

# FIRST LIGHT



*Journal of the South Bay Astronomical Society - August 2004*  
on line at [www.geocities.com/sbas\\_elcamino](http://www.geocities.com/sbas_elcamino)

**Monthly General Meeting: Friday, August 6th, 7:30 PM**

**Guest Speaker : Dr. Steven Morris (SBAS)**

***“The Venus Transit As Seen From Egypt”***

## ***Observing Reports***

**@Ridgecrest School** - It was a nice, clear, night for the **July 10th** in-town observing session. It was also another very large turnout. Once again I did not get around to record the names of everyone in attendance, but I would say that there were at least a dozen scopes and between 30-40 people there. We seem to be getting quite a few newcomers, both with and without telescopes. I would say at least half of the people and scopes there were first or second timers. The marine layer stayed away the entire night and the moisture level in the upper atmosphere was low enough to be able to see the Milky Way through the sky glow. Through the evening we had the potential to see four Iridium flares, but I kept getting distracted as the times approached. As a result we missed three of them but did catch one of -2 magnitude. The most popular area of the sky for the night were the constellations Scorpio and Sagittarius with their many globular and open clusters and nebula. M57 was quite nice near the zenith. The final few diehards packed up about 1:00 A.M.

**@Cottonwood Spring Campground** - We decided that the weather looked a bit better at Cottonwood Spring Campground on **July 17th**. This proved to be a very good decision. As I listened for traffic reports while heading out of the L.A. area, the report came that Highway 14 was closed in both directions due to a brush fire. We avoided that encounter with fire but would not be able to completely avoid another. The mountains above Palm Springs were ablaze with strong winds in the area. Upon arrival at Cottonwood Spring, the smoke was low on the horizon and a cloud band from a cold front was passing overhead. As twilight dwindled Jupiter was showing nicely with reasonable seeing for its low elevation. The Great Red Spot could be seen. We took a look at comet NEAT Q4, now about magnitude 6.4. One could just sense the direction the tail was leaving the coma. Ken Munson pointed out another comet that was better than Q4, with a much clearer tail. I did not record the name of this comet, unfortunately. Eventually, the cloud cleared from above and I began to explore the Milky Way as it rose. I spent quite a bit of time just wandering through the Milky Way through my 15 inch Dob, seeing what I would run into and then trying to identify it. There is much to see.

As the night wore on I took a look at many of the globular clusters that are visible this time of year. This was quite a treat as I see these for the first time through the 15 inch. Steve Lindsey spent some time with me looking at the North America and Veil nebulas. We tried some filters, which brought out considerable detail. The fire over Palm Springs was starting to affect our observing. The wind had shifted to bring the smoke in our direction. The Western sky was dimming out and a general loss of stellar brightness was noted over the entire sky. Occasionally the smell of smoke could be weakly sensed. Eventually, the haze brought an end to the observing at about 3:30-4:00 A.M. Still, it was a pleasant night with the temperature reaching a low of 72 F. The group consisted of Mike Rivas and his daughter, Ken Munson and his daughter, Tim Moore, Steve Lindsey and his son, Cliff (sorry, I forgot your last name) and his son and myself.

- **Greg Benecke**

**@Cottonwood Springs** – I joined several other club members in a trip out to the Cottonwood Campground during the new moon weekend. I had planned to go out to the eastern Mojave but, based on the satellite photos, the air looked to be a little clearer in the western Mojave. Then the fires came along and ruined that. Still, Cottonwood had some pretty good viewing. There were 5 comets in visual range that night. 2002 T7 and 2003 T3 turned out to be lost in the smoky haze along the horizon, west and north, respectively. 2001 Q4 has faded considerably from its brightest and was barely more than a faint gray blob. 2003 K4 on the other hand has continued to brighten. I believe it may peak out around magnitude 7.5 or so. 2004 H6, which I've seen in several photographs from the southern hemisphere was also a bit disappointing, being just a very faint blob.

My biggest treat of the night came while checking out the planet Uranus. When I used my 10mm Radian eyepiece (280x), the planet showed as a nice, slightly green disk. As I gazed at it, I suddenly noticed 3 tiny, faint points of light above the planet. The outmost one was about twice as far from the planet as the two inner ones. I ran over to check with Greg's Starry Night software. It showed the moons in the positions I was seeing the points of light, but it had all the moons listed as being exactly the same magnitude (16.53). After getting home, I did some research online and found that the four main moons are all actually around magnitude 14. That's just within the visual range of my scope. So I really did get to see the moons of Uranus!

