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# Desert Sky Observer

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NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC  
P.O. BOX 4595, LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA 93539-4595

*The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is a California non-profit Corporation  
Visit the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club website At [www.avac.av.org](http://www.avac.av.org)  
The A.V.A.C. is a Sustaining Member of The Astronomical League*



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## Up-Coming Events

September 6: New Moon

September 7: Star Party/BBQ Steve Trotta's house ([map](#))

September 13: First Quarter Moon

September 13: **Monthly Club Meeting\***

September 15: Quartz Hill Patriot Day George Lane Park (10a-5p)

September 21: Full Moon

September 28: Aerospace Walk of Honor

September 29: AV Youth Expo AV Fairgrounds (1p-6p)

September 29: Last Quarter Moon

**Anytime:** Observe

\* Monthly meetings held at the S.A.G.E. Planetarium at the Cactus School in Palmdale on the second Friday of each month. The meeting location is at the northeast corner of Avenue R and 20<sup>th</sup> Street East. Meeting starts at 7 p.m. Please note that food and drink are not allowed in the planetarium. Monthly A.V.A.C. meetings are open to the public.

## President's Report

Terry Pedroza

Mount Wilson is calling for us, Mount Palomar has said goodbye to us for now, and we are headed into a very busy time for the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club. For those of you who missed the Mount Palomar trip, it was **AWESOME!** We had an inside tour of the Hale telescope, courtesy of Oceanside Photo and Telescope. This trip was impromptu, with Matt's mother-in-law setting it up for us at the last minute. If you did not get the info in time, I apologize. A fantastic addition to my life.

We will be setting up more tours of this type if our members' interest remains high. If there is an attraction that you would like to see, let us know and maybe we can set it up. Mount Wilson is in process or may have been finalized by the time that you read this. We will be renting the 60-inch telescope for a night of observing. If you are interested, please let me know. As I have said in the past, this is your club. Let us know what you want and we can try to implement or attain that goal.

Elections are coming soon and we hope to have a full slate of nominees. If you are interested in running for an office, please see any board member. We have at this time two amendments that our members would like to see added to our constitution. If YOU have an amendment that you would like to see, hurry as time is running short.

The potluck and dark sky star party at Steve Trotta's might be a good time to talk to your board members about the elections or an amendment that you would like to see. I hope to see you all there.

### **Vice President's Report**

*Matt Leone*

Well, I left my heart at Mt. Pinos. If you missed this star party, you *really* missed it. I went to bed at 3:30 a.m. and wished I could have stayed up longer than that. The nebulas were as clear as a bell, whatever that means. The best part was it was cool during the day and not too cold at night, but just right. Tom Koonce and I were playing dueling telescopes all night.

I want to get into some serious things right now. First, Darrell Bennett, Mike Presswood and I are looking into some land for the Club to lease so that we can have our own viewing area. I don't want to get any e-mails from people who think that the Board is going to put the Club in debt. I said "lease," a one-way lease, but only *if* we can find something good. It will be a win-win situation for the Club. Did I say win-win?

Second, how about a few of my friends take a trip to Arizona to see Mars when it comes back in July/August 2003? Talk to me if you are interested in going on this trip. Of course I am going, but I would only like to take a few dozen people with me.

Third, do not forget about the Business Meeting in October- it is a "must" because we need to vote in our new Club officers and we need your support.

Fourth, when I was on my vacation, I met the man who worked on the "map satellite." This satellite will determine whether the universe is getting larger or smaller. I hope to bring him in around April, May or June of next year.

NASA is coming to talk about rocks- Moon rocks. That is all I will say. If you miss this speaker you will kick yourself. Did I say kick yourself? Jennifer Riedhart is wonderful- you will enjoy her talk and I guarantee that you won't want to leave. So I say to you, bon appetit and good viewing for the next month.

