

President's Message - May 2010



We had a great Astronomy Day event last month at the soccer field of Mayfield High School. We had publicity in various places before the event. On Astronomy Day Saturday, Wes Baker operated one of the ASLC solar telescopes at the Farmer's Market promoting the evening event. Rich Richins did the same thing with another of our solar telescopes during the day at the soccer field.

More ASLC members arrived at the soccer field as the sun headed for the horizon. Cory Sone and members of the Sun City Astronomers came up from El Paso to lend a hand. Telescopes and binoculars were set up all over the field. As the sun went down, a band of clouds blew through.

Set up at the east end of the field was a loud speaker and video projection. Cory Stone welcomed everyone and as twilight settled in, our speaker of the evening gave his talk (see photo below). With the clouds off to the east and the wind dying down, the telescopes were pointed at the sky. The three-quarters Moon was the prime target for many of the telescopes, but Mars, Saturn, and the Beehive were also targets. Prizes were awarded all during the event, concluding with a Celestron Firstscope at the end of the evening.

I want to thank every one who came out and helped at this event, especially Cory Stone and the Sun City Astronomers and volunteers who came up from El Paso. We had a great event with many members of the public getting a chance to see the heavens through a telescope for the first time.

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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This Month's Observer

President's Message.....	1
Next Meeting.....	2
June HDO.....	2
Hello From The Texas Star Party	3
April Meeting Minutes	7

Next Meeting

The ASLC gang who attended the Texas Star Party will provide a tour of the TSP, including many celestial wonders. There will also be terrestrial wonders, but what kind, you will just have to come to the meeting to find out. The May meeting will be held May 28 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)

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 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!



Hello From The 2010 Texas Star Party

By Kirby Benson

Star Date: Sunday, May 9, 2010 - Day One.

It appears that everyone who had been planning to attend TSP 2010 made it to the Prude Ranch this year. At least so far we have Chuck Sterling, Jerry Gaber, Steve Barkses, Keith Schirmer, Steve Smith, Dave Dockery, Rich Richins and Kirby Benson.



At great personal cost (time, energy, money, etc., blah, blah) Dave Dockery and Rich Richins came down the day before TSP was open in order to secure the ASLC observing and imaging site on the middle field. We don't know where they were during that 12 hour interval before they showed up in the TSP line of cars waiting to get in, but this reporter did notice small fleshy antennas sprouting out of the backs of their heads. So draw your own conclusions. I expect this TSP will reveal several instances of UFO phenomena as well as more data on the Gerbilsaurus bones that Steve Barkses discovered last year. At least he claims he has a tooth from one, but no one here has ever seen it.

Now that we have given you, dear reader, some background information it should be mentioned that it was very cloudy Sunday with a few holes between the clouds for viewing. Rich was out with his binoculars working on one of the TSP binocular lists. He claims it was poor viewing conditions but he was able to find a few objects between the clouds. There were no imagers out and about due to the poor conditions although we were treated to a beautiful sunset.

Star Date: Monday, May 10, 2010 – Day Two.

Monday at TSP started out with a bang. In fact, a big bang as Chuck Sterling's telescope bit the dust when wind gusts up to 50 mph roared across the imaging and observing fields. This was somewhat reminiscent of TSP 2008 when a mini-tornado struck the middle field and raised havoc with some ASLC member's equipment.

The wind continued to blow relentlessly throughout the day and some brave ASLC members took down the canopy in order to prevent more damage from occurring.

As the wind died down toward evening and the clouds began to dissipate as it grew darker, the night turned out to be splendid, with with stars shining brightly. Almost instantly the mood of the ASLC astronomers improved.





This night the last man standing was Dave Dockery. The writer of this blog left the field at 5 a.m. and Dave was still shuffling around the telescopes and could be heard to mumble, "I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it." I didn't know what 'it' was but assumed it had something to do with imaging or checking things off a list.

Several people hit the ground and covered their ears when Jerry Graber's mount began slewing thinking perhaps there really was an alien invasion under way. After the first five times or so most of us got used to it and no longer ducked down.

And speaking of alien invasions this writer noticed a large triangular scorched area in the horse pasture this morning along with some strange looking footprints. There was also a large moist cocoon looking thing under the trailer that Dave and Rich stay in. It wasn't there yesterday. Everyone in the group was evasive when asked what it might be. I don't want to alarm anyone.