- Ken Munson

## ***Mt. Wilson Observatory Trip Rescheduled***

Our trip to the Mt. Wilson Observatory to use the 60-inch Telescope has been scheduled for Friday, **September 17th**. All previous arrangements for attendees are still in effect. If anyone cannot make the trip, please contact me immediately so that other members on the waiting list can have the opportunity to join the group.

- Greg Benecke

## ***New Instructor Needed for Adult Education Class Supported By SBAS***

I am no longer going to be teaching the adult education class "***Astronomy for City Dwellers***", offered by the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District. Joe Fierstein taught the class before I did, about 4 years ago. If anyone would be interested in teaching the class - it's held on six consecutive Tuesday evenings, starting in mid-September, for 2 hours per session. If anyone has any questions about the job you can contact me, see page 3 for my contact information, or you can contact the Adult Ed. department of the PVPUSD.

- Mike Mayerchak

## ***Attention! SBAS Members' Preference for Newsletter Delivery Required***

In the past, SBAS was very fortunate that our newsletter reproduction services have been provided at "no charge". Circumstances have changed however, and we will now be paying for the monthly hardcopy newsletter reproduction costs to an outside service provider. This is an opportunity to expand the newsletter delivery process into more efficient and economical methods, thereby cutting down on the hardcopy production effort and costs.

Therefore, the SBAS Planning Committee is asking all members to declare their preferred newsletter delivery method from the following choices:

- ❖ I prefer to access the newsletter from the SBAS website.  
Option: Please send me an email notification when the newsletter is available on-line. My email address is:
- 

- ❖ I need to continue receiving a hardcopy through the U.S. Postal Service.

You may email your preferred method to Greg Benecke, return this form at the August 6th General Meeting or the August 7<sup>th</sup> observing session at Ridgecrest School, or mail to SBAS, P.O. Box 1999, Redondo Beach, CA 90278.

## Our SBAS Committee

<b>President</b>	Greg Benecke	217-1512	BeneckeRUs@aol.com
<b>Program Chairman</b>	Joe Fierstein	377-9834	Joefiers@aol.com
<b>Treasurer</b>			
<b>Newsletter Reproduction Astronomical League Rep.</b>	John Collins	- - -	Jcollins@runbox.com
<b>Astronomical League Liaison</b>	Bill Eisele	542-5070	Astronomy131@aol.com
<b>SBAS Website Webmaster</b>	Alex Athas	- - -	sbas_elcamino@yahoo.com
<b>First Light Editor</b>	Laura Lucas	798-7281	lpsaloquator@aol.com
<b>Observing Committee</b>	Greg Benecke	217-1512	BeneckeRUs@aol.com
	Craig Gates	376-6387	- - -
<b>Executive Committee</b>	Ron Rennie	326-5589	Rkgrennie@yahoo.com
	Mike Mayerchak	831-9188	Mmayerchak@aol.com
	Mark Braden	540-2810	Bradenm@fnic.com

## Monthly General Meetings



We normally meet on the first Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Planetarium at El Camino College. If the first Friday is on or close to a holiday, we usually defer the meeting until the second Friday of the month.

The Planetarium is on the south side of Manhattan Beach Blvd., one block west of Crenshaw Blvd. (near the center of the map at left). Click on the map to get a display that can be zoomed out for a regional view. The zoom display appears in a separate browser window, which can be closed to return to this page.

The domed roof of the planetarium is visible from the street. There is on-street parking, and we can often use campus parking: check inside to see if you need a FREE parking permit for your car. Park in northeast corner lot, temporarily, due to the construction project.

We enjoy the planetarium facilities through the courtesy of the El Camino College Administration, and have several faculty members of the Astronomy Department as members of our Club. Our meetings always include an informal opening, when new attendees are invited to introduce themselves and let us know about their interests in astronomy. Members share their latest news and observations at this time. The rest of the evening is devoted to guest speakers, who range from amateur astronomers to professional astronomers to representatives from local aerospace companies to college professors. We are fortunate to have all these talented people in our area, willing to come and talk to us.

## Monthly Planning Meetings

Committee members (and anyone else with an interest in Society activities) meet each month, usually on the Monday following the general meeting. Meetings are sometimes rescheduled due to travel and other circumstances. Exact date and time of each month's meeting will be announced in the schedule of events in *FIRST LIGHT* each month, and should also be verified with a committee member by any member or visitor wishing to attend. All are welcome!

