



The High Desert Observer

The Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces

October, 2012

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 Society and public educational projects. Members receive the High Desert Observer, our monthly newsletter, plus membership to the Astronomical League, which includes their quarterly publication, Reflector.

Individual Dues are \$30.00 per year (from January 1 to December 31), Family Dues are \$36.00 and Student (full-time) Dues are \$24.00, which includes electronic delivery of the HDO. Prorated dues are available for new members. Dues are 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 \$5.00 (per year) Sky and Telescope magazine discount.

ASLC Board of Directors, 2012

Board@aslc-nm.org

President: Ron J. Kramer; President@aslc-nm.org

Vice President: Tracy Stuart; VP@aslc-nm.org

Treasurer: Patricia Conley; Treasurer@aslc-nm.org

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Director-at-Large: Steve Shaffer; Director1@aslc-nm.org

Director-at-Large: David Anderson; Director2@aslc-nm.org

Director Emeritus: Walter Haas

Committee Chairs

ALCOR: Patricia Conley; tconley00@hotmail.com

Apparel: Ann McPhee; mcpt4@yahoo.com

Education: Rich Richins; education@aslc-nm.org

Grants: Sidney Webb; sidwebb@gmail.com

Librarian: Brenner Fody; mebrenner@live.com

Loaner Telescope: Ron Kramer; ronjkramer@aol.com

Membership: John McCullough; Secretary@aslc-nm.org

Night Sky Network: OPEN

Observatory:

- Leasburg Dam: Ron Kramer; ronjkramer@aol.com

- Tombaugh: Steve Shaffer; Director1@aslc-nm.org

Outreach: Chuck Sterling; csterlin@zianet.com

Publicity: Daniel Giron; astrofix@comcast.net

Web-Site; Joseph Clower; j.clower@hotmail.com

HDO Editor: Ron Kramer; ronjkramer@aol.com

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Next Meeting (Note Room Change)

Our October meeting will be held on Friday, October 26, in **Room 114M** at Doña Ana Community College, with the following schedule (please note the Room number change for October only):

7:00 pm - 7:30 pm Show & Tell

7:30 pm - 8:00 pm Business Meeting

8:00 pm - 9:00 pm Guest Speaker & Presentation

This month's speaker is Chuck Sterling. He will discuss his experience at the recent Okie-Tex Star Party

Editor's Note

Thank you all for the positive comments on the September HDO.

We are always looking for contributions from our readers. Any articles, projects, words of wisdom, cartoons or other material you would like to have published, please send, via e-mail to ronjkramer@aol.com. Please make certain the format is either a .JPG, .XLS, or .DOC file. I can translate other file types, but sometimes things can get lost in the conversion.

If any of our readers have any criticism, constructive or critical, please address comments to my attention at ronjkramer@aol.com.

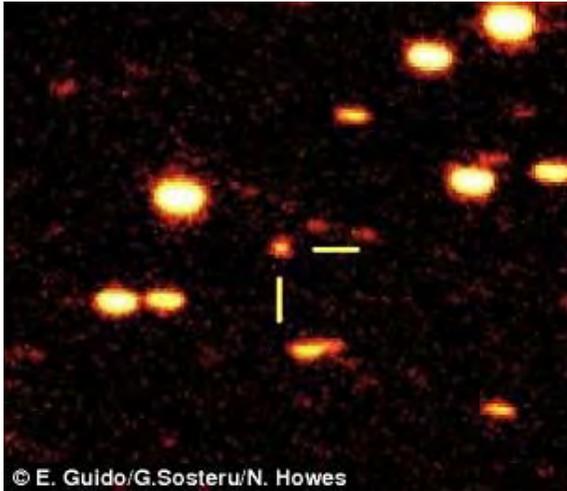
Thank you.

Ron

A Note From the President, October, 2012

Happy Halloween (well, in a few days anyway). It looks like we may be in for a major comet treat in December, 2013. According to estimates, Comet ISON (International Scientific Optical Network) will pass within 2 million miles from the Sun and may truly be a spectacular event.

