



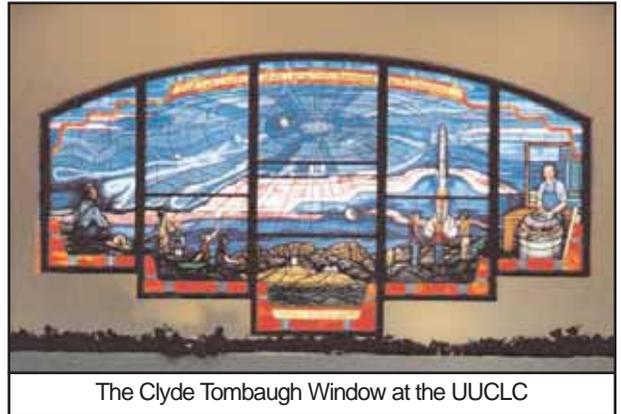
aslc bulletin

The Bulletin of The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces
www.aslc-nm.org

January - February, 2005

UUCLC and ASLC to Celebrate 75th Anniversary of Pluto's Discovery

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces in collaboration with the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces will host a celebration to mark the 75th anniversary of the discovery of the planet Pluto by Clyde Tombaugh. This will be a two day event February 19th and 20th, and will be open to the community.



Beginning on Saturday, February 19th from 2 until 4 pm, and continuing on Sunday February 20 from 2 until 4 pm, the Tombaugh gallery will feature an exhibit of "out of this world" photographs taken through the telescopes of Astronomical Society members. Also on exhibit will be a Clyde Tombaugh handmade telescope (the last known scope he built). Members of the Astronomical Society will be on hand to answer questions about these exhibits and related astronomical topics. In addition, a video will be presented of remembrances and anecdotes about the life of Clyde Tombaugh.

On both days there will be renowned speakers on Astronomy giving presentations of interest in the church sanctuary. On Sunday there will be a reception in the gallery following the speakers.

This event is open to the public. It is a good opportunity to see the unique stained glass window depicting the discovery of Pluto. It will be a family activity and everyone in the local community in invited to come and celebrate this historical event. The Unitarian Universalist Church with the Tombaugh Gallery is located at 2000 S. Solano. If you would like more information about this event please call: (505) 522-7281.

- Will Beattie (UUCLC)

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Upcoming ASLC Events

Please see the ASLC website <aslc-nm.org> for more information

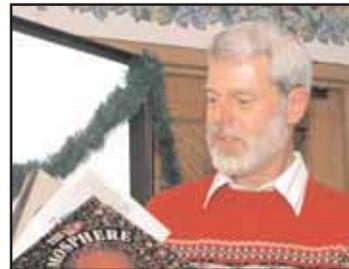
- January 8 - Deep Sky Observing (CDNP)
- January 15 - MoonGaze (Int'l Delights Cafe)
- January 16 - New Telescope Clinic (La Llarona Park)
- January 28 - ASLC Board Meeting (6:45 pm, DABCC)
- January 28 - ASLC Monthly Meeting (7:30 pm, DABCC)
- February 5 - Deep Sky Observing (Upham)
- February 11 - Star Party (Tombaugh ES)
- February 19-20 - Tombaugh/Pluto Exhibit at UUCLC

ASLC Meeting Highlights

December Meeting: ASLC 2004 Annual Holiday Dinner: A Time of Celebration and Remembrance



The ASLC met December 17, 2004 at AJ Flours on El Paseo for its annual holiday dinner. More than 20 Society members, family and guests joined to share a holiday meal and to celebrate the events of the year. The occasion included the celebration of the life of a founding member, Scotty Murrell, who died earlier this year.



After the holiday meal, outgoing ASLC President, Steve Barkes, welcomed participants, shared a brief recollection of the year's events and introduced incoming President, Rich Richins. Rich shared holiday greetings and then presented a pictorial history (with commentary) of ASLC 2004 functions including the VLA tour, Texas Star Party, Astronomy Day, Moongaze, and others. At the close of the presentation recent images of Scotty



Murrell were shown and his contemporaries and fellow Society members were asked to share thoughts and remembrances of Scotty's life and involvement in ASLC.