We will meet on Monday, August 9th at 7:30 PM at the home of Joe and Miriam Fierstein. Take Hawthorne Blvd. south past Pacific Coast Hwy. up the hill passing Silver Spur Rd. and Highridge until you get to the light at Eddinghill Dr., then turn right and go downhill to the 'T' intersection at Golden Meadow where you turn left up 2 blocks and turn left on Willow Dr. to 3<sup>rd</sup> house on the right side from the corner – 7022 Willow Dr., Rancho Palos Verdes.

## **SBAS Membership Benefits**

Contact John Collins for magazine subscriptions at club rates: "Sky & Telescope" \$32.95 and "Astronomy" \$29.00! Make your check payable to SBAS and mail the payment and your subscription / renewal form directly to South Bay Astronomical Society, P.O. Box 1999, Redondo Beach, CA 90278.

Part of your SBAS membership dues goes toward membership in the Astronomical League. All paid members should be receiving the "Reflector", the league's newsletter, four times a year. As a member organization, we can participate in a number of award programs they offer. These are based on completing various observing challenges. Check out the Astronomical League website at [www.astroleague.org](http://www.astroleague.org)

## **NexStar 8 Available to SBAS Members**

All members in good standing (with at least six months of continuous membership) can borrow the club's Nexstar8 for up to 7 days. The fee of \$5 for a weekend, or \$10 for an entire week, is nonrefundable and will be added to the club's Accessories Fund "Wish List" for future purchases. A fully refundable deposit of \$200 cash or check is required. Loss or damage is the responsibility of the borrower. A copy of the complete South Bay Astronomical Society Nexstar 8 Borrowing Rules and Agreement is available upon request. The **Accessories Fund "Wish List"** – Member contributions of any amount or donations will be appreciated, as will any suggestions for new purchases!

## **August - Comets & Asteroids**

### **Comets Visible In August:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Magnitude</b>	<b>Constellation</b>
2001 Q4	8.1 – 9.0	UMa-Dra
2003 K4	8.5 – 8.1	Boo-Com-Vir
2003 T3 (Tabur)	10.5 – 11.1	Lyn-UMa
2004 H6	8.7 – 11.1	Aqr-Aql

### **Comets at Perihelion:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Magnitude</b>
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No visible comets at perihelion.

### **Near-Earth Asteroid Flybys:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Magnitude</b>	<b>Distance</b>
19 Aug	4150 Starr	14.16	0.854 AU
22 Aug	2000 Herschel	14.29	1.308AU

Check the JPL Ephemeris Generator page for coordinates of the objects at:  
<http://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/eph>

- **Ken Munson**

# Night Sky Network Messages

## GET READY FOR THE NOVA ORIGINS MINISERIES

NASA is very excited about its partnership with you – the astronomy club community. Michael Greene, lead of the JPL Navigator Public Engagement Program, wanted to send this message to you. "The Night Sky Network is just five months old, and already you are all doing an impressive job in bringing astronomy to the public. We here at NASA/JPL admire your dedication and commitment to engaging students, parents, and the general public. Given the different venues you use, and the variety of activities you employ, you have the potential of reaching millions of Americans. NASA is proud to be your partner in sharing the excitement of the universe with all Americans."

Has the universe always existed? How did it become a place that could harbor life? Are we alone, or are there alien worlds waiting to be discovered? NOVA presents some startling new answers in Origins, a groundbreaking four-part NOVA miniseries airing on PBS television stations September 28 and 29, 2004. NASA is arranging for Night Sky Network club members to participate in an exclusive Telecon with the producer and the host of this NOVA series. The date is tentatively set for Thursday, **September 9th**. We'll be sending out a confirmation of the date and time within the next two weeks. Remember, anyone from your club can call in and participate.

This NASA/NOVA partnership is a great opportunity for your club to plan some astronomy events around this miniseries. For more information on the NOVA series, log into the Night Sky Network and scroll down to "ToolKit Downloads". Or log in, then click on <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/club/kit-downloads.cfm>. Click on "Tele-Conference", then choose: "NOVA Origins Miniseries".

## WINNERS IN "EVENTS LOGGED" DRAWING

The ASP and JPL would like to congratulate the winners in our first quarterly "Events Logged" drawing. Each winning club received an engraved Night Sky Network green laser pointer to use at their outreach events. Five events were selected at random from the 331 qualifying events logged through June 30th. And the winning clubs are:

- \* Raleigh Astronomy Club of Raleigh, North Carolina
- \* Central Pennsylvania Observers of State College, Pennsylvania
- \* Charlottesville Astronomical Society of Charlottesville, Virginia
- \* San Antonio Astronomical Society of San Antonio, Texas
- \* Door Peninsula Astronomical Society of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

The deadline to participate in the next quarterly "Events Logged" drawing is September 30th. All events logged from July 1st through midnight September 30th count in the drawing for another five engraved green laser pointers! The next drawing will be held on October 4th.