Early estimates imply that this comet may actually outshine the Moon (of course these are only estimates and the reality is the comet could fizzle out before it gets here), which would make it the brightest comet in almost 1,000 years.



Most comets which are projected to be bright are usually a bust (remember Kohoutek in 1973?). They are very unpredictable so be prepared for anything. Presently beyond the orbit of Jupiter the comet should be in the range of amateur telescopes by mid-2013.

The image to the left shows the discovery of the ice ball, very dim against the background stars. The comet is in a parabolic orbit which implies it probably came from the Oort cloud, a ring of icy debris about 0.5 light years from Earth which orbits the Sun.

Since the orbit is parabolic, it is very unlikely this comet will ever return for a repeat performance. Even if it does, it would be millions of years later.

This could likely be the most exciting astronomical event of 2013, so keep tuned for regular updates. If anyone happens to take a picture of it, please forward to the Editor and we'll be sure to publish it in a future edition of the HDO.

The 2012 Holiday Party, scheduled for Saturday, December 1, 2012, will be held at the Las Cruces Airport, EAA Hanger. Starting at 5:30 pm, it will be a "pot luck" dinner, with everyone bringing something to eat. Those people whose last name starts with the letters "A" - "M" should bring either a salad or dessert. If your last name starts with "N" - "Z" please bring a side dish. **We also need some volunteers for decorations, gift-exchange, entertainment, etc.**

If you wish to participate in the gift exchange, please bring a wrapped gift (under \$25.00) with your name on it. All participants will be given a number. These numbers will be drawn at random and the holder of the ticket will take any gift. This will continue until all gifts are drawn. Please let me know if you are coming, and what you are bringing (for food).

On October 11, the ASLC held its 4th Quarter Board Meeting. Here is a summary of what was discussed:

- Vice President Tracy Stuart has put together a New Member Packet, which will be given, at no charge, to all new members. The Packet will include a copy of the Society Brochure, a copy of the Astronomical League's *Reflector* (which is sent quarterly by the AL to all ASLC members), a guide to joining our Yahoo! Groups sites, a Calendar of Events and other goodies. Several Packets will be made for future members.
- The ASLC has joined the NASA/Astronomical Society of the Pacific's *Night Sky Network*, which is a great source of outreach material. We are looking for someone to maintain the database of outreach programs and be our primary contact with the Network. Please contact me if you're interested in this important position.
- After much discussion it was decided to keep the Membership Dues at \$30.00 per year (January 1 - December 30). It was also decided to continue the Family Membership at \$36.00. A new bracket, Student Membership is now available for \$24.00 per year. This is open to full-time students only.

Please contact me if you have any questions. Thanks.

We have lots of apparel for sale, including hats, t-shirts (short- and long-sleeved), hoodies and denim shirts. Please talk to (or email) me at the next meeting if you're interested in purchasing this gear. We are also looking for a replacement Quartermaster, who will be responsible for ordering and maintaining our apparel inventory. If you are interested, please contact me

There are plenty of items available from the Ken Kile estate. Adapters of all sizes, cables and hardware for larger Meade telescopes, as well as a fully equipped 10" LX200. Walter Haas finally sold his 12" Newtonian. See the Classifieds section elsewhere in this publication.

Our next meeting will be on Friday, October 26. We will be meeting in Room 114M since our usual room (77) will be occupied by a Halloween event. Best access to Room 114M is via the main doors near the flagpole. Elections will be held for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Directors-at-Large (2). Please mail in your ballot, or submit it at the meeting.

Ron J. Kramer

Outreach Activities Roundup

By Jerry McMahan

Bright Beginnings Pre-School; Friday, September 21

Most of the Observers were too young to appreciate what they were seeing and had trouble lining up their eyes with the eyepiece. One little boy thought the telescopes looked dangerous and refused to get near one. Some of the kids did want to look several times and their parents seemed pretty interested as well. The turnout was good, but we did finish early.

