



The High Desert Observer

The Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces

May, 2009

President's Message

It's been another busy month. TSP the Texas Star Party was the major event of this past month. There was a large group of ASLC members at the annual event. It was a week filled with equipment problems (some real, some not so real), dark skies, great images, outstanding visual observations, and most of all group fellowship. Steve and I both had guiding problems. His were caused by a fuse that he didn't find until he had returned from TSP, mine were strictly brain equipment interface issues. I can't get my mount to guide when I connect the incorrect cables to the mount. I only managed to capture one image using no mount guiding, strictly AO guiding. There were a lot of images taken by other members and a tremendous amount of visual observation. My week was spent doing mostly visual astronomy. I sold my 18 inch Obsession on the third day of the TSP and broke in my home built 16 inch truss DOB doing the 5x5 telescope list and the Glob list. Several members received pins for completing various visual observation lists. It was a successful TSP.

I took the Messier Marathon certificates to TSP to award them to the members that missed last month's meeting but didn't get a chance to award them, so I will present them at this month's ASLC meeting. However that didn't stop our members from receiving prizes and awards presented by TSP. Nils won a book on Astro imaging, it must be a sign, we may have a new imager in the group. Rich Richins was our society's major award winning representative. Rich was presented with the winning Solar system image award for his fabulous Comet Lulin Image, and won the People's Choice Award for his Messier Marathon Image. Congratulations, Rich!!!

Upon returning from TSP there was no time to rest. We had to jump right into the International Day of Astronomy preparations. This year's ASLC Astronomy Day evening activities were conducted at the new Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. These events followed a day of solar viewing at the downtown Farmers Market and International Delights coffee shop. The evening events began with a guided sunset bird stroll followed by music by James Michael. As the sky darkened, views of the Moon, Saturn, and several star clusters and galaxies were offered through the available holes in the clouds. The wind and clouds contributed to a smaller than usual turnout. However the new state park looks like it will be a good place to bring astronomy to the local public in a near by, relatively dark sky area.

Finally one of our major purposes as a society is to provide public outreach events designed to educate and serve the local community. This must be coordinated and is no small task. For the past 2 years Chick Sterling has been that focal point. He has done an admirable job and has continued to fulfill his commitment even with extended trips to Albuquerque to care for his daughter. It has become too much for Chuck to continue to do this commitment and he has asked that we appoint a replacement. I will be asking for volunteers at the May meeting and if no volunteers step forward I will begin asking individuals directly. Being a member of this society has many benefits, and along with those benefits come responsibilities. We need someone to step up and shoulder some of those responsibilities. I realize we are all busy and have full lives outside this group but if we are to continue to provide the level of service to our members and the public we have in the past we need to fill this very important and often underappreciated position.

Your President and humble servant, Jerry Gaber

The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC) is dedicated to expanding members and 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 \$35 per year. Those opting to receive the ASLC newsletter electronically, receive a \$5 membership discount. Send dues, payable to ASLC with an application form or a note to: Treasurer ASLC, PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004.

ASLC members are entitled to a \$10 discount on subscriptions to *Sky and Telescope* magazine.

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Next Meeting

The next monthly meeting will be held June 26th at 7:30 pm in the usual place (Main Campus of the Dona Ana Community College, room 77), speaker TBA.

The Imaging Group will meet at 7:00 pm.

Events

The next monthly dark sky viewing night will be held on Saturday, June 20th at the Upham site. The next moon gaze will be held at International Delights Cafe on Sat. May 30th. For these and other events, please see the ASLC website for further information:

<http://www.aslc-nm.org>.

June 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 the June issue should be sent to Tony Gondola by the 10th of the month. Text should be sent as email (acgna@comcast.net) or as an attached Microsoft Word document. Images should be sent in jpg format.

If you have any questions about submitting materials for publication in the *HDO*, please don't hesitate to contact me at 571-5118 or via email. Thanks in advance! Tony Gondola, Editor, ASLC Newsletter

April 2009 Meeting Minutes

No minutes were recorded for the April 2009 meeting



The study of archaeoastronomy and culture has been enhanced by the International Society for Archaeoastronomy and Astronomy in Culture (ISAAC) and the "Oxford" conferences held at roughly four year intervals. These conferences bring together researchers working in all areas of archaeoastronomy and cultural astronomy from around the world. The American Southwest was one of the early and fruitful areas of cultural astronomy study, and remains so to this day. However, the opportunity for professional and avocational archaeoastronomers to share their research outside of the periodic ISAAC/Oxford conferences is limited. To mark the International Year of Astronomy 2009, and to provide a forum to promote research and a better understanding of the cultural significance of astronomical knowledge among American Southwest cultures, we are inaugurating a biennial Conference on Archaeoastronomy of the American Southwest.

