Desert Sky Observer

Volume 24 Issue 4 **April 2004**

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

The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is a Federal 501 (c)(3) Non-profit Corporation
Visit the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club website At
http://www.avastronomyclub.org
The A.V.A.C. is a Sustaining Member of The Astronomical League

Up-Coming Events

April 5: Full Moon
April 9: Club Meeting – SAGE Planetarium, 7:00 pm, Chris Butler, Space Artist, will be giving a talk entitled: "The Big Dipper"
April 12: Exec Board Meeting – Larry Ochsner's House (6:30 pm
April 12: Last Quarter Moon
April 17: Dark Sky Party at Devil's Punch Bowl
April 17-18: Poppy Festival, Lancaster City Park
April 19: New Moon
April 26: First Quarter Moon
Anytime: *Observe*

President's Report

Terry Babineaux

The observing season has finally arrived: the clouds and inclement weather are gone. We took advantage of this opportunity at our last public viewing event at Prime Desert Woodlands where club turnout was strong and we had nearly 100 satisfied members of the public in attendance.

Our club has grown in leaps and bounds over the last couple of years. The Executive Board is working on plans to create a Board of Trustees to manage the club's assets and long-term goals. We are also working on a two-year plan that includes, amongst many other things, goals to establish a realistic and permanent observing site for the club (our current observing site has, unfortunately, proven to be a failure).

But central to the success of these plans is the need for club participation. Manpower is needed to interface with the public and manage the club's affairs. If you have never participated in any of our public outreach events, be assured that the experience will prove rewarding. You will also gain the satisfaction that comes with giving a little back to the community.

Once established, the Board of Trustees will need volunteers from the club to fill the positions. New club officers will be elected in eight months. Fresh blood and new ideas will keep our club alive and vibrant. My short tenure as President has required the expenditure of large amounts of time, but the experience has proven very rewarding and worth every minute of time invested.

You do not have to be an astronomy whiz-kid to volunteer. All you really need are two willing hands and the desire to learn. I doubt that there is a single member of the club who, however advanced in the pursuit of our hobby, cannot find new things to learn and do. I encourage every member of our club to consider lending a hand, be it as a volunteer at our next public event or as a potential trustee or club officer. *Every* effort is valuable, be it answering questions from the public or helping out with fund-raising.

If the turnout at Prime Desert Woodlands is any indicator, I have no doubt our club will continue to deliver. I know I'll be seeing many of you at the next Poppy Festival, which with our expanded presence promises to be a significant event.

Vice President's Report

Doug Drake

My lovely wife, Wendylee, and I were looking at the night sky the other night and found a wonderful view to behold. We saw planets - Saturn was most impressive with it's spectacular rings. We also saw star clusters, gaseous nebulas and watched a variable star change it's brightness. We spotted the International Space Station going overhead and then saw it fade into the darkness. And for fun we even spotted airplanes flying overhead with their red, green and white lights flickering as they trekked across the night sky. Did we have fun and will we do this again? You bet we did! You can enjoy the night sky too.

When you really get into viewing the night sky you find all kinds of wonderful and interesting things. Those of you that have been doing amateur astronomy for some time now what I'm talking about. Newcomers to astronomy find the night sky beautiful but may find the observation methods a little bit overwhelming. Like what telescope should I buy or how do I use it, or where do I even point it to observe something? The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club comes to your rescue because you have vast resources through your club membership. You have resources through the membership's knowledge, a great web site, club meetings, star parties, equipment loan, a library and beginning educational classes. Be sure to talk to one of the Executive Board members to steer you to the source of information you are inquiring about. By the way, if you want to see the International Space Station just get on the web, http://skyandtelescope.com/ and go to "OBSERVING", "Almanac" and find the date and time for the space station visibility predictions. The more you know the more fun you'll have. Till next time, Douglas.

Dir. of Community Development

Michael Roberson

One more month down and lots more fun to go! Our last star party at Saddleback Butte went great. Sadly, I had to leave early so I don't yet know who got the most objects for the night. It was a great turn out, with some new faces that joined us for a while.

I would like to thank those who have been a great help to the club in the last month. Tina Eldridge, David Abrass, Steve Trotta, Terry and Debora Pedroza and the Executive Board. With their help, we were able to give star talks to several groups in March. We will soon have more schools and scout groups that will be calling on us, so more helpers will be needed in the months to come. If you have not yet been able to help, please let me know if you could help and when it is convenient for you.

Our next big event is the Poppy Festival (April 17, & 18th) and several of you have already signed up, but we could always use more help. If you can volunteer at the Poppy Festival, please let me know on what days, and if you can bring a telescope and solar filter. For those who have already signed up, please contact me with what scope you intend to bring, or how you would like to help. Free passes are limited, so it will be on a first-come first-serve basis.

