

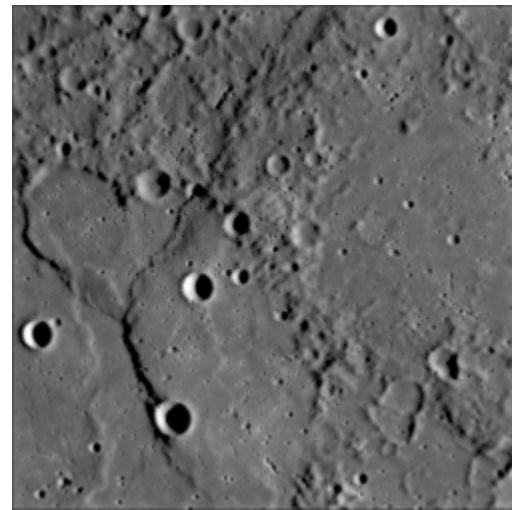
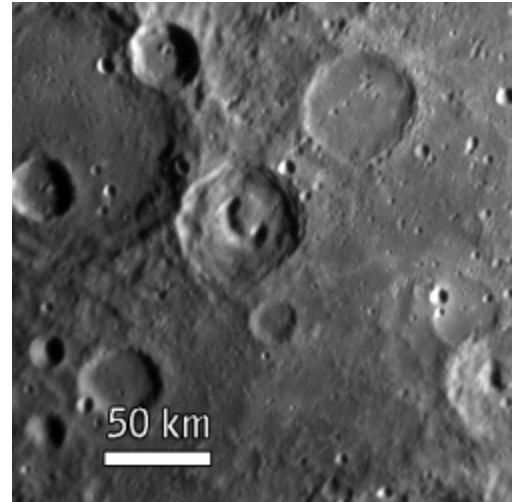


Desert Skies

Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association

Volume LIV, Number 2

February, 2008



Messenger to Mercury

Inside this issue

- ◆ Learn about the 2009 International Year of Astronomy
- ◆ School star parties
- ◆ Viewing at A Total Solar Eclipse
- ◆ Constellation of the month
- ◆ Bernhard Schmidt, developer of the Schmidt camera
- ◆ A Martian Christmas Eve

Cover Photo: Spacecraft Messenger shows views of an interesting crater, ridges, and cliffs during a close approach of Mercury. Images from <http://messenger.jhuapl.edu>

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TAAA Phone Number: (520) 792-6414

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Membership in the TAAA

Annual Fees

- Individual membership \$25.00
- Family (includes two adults plus minor children)..... \$30.00
- Youth under 18 years must join as a family upon parental or guardian acknowledgement of participation in TAAA events. Ask the Treasurer for the required form.

Discounts (one discount allowed, subtract from above rates)

- Seniors (over 60 years) \$2.00
- College Students, Teachers (K – 12)..... \$8.00
- Youth under 18 yrs (form required, contact the treasurer) \$13.00

Options (add to above membership rates)

- Tucson society of the Astronomical League (TAL) fees\$ 5.00
- Sky & Telescope Magazine 1 year (12 issues)..... \$32.95
- Astronomy Magazine 1 year (12 issues)..... \$34.00
- 2 years (24 issues)..... \$60.00
- Postage for New Member Pack \$ 4.60

Donations are accepted for the following funds: SA-IDA/Light Pollution, TIMPA, Education, 30" Telescope & Land, and General/Undesignated.

Renewal Information

- Your membership expires as indicated on your mailing label.
- TAAA members may join the Tucson society of the Astronomical League (TAL) at the time they join or renew.
- Discounted Sky & Telescope or Astronomy magazine subscriptions are available to members and can be started or renewed at anytime. Rates are given above. Allow 3 months for processing. Subscriptions must be sent through the TAAA. *Do not send money directly to the magazines.* To change an individual subscription to the group rate, pay the

subscription amount to the TAAA treasurer. Include your magazine renewal notice.

- Please include a note explaining what you are paying for. Credit cards are not accepted. Write one check or money order for fees plus any options or donations. Make it payable to TAAA and send to:

Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association
PO BOX 41254 Tucson, AZ 85717

Mailing Address or Email Changes - Send to address above or email the treasurer.

TAAA Mission Statement - The mission of the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association is to provide opportunities for members and the public to share the joy and excitement of astronomy through observing, education and fun.

Desert Skies Publishing Guidelines - All articles, announcements, news, etc. must be submitted by the newsletter deadline. Materials received after that date will appear in the next issue. The editor retains all submissions unless prior arrangements are made. Submissions should be submitted in Word compatible files via e-mail or on a recordable media.. All material copyright Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association or specific author. No reproduction without permission, all rights reserved. We will not publish slanderous or libelous material! Send submissions to:

George Barber
TAAA/Desert Skies Editor
15940 W Ridgemoor Ave
Tucson AZ 85736

President's Message

Hello fellow TAAA members:

The pursuit of our Special Use Permit to implement our Astronomy Complex in Sulfur Springs Valley continues to be a top priority for the club this month. We are scheduled to appear before the Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission at a newly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, February 27th. That meeting begins at 4:00 PM and we do not know when we will be on the agenda.

Our efforts at relations with the local community through the Citizen Review Process continue, with several important events in early February. By the time you read this we will have held a star party at the Ash Creek School on Highway 181 on January 25th. Dean Ketelsen gave a talk on Astronomy in Southern Arizona and we had a good number of member scopes at the school. Mrs. Linda Frost, the Principal of the school, has been very supportive of our presence in the neighborhood.

