their parents and teachers are given the opportunity to view planets, the Moon, star clusters, nebulae, galaxies, the occasional comet and



even double stars through the equipment. Students range from kindergarten age through high school and some groups can reach 400 or more people. The parties typically last two to three hours, depending on the observing conditions, temperature, ages, etc. We also set up monthly at International Delights restaurant for a public star party and have offered daytime solar observing sessions.

Lectures and Presentations

Several Society members have been invited by schools and museums to discuss various astronomical subjects, including *Telescopeless Astronomy* and *DaVinci's Astronomy*.

Science Fair Judging

A number of our members have been asked to judge local and regional science fairs which are sponsored by various schools. The judges view the exhibits created by the students and discuss the



displays with the students. The displays and experiments are then graded for technical merit, creativity, scientific method and other criteria. The best displays are oftentimes entered in statewide or national science fairs.

Displays

Displays are usually setup by invitation. The Society has participated at local fairs (Renaissance Faire), exhibits (Mesilla Valley Mall) and other events (Earth Day) with several tables of maps, photographs, books and other materials as well as with telescopes.

Recently Held Events

Saturday, January 16, 2010; El Paso Museum of History; Leonardo DaVinci Exhibit opening

- Attended by Ron Kramer (in period costume, pictured right)
- Outdoor table with solar telescope and display aids (maps, books) for museum visitors
- More than 1400 people came to the opening and about 700 visited the table during a two hour period



Thursday, January 28, 2010;
White Sands Elementary
Science Day and Star Party

- Science Day attended by Bob Garcia and Ron Kramer
- Immediately after setting up equipment (computer, projector, books, etc.) the event was cancelled due to snow (threat of closing San Augustin Pass)
- This star party will be rescheduled

Friday, February 5, 2010; Star Party; Cesar Chavez Elementary School

- Attended by Nils Allen, Bert Verstraete, Rich Richins, Jerry Gaber and Glenn Westfall
- Between 100 and 125 students, parents and teachers attended
- Targets included Mars, M42, M37, M35, M45

Thursday, February 11, 2010; Presentation; White Sands Middle School; 6th and 7th grade classes

- Attended by Ron Kramer
- Two classes of approximately thirty students each
- Presented *Telescopeless Astronomy*; each presentation was fifty minutes plus twenty minutes of questions/answers



Thursday, February 11, 2010; Presentation and Star Party; Tombaugh Elementary



- Attended by Nils Allen, Jerry Gaber, Dave Dockery, Mohammed Hijazi, Chuck Sterling (pictured left), John Kutney, and Ron Kramer (sorry if I missed anyone)
- Approximately 400 students, parents and teachers attended.
- There was some light pollution from a new car wash and the NMSU stadium.
- Targets included Mars, M41, M42, M37, M35, M45, Perseus Double Cluster
- Two presentations of *Telescopeless Astronomy* to groups of approximately 40 each

Thursday, February 18, 2010; Star Party; Hermosa Heights Elementary School

- Attended by Nils Allen, Bert Verstraete, Bernie Joplin
- Over 100 students, parents and teachers attended
- Targets included Mars, M42, M37, M35, M45

Saturday, February 20, 2010; Share Fair, sponsored by Las Cruces Museum of Natural History at Mesilla Valley Mall

- Attended by Ron Kramer
- Over 2000 people attended the Fair with about 250 visiting our tables
- Slides were projected on a far wall, *Solar System* and *Earth at Night* maps were mounted on easels and a variety of astronomy books were on the tables for viewing

Thursday, February 25, 2010; Star Party and Presentation, Cesar Chavez Elementary School

- Presentation to first grade class by Ron Kramer on *Telescopeless Astronomy*
- Star Party was clouded/rained out

Thursday, March 4, 2010; Star Party, Mesilla Park Elementary School

- Attended by Dave Dockery, Steve Shaffer, Bert Verstraete, Chuck Sterling, Jerry Gaber, Ron Kramer
- About 150 people (students, parents, teachers) attended

Friday, March 5, 2010; Star Party, Cub Scouts; requested by Glenn Westfall; held on private farmland in East Las Cruces, about 1 mile north of Hwy 70

- Attended by Chuck Sterling, Jerry McMahan, Steve Shaffer, Frank Miller, Ron Kramer, et. al.
- Over 130 children and parents attended.
- Mars, Saturn, Venus, M42, Pleiades and other objects observed

Thursday, March 11, 2010; Star Party; Camino Real Middle School

- Attended by Jerry Gaber, Bert Verstraete, Chuck Sterling, Ron Kramer, and others
- Over 150 students, parents and teachers



Thursday, March 18, 2010; Star Party, White Sands Schools

- Attended by Dave Dockery, Bert Verstraete, Carol & Wes Baker, Charles Sterling, Shawn Rickman, Ron Kramer, others
- About 65 students, teachers and parent attended. Unexpectedly low turnout, considering we usually has a larger group of childred at White Sands.
- Dale Harris (teacher point-of-contact arranged pizza, drinks, and snacks. Nice touch.