Chuck Sterling had his 10-inch on Saturn early in the session. It was our last outreach view of the planet for this year. I had the 5-inch on the Moon. Brenner Fody and his mother had his Newtonian on several objects, including Mars. Sydney Wells had a new 10-inch Orion GOTO Dobsonian.

Tombaugh Open House; Saturday; September 22

Steve Shaffer was at the Tombaugh Observatory operating the Society's 12.5 inch Cassegrain. It was the first open house, by the NMSU Astronomy Department, of the fall semester.

Moongaze, Saturday; September 22

Chuck Sterling had his 10-inch, Steve Shaffer had the small Newtonian Dobsonian and I had the 5-inch Maksutov. Trish Conley was also in attendance as was Larry Hawke. Larry is possibly going to join the club.

Steve and I had the Moon. Chuck was on the Moon as well as the Double-Double stars in Lyra. He also had the star cluster M6.

We had one of the smallest number of people show up for any Moongaze session. Most of the potential observers were at the New Mexico State football game, or were outside the stadium shooting at the crowd inside. Astronomy is a much better hobby and less painful. The lady that was hit by a bullet would have been better off coming to Moongaze.

Wapaha District Boy Scouts, El Paso; October 19

Ron was invited by the District Vice Chairman to offer a presentation to a group of Boy Scouts who were seeking to earn their Astronomy Merit Badge. About 90 Scouts (plus parents and siblings) showed up for the 90-minute presentation and a brief star-party. With the 5" Meade Refractor we all looked at a nearly first-quarter Moon and we also looked at several constellations with the help of a green laser pointer. These Scouts will send me their completed Merit Badge test forms which will be graded and returned. We're expecting 80% of the forms to be submitted. Ron has already been invited back for the 2013 program.

Calendar of Events: October - December 2012 (Mountain Time - 24 hr. clock)

Oct	21	21:32	First Quarter Moon
	26	19:00	ASLC MONTHLY MEETING (Elections)
	27	17:00	OUTREACH; Music Under The Stars Star Party; Leasburg Dam State Park
	29	12:50	Full Moon
Nov	01	17:58	Moon - Jupiter Conjunction
	06	17:36	Last Quarter Moon
	11	10:52	Moon - Venus Conjunction
	13	15:08	New Moon
	16	19:00	ASLC MONTHLY MEETING
	17	17:00	OUTREACH; Music Under The Stars, Franklin Mountains (El Paso) State Park
	17	19:00	ASLC MoonGaze (at International Delights Cafe)
	17	03:10	Leonids Meteor Shower
	20	07:31	First Quarter Moon
	28	07:46	Full Moon
	30	20:00	NMSU Open House (Tombaugh Observatory)
Dec	01	17:30	ASLC Holiday Party (Las Cruces Airport, EAA Hanger)
	04	15:59	Mercury Western Elongation
	06	08:32	Last Quarter Moon
	07	18:00	ASLC MoonGaze (at International Delights Cafe)
	08	17:00	OUTREACH; NSO + ASLC Star Party; Leasburg Dam State Park
	09	02:30	Moon - Spica Conjunction
	10	05:46	Moon - Saturn Conjunction
	11	06:48	Moon - Venus Conjunction
	13	01:42	New Moon
	13		Geminid Meteor Shower
	15	16:00	OUTREACH; Music Under The Stars Star Party; Leasburg Dam State Park
	19	22:19	First Quarter Moon
	21	04:12	Winter Solstice
	21	20:00	NMSU Open House (Tombaugh Observatory)
	22	01:00	Ursids Meteor Shower
	28	03:21	Full Moon

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

Events

ASLC hosts deep-sky viewing and imaging at our dark sky location in Upham. We also have public in-town observing sessions at both the International Delights Cafe (1245 El Paseo) and at Tombaugh Observatory (on the NMSU Campus). All sessions begin at dusk.