Looking ahead, the RTMC is fast coming on us. Please clear your schedule for this one. We would like to see a strong showing from our club. Be sure to check the calendar on our website to make sure of the days and times.

If you have any ideas for our club, some event that you think would be good for us to assist with, please contact me with your ideas.

Remember, Astronomy is looking up!
- Michael

Doug Drake's *Planet Watch*

Meteor Shower

On the morning of 22 April the Lyrid meteor shower will be visible between 1:00 AM and 4:00 AM; this is very early morning so bring coffee. The Lyrid showers have generally been between 10 to 20 meteors per hour, so the showing is not too impressive. The good news is that the Moon will not be up and present sky glare to detract from the meteor shower. Hint: Look to the east, centered in the Lyra constellation. Did you know that most meteors showers originate from the east? Talk to me some time and find out why, or maybe you can tell me?

Venus

Watch Venus, in the southwest, just after sunset each week and see how it transforms into a crescent from an half-moon shape. Hint: You must use a Neutral Density filter with a #21 orange filter (piggyback) for the best observation because Venus will be too brilliant for your eyes.

Jupiter

Look for this wonder in the sky after sunset, as Jupiter shines bright in the east and Venus shines two magnitudes brighter in the west. Jupiter fills your eyepiece with 2/3 thirds of one degree angular extent. Look for the great red spot, very dim and not much color now. Also look for turbulent festoons along the upper and lower edges of the equatorial belts. Hint: Use an 80A light blue filter to enhance the red spot and festoons.

Saturn

Saturn is between the Gemini twins (Pollux and Castor) and Orion. The rings remain at almost maximum tilt for spectacular observation. …Saturn trivia: Did you know that Saturn's moon "Iapetus" appears to have a dichotomy? That is, one hemisphere is bright and the other hemisphere is dark!

Did you know? ?

The Mars Exploration Rover that landed in Gusev Crater has found proof of the existence of a shallow salty sea that existed in the past? If we were going to look for fossils, this would be the place to start!

? ? ?

WANTED: Counterweight 4-7 lbs with ¾ to 1" hole (shaft size) contact Terry Pedroza…661-718-3693.

For Sale

Amateur Astronomy Spring Cleaning!!

After ordering an 8 inch Meade LX10, I am going to sell the rest of my scopes. If you're interested in an item, send me an e-mail at tinkweb@pacbell.net. I'm located in Saugus. – Clear Skies! Brian Tausig

- Package: Celestron 102 refractor upgraded with dual axis drives ($120), Polar alignment scope ($40), a 50 mm right angle finder from Orion ($60), Scopetronix tripod leg braces (a must, $40), a red dot finder ($20), bubble levels on the tripod (nice touch, but not a

biggie), a Williams 2 inch 90 degree mirror eyepiece holder ($99), a Williams 2 inch Minus V filter ($89), and an Orion carrying bag ($50). The basic telescope with mount is selling new for $ 400 (I paid $ 450). If I add all this up, it comes to over $900. **I will sell it all in this configuration for ** $450 ****, the original price I paid for just the basic scope without all the other goodies.

- ETX 70 *slightly* used with a 90 degree finder, dew cap, cable focuser, and a 3X and 2X Barlow. Also with home made case and home made tripod adaptor and tripod (made for civil engineers). **$200 - OBO**. I also have a 1.25" Minus V filter that makes the images very good **(Best offer).**
- Brand new medium equatorial mount (the same as Stellarvue uses). I paid $210 and added $40 Scopetronix. **Sell for $150**.
- 60 mm Lomo Maksutov with variable power eyepiece and case. I also have a mini Equitorial mount that goes well with it. Great for back packing or camping. I took it to the Grand Canyon with excellent results. **$125**.
- TAL 150 F/6. Brand new. Not sure I want to sell it, but willing to if someone wants it. **(Best Offer)**

Once again, if you're interested in an item, send me an e-mail at tinkweb@pacbell.net. I'm located in Saugus. - Brian Tausig

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Astronomy Links on the Web

http://www.actonastro.com/
(Steve Trotta's website- note the new address)
http://www.noexitrecords.com/zerobox/astro.htm
(Tom Varden's website)
http://www.astro-tom.com/
(Tom Koonce's website)
http://www.projectsandhobbies.com/howtolearnastronomy.htm
(Getting started in Astronomy…)
http://www.astroleague.org/
(The Astronomical League's homepage)
http://www.astromart.com/
(time to go shopping)
www.exploratorium.edu/auroras/index.html
(how far south is the aurora extending?)
http://www.avastronomyclub.org/
(Hey, that's us! So hop to it!)