We have scheduled dinner meetings on February 5 at the China Rose Restaurant in Tucson and at Margie's Country Cafe on February 7 in Sunsites for us to meet with adjacent land owners to discuss our plans with them. We hope this will give us an opportunity to meet some of them face to face and answer any questions they might have about our presence in the area.

The property was posted on Thursday, January 17, so the final steps toward the hearing are now set in motion.

On January 17 and 19 special meetings were held at Steward Observatory for TAAA members to gather to make plans for the weeks just before and following the Commission hearing. A total of 19 TAAA members attended these meetings. We began to set the stage for more member involvement to take place in the shaping of detailed plans for the Astronomy Complex. As we discussed the immediate steps to be taken once we get the Permit it became

clear that certain task groups will be needed to make the first things happen. These include clarification of the Policies and Procedures that will govern the use of the Complex; plans for the layout of observing facilities; roads, water system, electricity and other infrastructure matters; communications; overnight use; security; landscaping and minimization of headlight intrusion; and fundraising. There is strong interest in our plans for the use of member pads and small observatories that are part of the first phase of development in year one.

We will be scheduling additional special meetings for those who are interested to be involved in continuing this planning process. We have a structure in place for ad hoc groups to come together to make recommendations to the Strategic Planning Group. Then, when needed, those recommendations will go to the Board of Directors for official decisions to be made.

The month ahead promise to be both exciting, and challenging, as we make our dark site an outstanding one.

More information will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead through the use of the Forum and subsequent issues of Desert Skies. As our redesigned web site is completed that will be another opportunity for communication of these plans, as well as at our regular monthly meetings.

Other items on the Board's agenda are the Beginners' Special Interest Group, the Grand Canyon Star Party, the completion of the observatory at TIMPA and continuing routine interests of TAAA. We invite any members to attend our regular monthly Board meetings. In February the Board meeting will be on Wednesday, February 6, which is a change from our regular time on the second Wednesday of the month.

Clear skies for the month of February,
Bill Lofquist

Meeting Information and Calendar of Events

TAAA MEETING DATE: Friday, February 1, at the Steward Observatory Auditorium - Room N210

ASTRONOMY ESSENTIALS: 6:30 pm

Title: Observing Accessories You Can't Live Without
Speaker: Keith Schlottman

You can enjoy the astronomy hobby with just your naked eyes, but wouldn't it be more fun if you had the latest stellaphotobigbangcollectagizmo? You might be surprised at the large number of accessories available to amateur astronomers. Some are ridiculous, while others just might make your nights under the stars a little more enjoyable. Various items will be demonstrated to help you decide which observing accessories you can't live without.

GENERAL MEETING: 7:30 pm

Speaker: Doug Isbell, NOAO
Title: 2009 International Year of Astronomy

Doug Isbell is the associate director for public affairs and educational outreach at NOAO, and a former NASA public affairs officer. He is also co-chair of the committee established by the American Astronomical Society (AAS) to plan US programs and activities for the 2009 International Year of Astronomy, which recently won full official designation from the United Nations and named its 100th national node around the world. Doug will describe the state of the US planning effort, and the materials and resources that it hopes to make available to the amateur astronomy community to enable better star parties, more effective dark-skies education, and (perhaps) a new "Galileoscope" telescope kit on the order of \$3-4 dollars that could be

Club News

mass produced in the millions. He also seeks feedback from TAAA members on these plans.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: Wednesday, February 6, 6:30 pm. The meeting is held at Steward Observatory Conference Room N305.

STAR PARTIES AND EVENTS:

02 Feb - Sewell ES Star Party
 02 Feb - TAAA Star Party at Las Cienegas
 04 Feb - Astro-Imaging SIG Meeting at China Rose
 05 Feb - Cragin ES Star Party

07 Feb - Beginner's SIG Meeting at China Rose
 09 Feb - TAAA and Beginner's SIG Star Party at TIMPA
 10 Feb - UofA Astronomy Students Star Party
 15 Feb - Ft. Lowell ES Star Party
 21 Feb - Oro Valley Library Star Party
 26 Feb - Ft. Lowell ES/ Camp Cooper Star Party
 28 Feb - Peter Howell ES/ Camp Cooper Star Party

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE: Deadline for articles: Sat, Feb 23. Printing: Mon, Feb. 25. Folding Party: Wed, Feb. 27. Mailing: Thu Feb. 28. The newsletter is mailed at least one week prior to the following month's General Meeting.

Club News

Member News

We welcome these members who have recently joined the TAAA: Norman Doty, Lee Goggin, Jayme & Phil Goodwin, David Jacobsen, Steve Koerber, Peter Lammers, Debra Malmos, Mark Meanings, Nancy, Jane Statham & Lauren Cyran, Joe Statkevicius John Wiggins, Larry Wood, Dominick San Angelo, and Austin Gundy. Glad to have all of you join! New members can pick up a members pack at a meeting if they didn't request it by mail. Hope you'll make it to our star parties or meetings so we can all get to know you. (Updated membership lists are available online at either Yahoo Groups email list website under Files, or at most meetings.)

Astro-Imaging SIG Meeting

Monday, Feb. 4, 7pm
 China Rose, NE corner Speedway/Rosemont

Our presentations feature CCD images, planetary webcams, and film. Come see some of the state of the imaging art over some Chinese food. Just show up and enjoy the show! For more information, contact Steve Peterson.