A very touching closing was then displayed. Rich's closing photos were some of the best astro-photography images captured by Society members this year (Dave Dockery, Steve Barkes, Steve Smith, Rich Richins), with carefully selected musical background (Kate Rusby - *Underneath the Stars*). Silence fell on the room as participants celebrated the progress of the Society, the beauty of the images and the meaning of Scotty's life.



- Story and Photos by Tim Barnett-Queen

== MORE HOLIDAY PARTY PHOTOS CAN BE SEEN AT ASLC-NM.ORG ==

January Meeting: "Because I Stood on the Shoulder of Clyde Tombaugh - A Sequel to his Work at White Sands Missile Range". Presentation by Joe Zurlinden.



SUMMARY: Mr. Zurlinden will give a Power Point Presentation of the work he is doing at WSMR's Optical Facility. The work includes extending WSMR's image data acquisition capabilities to include infrared wavelengths. The talk will cover the process from initial requirements to testing the final product satisfying the given initial requirements. Shown on the right is a photo showing the 12-inch F/10.5 IR telescope that he designed helped to build.



January Beginner's Corner: "A primer for observing gas giants", with an emphasis on Saturn. Presentation by Nils Allen, ASLC Education Chair.

No, this is not an anti-aircraft battery. It's an infrared telescope. Its designer, Joe Zurlinden, will speak at the ASLC meeting this month.

Walter Haas Receives AstroLeague 'President's Award'

At their 2004 annual conference held in Berkeley, California, the Astronomical League council voted unanimously to give a President's Award to Mr. Walter Haas, founding officer and Executive Director Emeritus of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO).



Our very own Walter Haas - recipient of an Astronomy League President's Award (the third such award ever given).

Walter Haas began making observations of the planets in the 1930s and in about 1940, he published an article about Mars in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. Shortly after World War II, Walter corresponded with several observers and founded the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO).

The first issue of the Strolling Astronomer (which is also called the Journal of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers) was published in 1947. Walter and his wife Peggy were instrumental in sustaining this organization during the early years.

Walter was the executive director of the ALPO between 1947 and the mid-1980s. Walter has attended most of the ALPO conventions, and he continues to be an excellent advisor and referee for the journal. Currently, Walter is the Executive Director Emeritus of the ALPO. During the past 18 months, Walter has continued to make visual observations of several of the planets and has also served as a proofreader for articles that appear in the Strolling Astronomer.

Astronomical League President Robert Gent reports, "Mr. Walter Haas has been an inspiration to amateur astronomers for many decades. Only three other Presidential Awards have been presented over the years. These awards were given only to those who have gone far above and beyond the call of duty in promoting astronomy. We were excited to give this award to such a deserving person as Walter."

- Robert L. Gent (President, Astronomy League)

NMSU To Hold Memorial Service For A Dear Friend

The family of Scott Murrell and the NMSU Astronomy Department will be holding a memorial service to remember Scott among his friends and colleagues in Las Cruces. The service will take place on Friday Feb. 18, 2005, at 3:00 pm in the Dona Ana Room of Corbett Center, the student union on the campus of New Mexico State University. Refreshments will be served between 2:30-3 pm.

In order to accurately gauge seating and snacks, please RSVP if you plan to attend - call the NMSU Astronomy Department at 646-4438. In addition, Scott's family is compiling some of our favorite memories of Scott for a collection - please share yours! You can send them to Nancy Chanover in the Astronomy Department, Box 30001/MSC 4500, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM 88003-0001, or email them to nchanove@nmsu.edu



- Nancy Chanover (NMSU)

January Sky Map

Chart shows positions of objects at about 8 pm for mid January, about 7 pm for late January and about 6 pm for mid February