We frequently offer solar observing at the Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. For further information please visit our website at www.aslc-nm.org.

Outreach

Outreach is a very important part of ASLC. We are always looking for more volunteers to help us educate the public. Even if you do not have a portable telescope to bring to the events, please consider attending our public outreach programs to help answer questions, share knowledge and point out constellations in the sky.

Minutes, September; 2012 ASLC Meeting

Show & Tell:

David Anderson was not present. There were no presentations made.

Call to Order:

Ron Kramer, President, Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC), called the business meeting to order at 7:25 pm., 28 September 2012, Room 77, Dona Ana Community College, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

President's Comments:

Ron Kramer, President, welcomed the group to tonight's meeting. He noted that there were a number of topics to be discussed, thus the slightly early Call to Order. There were no new members or guests present at tonight's meeting.

Secretary's Report:

The Secretary, John McCullough, reported that the minutes for the August 2012 meeting were submitted for publication in the September issue of the Society newsletter, the *High Desert Observer (HDO)*. Tracy Stuart moved that the minutes from the August general meeting be accepted as submitted; Fred Pilcher seconded. The motion passed by acclamation. There was not an additional Secretary's report.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer, Trish Conley, was not present. Ron Kramer noted a new member from Alamogordo, Michael Smith, had paid dues and joined the Society in the last month. There was not an additional Treasurer's report.

Committee Reports:

Apparel Committee:

Ann McPhee, Committee Chairman, was not present. She has informed Ron Kramer that she will miss the remaining meetings of 2012 and will resign effective the end of the year. Ron will fill in as temporary Committee chair, but a new chair will be required.

Education:

Rich Richins, Committee Chairman, was not present. There was no committee report.

Fund-Raising and Grants:

Sidney Webb, Committee Chairman, is working on a grant application to the New Mexico Space Consortium, but there is apparently a paperwork glitch. This is for up to \$5000 to support the Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) observatory. Because the grant application is time sensitive, submission of the application may be delayed until next year/next application cycle. Board of Directors sign-off of the application may be required. Any other ideas for fund-raising efforts are welcome.

Loaner Telescope Program:

Ron Kramer, acting Committee Chairman, reported the program is doing well. The loan agreement is in place and is working well; Ron is working on additional telescopes to add to the program. This is a good way for new members to work with a variety of telescope systems if they are uncertain about which type will fit their needs. Members may contact Ron if they have questions about the loaner policy, including how to donate equipment to the program.

Membership:

John McCullough, Committee Chairman, reported that membership for the year is up with the addition of fourteen new members, some of whom are very active in the Society. However, it was noted that more participation is needed from the longer-term membership.

Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) Observatory Committee:

Ron Kramer, Committee Chairman, reported on the progress of construction of the observatory at LDSP. The State of New Mexico Parks Department has written purchase orders and is contacting contractors. Ground breaking, potentially a major media event, is now expected sometime in October, perhaps the week of 15 October, with first light expected by the end of this year. Ron hopes to have a slate of dignitaries for both occasions. The Society has a 16" Meade telescope ready to install and the committee needs to finalize the

support equipment list.

Tombaugh Observatory:

Steve Shaffer, Committee Chairman, reported the NMSU Astronomy Department open house schedule is out in conjunction with the start of the fall semester. The first joint open house was 21 September with approximately sixty (60) attendees. He continues to work maintenance, primarily water leak, issues with the University. The telescope and Grubb mount remain in good shape.

Outreach Committee:

Chuck Sterling, Outreach Coordinator, reported on recent events. A star party was held at Bright Beginnings pre-school on 21 September with good attendance. A Moon Gaze was held at International Delights Café (IDC) on 22 September. A star party at Hueco Tanks State Park, outside of El Paso, also occurred on 22 September. Upcoming events include Tombaugh Elementary on 17 October, Moon Gaze at IDC on 20 October, and the 2012 White Sands Star Party (one night, 20 vehicle limit) on 13 October. Ron Kramer will join the El Paso Astronomy Club (Sun City) and will liaise with them, particularly as the Hueco Tanks and Franklin Mountains State Parks (both in the El Paso area and parts of the Texas state parks system) are interested in additional star parties.