TAAA Apparel

Looking for a special gift or a way to make that fashion statement? Try on something from our fine line of club apparel. We have got hats, T-shirts, denim shirts, and patches. We take cash and checks.

2008 Calendars

Calendars for 2008 will be available for purchase at regular meetings. You'll find them at the same table where you purchase TAAA apparel. This year you have your choice of either the Astronomy magazine "Deep Space Mysteries" calendars or the Vatican Observatory calendar...or get both. The cost for a calendar is \$10

each (\$3 or \$5 off the regular selling price), or \$9 each for more than one. Proceeds from the sale of these calendars will be used appropriately as decided by the board. Thank you to all who support the TAAA through the purchase of the yearly calendars.

Beginners' Special Interest Group BSIG Meeting for February *Note Meeting Date!*

The Beginners Special Interest Group will gather for the monthly dinner meeting & TIMPA warm-up at the China Rose restaurant (NE corner of Speedway and Rosemont) on **Thursday, February 7**, at 6:00 pm. We will present an observing list for the TIMPA star party the following Saturday, February 9, and J.D. Metzger will discuss "Seeing, Transparency, and the Airy Disk" - don't miss it! Join us at the China Rose for information and good company, and at TIMPA for (we hope!) clear skies!

Upcoming Lectures

Our meeting lecture schedule for the first half of 2008 is looking very full. There is still an opening for the June Astronomy Essentials lecture.

Mar 7	<i>Astronomy Essentials</i>	Astronomy Complex
	<i>Invited Lecture</i>	Peter Smith, LPL Mars Phoenix Mission
Apr 4	<i>Astronomy Essentials</i>	Mary Turner Seasonal Objects
	<i>Invited Lecture</i>	Gilda Ballester Exoplanets
May	<i>Astronomy Essentials</i>	Members Night, meeting begins at 6:30pm Election of Officers
	<i>Invited Lecture</i>	
Jun	<i>Astronomy Essentials</i>	<i>OPEN</i>
	<i>Invited Lecture</i>	Randy Jokipii Solar Heliopause and Voyager

Club News (cont.)

Basha's Thanks a Million Program

Basha's has an excellent program to support local non-profit groups like the TAAA. It's called the Basha's Thanks a Million for Friends and Neighbors program. This is a no-brainer fundraiser. If you shop at Basha's and have a "Thank you" card, the next time you go through the checkout, give the cashier this number: ID #23178. They can look up the number using our name, too. It's that easy! Just do it once. At the end of the program next spring, Basha's will make a donation to the TAAA based on the total sales of every Thank You card linked to our number. Anyone can participate, so give our number to family and friends. If you participated last year, you need to give our ID number again, or your sales won't count. Thanks to everyone who participates.



ID # 23178



A request has been made to arrange for NSN Toolkit workshops so members can learn more about them and perhaps get them into more use at our outreach events. Terri Lappin is looking into this. Let her know (see page 2 for contact info) you're interested and if you have a preference for when they are held. This will help her know how many people will attend and when best to schedule the workshop. The first workshop will most likely cover the Exploring the Solar System toolkit.

**Our Sponsors**

STARIZONA

ADVENTURES IN ASTRONOMY AND NATURE

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Tucson, AZ 85704 292-5010

All NSN toolkits contain essentially all the materials needed for the projects. The projects are easy to do and you don't have to use all the projects in your outreach activity. You get to pick and choose the project(s) you demonstrate.

PlanetQuest: materials to explain how planets are detected, why we put telescopes in space, treasure hunt for objects related to stellar evolution, star chart of naked eye stars known to have planets in orbit

Our Galaxy, Our Universe: scale model of the Milky Way galaxy and the Universe

Black Hole Survival Kit: what is a black hole and how does it affect objects nearby, includes a game that a group or family can play

Telescopes - Eyes on the Universe: explains the basic principles of optics, the human eye, and observing

Shadows and Silhouettes: covers lunar phases, eclipses, and transits

Exploring the Solar System: scale model (size and distances) of solar system and NASA explorations of planets

All NSN toolkits include a Resources CD, a training DVD, and essentially all the materials needed for the projects. Each workshop attendee will receive a CD and DVD set. You can also request a copy of the CD and DVD set at a meeting.

The Night Sky Network has also given us a SolarScope to use in our outreach efforts. It will provide a white light image of the sun suitable for a small group to view together.

What's your name?

How many of us have struck up conversations with other members and then can't recall the person's name to whom we're talking? Its embarrassing asking someone you may sit next to each month, "What's your name?" Some members in leadership or volunteer roles already have nametags, but the TAAA Board of Directors has decided (at Keith Schlottman's suggestion) to get name tags for all TAAA members who want them. Over the next two months we'll be asking members attending our meetings if they want a name tag and what style they

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Club News (cont.)

want (pin or magnet). You'll be under no obligation to pay for the nametag; your only obligation is to wear it at TAAA events. The current cost to the TAAA is going to be around \$5 each but we're looking for better pricing. We'll let you know how much the cost per nametag is so if you want to help offset this cost you can through a donation.

The TAAA Announcements, Forum and Dark Site Email Lists

Do you have email? Are you a member of the TAAA Announcements List or the TAAA Forum? These are TAAA email distribution lists run on Yahoo!Groups. Members of the Announcements List receive reminders and information about TAAA events. The TAAA Forum List allows members to send emails to everyone on the forum. There are about 15 announcements and about 75 forum messages per month. The TAAA Dark Site list is the newest addition. Activity on this list should increase with the future work planned for our dark site.