Each qualifying event your club logs counts as a "ticket" in the drawing. The more Night Sky Network events your club holds and reports, the more chances your club has to win! A qualifying event is one where your club used any part of the PlanetQuest Outreach ToolKit to provide information to your club or the public about the search for extrasolar planets. Gifts are provided by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. For questions about logging and approving events, see the FAQ's on the Participants' site after you log in: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/login.cfm>.

## COMING IN OCTOBER: OUR GALAXY, OUR UNIVERSE OUTREACH TOOLKIT

The next Outreach ToolKit for the Night Sky Network, "Our Galaxy, Our Universe", is currently under development and testing. This new ToolKit will be shipped in October to all Night Sky Network member clubs who have logged at least one PlanetQuest outreach event by September 30th. This ToolKit features materials and activities to convey concepts of distance and scale in our Galaxy and the rest of the Universe. Included are at-the-telescope props to expand on the stories you tell about the objects your visitors are viewing. Remember that to remain a member in good standing of the Night Sky Network, your club needs to log at least five outreach events by the end of December 2004. This new ToolKit may provide even more opportunities to share astronomy with your audiences!

# ***New Widefield Astrophotos***

Here's a few recent astrophotos of mine you might enjoy from the June SBAS outing on Inyokern Road.

<http://home.earthlink.net/~stevelindsey/cygmilkyway.htm>

<http://home.earthlink.net/~stevelindsey/milkywayso.htm>

<http://home.earthlink.net/~stevelindsey/rhotopipe.htm>

- Steve Lindsey

## ***AstroImage 2004***

The Orange County Astronomers is pleased to again bring you a strong lineup of speakers for this event. On Friday evening **August 27th**, we will again host a session for new astroimagers. **An Introduction to Film, Digital Camera, and Astronomical CCD Cameras** will be presented by Greg Pyros (OCA member) and Robert Reeves, author of *Wide Field Astrophotography*. There will be Q&A time available as well as hardware on display. The session is oriented towards beginners, but all imagers are invited to attend and provide tips and encouragement. Saturday, **August 28th**, sessions continue OCA's tradition of providing quality speakers to advance the art of astroimaging.

**Color Balancing Astroimages** (Ron Wodaski) - Tutorial presentation of techniques for getting the color balance right for your astroimages, including an overview of basic processing using Adobe Photoshop.

**Getting to Print** (Larry Arnold) - Discussion of color spaces, printer gamuts, printing technologies, color matching, and upscaling images to insure that your prints do justice to your images.

**Imaging with Digital Cameras** (Robert Reeves) - Introduction to technology in the hottest new area in astroimaging and techniques for getting good results out of your digital camera, whether it is a fixed or removable lens system.

**Using a Modified Digital Camera For Increased Sensitivity** (Mike Unsold) - Tutorial presentation describing the use of a Nikon D70 with infrared and lowpass filters removed for increased sensitivity, especially in the H-alpha region. Setup, image capture, and processing of a set of H-alpha images from a modified D70 using ImagesPlus.

**Crossing Over From Film to Digital** (Loke Kun Tan) - An experienced astrophotographer's personal evolution from film to CCD imaging, including a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the media, matching media with optics, and special image processing required for CCD images.

**Ultrawidefield Film Imaging -- A New Dimension in Astrophotography** (Wei-Hao Wang) - Discussion of widefield film imaging with unusually high image quality, including a fresh approach to film selection, exposures, and digital processing of astrophotos.

On Saturday evening, the OCA is pleased to host a special event with Robert Reeves (author of *Wide Field Astrophotography*) and Don Pettit (NASA International Space Station astronaut) who will make a joint presentation of **"Amateur Astroimaging from the International Space Station"**. This talk chronicles their long-distance collaborations in techniques which allowed Don to do his own "amateur" imaging from the International Space Station. Some of Don's never-before-seen images will be presented as well as an inside view of astronaut life. Note: Don Pettit's presence is subject to NASA scheduling.