Product Review

By Tom Koonce

ActonAstro's "Telguide" Map Aid

www.actonastro.com

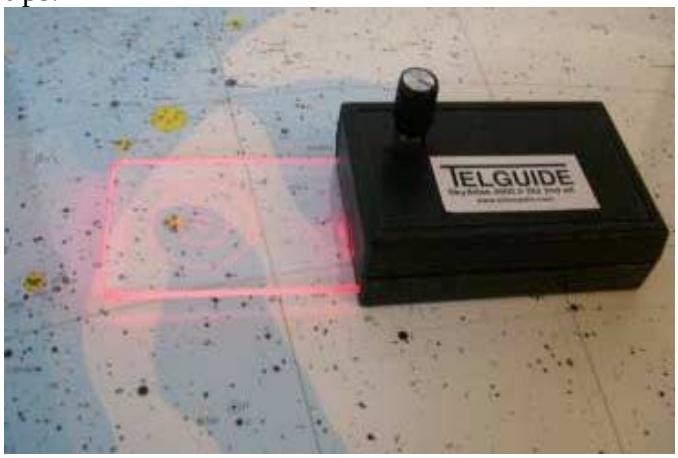
~ $30 + shipping

Purchased online 3/14/04, delivered 3/20/04

I saw a prototype of one of these units at a club star party at the end of last summer and thought they looked really useful! It has a lighted Telrad-style reticle sized to perfectly match your particular star atlas that you can lay down on the page to clearly see where you need to go on the map. With ActonAstro's Telguide on your star atlas, and a Telrad on your telescope, getting around the sky manually has never been easier. Perfect for deep sky Messier and Herschel hunts!!

The website is intelligently laid out, and secure ordering was simple and straightforward. I had a 'receipt of order' confirmation within an hour, and a personal follow-on e-mail the next day asking some specifics of the star atlas I was going to use with the Telguide. The unit arrived 6 days later, and includes its' own custom pouch. A great bag design - no Velcro to hassle with, but it stays closed and is easy to open with cold fingers.

The unit itself is roughly 6.8 x 2.3 x 1 inches in dimension, and the brightness adjustment knob brings the vertical heath to about 1.7 inches tall. The body is made of tough impact resistant plastic, and the clear Lexan plastic portion that is illuminated has been scratch resistant so far. I used the unit exclusively all night for the recent Messier Marathon and found out a couple of helpful user tips:



- The unit had no problems whatsoever with dew.
- The 9-volt battery powered the unit on high power for 12 hours and still has power to go.
- If the unit is left on high, the edge illumination I show in the picture is enough to read all map symbols, and I used it as my primary red light to read observation notes, write comments, and sketch. It's adjustable brightness gives a broad red 'band' that was really useful. Turning the adjustment knob counterclockwise past a click stop turns the unit off securely.

I recommend this product to every amateur astronomer. This simple idea, implemented in a rugged manner for a reasonable cost is how Telrad got so successful. It fills a need on your chart table!!!

A.V.A.C. Membership Information

Membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is open to anyone.

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.
- Attend free introductory astronomy classes.

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 Babineaux (661) 724-1248
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Vice-President: Doug Drake (661) 724-0849
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Tom Koonce (661) 943-8200
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Webmaster of Club Site

Steve Trotta (661) 269-5428
webmaster@avastronomyclub.org

Don't forget – The RTMC Astronomy Expo is coming up May 28 – 30th at Camp Oakes, near Big Bear. This is THE amateur astronomy event in our region…lots of prizes and equipment on display. Make plans soon to attend http://www.rtmc-inc.org/registration.html

The AVAC is a "Silver Level" Sponsor of RTMC this year!

Our Sponsors

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

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.

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 Cathy or Hank.

High Desert Broadcasting: General Manager, Vicky Connors (661) 947-3107; They assist us in advertising our Club.

Woodland Hills Camera: 5348 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Woodland Hills. 888-427-8766. www.telescopes.net

Thanks for your generous support!

Messier Marathon
Saddleback Butte State Park
March 20, 2004.

Objects Seen:

109 TIE(!): Steve Trotta and Matt Leone
108 Terry Pedroza
87 Mindy Peterson

Talking "Scopes" until the Sun sets…

First Light! Terry Pedroza unwraps his new Discovery 12 ½" Premium DHQ Dob! (Fantastic, planet and nebulae views!!!) Aperture Rules.

The back telescope field

From L to R: Wendylee Drake, Debora Pedroza, Doug Drake, Brian Peterson. Far Background: Mary Andrus and Milt Sawyer.

Do you have Red/ Blue 3D Glasses? If so, Check this picture out.

Terry Pedroza and Mindy Brown getting ready for the event! How was this picture done? See the Mars Exploration Rover website "Features"

Step 1: Take two digital pictures, a "Left" and a "Right" about two inches apart. Tell everybody to hold still!
Step 2-10: - See the instruction on the website!