Since Yahoo!Groups hosts these lists, you may see ads inserted into the email messages. The TAAA has no control over the content of these ads; however, your email program or internet security software may be configurable to block the ads so you won't see them.

Membership in these groups is restricted to TAAA members. Please follow the directions below to join. Please also send an email to Terri Lappin at treasurer@tucsonastronomy.org letting her know you have requested membership in the list(s). Be sure to include your name so she can verify your membership and approve your request.

If you are a member of Yahoo:

Go to the following websites and click on "Join this Group".

Announcements: <http://tinyurl.com/e7o3y> (same as <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tucsonastronomy>)
 TAAA Forum: <http://tinyurl.com/hwoau> (same as <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/taaaforum>)
 TAAA Dark Site: <http://tinyurl.com/3d8ts9> (same as <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TAAADarkSite>)

If you aren't a member of Yahoo:

Join Yahoo by going to the above URLs and registering when you see the Login screen. Before joining Yahoo, it's recommended that you visit the Yahoo!Groups website (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>) to learn about their privacy policy (link is at the bottom of the screen). Once you join, you should check the default "Marketing Preferences" for your account by clicking on "My Account" (top of the screen), and then "Edit your marketing preferences" (about center of screen).

If you don't want to join Yahoo:

Send a blank email to the following addresses using your email account where you want the messages to be sent.

Announcements: tucsonastronomy-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com
 TAAA Forum: taaaforum-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com
 TAAA Dark Site: TAAADarkSite-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com

If you have any problems, contact Terri Lappin.

Member's Events

TAAA Star Party at Las Cienegas (Empire Ranch) Saturday, February 2

Las Cienegas (formerly Empire Ranch) has been our normal dark-sky observing site for quite a number of years. Please try to arrive before sunset. Stay as long as you like, but let everyone know when you are ready to leave; someone may be taking astro-images. Bring a telescope if you have one, but you don't need one to attend. Any member would be glad to let you look through their telescope. And, there are now restroom facilities at the site. Las Cienegas is at 4000 feet so be prepared for cold temperatures. Attendees should park their vehicles either perpendicular to the airstrip facing toward the center of the strip, or parallel to the airstrip along either side facing west. That way, when you are ready to leave, you will not have to back up and turn on your bright white backup lights. See the directions to Las Cienegas on the outside flap of this newsletter.

TAAA and BSIG Star Party at TIMPA Saturday, February 9

Come on out and enjoy the winter skies! TIMPA star parties are great for both beginners and experienced observers. Our novice members can get help with observing issues or equipment problems, as there are many experienced members there who would be happy to help. If you don't own a telescope, come anyway, because there are lots of telescopes set up and everyone is invited to look through them. This is a great way to check out different telescope designs before you make that all important decision to buy. We'll do our best to get you the answers you need. If you have friends or relatives who are curious about amateur astronomy, feel free to bring them along. The TIMPA site features a large parking area, and full restroom facilities. Directions to the TIMPA site are located on the outside flap of this newsletter. Be sure to dress warmly!

Items of Interest

Websites: Trips on the Internet Super-Skyway

By Rik Hill

History in the making...again!

As I write this images from the January 14 flyby by the MESSENGER spacecraft are being released. This rugged little vehicle is braving the solar winds and radiations to bring us images of the approximately 40% of Mercury we have never seen in any detail. It's hard for us to not to get jaded by constant history making planetary discoveries and explorations but this is indeed what is historical and for a local connection, MESSENGER is another mission that Lunar & Planetary Lab, here at University of Arizona is involved in.

This particular flyby is the first of several flybys that adjust the trajectory for the final orbital insertion in March, 2011. To keep up with that, the best place to go to get the 'scoop' on this project is the NASA MESSENGER website at:

<http://messenger.jhuapl.edu/>

They have various clocks, one that tallies the time since launch, and two more that are countdown clocks to the next flyby and orbital insertion.

NASA's main press page is updated daily with images and information. Right now, of course, it happens to all about MESSENGER:

http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/messenger/main/index.html

For some good background information on any mission SpaceRef.com:

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewsr.html?pid=26697>

Is a very good place to go.

Mercury is visible to you now in the twilight sky just after sunset. On Jan. 22 it will be the farthest from the sun when it will be only 0.25 deg. from Neptune. But look quick because this fleet footed messenger Mercury will quickly swing back into conjunction with the sun.

{As always, if you have a topic you'd like explored or have some interesting URLs you've turned up, drop me a line at: rhill@lpl.arizona.edu}

Can You See the Stars?

Join thousands of other students, families and citizen-scientists hunting for stars during February 25 through March 8, 2008. Take part in this international event called

GLOBE at Night to observe the nighttime sky and learn more about light pollution around the world.

GLOBE at Night is an easy observation and reporting activity that takes approximately 15-30 minutes to complete. Citizen-scientists record the brightness of the night sky by matching its appearance toward the constellation Orion with 1 of 7 stellar maps of different limiting magnitude. They then submit measurements on-line at www.globe.gov/globeatnight/. Resulting maps of all observations are created and placed back on-line by the GLOBE at Night staff within the few weeks that follow.

The five easy star-hunting steps, for which more information is provided on-line, are:

- 1) Find your latitude and longitude.
- 2) Find Orion by going outside an hour after sunset (about 7-10pm local time)
- 3) Match your nighttime sky to one of our magnitude charts.
- 4) Report your observation on our website.
- 5) Compare your observation to thousands around the world.