Wednesday, March 31, 2010; Presentation and Star Party, Jornada Elementary School

- Ron Kramer presented *An Introduction to The History of Astronomy* to 45 third graders
- Star Party attended by five members of ASLC
- About 150 students, teachers and parents attended

Saturday, April 3, 2010; El Paso Museum of History; Lecture

- Ron Kramer presented *Astronomy in Da Vinci's Time* at the request of the Museum
- About 25 people attended

Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, April 7; Presentation to Desert Hills Elementary by Kramer
- Thursday, April 8; Star party at Desert Hills Elementary
- Friday, April 16; Star party for Boy Scouts at Percha Dam State Park
- Saturday, April 17; Earth Day at Young Park; daytime and nightttime events
- Saturday, April 24; Astronomy Day at Mayfield High School soccer field; daytime and nighttime events
- Saturday, May 1; May Day at El Paso Museum of History; Solar observing planned

I am also working on an overnight star party with the Mescalero Apache Schools on the Reservation (at 8,400' elevation), coordinating a star party at Las Cruces High School (waiting on teacher to confirm date), supporting a fund-raising event (El Paso Social Services, with the venue to be in New Mexico)(waiting on verification) and October 2010 Corn Maze.

We can use all possible support by our members of these events. By offering star parties, lectures, displays, etc. we are able to educate the people of Las Cruces and the surrounding region about the wonders of the night sky, the importance of dark sky preservation, and the joys of astronomy in general. If you are able to offer any support or suggestions, please contact Ron Kramer at (home) 575-521-1336, (mobile) 704-661-0406 or at ronjkramer@aol.com.

The New ASLC Loaner Telescope Program

By Janet Stevens, Chair, ASLC Loaner Telescope Program

Since the purchase of the new and used Meade Solarmax telescopes, the ASLC Board of Directors has decided to create a new permanent committee, a Loaner Telescope Program Committee for its membership. I volunteered to form this committee and was appointed as its as Chair at the last Board of Directors meeting. Included in this program will be all of the society's telescopes.



Right now we are in early stages of putting this program together. For our first stage, we are putting together a list of the assets of the Society. If you are holding any of the Society's equipment, I am requesting you contact me. I have a list of telescopes which are owned by the ASLC, but it does not include information on eyepieces, barlows, filters, etc. In order to loan out telescopes, these need to be included, since some of our members who will be borrowing the telescopes do not own them. I will also be happy to accept donations of those items

I am also writing a Loaner Telescope Agreement which will be signed by both the borrower and a member of the committee who is holding the telescope.

The agreement includes a statement that the telescope is on loan for the period of a month, with options to renew for another two months if no one else wishes to borrow the instrument. The reason for the time limit is so that none of our equipment will disappear from our possession for any reason.

There will be a monthly charge of \$10.00 which will be used for future purchases of equipment (eyepieces, filters, etc.) and repairs from wear and tear, such as recoating mirrors, etc.

The two Coronado Solarmaxes will be loaned out with the understanding that they will be occasionally be used by the public observers for school activities, or ASLC events such as the Renaissance Fair, Earth Day, Astronomy Day, etc.. The borrower can either participate in the function, or give it to a member who will be at the event. It will be returned promptly to the borrower after the event.

Once we have all of the necessary information, we will determine if we need to make any purchases to make a set of at least three different eyepieces and one Barlow for each of our loaner telescopes so that we can begin loaning out the ASLC owned telescopes to our membership

Minutes, March 2010 ASLC General Meeting

By John McCullough, Secretary, ASLC

Call to Order:

Bert Stevens, President, Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC), called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm., 26 March 2010, Rm. 77, Dona Ana Community College Las Cruces, New Mexico.

President's Comments:

Bert Stevens welcomed the group and recognized new members and/or visitors present.

Secretary's Report:

The minutes for the February meeting were posted on the yahoo groups sites for review. Ron Kramer moved to dispense with reading the minutes; Dave Dockery seconded. Motion passed by acclamation. There was not an additional Secretary's report.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer was not present at this month's meeting. There was no Treasurer's report.



Committee Reports:

Observatory Committee:

Rich Richins, Committee Chairman, was not present at this month's meeting to provide an update on the status of the Club observatory proposed for Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP).

Apparel Committee:

Ron Kramer, Committee Chairman, announced that the new ASLC sports shirts are here. See him after the meeting if you ordered one/some. He also has a price list of items currently available.