Publicity:

Daniel Giron, Committee Chairman, has been distributing emails announcing Astronomy Day 2012 and the LDSP observatory groundbreaking, but he needs additional details, particularly dates, before these can be developed into formal press releases. He is also ready to send invitations to local dignitaries to attend the LDSP groundbreaking. Daniel also noted that the Fellowship of Las Cruces Area Rocketry Enthusiasts (FLARE) will be participating in the Apollo 17 40th Anniversary Commemorative events on 12-13 October at the New Mexico Museum of Space History in Alamogordo recognizing the last time humans walked on the moon and honoring Dr. Harrison Schmidt. This will include lunar images, some by Society members, and other ceremonies at the Museum of Space History.

Society Website:

Steve Barkes, web master, reported he could use an assistant who could then take over maintenance of the website as webmaster. Joseph Clower volunteered to coordinate with Steve.

Society Library:

Brenner Fody, the new Librarian, has posted a list of titles possessed by the Society on the yahoo group. The majority of the publications were donated by Walter Haas and the Ken Kile estate. Three (3) new donations were submitted tonight.

Nominations:

Fred Pilcher, Nominating Committee Chairman, presented the slate of officer candidates for 2013. Elections will take place at the October meeting. The candidates are:

President	Chuck Sterling
Vice-President	Jerry Gaber
Treasurer	Patricia Conley
Secretary	John McCullough
Director-at-Large	Steve Shaffer
	David Anderson

NOTE: The October meeting will be held in Room 114 of the Community College. This is off the “Commons” area of the campus where the two “legs” of the main building intersects (see the map on the website). Rm. 77, the normal venue, will be in use as a Halloween “Haunted House” by the DAAC students. The November meeting will be held in Rm. 77.

Astronomy Day 2012:

Tracy Stuart, Committee Chairman, announced this event will take place on 20 October at the Las Cruces Public Schools “Field of Dreams” complex. Set-up will begin at 4:00 pm and the event will be from 5:00 pm to 10:00pm. He is planning three or four presentation stations with Rich Richins presenting telescopes, Ron Kramer presenting astronomy history, and Tracy presenting constellation identification. Tracy would like volunteers to do presentations on the role of the amateur in astronomy and on the Society and its activities.

Renaissance ArtsFaire 2012:

Tracy Stuart, Committee Chairman, announced this year's Faire will be 03-04 November at Young Park. He has ten (10) passes for volunteers in the booth who will preferably be in costume. He needs booth worker commitments for both days and volunteers for booth set-up and tear-down on Friday and Sunday, respectively.

There were no additional committee or officer reports.

Old Business:

1. State-wide Star Party - Ron Kramer has been in communication with the TAAS (The Albuquerque Astronomy Society) president. This event will be postponed until at least March 2013.
2. Astronomy Gear Swap & Auction – This will be a working equipment auction; Ron is doing maintenance on the smaller telescopes in the Society possession. This will be the topic of a future monthly meeting.

There was no additional old business discussed.

New Business:

1. November general meeting – By vote of the members present, the November meeting will be held on 16 November in Rm. 77. The fourth (4th) Friday of the month, the 23rd, is the Friday following Thanksgiving.
2. Las Cruces lighting ordinance – The Las Cruces City Council has adopted a resolution effective 01 March 2013 that incorporates many of the light pollution reduction/minimization suggestions of the Society and International Dark Skies Association (IDA).
3. Okie-Tex star party – Several members of the Society attended this star party in the Oklahoma panhandle. Chuck Sterling will present a report at the October meeting.
4. Holiday party – The majority of the members present at tonight's meeting were in favor of the December meeting being a holiday party (no business meeting, no *HDO* in December). The party will be 01 December at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) hangar at the Las Cruces airport with a potluck dinner format. Volunteers will be needed for a gift exchange, food coordination, set-up/decorations, a 2012 Society presentation, and clean-up. Contact Ron Kramer via email to volunteer. More details are forthcoming.