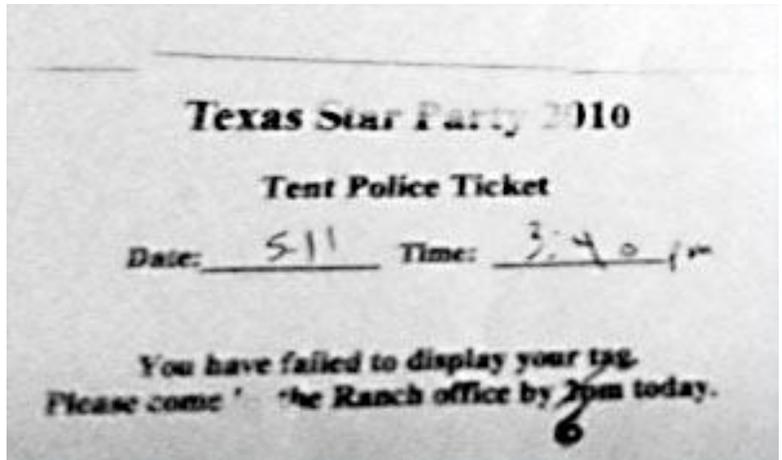
Star Date: May 11, 2010 – Day Three

ASLC Member Busted at TSP!

The Texas Star Party SWAT Team swooped down on an ASLC member in the early morning hours of May 11 for lack of proper display of the TSP/Prude Ranch camping/parking permit.

Sheriff Rich commented, "It's about time they caught the rascal even if it is one our own. I hope they throw the book at him."

The accused offender protested, "It was just a misunderstanding, I did nothing wrong."



Yea, but that is what they all say!



New policy for late night TSP members.

Starting on Monday night there is now a floating award (that is, it is to be passed to the winner of each evening). This is the LAST MAN STANDING award. Who ever is the last person to leave the observing field will be awarded an Etta James doll singing "At Last". Monday night the award went to Dave Dockery and Tuesday night to Kirby Benson.



ASLC Members Add Golf To The List Of Approved Activities For The TSP.

ASLC members Dave Dockery, Jerry Gabers, Rich Richins and Steve Barkes drove to Alpine, Texas, to play nine holes of golf. The only noteworthy comment was, "The greens were so small the golf ball almost covered them up."

The past two nights have been very good for observing and imaging. It is cloudy and windy during the daylight hours and then shortly after dark the sky clears and the wind dies down.

There will be images coming out and onto the blog soon.

Star Date: May 12, 2010 – Day Four

Last Man Standing Award is Passed to New Winner!

Book makers and others who watch this event carefully were taken back and surprised to say the least when Steve Smith came from behind the pack to lay claim to the title of *Last Man Standing*. Smith, who was a long shot to pay 156 to 1, upset the field when toward end of the night. He surged ahead and stayed awake until the last moment. Benson, who was



attempting to hold on to the title after claiming it from Dockery on May 11, faded at the last and left the race to Smith. Richins and Gabers were both favored to win but never left the gate. The winning time for Smith was sometime shortly after 5 a.m. There will be an awards ceremony for the Etta James singing doll.

More Mount Problems Plague Steve Barkes

Steve Barkes, who at last year's TSP had a Gemini break down, began having Losmandy mount problems yesterday. There was a brief clinic to attempt repairs, but this attempt was only half successful. It was determined that the Oldham coupler on his



declination axis was the culprit and has now been repaired.

Steve claims that others have been crying out for help with their G-11 mounts are copy cats and lemmings and only want attention.



The Sky Continues To Please ASLC Astronomers

Against all the predictions the sky once again cleared up beautifully for the third night in a row. The pattern has been cloudy and windy during the day time. At dusk the sky will clear up and the wind will die down.

It has been a fantastic week so far. The nighttime temperatures have been tolerable in the low 40s. There will be many fine images and observing lists coming out of this TSP.



Star Date: Thursday, May 13, 2010 – Day Five

Steve Barkes Wins Last Man Standing Award!

After days of struggling with faulty equipment Steve Barkes won the Last Man Standing Award. Thinking the G11 gear box was the cause of the tracking difficulties that he had been plagued with, it failed to track correctly again on Wednesday night. On Thursday he was able to 'track' the problem down. The Oldham coupler in combination with a bad cable was discovered to be the problem and Steve quickly

crossed the finish line and won the coveted award.

Asked how he felt Steve commented, "It was really pretty easy to win since it was cloudy Thursday night and no-one else was on the field with their telescopes and cameras."

Jerry Gaber Submits Blank Image

Jerry submitted an image for the blog to Rich Richins, the blog web master (or blog master) that contained no image data. Jerry has been talking for days about how he wanted to image the Jewel Box in the constellation Scorpio so he could see it published on the ASLC TSP blog. However when Rich opened the Jewel Box image it was blank!