Outreach Committee:

Ron Kramer, Outreach Coordinator, provided a schedule of upcoming events:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 31 Mar. | Jornada Elementary, day presentations, star party 8:00 pm |
| 03 Apr. | Astronomy of DaVinci's Time, El Paso Museum of History (100-250 people expected),
2-4 pm |
| 08Apr. | Desert Hills Elementary, Science Night |
| 16 Apr. | Boy Scouts (200-500 Scouts), Percha Dam SP, \$5 entry fee waived |
| 17 Apr. | Earth Day, Young Park (day-solar/night-star party) |
| 24 Apr. | National Astronomy Day, High Noon Soccer Fields/Field of Dreams |

Ron meets with the Mescalero Apache Schools (K-12, 1200 students) on 01 April and will discuss holding a star party for the schools in May. The star party may last until 10 or 11 pm, and then Club members will be able to observe at high altitude the rest of the night. This may also include the Alamogordo and El Paso clubs because of the number of telescopes required for the star party.

Astronomy Day 2010:

Astronomy Day 2010 is 24 April 2010. There will be solar observing during the day at the Las Cruces Farmers' Market and the High Noon Soccer Fields/Field of Dreams. A public star party will be held at High Noon Soccer Fields/Field of Dreams after dark. Kids' activities need to be coordinated for the lead up time to the star party, i.e., Guess Your Weight on Other Celestial Bodies, Do-It-Yourself star charts/plot the constellations, green laser constellation ID, possible night launches by the Las Cruces Rocket Club.

Corey Stone, Sun City Astronomers (El Paso Club), offered his club's and his personal expertise with holding large (1000-1500 people) public events. *Astronomy* magazine has sponsored the Sun City Astronomers' Astronomy Day event in the past. The magazine and community have provided numerous "give-aways" in the past including telescopes. An attendance of up to 800 people may be expected with the new, in-town, venue.

The main purpose of the event is to get people to look in a telescope, not "doing" but "selling" astronomy. If the Club decides to go ahead with the "give-aways", it may require more "crowd control" to get people registered. The Sun City Astronomers will provide prize items. The Club may consider feeding the astronomers and other volunteers, not providing food items to the public (trash clean-up issue). Corey will handle publicity in El Paso, Kirby Benson will publicity in Las Cruces. Corey also has posters and information for press releases.

Loaner Telescope Program:

Janet Stevens will chair this committee. She is developing the guidelines for Club members to use equipment owned by the Club and the Club will know where the equipment is located. A proposed fee of \$10 per month will be collected for equipment use. Janet will administer the program. Please email her if you know you have Club equipment in your possession along with a description of that equipment.

There were no additional committee reports.



Old Business:

There was no old business discussed.

New Business:

There was no new business for discussion.

Jerry Gaber offered a motion to adjourn; Muhammad Hijazi seconded. The motion passed and the business portion of the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Announcements:

Items for Sale:

No items were announced for sale.

Recognitions/Achievements:

John Kutney received both the Messier Club and Double Star Club certificates from the Astronomical League.

No additional recognitions or achievements were announced.

The Seventh Annual ASLC Messier Marathon at the Upham DSO on 13 March 2010 was declared a success. Most participants attempted the binoculars list.

There were no additional announcements made.

Presentation:

The March program was “*At the Heart of the Matter: The Blue-White Dwarf in M57*” by Club member Paul Temple, who lives in Deming, NM. Paul started by giving some of his personal history. After he had collected some observing equipment, which he showed images of, he started looking at M57. Paul wondered about the central star in M57 and what, if any, data had been collected on it. He contacted a number of professional astronomers but found that detailed information was very sparse. He got abundant support from AAVSO members he contacted, especially Tom Kracji.

Paul proceeded to describe the blue-white dwarf: it’s hot, about 100,000 degrees Kelvin; it has the mass of our Sun but is about the size of the Earth; it’s degenerate; and spins, or rotates, very fast. Paul encountered a number problems when interpreting his data. The data collected to date looks “strange” and there is no real explanation for its trends, so far.

If his current data interpretation holds up, a new model will need to be developed. Paul will collect additional data this year and he hopes it will result in an article for the *Journal of the AAVSO*.

This presentation was not recorded for rebroadcast on the Internet. Other meeting presentations can be accessed on the web at <http://www.aics-research.com/lectures/aslcnm/>.

The March 2010 monthly meeting concluded at 8:50 pm.

-Respectfully submitted by John McCullough, ASLC Secretary



Calendar of Events April-May (MDT)

April 17		Earth Day
21	12:20 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
23		ASLC General Meeting
24		Astronomy Day
28	6:18 a.m.	Full Moon
May 05	10:15 p.m.	Last Quarter Moon
06	1 a.m.	Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower peaks
07		Space Day
09		Moon near Jupiter
13	7:04 p.m.	New Moon
20	5:43 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
25	8 p.m.	Mercury greatest distance west of the Sun (25 degrees)
27	5:07 p.m.	Full Moon
28		ASLC General Meeting

Be sure to visit our web site for the latest updates: <http://www.aslc-nm.org>

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of Las Cruces
PO Box 921
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ASLC - Sharing the Universe
 With Our Community
 for Over 50 Years