June 11-13, 2009, will mark the first conference with the theme "Creating Sustainability in American Southwest Archaeoastronomy Research." This conference will be held in Camp Verde, Arizona. The Camp Verde/Sedona/Verde Valley area was selected for this first event because of its unique location at the entrance to several National Monuments, including Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well and Tuzigoot, as well as the U.S. Forest Service National Heritage sites of Honanki, Palatki and V-Bar-V, with abundant collections of rock art and many archaeological and astronomical sites. The Arizona Archaeological Society is proud to sponsor this inaugural event.

We are pleased to be participants in the International Year of Astronomy 2009 observances of the Cultural Astronomy and Storytelling Working Group.

Conference Chairs,

Todd Bostwick, PhD, Pueblo Grande Museum

Bryan Bates, Coconino Community College

Ann Owen, Archaeological Society of New Mexico

Ken Zoll, Arizona Archaeological Society Conference Administrator

Cleaning your Large DOB Mirror

By Jerry Gaber



Cleaning a telescope mirror is a delicate subject there is a wide variety of opinions on if, when, and how you should clean a first surface mirror. I do not intend on getting into that discussion except to say an improperly cleaned mirror can be more detrimental to your viewing capability than using a dirty mirror. The next thing I would like to emphasize is that I am not an expert; I am only taking this opportunity to pass on information that was passed on to me, primarily by our resident mirror expert, Tony Gondola. There may be many ways to clean a mirror however, this is what I

did. First I needed a container large enough to put my mirror in and let it soak. I purchased a tub at Lowes that would work for my 18 inch Obsession mirror and as I was going to have the mirror recoated it was a perfect opportunity to practice before cleaning the 16 inch mirror I purchased for my home-built truss dob.



First, carefully remove the mirror from the telescope. Then place the mirror, mirror side up, in the tub. Next fill the tub with warm water to a point where it just covers the mirror. Add a few drops of mild dish washing liquid soap and then add enough additional water to properly mix the soap. I used my removable shower head. Then go do something else and let the mirror soak for an hour or two. This should allow the soap and water enough time to dissolve any oils on the mirror.



Next you need to remove any additional dirt from the mirror without damaging the mirror surface. This can be done by using soft cotton balls.

While the mirror is still submerged, lightly brush the mirror with the cotton balls. Move the cotton ball from side to side across the mirror surface, never putting any pressure on the mirror but allowing the soaked cotton to lightly touch the mirror surface. This should remove any remaining dirt and oil from the mirror surface without scratching the finish. If there is

still dirt stuck to the mirror, allow it to soak another hour and repeat the cotton ball process.

Next remove the mirror from the tub without touching the mirror surface. If possible set the mirror at a steep angle but adequately supported. Rinse the mirror with warm water. Again my shower worked well. The tile grout lines made a good lip to support the mirror at a steep angle while I used the removable shower head to rinse the mirror with warm tap water.



After thoroughly rinsing the mirror with warm tap water, it is time for hopefully, the final rinse.



This is done with distilled water. I found that Walgreens has gallon jugs of distilled water for under \$2.00. Most of the water droplets should run off the mirror. However, it is important to not let water drops dry on the mirror surface.



Chase the remainder of the water from the mirror surface with a can of compressed air, sometimes called Dust Off. Lowes again had this as did Best Buy. If after chasing all the water droplets off the mirror you see dried water spots on the mirror Rinse it again. This time use a mixture of 75% distilled water and 25% alcohol (denatured alcohol) Tequila is not an acceptable substitute. Then again chase the droplets off the mirror surface.

You should be left with a clean, undamaged, dry mirror. All that is left is to put it back in your telescope without touching the surface or damaging it in any other way. Then wait for clear dark skies and give it a test.

Abell 1060



Abell 1060 is a galaxy cluster, about 165 million light years away. Its central region includes six NGC galaxies brighter than 14th magnitude within a 20 arcminute field. The cluster is dominated by a pair of giant ellipticals, NGC 3309 and NGC 3311. Also known as Hydra I, Abell 1060 is a member of the Hydra - Centaurus Supercluster.

Image by Rich Richins
Hyperstar 33x3, ISO 1600

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ASLC - Sharing the Universe
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for Over 50 Years