Helpful and user-friendly ancillary materials such as a teacher packet and science standards, a family packet, and student games and information are provided on-line at www.globe.gov/globeatnight/.

You can also subscribe to our mailing list to receive updates and results of this campaign. Visit www.globe.gov/globeatnight/ and click on "subscribe" at the bottom of the webpage.

During the inaugural event in 2006 over 18,000 people from 96 countries submitted 4600 observations, including data from every U.S. state. In 2007, the number of observations almost doubled! Help us exceed 10,000 observations in 2008!

SAIDA NEEDS MORE HELP FROM MORE TAAA MEMBERS. AFTER ALL, WE WILL ALL BENEFIT FROM DARK SKIES IN OUR AREA !!!

For more information, go to: www.sa-ida.org

Or feel free to contact:

John Polacheck
President of SAIDA
E-mail: jpolach@dakotacom.net
Telephone: 743-1362

SAIDA meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 5:30 to 7:30 PM in the IDA office located at 3225 N. First Ave, just North of Ft. Lowell. And.....

WE USUALLY HAVE PIZZA !!!

Public Star Parties and Community Events

All members of are asked to support the TAAA School Star Party program and other community events listed below. TAAA either sponsors or co-sponsors these events. These are great opportunities for beginners as you may only need to know a few objects in the sky. Even without a telescope, you can be valuable in other capacities. Sign up sheets for many events can be found at the meeting or contact a TAAA officer.

Sewell ES Star Party

Monday, 2/4/2008

Central

No. of Scopes: 2

Sewell ES will be planning Sewell Star Gazing at 425 N. Sahuara. From Speedway & Craycroft go south to 5th Street, turn left (east) to Sahuara then right (south) to the main school entrance. Viewing is to be arranged. Contact person Inga Davidson can be reached at 661-3255 or email idaavidson@aol.com. Set-Up Time: 6:30pm. Observing will be from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Sunset: 5:59pm Dark Sky: 6:54pm Moon Phase: (no moon during viewing).

Cragin ES Star Party

Tuesday, 2/5/2008

Central

No. of Scopes: 5

Cragin ES will be hosting Science Night at 2945 N. Tucson Blvd. From Grant and Campbell: take Grant west to Tucson Blvd, turn left (north); School is on corner of Tucson Blvd and Blacklidge. (Between Glenn and Ft. Lowell). Viewing will be Field near Ramada on West side of school. Contact person Tina Zadro can be reached at 795-4470 or email tzadro@earthlink.net. Set-Up Time: 6:30pm. Observing will be from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Sunset: 6:01pm Dark Sky: 6:56pm Moon Phase: (no moon during viewing).

UofA Astronomy Students Star Party

February 10 (Sunday)

6 scopes

The TAAA will be supporting a star party for two classes of astronomy students from the UofA. The event will be held at the Saguaro National Park West in the parking lot at the Visitors Center. The activity runs from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Set-up will start at 6:00 pm and must be completed before 7:00 pm when the students arrive. Approximately 60 students are expected to attend. This is a fun event. The students are very interested and appreciative and will be asking lots of questions to complete their assignments for the evening. John Kalas is the coordinator. There will be a sign-up sheet at the February 1st meeting. If you are interested in helping out but are unable to attend the meeting, please give John a call at 620-6502 or e-mail him at jckalas@cox.net to volunteer.

Ft. Lowell ES Star Party

Friday, 2/15/2008

Central

No. of Scopes: 5

Ft. Lowell ES will be celebrating The Moon, Planets, and Asteroids at 5151 E. Pima. East on Broadway to Swan Road; turn left. North on Swan to Pima Street; turn right. School is between Swan and Beverly. Viewing will be on the basketball court by activities building. Contact person

Celeste Aho can be reached at 520-232-7159 or email Celeste.Aho@tusd1.org. Set-Up Time: 6:30pm. Observing will be from 7:00 pm to 8:00pm. Sunset: 6:10pm Dark Sky: 7:04pm Moon Phase: Crescent after New Moon.

Oro Valley Library Star Party

Thursday, 2/21/2008

Northwest

No. of Scopes: 3

Oro Valley Library will be holding Star & Moon Party at 1305 W. Naranja Drive. From Speedway go north on Oracle Road to 1st Avenue. Take a left and follow to Naranja (left) and continue on Naranja, Take a left into the OV Library it's on the hill before you get to LaCanada. (The last left before the Naranja/LaCanada intersection.)

Viewing will be on the Library Patio area. Contact person Becky Blount can be reached at 229 5324 or email rblount@orovalley.net. Set-Up Time: 6:45pm. Observing will be from 7:15 pm to 9:15 pm. Sunset: 6:15pm Dark Sky: 7:08pm Moon Phase: Full Moon.

Ft. Lowell ES/ Camp Cooper Star Party

Tuesday, 2/26/2008

West

No. of Scopes: 3

Ft. Lowell ES at Camp Cooper will be planning Comets, Asteroids, and Constellations at 5745 W. Trails End Rd. Drive west on Speedway or Anklam Road. Just beyond the intersection of Speedway and Anklam turn right (north) on to Camino De Oeste. Turn left (west) on to Trails End Road. Drive one mile. Cooper ESC is on the left (south) side of the road. Viewing will be at the telescope-designated location at Camp Cooper. Contact person Thalia Wright can be reached at 520-232-7153 or email thalia.wright@tusd1.org. Set-Up Time: 6:45pm. Observing will be from 7:15 pm to 9:15 pm. Sunset: 6:19pm Dark Sky: 7:12pm Moon Phase: (no moon during viewing).