**Registration** \$65.00 (\$49.00 for pre-registration) includes: Friday evening beginner's session, Saturday technical presentations, Saturday box lunch, Saturday evening special speaker presentation, Entry to Vendor, Gallery, and Exhibit areas and Conference Proceedings CD.

**Pre-register via Mail** To register by mail, send your name, mailing address, email information and indicate your selections from below with a check (for US dollars) made out to Orange County Astronomers to: Charlie Oostdyk, Orange County Astronomers, PO BOX 1762, Costa Mesa, CA 92628.

- o \$49.00 (discounted registration)
- o \$20.00 Cold Buffet Dinner
- o \$15.00 Optional Conf. Video CD

**Pre-register Online** via a secure web page at: [www.OCAstronomers.org](http://www.OCAstronomers.org)

**Register at the Door** \$65.00 on Friday evening or Saturday morning. However, if we are at capacity, you may be turned away. In addition, the optional Saturday evening dinner is not available if you pay at the door.

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## ***Schedule of Coming Events***

<b>6 August Friday 7:30 P.M.</b>	<b>Monthly General Meeting:</b> Dr. Steven Morris will be showing images of the Venus Transit, taken during his trip to Egypt.
<b>7 August Saturday Evening</b>	<b>In-Town Dark Sky Observing at Ridgecrest School – Weather Permitting:</b> If the weather conditions are marginal, contact Greg Benecke to confirm that he will be opening the gate! Take Hawthorne Blvd. south across Pacific Coast Hwy.; continue up the hill past Silver Spur and turn left at Highridge. Go one mile and turn left on Whitley Collins, up one block and turn left on Northbay Rd., the new parking lot is at the end on the left. Enter parking lot and turn left, the gate is at the east end (it should be open about 15 minutes before sunset) and a paved road leading into the playground where we have traditionally set up. If at all possible, drop your equipment off and park your car in the new parking lot (less than 200 feet away). If you are absolutely certain that your vehicle does <u>not</u> drip anything you can park with your equipment. <b><i>Drive with care</i></b> to avoid steel pillars supporting basketball nets...
<b>9 August Monday 7:30 P.M.</b>	<b>Monthly Planning Meeting</b> Refer to page 3 for directions.
<b>13 August Friday Morning</b>	<b>Palos Verdes Library Lecture</b> Joe Fierstein will present his lecture on the Library's telescope-like sculpture and the Analemma.
<b>14 August Saturday Evening</b>	<b>Out-of-Town Dark Sky Observing – New Moon August 16<sup>th</sup></b> Contact Greg Benecke to confirm site location.
<b>19 JPL 20 PCC 7:00 P.M.</b>	<b>Von Karman Auditorium Lecture Series – FREE</b> "The Orbiting Carbon Observatory: Understanding Atmospheric CO <sub>2</sub> and its Impact on Climate Change", presented by Charles Miller, JPL, Orbiting Carbon Observatory Deputy Principal Investigator. For more information call: (818) 354-0112. Current and archived webcasts can be viewed at <a href="http://www.jpl.nasa.gov">http://www.jpl.nasa.gov</a>
<b>27 – 28 August Fri. – Sat.</b>	<b>Astrolmage 2004 – Sponsored by Orange County Astronomers</b> See page 6 for details!
<b>4 September Saturday Evening</b>	<b>In-Town Dark Sky Observing at Ridgecrest School – Weather Permitting.</b> Refer to August 7th entry for directions to the site & instructions on weather conditions.
<b>10 September Friday 7:30 P.M.</b>	<b>Monthly General Meeting:</b> The speaker for the evening will be announced in the September Newsletter.
<b>10 – 11 September Fri. – Sat.</b>	<b>Nightfall 2004 – Sponsored by RTMC</b> Scheduled dates are confirmed. Call (800) 242-0044 for Palm Canyon Resort reservations.
<b>11 September Saturday Evening</b>	<b>Out-of-Town Dark Sky Observing – New Moon September 14th</b> Contact Greg Benecke to confirm site location.
<b>13 September Monday 7:30 P.M.</b>	<b>Monthly Planning Meeting</b> The location of this meeting will be announced in the September Newsletter.

# South Bay Astronomical Society

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***General Meeting at El Camino College Planetarium:  
Friday, August 6th at 7:30 P.M.***

***Guest Speaker: Dr. Steven Morris (SBAS)***

***“The Venus Transit As Seen From Egypt”***

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South Bay Astronomical Society  
P.O. Box 1999  
Redondo Beach, CA 90278

❖ **Attention All Members – Refer to page 2 to make arrangements for Newsletter delivery!**