In other news…

- Tom and Kellee Koonce welcome their newest little astronomer, Miranda Elizabeth, born March 28, 8 lb 7 oz, 20 ½ inches long.

- Congratulations to Doug and Wendylee Drake on their recent marriage! Best wishes to you both!

Note:
Apologies for the slightly different 'feel' to the DSO this month…

Disaster struck Brian Peterson's computer that maintained the master versions of the DSO he edits each month for the Club. He expects his new computer to arrive in early April – just in time for the May DSO. I'll be REAL glad when he gets his new machine! ☺ - TK

Our March Speaker – Doug Drake. Great talk on "Right Ascension and Declination"

Our President – Terry Babineaux at the March AVAC Meeting

Getting to Know AVAC Member…
This month's featured member is **Tina Eldridge**
Read her interview on the Club website!

Here are some of the objects we'll be observing at the next Dark Sky Party at Devil's Punchbowl on April 17.

Some of these objects can be seen with binoculars, others are challenging for 8" and larger telescopes.

Have you ever seen...?

(All are brighter than magnitude 9.9)

Name	Mag	RA	Dec	Constellation
NGC 221 (Galaxy)	9.1	0h 42m	40° 53'	Andromeda
NGC 224 (Galaxy)	4.3	0h 42m	41° 17'	Andromeda
M1 (Crab Nebula)	9	5h 34m	22° 1'	Taurus
M42 (Orion Nebula)	5	5h 35m	-5° 25'	Orion
NGC 1976 (Nebula)	4	5h 35m	-5° 23'	Orion
Pinwheel Cluster	6	5h 36m	34° 8'	Auriga
Christmas Tree Cluster	3.9	6h 41m	9° 53'	Monoceros
M41 (Little Beehive)	5	6h 46m	-20° 43'	Canis Major
Clown Nebula	9.2	7h 29m	20° 54'	Gemini
M44 (Beehive Cluster)	4	8h 40m	19° 44'	Cancer
M67 (King Cobra)	7.5	8h 51m	11° 48'	Cancer
M81 (Bode's Galaxy)	8.5	9h 55m	69° 3'	Ursa Major
NGC 3031 (Galaxy)	6.8	9h 55m	69° 2'	Ursa Major
M82 (Cigar Galaxy)	9.5	9h 56m	69° 39'	Ursa Major
NGC 3034 (Galaxy)	8.4	9h 56m	69° 39'	Ursa Major
Eye Nebula	7.8	10h 24m	-18° 39'	Hydra
M104 (Sombrero Galaxy)	9.5	12h 40m	-11° 38'	Virgo
M94 (Cat's Eye Galaxy)	9.5	12h 51m	41° 5'	Canes Venatici
M64 (Blackeye Galaxy)	9	12h 56m	21° 39'	Coma Berenices
M63 (Sunflower Galaxy)	8.5	13h 16m	42° 0'	Canes Venatici
M51 (Whirlpool Galaxy)	8	13h 30m	47° 11'	Canes Venatici
M101 (Pinwheel Galaxy)	8.5	14h 3m	54° 19'	Ursa Major
M4 (Cat's Eye)	7.5	16h 23m	-26° 32'	Scorpius
M13 (Hercules Cluster)	7	16h 41m	36° 26'	Hercules
M12 (Gumball Globular)	8	16h 47m	-1° 57'	Ophiuchus
M62 (Flickering Globular)	8	17h 1m	-30° 6'	Ophiuchus
M16 (Eagle Nebula)	6.5	18h 19m	-13° 50'	Serpens Cauda
M18 (Black Swan)	8	18h 20m	-17° 4'	Sagittarius
M17 (Omega Nebula)	7	18h 21m	-16° 11'	Sagittarius
M20 (Trifid Nebula)	5	18h 2m	-22° 57'	Sagittarius
M22 (Sagittarius Cluster)	6.5	18h 36m	-23° 54'	Sagittarius
M8 (Lagoon Nebula)	5	18h 4m	-24° 21'	Sagittarius
M11 (Wild Duck Cluster)	7	18h 51m	-6° 16'	Scutum
M57 (Ring Nebula)	9.5	18h 53m	33° 1'	Lyra
Coathanger Cluster	3.6	19h 25m	20° 11'	Vulpecula
Blinking Planetary	8.8	19h 44m	50° 31'	Cygnus
M27 (Dumbbell Nebula)	7.5	19h 59m	22° 43'	Vulpecula
Owl Cluster	6.4	1h 19m	58° 18'	Cassiopeia
M15 (Pegasus Cluster)	7.5	21h 30m	12° 11'	Pegasus
Saturn Nebula (Planetary)	8	21h 4m	-11° 20'	Aquarius
M52 (The Scorpion)	8	23h 24m	61° 36'	Cassiopeia
Blue Snowball	8.3	23h 26m	42° 33'	Andromeda

Clear Skies!