

aslc bulletin

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of LAS CRUCES
New Mexico
www.zianet.com/aslc/



JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2004

THIS MONTH - 2004 INAUGURAL MEETING: January [*Howard Brewington*]

Regular Meeting; January 23; 7:30 PM, Room 77 of the Dona Ana Branch Community College

Program *Howard Brewington Comet Hunting the Old Fashion Way; Visual comet hunting.* As part of my talk, I will disclose the procedures used to find the five comets which bear my name. Likewise, I will talk about the telescopes that I built for comet hunting, as well as the evolution on my comet hunting methods during the ten years I spent scanning the night skies. *Howard Brewington*

Business Board of Directors report of Jan.7 meeting. See News & Views for minutes of the meeting

LAST Meeting - November [*Alan Hale*]

Regular Meeting; November 21; Program: Life After the Comet Alan Hale; Southwest Institute for Space Research. "Dr. Hale discussed some of the comet/NEO work he's doing, as well as the *science diplomacy* activities he's been involved in, including the *Earthrise Project* that he's in the midst of getting underway. The institute strives to provide an arena for astronomical and space science research, and to assist in the improvement of science education and science literacy, inviting student participation in ongoing research projects, creating a *learning-by-doing environment*." SWISR is a nonprofit organization based in Otero County, New Mexico; founded in 1993 by Dr. Alan Hale.

NEXT MONTH - February [*Steve Barkes*]

Regular Meeting; February 27; 7:30 PM, Room 77 of the Dona Ana Branch Community College *Steve Barkes "The Messier Marathon: For Fun and Profit"*.

Basically a history of the marathon, how to prepare, etc. This will be a good lead-in for our March event, and will hopefully get more observers out under our dark skies. *Steve Barkes*

Excellent timing for those newbies (like me) who want to fully participate in this and start getting ready early enough to be fully prepared. Providing info & enthusiasm early on should encourage members & their families and make this thing more successful as a social event also. *Nils Allen*

LOOKING AHEAD

We have an offer for a program on the third Friday in May from ALPO Executive Director Richard Schmude, Jr. His topic will be the 2003 apparition of Mars. It was a complete surprise, though a very pleasant one, when Cecil Post told me that Richard Schmude is coming to Las Cruces in May and has offered to talk to the ASLC about the 2003 apparition of Mars. He is an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable speaker. I would certainly recommend that we adjust our ordinary meeting date in May to meet his schedule. He teaches at Gordon College in Georgia. In the ALPO he is the Coordinator for the Sections on Jupiter and also the Remote Planets (those beyond Saturn). *Walter Haas*

Bert Stevens will videotape the talk and invite those who were unable to attend up to the Stevens home to view the it (it's digital video). He will also dub it to VHS for those who cannot make it.

NEWS & VIEWS

Minutes ASLC Directors Meeting (condensed) A.J. Flours Bakery; January 7, 2004

Steve Barkes called the meeting to order. We have quorum. Seven board members attended of 9 total. Those in attendance: Steve Barkes (Pres), Rich Richins (VP), Tim Barnett-Queen (Sec'y), Janet Stevens (Treas.), John

McCullough (BD Member) Walter Haas (BD Emeritus), Scotty Murrell (BD Member). Nils Allen and Vince Dovydaitis attended as guests.

- Steve gave an opening statement for the year; he indicated he wanted, among other things, to review and update the by-laws as needed. He also said he wanted to begin to work on the budget for the year. There is to be a BOD meeting once a quarter. Steve thinks we might need to meet every month for a while and then go to every other month.
- Janet is going to get the insurance issue clarified
- The club's property insurance needs and obligations on the club's property at the NMSU observatory will be investigated this year.
- A \$500 buffer/working account was proposed and approved unanimously
- The S & T subscriptions are money in money out.
- The yearly dues and subscriptions will be kept on the same schedule they are now. Janet said if it becomes difficult to keep track she will let us know.
- Vince suggested that we should make \$250 available for a double booth at Renaissance Faire 2004 and use it as a money-maker.
- A line item of \$150 for printing was approved for the 2004 budget. \$450 was approved for the budget for "consumables" (projector bulb and repair; observatory dome repair, etc.).
- The BoD passed unanimously a recommendation to the general membership that we increase ASLC annual dues from \$28 to \$35 with a \$5 discount for members electing to receive the bulletin electronically. Steve Barkes suggested that the proposal to raise fees will be mentioned at the January meeting, and voted on at the end of the meeting in February. Proposal would also be published in the upcoming ASLC Bulletin. The proposed budget will also be presented at the January meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10. Respectfully submitted, Tim Barnett-Queen (with help from Rich Richins)

January 20 KRWG-TV Program Captures Astronomy - Planning Family Event at Studio on Jan. 31.