Peter Howell ES/ Camp Cooper Star Party

Thursday, 2/28/2008

West

No. of Scopes: 4

Peter Howell ES at Camp Cooper will be hosting Star "Spacetacular" at 5745 W. Trails End Rd. Drive west on Speedway or Anklam Road. Just beyond the intersection of Speedway and Anklam turn right (north) on to Camino De Oeste. Turn left (west) on to Trails End Road. Drive one mile. Cooper ESC is on the left (south) side of the road. Viewing will be at the telescope-designated location at Camp Cooper. Contact person Stephanie Greene-Hunley can be reached at 232-7267 or email stephanie.greene-hunley@tusd1.org. Set-Up Time: 6:45pm. Observing will be from 7:15 pm to 9:15 pm. Sunset: 6:21pm Dark Sky: 7:14pm Moon Phase: (no moon during viewing).

TAAA Board of Directors Meeting - January 09, 2008

Attending: TAAA Board Members present: Bill Lofquist, presiding, Ken Shaver, Steve Marten, Terri Lappin and Teresa Bippert-Plymate. Members present: Claude Plymate and Richard Crump.

The President called the meeting to order at 6.38pm.

December Minutes. Accepted unanimously.

Member Feedback -

TIMPA was not opened for several arriving observers on scheduled TIMPA night. The Board is working to develop new procedure to ensure TAAA member opens gate on observing nights.

Some members not advised of recent star party cancellation. Cancellation notifications are currently on Yahoo

Announcement Group site (emailed sent to all group site members) until our revised website is uploaded. Board

recommended that star party volunteers check their email before departure for scheduled star parties. Terri will post

Yahoo Announcement Group notification policy in February *Desert Skies*.

Presentation Schedule

March Astronomy Essentials will be devoted to the Astronomy Complex Presentation.

Announcements

February Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 6, 2008 due to conflict with Planning and Zoning meeting associated with dark site property near Wilcox.

Website Update - Bill Lofquist

Terri and Ken will meet with Loretta to resolve technical and software issues before the February Board meeting. Bill suggested that the Board offer an electronic newsletter during 2008 to reduce newsletter circulation and therefore reduce newsletter printing costs.

TAAA Budget for 2008 - Terri Lappin

Terri presented the TAAA 2008 revised Budget. Approved unanimously.

Dark Site Land Development - Bill Lofquist

Bill reviewed planned events and citizen review process for the Astronomy Complex development near Wilcox. Several events will include neighbors, school officials and other interested persons in the area and TAAA members.

Name Tags - Terri Lappin

Updated nametags (badges) for all members will be distributed within the next few months. Cost is reasonable and a list of members receiving nametags will be compiled.

Rincon Development Including Astronomy Features - Keith Schlottman and Steve Marten

Steve reported that Keith spoke to a real estate developer that had inquired how to learn more about astronomy for a dedicated dark site with in a new development. The real estate developer's intention was to gather information for their real estate development east of the Rincon Mountains. The area will be reasonably dark and ideal for new residents. The developer is not asking for direct assistance from TAAA; Keith directed the developer to organizations that could provide additional information for their project.

Master Schedule - Steve Marten

Steve noted that some of the significant traditional event sponsors were late in posting their events on the internet and others were called for dates and locations. The 2008 Master Schedule was approved unanimously.

Nominating Committee 2008-9 - Steve Marten

Steve will ask for volunteers for nominating committee at the next meeting. Once the committee is formed, the nominating process will begin for the 2008-2009 term. Anyone with questions should contact the Committee Chairman, Steve Marten at the email address or phone listed in the front of *Desert Skies*.

SARSEF Planning - Steve Marten

Steve reviewed judging and awards from last year. To ensure that minor administrative errors do not recur this year, Steve asked that he be assigned as TAAA SARSEF Coordinator this year which was accepted.

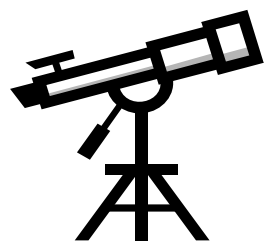
Adjourned at 8:57 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Marten

Secretary

Telescopes for Borrowing



Free service

Only for Members

Don't own a telescope?
Our Loaner Program is your answer!

These telescopes are in the program

- Sears 60mmf/15 on equatorial mount
- Unitron 62mmf/14.5 on equatorial mount
- Meade 90mm ETX
- Coulter Odyssey8 8-inch f/4.5 Dobson
- Meade 8-inch f/4 Schmidt-Newtonian LXN-55
- Meade 10-inch f/4.5 on equatorial mount
- Meade 10" LX200 GPS (requires training session)

Beginners, here's your chance to learn and observe the sky before buying any equipment. The Loaner Program is available to any current member after meeting requirements detailed in the TAAA Loan Policy. Contact the Equipment Loan Coordinator (see page 2) or any club officer for details about these telescopes.