### **Dir. of Community Development**

*Debora Pedroza*

Hello club members and families. Can you believe that summer is nearly over and autumn is just around the corner? Autumn is my favorite time of year and I anxiously wait to view the beauty of fall and winters skies. This summer we had a little reprieve in community events and good thing because in September and October we are completely booked. We are becoming well known within the community and are receiving many requests to do telescope viewing as well as give lectures. Lately, we have had so many requests that we actually had to turn down a few. This is where YOU come in.

It is as simple as sharing your love for astronomy. You can help by providing a scope or giving out club information or by just giving an informal talk on any of the many aspects of astronomy. This community is interested and we need your help. Here is a brief summary with some particulars on what you can expect for the month of September:

Our first scheduled event is on Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, from 10am to 5pm. It is the Quartz Hill Festival and Patriot Day held at the George Lane Park. I have had the pleasure of meeting with the park supervisor, Mr. Frank Hoffman. Some of you may remember him as Ranger Frank with the beard and raccoon hat. He worked at the Placerita Nature Center for seven years and

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always had a host of different animals to wear and share. His enthusiasm is amazing and he is thrilled to have become acquainted with our organization. We plan more partnerships in the future. He is a licensed falconer and has the highest degree in animal education. He has offered to give any of us who are interested nature and animal walks. So I think you would agree with the following quotation from Demosthenes: "Small opportunities are often the beginnings of great enterprises."

Back to the Quartz Hill Festival, Mr. Hoffman is providing us with a lovely paved area in the park (next to the restrooms) and is allowing us to bring in our vehicles very close to the setup location. This festival is going to be a blast...fun for the whole family. If you would like to participate in this event, please let me know.

The last weekend in September offers us two more exciting opportunities to reach and inspire the people of our community. On Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, we will be doing the Aerospace Walk of Honor from 10am to 2pm and on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup>, we will be part of the A.V. Youth Expo from 1pm to 6pm. We will have our usual setup at both of these events, which includes our information booth, solar viewing and our display wall. We need your help in making these events fun and fruitful. I will have volunteer sign-up sheets available at Steve Trotta's Dark Sky Star Party or you can phone or e-mail me with your selected commitment dates and preferred duties.

Please do not miss these opportunities to make a difference. Trust me, the rewards will be yours. Until then-take good care.



*The famed Palomar Observatory. Photo by Tom Koonce*



**Shut Out:** *When the Palomar Observatory saw these people coming, they closed the doors. L-R: (front) Frank Short, Jackie Short (cousin of Debora), Debora Pedroza, Tom Koonce; (back) Mindy Peterson, Brian Peterson, Terry Pedroza, Doug Drake. The closed doors to the observatory are in the background. Not wishing to be photographed with this bunch, Bryan Pedroza took the picture.*

## Star Party Report



by Tom Koonce

### Mt. Pinos - August 10, 2002

Our last dark sky party on the top of Mt. Pinos was a huge event and huge success. There were a LOT of people up there. I pulled into the parking lot at Noon and got the last space in the middle of the parking lot. By dark, I had counted over 100 telescopes and there must have been 300 people. Telescopes were 5 and 6 across in the center of the lot and a couple deep along the periphery. Cars were still parked 1/4 mile down the road at midnight.

The sky was great. I rated it a "7" initially that improved to an "8" by 11 pm or so. A couple nebulas in Sagittarius were naked eye objects and the Andromeda galaxy looked like a large oval to my eyes. Club members had to set up in two different groups because of the crowds, but down at our end, Dr. Mahadevan and his wife; Terry Pedroza; Matt Leone; David Abrass and myself had a great time comparing views, swapping eyepieces, filters, and object locations back and forth. Dr. R has a 13mm Nagler that gave incredible views of the Ring Nebula through my scope. Thanks for letting me borrow that one Dr. R.



*L to R: Terry Pedroza, Tom Koonce, Mrs. and Dr. Mahadevan, Matt Leone, Bill and Jennifer Riedhart, Holland and Joyce Fountain, Sam, Karen, Jerry and Sarah Prestel*

After the crowds thinned out a bit around midnight, Matt did some work on the Caldwell objects and I got to my observing plan of the Herschel objects in Cassiopeia. The most surprising objects to me were in a small chain of galaxies on the eastern edge of Cassiopeia that I didn't know were there... including NGC 185 and NGC 278 which I got in the same field of view at 52X with a 22mm Nagler. Matt treated me to a view of the Helix Nebula through his scope that was wonderful. I hogged his eyepiece for several minutes over that one! Thanks Matt.