The KRWG-TV Program "*Capturing Heaven in a Box - The Sloan Digital Sky Survey*," January 20, 7 p.m. takes viewers to Apache Point Observatory in the Sacramento Mountains east of Alamogordo, New Mexico, where astronomers and scientists from around the world are conducting the first massive sky survey to be undertaken in half a century. This \$80-million, seven-year project is producing a three-dimensional map of one-half of the northern sky. The Sloan Digital Sky Survey is expected to be used for research by astronomers for decades to come.

The KRWG-TV documentary brings a highly technical project into focus so that all viewers will understand and appreciate its importance for the future. The program looks at how the SDSS was conceived and how the technology was designed and built specifically for this survey. Rare footage of the Sloan telescope in action at night is included. Viewers are introduced to key astronomers with the survey and learn about some important discoveries based on data collected from the survey. Filming of the documentary began in the summer of 2001 and the project took more than two years to complete due to the technical nature of the topic and the fact that filming had to be done at night.

In conjunction with the premiere of *Capturing Heaven in a Box: The Sloan Digital, Sky Survey*, KRWG-TV is planning a **family event at Gerald Thomas Auditorium**, NMSU on Saturday, January 31 4:30 - 6 p.m.. The event will feature talks by astronomers and photographs taken in the survey. Come meet *Dr. Xiaohui Fan*, assistant professor of astronomy at University of Arizona, discoverer of the most distant quasar currently known (using Sloan Digital Sky Survey data) and *Dr Nancy Chanover*, assistant professor of astronomy NMSU, who will discuss light waves (spectroscopy). At 3:30 pm the film will be shown and *producer Gary Worth* will briefly discuss the film. Talks begin at 4:30. There will be telescope time at 7 p.m following the reception at 6 p.m. More information will be available on the KRWG-TV website in early January or by calling 646-2042.

"We appreciate any assistance ASLC can give us at the event, to give information on the astronomical society and answer general questions. If we give the astronomical society some flyers, can they get them out around town and WSMR and??? We will give you recognition." Said *Debra Weaver* 646-5117 (527-0440)

On June 8, 2004 the planet Venus will transit the face of the Sun, being seen in telescopes as a small black disc against the brilliant photosphere. The event will be the first such transit of Venus since 1882. There will be a repetition in 2012; but if you miss both, you will have to mark your calendar for 2117!

This year's event will not be visible in New Mexico. The best views in the USA will be in the Northeastern States, where the planet will be on the solar disc at sunrise and will exit after an hour or two. The complete 6-

hour transit can be seen from Europe and almost all of Africa and Asia, as cruise lines will soon be reminding amateur astronomers-tourists.

In recent centuries these transits were of great value for attempts to improve the value of our astronomical yardstick, the distance between the Earth and the Sun. Astronomers travelled all over the World, sometimes to watch clouds during the critical hours. They are now of little scientific value but remain interesting spectacles for such things as a bright atmospheric ring around the black disc of Venus, optical diffraction effects when the planet is at the edge of the Sun, and conjectured efforts with new technologies to image Venus against the solar chromosphere or prominences.

Many more details about next June's event can be found in the Handbook of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, pages 188-199. *Walter Haas*

The ASLC Website at www.zianet.com/aslc has recently been updated and some new changes are still on the way. What to look for:

1. The new 2004 Calendar is posted there, I tried to fill it with as many dates as I could come up with. The quarters of the moon are given as are the sunset and sunrise time for every Wednesday (a day that didn't have too much else on it usually). Send any new events or corrections to aslc@zianet.com
2. I am putting the date that the Headlines are changed on the front page next to the link.
3. Jim Mayberry from Project Astro has started putting out a monthly Newsletter and I have been converting it into an Electronic Version and posting it on the Website, you will find a link for it there on the front page.
4. The "Beginners Corner" was taken down for a while till we could get it updated. That is now back on line as well and has new and current information.
5. I re-organized the Links and added a few more. All the links are now on one page, so scroll all the way down to see what is there.
6. Coming soon! The Scrapbook is being redone and will soon have thumbnails that load faster. The other pictures are being better compressed so the full-sized picture will load faster too. This feature should be up and running next month. If you have additional suggestions for improvements to the Webpage, please feel free to send them to me at aslc@zianet.com. *Thanks Richard*