When Jerry was asked about this strange submission he commented, "I have been telling people for years there is nothing in that part of the sky. What this image does is prove my contention and sets a new standard for scientific discovery."

TSP Deemed A Success By All ASLC Attendees

By Thursday morning it was determined that after three fabulous nights if nothing else was to work out it was by any measurement a great success. All three nights were clear with acceptable seeing and transparency. Most of the members doing the challenge

lists were successful and many great images have been taken.

More on Strange Object Under Trailer

The large, moist, pulsing object that appeared under the Dockery trailer has disappeared! It is not known why or where it has gone or what it was there for in the first place. However, there is a film of gooey spider web looking stuff all over both the Richins and the Dockery Dob Reflectors. Could something be inside?

(Editor's Note: If you want to know more about the ASLC's adventures at TSP, be sure to come to this Friday's ASLC General Meeting. More images and more stories will be presented by the ASLC TSP team!)

Minutes, April 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 7:33 pm., 23 April 2010, Room 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 March meeting were published in the most recent issue of the Club newsletter, the *High Desert Observer* (HDO). Rich Richins moved to dispense with reading the minutes; Janet Stevens seconded. The motion passed by acclamation. Note: Bert Stevens will be editing the HDO until a replacement editor volunteers. Hard copies of the newsletter will be mailed in the near future. There was not an additional Secretary's report.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer reported on the status of the Club's accounts. There was not an additional Treasurer's report.



Committee Reports:

Observatory Committee:

Rich Richins, Committee Chairman, did not 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 Club has sold \$900.00 worth of apparel items so far. He has some items still available.

Outreach Committee:

Ron Kramer, Outreach Coordinator, provided an update on events, primarily that Astronomy Day this weekend is the last big event until fall. He is still working issues with the Mescalero schools for a star party/observation event. He displayed a large handful of notes and letters from Desert Hills Elementary thanking the Club for their star party earlier this spring.

Astronomy Day 2010:

Astronomy Day 2010 is 24 April 2010. Rich Richins reports that plans are in place for the Saturday events. He provided brief directions to the High Noon soccer fields/Field of Dreams for members new to the area. Volunteers from the Las Cruces High School National Honor Society will be on hand starting at 5:00 pm to help direct traffic and help with crowd control. Pizza for all volunteers will be served at 6:00 pm. Ron Kramer said he can still use items for give-aways/door prizes. Information and publicity were distributed at the Earth Day events at Young Park on 17 April.

Loaner Telescope Program:

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

There were no additional committee reports.

Old Business:

Tombaugh Observatory

Ron Kramer is working with Ron Fisher at NMSU to submit a reimbursable work order to have the entrance doors fixed/replaced. An estimate will need to be obtained first. Steve Barks will assist Ron with this effort.

There was no additional old business discussed.

New Business:

1. Texas Star Party (TSP) 2010 – Only two weeks until TSP!
2. Solar telescopes – Rich Richins and Steve Barks reported on using the two solar telescopes recently obtained by the Club at the recent Earth Day event. Rich urged members to inspect and evaluate the mount being used with the Meade ‘scope after the meeting.

There was no additional new business for discussion.



The President adjourned the business portion of the meeting at 7:49 pm.

Presentation:

The April program was scheduled to be presented by Club member Vince Dovydaitis. Instead, he introduced Michael Sussman, Club member and NMSU astronomy graduate student. Michael’s topic, also one of his research projects, was “*Seasonal Change on Uranus*”. Michael started with Herschel’s discovery of Uranus in 1781 and continued to the present day, describing information that has been collected with ground-based and orbital sensors, and fly-by vehicles.

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 April 2010 monthly meeting concluded at 8:50 pm.

-Respectfully submitted by John McCullough, ASLC Secretary



Calendar of Events May-June (MDT)

May 27	5:07 p.m.	Full Moon
28		ASLC General Meeting
31		Memorial Day
June 04	4:13 p.m.	Last Quarter Moon
06	8 a.m.	Mars 0.9 degrees north of Regulus
06	Noon	Jupiter 0.5 degrees south of Uranus
12	5:15 a.m.	New Moon
14	Evening	Venus near the Moon
18	10:29 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
19		Moongaze
20		Father's Day
21	5:28 a.m.	June Solstice - Summer begins
25		ASLC General Meeting
26	5:30 a.m.	Full Moon - Partial Lunar Eclipse

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

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