Jan. 10



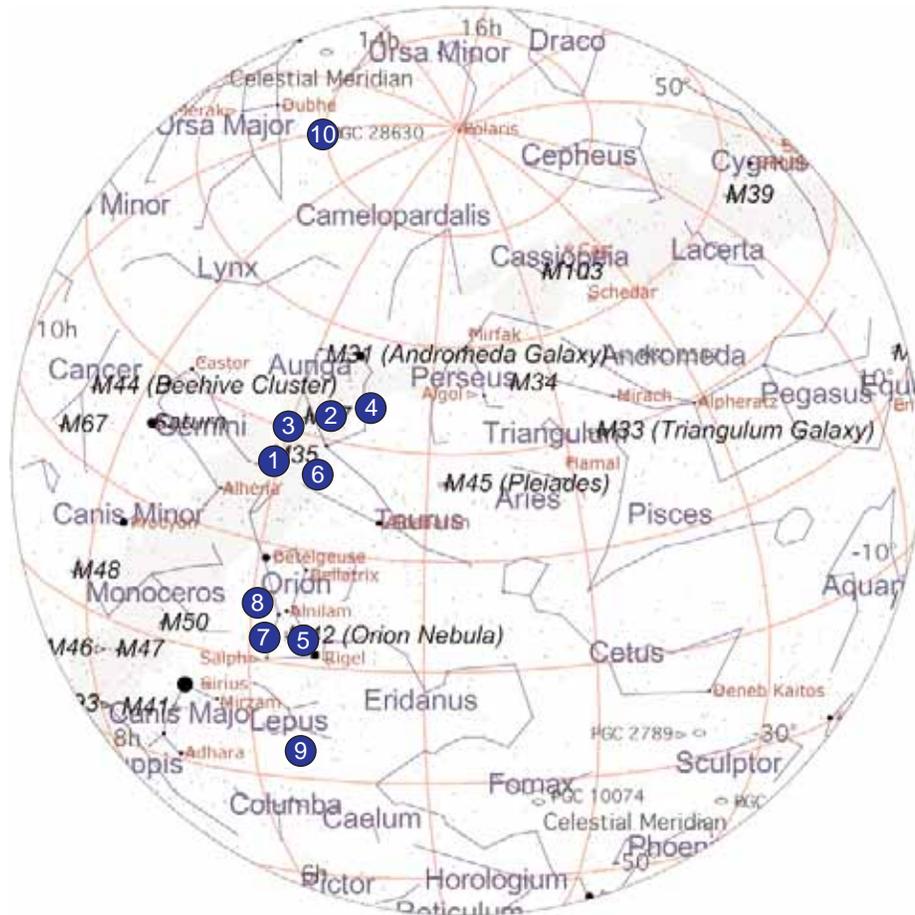
Jan. 17



Jan. 25



Feb. 02



Mars



In Libra
Mag. 1.7
Rises about 4 am

Jupiter



In Virgo
Mag. -1.8
Rises about 12 pm

Saturn



In Gemini
Mag. -0.1
Rises about 5 pm

Astronomy Calendar

Dates are MST. Please see the ASLC website
<aslc-nm.org> for more information

January 13	Saturn at Opposition (4 pm)
January 13	Mercury 19' from Venus
January 14	Huygens Probe Landing
February 18	Pluto Discovered (1930)

Looking for Pluto??

What better way to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Pluto than by observing it yourself? Pluto has emerged from the Sun's glare and can be found in the pre-dawn sky in Serpens Cauda. Several of us observed the Mag 13.8 object at Upham a few months ago using an 8" dob. It will require some patience, but it's worth the effort.

January-February Tour

Binocular Objects

- 1) M35 (Open Cluster)
- 2) M36 (Open Cluster)
- 3) M37 (Open Cluster)
- 4) M38 (Open Cluster)
- 5) M42 (Open Cluster + Neb)

Telescope Objects

- 6) M1 (Crab Nebula)
- 7) M43 (Diffuse Nebula)
- 8) M78 (Diffuse Nebula)
- 9) M79 (Globular Cluster)
- 10) M81 (Galaxy)

Joseph's Challenge - NGC2022
PN (Orion) 12.0, 05H 42m, +09° 05'