Great Features Untapped in Yahoo! Lists [aslcbod](http://www.aslcbod.com) & [aslcnm](http://www.aslcnm.com)! Go to the website www.yahogroups.com and it will list the groups to which you belong. Click on "[aslcbod](http://www.aslcbod.com)" and/or "[aslcnm](http://www.aslcnm.com)" and look in the column on the left for a link to messages. All group messages are listed there. Here you have access to what has transpired. You can use the link "Edit my membership" in the upper left corner to change your settings as to how you get the messages. You can get individual messages or a day's worth at a time or not at all if you prefer to read from the website. And there are other great features to this utility that we've not begun to use.

Thanks to each of you who helped my daughter (Julie) with her school project by looking at Moon shots and picking the one you thought contained more detail. She's doing an experiment for her 6th grade science class, using her Nils-Allen-signature 4.5 inch ASLC-workshop built Dob/reflector scope (Nils autographed her OTA from the scope we built in telescope workshop) and our 80mm refractor (Stellarvue), to see if she can determine image difference between the two scopes used the same eyepiece; when looking at the moon. She did drawings and took digital photos through each scope, and picked the one she thought contained the most detail (the refractor). It satisfies her 6th grade science project requirement and has given us a chance to do some observing and learning together. *Timothy Barnett-Queen*

ASLC OFFICERS 2004

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MEMBERSHIP in the ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of Las CRUCES, offers:

Frequent observing sessions and parties; Opportunities to work on club and public educational projects and the ASLC Bulletin, our monthly newsletter, plus the quarterly A.L. Reflector, newsletter of the Astronomical League. Also, as an ASLC member you are entitled to the 10% club discounted rate on *Sky and Telescope* magazine. To join the ASLC, or renew membership; your dues are only, \$28.00 per year. The optional club discounted *Sky and Telescope* presently adds \$33.00, for a total of \$61 per year. At either rate, mail your dues, \$28 or \$61 per year, payable to **A.S.L.C.**, along with a note or an application form to:

Treasurer ASLC, PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004

Members so equipped are encouraged to receive this BULLETIN electronically.

The product is superior to the USPS version, and it saves money for other Society outreach activities.

CALENDAR January - February 2004

Jan 21/We **New Moon** Sunset approx. 5:30 MST
Jan 23/Fri **Regular Meeting** *Howard Brewington "Comet Hunting the Old Fashioned Way"*
Jan 24/Sa **Dark Sky Saturday** Upham DSO site.
Jan 31/Sa **Moongaze** International Delights Cafe
Feb 14/Sa **Public Star Party** La Llarona Park
Feb 20/Fri **New Moon** Sunset approx. 5:58 MST
Feb 21/Sa **Dark Sky Saturday** Upham DSO site.
Feb 27/Fri **Regular Meeting** 7:30 DABCC Rm 77 *Steve Barkes Messier Marathon; Fun & Profit?*
Feb 28/Sa **Moongaze** International Delights Cafe

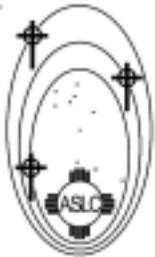
Looking Ahead

March 2 -May 4 **StarGazing under New Mexico Skies** DABCC Course #hl102 East Mesa campus
March 10 -April 10 **Telescope Making** Workshop. Apply now to aslc@zianet.com, or 522-1456
Apr 24/Sa **International Astronomy Day** <http://www.astroleague.org/al/astroday/astroday.html>
May 16-23 **Texas Star Party** <http://www.texasstarparty.org/>
May 21/Fri **Meeting 3rd Friday** *Dr. Richard Schmude, Jr. Ex.Dir.ALPO "2003 Apparition of Mars"*
June 12-19 **Grand Canyon Star Party** <http://www.tucsonastronomy.org/gcsp.html>

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