*Jim and Jennifer Rothenflue*

Down at the other end of the parking lot, Holland Fountain had first light for his brand new Scope. What a beauty! A C-11 GPS. What a perfect first night to use the telescope. He reported that the scope centered up every object in the field of view automatically and the view of M-57 knocked his socks off. Sam, Jerry, Karen and Sarah Prestel we're enjoying the evening too. We had Jim and Jennifer Rothenflue stop by and talk for a while, too.



*Holland Fountain setting up*

Bill and Jennifer Riedhart were there with some serious toys, too. A Meade 10" LX-200 with a Tele Vue NP101 riding piggyback! Wow! What a "spotter scope" I don't think Terry stopped salivating all evening. I know I didn't. Matt and I were the last ones there as we wrapped up about 3:30 or so. It never really got cold, which is a Mt. Pinos rarity. Everyone who went had a blast.



*Jennifer Riedhart setting up.*

What a treasure Mt. Pinos is for amateur astronomy. Please give whatever support (volunteer time or \$) you can to the International Dark-Sky Association to limit the impact of light pollution on this valuable resource so it will be available for our children. You may contact our Club's own Brian Pearson at 661-948-0016 if you'd like to help. It is a worthy cause and the effort really needs talented individuals to help in many ways.

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Did you know?      ?

It took a total of 13 years to make the 200-inch mirror for the Mt. Palomar Observatory.

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If you want to sell astronomical equipment through the DSO, please contact Brian Peterson with a description of the items.

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### Doug Drake's *Planet Watch*



If you are going to observe Mercury, this is the month to do it. Mercury slips very quickly into our sunset view and then is gone. During the first part of this month, Mercury is at half-moon phase. By the end of the month, it will transition into a crescent and into the Sun. Look just above the horizon in the West just after sunset with your binoculars. Mercury can be elusive so using binoculars and make sure that you have a good view of the Western horizon. I'll give some more tips at our next club meeting.

Venus takes a couple of months to transition into the Sun and you have more time to observe, unlike Mercury. During the first part of this month, Venus is also at half-moon phase and will transition into a crescent by the end of the month. But unlike Mercury, you will have time to observe Venus' crescent through next month.

Saturn can be observed at around 3:00 a.m. in the southeast, but I suggest you drink a lot of coffee to keep your eyelids open.

Uranus and Neptune can still be observed this month in the constellation Capricornus. I'll provide hand-outs at our club meeting to help you locate these two jewels in the night sky.

Happy planet observing.

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Got something you want to see in the *Desert Sky Observer*? Whether it's a website, a type of story, or astronomy jokes, send an e-mail to Brian Peterson at [cybrpete@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cybrpete@sbcglobal.net) and he'll be happy to consider your request.

### **Astronomy Links on the Web**

<http://www.astro-tom.com/>

(Tom Koonce's website)

<http://pages.prodigy.net/sstrott/>

(Steve Trotta's website)

<http://www.projectsandhobbies.com/howtolearnastronomy.htm>

(Getting started in Astronomy...)

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html>

(Astronomy Picture of the Day)

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/>

(Jet Propulsion Laboratory)

<http://www.avac.av.org/>

(Hey, that's us! So go there!)

### **A d v e r t i s e m e n t**

Chart Markers and More will be hosting the Desert Sunset Star Party, May 1-4, 2003 at the Kartchner Caverns State Park in Benson, AZ. Check out the details on our website below, which we update regularly. Applications for participants will be posted and accepted beginning late November. We have a limited capacity of 250 persons so apply early.

Meanwhile we are looking for volunteer speakers.