Dave's Astrophotography Corner

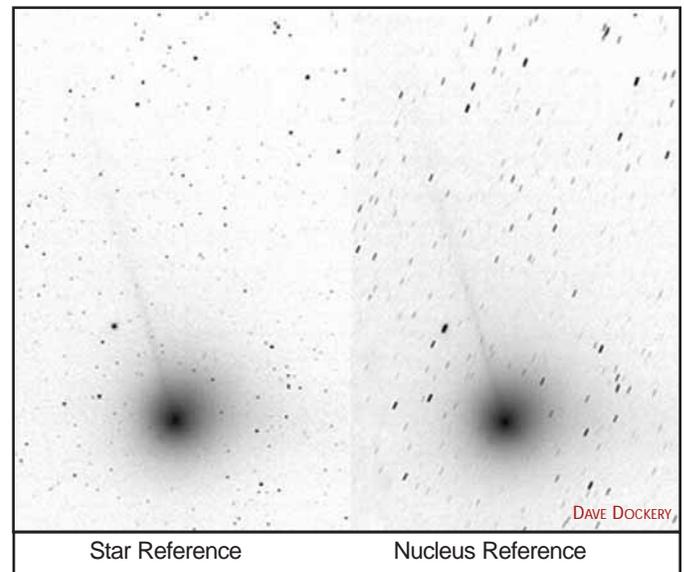
This Month: Comet Machholz - Capturing Comet Images

We've had visits from several bright comets over the past year or so and capturing images of these beautiful transient visitors can be challenging. The added difficulty is due to the fast relative motion of the comet to the background stars and the typically dim tail, which requires a long exposure. There are two techniques I use to deal with this:

1. Use a high sensitivity/ISO setting – this will minimize the exposure time required to capture faint detail and reduce the star trails or comet smearing.
2. Track or stack referenced to either the comet nucleus or the background stars – choose the comet nucleus as the tracking or stacking reference to capture the finest comet detail. Use a background star as the reference to have a more natural looking image. Often the loss of comet detail will not be that dramatic.

Right: Ten - two-minute exposures of Comet Machholz were stacked using a background star and the comet nucleus as the references for comparison. The images were converted to grayscale and inverted to display faint detail. Note: the right image has a slightly tighter and longer visible tail. The length of the star trails indicates the relative motion of the comet over 20 minutes.

The method of choice is up to the photographer. Using a higher ISO setting will certainly minimize trails or the loss of detail depending on how you choose to track or stack. For more details on this image and other comet images see my website.



- Dave Dockery



(Comic provided free of charge by www.astronerds.com)

MEMBERSHIP in the ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of LAS CRUCES (ASLC) offers...

Frequent observing sessions and parties; Opportunities to work on club and public educational projects; The *ASLC Bulletin*, our monthly newsletter; Membership in The Astronomical League, including the quarterly *A.L. Reflector*, the newsletter of The Astronomical League. ASLC members are also entitled to a \$10 club discount on subscriptions to *Sky and Telescope* magazine (discount rate is \$33/year). Dues are \$35 per year. For those who opt to receive the *ASLC Bulletin* electronically, a \$5 discount applies. Send dues, payable to A.S.L.C. with application form or a note to:

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

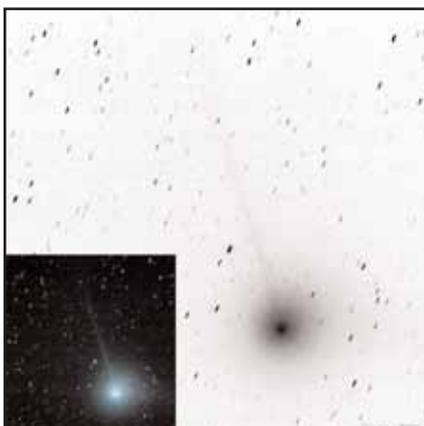
Sky & Tel. subscribers MUST submit their renewal through the Society Treasurer for the special club rate. To avoid a lapse in delivery, this must be done when S&T sends their reminder, 4 months in advance.

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ASLC IMAGE GALLERY



Comet C/2004 Q2 Machholz imaged by Dave Dockery captured through his TeleVue 85 using a Canon 300D.



The Running Man Nebula, NGCs 1973, 1975, and 1977 imaged by Steve Smith using his Meade LX200 (f/5.5) and Hutech-modified Canon 300D.



Comet C/2004 Q2 Machholz as it flew past the Pleiades (M445) on January 7th, 2005. Image by Dave Dockery

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of Las Cruces, New Mexico

PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004



ASLC - Sharing the Universe
With Our Community for
Over 50 Years