There was no additional new business for discussion.

Announcements:

Items for Sale:

Various items from the Ken Kile estate will be for sale following the meeting.

No additional items were announced for sale.

Announcements:

There were no announcements made.

Recognitions/Achievements:

John Kutney has received the Carbon Star Observing Club certificate and pin from the Astronomical League (AL). John described his experience observing the 100 carbon stars featured on the observing list, usually logged while he was waiting for other items of interest to appear. John is an AL Master Observer.

There were no other recognitions or achievements announced at tonight's meeting.

Jerry Gaber offered a motion to adjourn and Wes Baker seconded. The motion passed by acclamation and the business portion of the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm

Presentation:

This month's presentation was made by Society member and Vice-president Tracy Stuart on "A Belated Blue Moon". There are two (2) definitions of a "blue moon"; the traditional definition is the third (3rd) full moon in a season in which an extra or fourth (4th) full moon occurs. This means there could be thirteen (13) full moons in a calendar year, which is historically important because it could affect the timing of Lent and Easter in various religious calendars. The second definition relies on a misinterpretation published in an article in the March 1946 issue of *Sky & Telescope* magazine that implied a "blue moon" was the second full moon that occurred in a calendar month. This is the currently prevalent interpretation of the term. It's interesting that the month of February can have no (0) full moon, but even in a leap year, because of the lunar cycle, cannot have more than one (1).

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 September meeting of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces concluded at 8:35 pm.

-Respectfully submitted by John McCullough, ASLC Secretary

Classifieds

The following items are on a "first-come, first-served" basis, to all readers of the ASLC's *High Desert Observer*. If you are interested in a particular item, please contact the individual listed next to the item. In some cases the ASLC is assisting the seller, so you can contact the ASLC member.

All items are sold "as is" unless otherwise warranted by the seller. It is suggested that the buyer inspect and evaluate the item prior to purchasing. Items are non-refundable and non-returnable, unless prior agreement is made between the seller and the buyer.

If you have an item to sell, please contact ronjkramer@aol.com

The following materials (except for the LX200) will be brought to the October meeting for examination and purchase:

2. Ken Kile estate. Please contact Ron Kramer (ronjkramer@aol.com) if you're interested in any of the following. There are adapters, cables and other accessories for larger Meade scopes.

Celestial Seeker, Illuminated Constellation Finder; \$5.00
Meade, 10" LX200 with Autoguide, dew remover, field tripod, dolly, solar filter, etc.; \$2250.00
Meade, Variable Projection 1.25" Camera Adapter, in original box, \$35.00
Meade, Basic 1.25" Camera Adapter, in original box, \$20.00
Meade, Variable Polarizing System, 1.25"; \$25.00
Meade, #647 Flip-Mirror System, 1.25"/2"; \$110.00
Meade, T-Mount, Pentax K; \$10.00
Orion, 1.25" Extension Tube, in original box; \$10.00
ScopeTronix, MaxView DSLR 2" Camera Adapter; \$125.00

3. The following items are part of an anonymous donation. Prices are negotiable. Please contact Ron Kramer (ronjkramer@aol.com) if interested. Our Society gets 100% of the proceeds from this material:

Argus 40 camera, uses 620 film, 75 mm lens with case, built in August, 1953; \$5.00
Canon, Canonet 28, 35mm film camera; \$5.00
Capital TK-79 Light Meter, with carrying case; \$5.00
PRO mini-flash; \$2.00
Soligor, 400mm f5.6 telephoto lens, for Pentax (needs good cleaning); \$15.00

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of Las Cruces
PO Box 921
Las Cruces, NM 88004



ASLC - Sharing the Universe
With our Community
for Over 60 Years