Desert Skies Classified

FOR SALE	Celestron C4.5 reflector telescope with Polaris equatorial mount, wooden tripod, and 26mm eyepiece. Excellent condition. \$150. Please call John McClelland at 520-990-2262. [05/08]
FOR SALE	Meade DS-2114ATS Reflecting Telescope with Autostar Computer Controller. Optical diameter=144mm; Focal length/ratio=1000mm, f/8.8. Comes with 2 eyepieces (25mm, 9mm). Used 2x. Purchased new for Christmas 2005. Asking \$150. Call Kim at 574-2995. [03/08]
Wanted	Telescope for Sunnyside School District. Is that C-12 just taking up space around the house? The Sunnyside School District is looking for a telescope for use in school classes and programs. The ideal instrument would be a 10-inch telescope or larger and would be permanently mounted at a school site. Anyone who is interested in helping with any part of this project should contact the office of Tucson City Council member Steve Leal. Vice Mayor Steve Leal, Ward 5, 4300 South Park Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85714, Phone: (520) 791-4231, FAX: (520) 791-3188, E-Mail: steve.leal@tucsonaz.gov [02/08]

Your ad will run for 4 months unless specified. Month and year of last appearance is last item of ad. For additions or changes to this list, call or e-mail the newsletter editor.

Dark Skies for February 2008 By Erich Karkoschka

DARK SKIES (no twilight, no moonlight) for Tucson in 24-hour MST: 18=6pm, 20=8pm, 22=10pm, 0=12am
RISE, SET, VISIBILITY for sun and bright planets: rise for morning object, set for evening object

Th/Fr 31/ 1 19:21 - 3:06	Su/Mo 10/11 22:06 - 5:48	Th/Fr 21/22 - - -
Fr/Sa 1/ 2 19:21 - 4:02	Mo/Tu 11/12 23:13 - 5:47	Fr/Sa 22/23 19:38 - 20:05
Sa/Su 2/ 3 19:22 - 4:55	Tu/We 12/13 0:22 - 5:46	Sa/Su 23/24 19:38 - 21:03
	We/Th 13/14 1:33 - 5:46	
Su/Mo 3/ 4 19:23 - 5:43	Th/Fr 14/15 2:42 - 5:45	Su/Mo 24/25 19:39 - 22:00
Mo/Tu 4/ 5 19:24 - 5:52	Fr/Sa 15/16 3:46 - 5:44	Mo/Tu 25/26 19:40 - 22:58
Tu/We 5/ 6 19:25 - 5:52	Sa/Su 16/17 4:43 - 5:43	Tu/We 26/27 19:41 - 23:56
We/Th 6/ 7 19:25 - 5:51		We/Th 27/28 19:41 - 0:54
Th/Fr 7/ 8 19:26 - 5:50	Su/Mo 17/18 5:31 - 5:42	Th/Fr 28/29 19:42 - 1:51
Fr/Sa 8/ 9 19:57 - 5:50	Mo/Tu 18/19 - - -	Fr/Sa 29/ 1 19:43 - 2:45
Sa/Su 9/10 21:01 - 5:49	Tu/We 19/20 - - -	Sa/Su 1/ 2 19:44 - 3:34
	We/Th 20/21 Total Lunar Eclipse	

Weekend	Sun	Sun	Mercury	Venus	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn
Sa/Su	Set	Rise	Rise Vi	Rise Vi	Set Vi	Rise Vi	Rise Vi Vi=Visibility
2/ 3	17:56	7:15	7:10 -	5:21 -2	4:21 -1	5:14 0	19:38 0 -3 brilliant
9/10	18:02	7:09	6:31 -	5:28 -1	3:56 0	4:52 -1	19:08 0 0 conspicuous
16/17	18:09	7:03	5:53 6	5:33 -1	3:33 0	4:30 -1	18:38 0 3 moderate
23/24	18:14	6:56	5:35 4	5:37 0	3:12 0	4:08 -1	18:08 0 6 naked eye limit
1/ 2	18:20	6:48	5:30 4	5:38 1	2:53 0	3:46 -1	17:38 0 9 binoculars limit

OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER

TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE EVENT FLANDRAU SCIENCE CENTER

Wed., Feb. 20

A superbly timed, and the most convenient total lunar eclipse until the year 2015 will occur just after sunset for North America (and much of the western hemisphere) on Wednesday, February 20. The Moon is conveniently placed in the eastern sky in Leo the Lion for evening viewing. In addition this eclipse includes a rare bonus: The planet Saturn (just days from opposition) is just a few degrees from the Moon, along with Regulus, Leo's brightest star. All three objects will fit within a binocular field of view. TAAA members are invited to join Flandrau Science Center volunteers to show the public the eclipsed Moon, Saturn, and other celestial objects at Flandrau on the University of Arizona mall on Wednesday, February 20 from 6:00 p.m. (setup) until 10:00 p.m., weather permitting. A sign up sheet will be available at the February meeting but members wanting to help out are encouraged to contact Michael Terenzoni (<miket@ns.arizona.edu>, or phone 621-3646) directly. For more information visit the Flandrau web site at <http://www.gotuasiencecenter.org/astronomy>. Volunteer only parking on the UA mall will be requested as well as lights on the UA mall turned off for this event.

Pima Air and Space Museum

The Pima Air and Space Museum is supporting a special event for the Metropolitan Education Commission on March 6th. This is an education outreach event aimed at our high school kids. Details can be found at www.metedu.org/key2e. They would like us to help by setting up our scopes for viewing from about 6:00 to 8:00 that evening. The location would be between hanger 1 and 3 instead of next to the Challenger Learning center. We would be covering the flow of participants as they move between the various activities going on in hangers 1 and 3. Please let me know if you would be interested in supporting this event. They are expecting about 1000 visitors at the event so we might need a few more scopes. Look for the sign up sheet at the Feb meeting.