- . Evening talks - ½ hour lectures
- . Afternoon presentations - 15-20 minutes
- . Afternoon demonstrations - to small groups, possibly repeatable

Provide a written title and brief description

Email to [chartmarker@cox.net](mailto:chartmarker@cox.net)

Deadline for submission, Sept. 30, 2002

Chart Markers and More

Pat and Arleen Heimann

<http://chartmarker.tripod.com>



**A.V.A.C. Membership Information**

Membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is open to any individual. The Club has three categories of membership.

- Family membership at \$30.00 per year.
- Individual membership at \$25.00 per year.
- Junior membership at \$15.00 per year.

Membership entitles you to...

- Desert Sky Observer—monthly newsletter.
- The Reflector—the quarterly publication of the Astronomical League.
- The A.V.A.C. Membership Manual.
- To borrow club telescopes, binoculars, camera, books, videos and other items.

The Desert Sky Observer is available as a separate publication to individuals at a cost of \$10.00 per year. Subscription to the Desert Sky Observer does not entitle the subscriber to membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club and its associated privileges.

**A.V.A.C. Board Members**

**President:** Terry Pedroza (661) 718-3963 [res1atuo@verizon.net](mailto:res1atuo@verizon.net)

**Vice-President:** Matt Leone (661) 948-1521 [als@antelecom.net](mailto:als@antelecom.net)

**Secretary:** Brian Peterson (661) 273-1693 [cybrpete@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cybrpete@sbcglobal.net)

**Treasurer:** Mary Andrus (661) 946-0372 [mfandrus@aol.com](mailto:mfandrus@aol.com)

**Director of Community Development:**

Debora Pedroza (661) 718-3963 [res1atuo@verizon.net](mailto:res1atuo@verizon.net)

**Newsletter Editor**

Brian Peterson (661) 273-1693 [cybrpete@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cybrpete@sbcglobal.net)

**Club Librarian**

Terry Pedroza (661) 718-3963 [res1atuo@verizon.net](mailto:res1atuo@verizon.net)

**Astronomical League & Club Historian**

Tom Koonce (661) 943-8200 [takoonce@aol.com](mailto:takoonce@aol.com)

**Webmaster of Club Site**

Steve Trotta (661) 269-5428 [sstrott@prodigy.net](mailto:sstrott@prodigy.net)

**Our Sponsors**

**Al's Vacuum and Sewing:** 904 West Lancaster Blvd. (661) 948-1521. Stop by and say "hey" to Matthew and Suzanne.

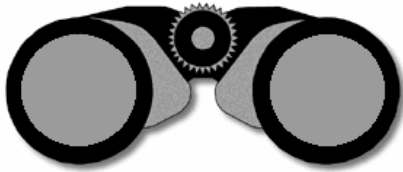
**Darkrooms Plus:** 20th St. W. near Pep Boys in Lancaster. (661) 945-1444. They offer all club members a 10% discount on all purchases. Stop by and say "hey" to Dean or Hank.

**King Photo:** 749 W. Lancaster Blvd. (661) 948-8441. As a telescope dealer, they always support the AVAC. Stop by and say "hey" to Stokely or Paul.

**QNET:** 1529 E. Palmdale Blvd., Suite 200. (661) 538-2028. As an Internet provider, they are kind enough to provide us with a free website.

**Vista Golf:** 43517 N. 13th Street West, Lancaster. (661) 945-7003.

*Thanks for your generous support!*

***A Look Ahead...*****October Calendar**

**October 5:** Super Science Saturday, Joe Walker Middle School;

**October 5:** Dark Star Party, Red Rock State Park;

**October 11:** Annual Club Business Meeting, Sage Planetarium;

**October 12-13:** Palmdale Fall Festival

**October 26:** Prime Desert Woodlands

**November Calendar**

**November 2:** Dark Sky Party, Saddleback Butte

**November 8:** Club Meeting, Sage Planetarium;

**November 16:** Star Party, Poppy Reserve (Leonid Meteor Shower)

**December Calendar**

**December 14:** Annual Christmas Party, Greenhouse Café in Lancaster