Regards,
David Acklam

MEMBER'S FORUM

A Martian Christmas Eve

I try to take advantage of clear nights whenever they occur, even during the Holidays, and the night before Christmas, 2007, was as inviting as any I've seen in a while. So the Three Legged Newt was up and cooling before the sun was very far below the horizon. It had been far too long since the last real observing session, and I had a list of double stars to split. But first, of course, there was Mars.

In the end, there was *only* Mars.

This may not be the closest Mars has come to Earth in my lifetime, but with the Red Planet so high in the sky, this was certainly not an apparition to miss. So I made it a priority. To aid and abet this activity, I'd indulged in one of Orion Telescope's made for Mars filters. I spent time trying combinations of eyepiece and filter, and very quickly decided the filtered view was the way to go, regardless of eyepiece. The Orion filter gave new meaning to the concept of a Red Planet, but the pinkish red cast lost importance when I realized how much more clearly surface features stood out while using it. With the filter a distinct dark band crossed the southern quarter of the disc, with a fat protuberance aimed north like a stylized rendition of the Indian subcontinent. Smaller dark markings popped in and out of view between that dark peninsula and the pale hazy feature that I took to be the North Polar Hood. How clearly the surface features of Mars stood out depended on the seeing conditions of the moment, and since these changed dramatically from moment to moment, I employed the time honored technique of

sitting quietly at the eyepiece and waiting, taking note of whatever showed up when the air, for a precious moment, was calm.

I studied the Red Planet with that filter stuck to eyepieces ranging from a 10mm Plossl to a 4.8mm Nagler with a 2x Barlow lens – that last being crazy high magnification for the Newt on a night of average (at best) seeing conditions. Much of the time the image shimmered, as if I'd found Mars in a pool of clear water. But those moments came, the moments craved by planet observers, when the air settled and the image of Mars was nearly still, and the blur became a world. Syrtis Major, of course, was that dark peninsula that brought India to mind. Maria Tyrrgenum and Serpentis together made that dark band from which Syrtis Major appeared to hang. Glimpses of pale blue-white clung to the northern limb. Polar cap or cap of clouds? That much I could not say for certain, though given the extent, most likely the latter. Beautiful, whichever it was, and worth a very long look.

All of Mars was worth this much, at least. A long look, I mean. It could well be a very long time before I have this chance again, and so once Mars was in focus, Mars it was for the duration. I never did look at any of those double stars. But those stars will be where I left them, long after this apparition of the Red Planet has ended. They can wait.

Tom Watson
24 December 2007

MEMBER'S FORUM (cont.)

Star Gazing in Fiji

By George Barber

On a clear evening during my trip, I was able to share the night sky with my fellow travelers. I led our group down the beach, where we could get a view of the southern sky. Right away, the biggest difference we noticed was Orion. Orion was very high in the sky, and he was standing on his head! I also pointed out the Pleiades. We then turned our attention southward, and spotted both the small and large Magellanic clouds. The small Magellanic cloud covered about two sizes of the full moon; the large one was even bigger. Our conversation turned to galaxies and cosmology as we sat under that starry sky.

Later in my trip, a group of us went for a night dive. We boarded the boat around dusk, and set sail for our dive site. Everyone suited up, and we explored the reef with our flashlights. Finally, the dive ended and we ascended to the surface. It was really awesome to come out of the water and see a night sky filled with stars, starting at the water's surface and rising to zenith. Many of the divers made the same observation, and we spent the trip back looking at the stars and talking about them.

Bernhard Schmidt

By Richard Crump

The name "Schmidt" as in the Schmidt Cassegrain telescopes owned by so many of us belonged to Bernhard Schmidt, a one-armed German optician who gave the world the Schmidt camera in 1930.

It was another 36 years before the Celestron Corporation marketed the first Schmidt-Cassegrain visual telescope in 1966. The straight Cassegrain telescope had been known since 1672.

Schmidt himself lost his right hand and forearm as a teenager experimenting with explosives. This physical impairment made him shy around women and he never married.

Most of his adult life was spent living in boarding houses in Mittweida Germany near Jena. He used a nearby vacant lot for his observing station. He was a co-discoverer of Nova Persei in 1901. He began grinding his own mirrors later that year.

He was evicted from one boarding house for using the top of his landlady's polished chest of drawers for grinding mirrors.

From there he moved to unfurnished rooms and finally to a deserted bowling alley. "Hire the handicapped" was not a popular slogan in Germany at that time. Nor would Schmidt have wanted a 9-to-5 job. He was fiercely independent and did not hold his fellow man in very high esteem.

Schmidt's mirrors were getting better and better, however, and within a few years he was well known in amateur astronomy circles for the quality of his mirrors.

He approached the professional astronomers about refiguring some of the mirrors and lenses of their existing telescopes. They were amazed at the improvement Schmidt made in them.

Things seemed rosy but soon World War I broke out and Schmidt found himself viewed as an enemy alien, since he had been born on the Estonian island of Nargen. The family name of Matts had been changed several generations before to "Schmidt".

He was interred in a concentration camp for a short time, released and spent the rest of the war under police surveillance. The police thought that Schmidt might be using his horizontal reflector to signal Russian aircraft.

Ever the inventor, Schmidt designed a periscope for pilots to observe directly below, a blind spot. Schmidt's periscope had eyepieces giving over 100 degrees apparent field and sharp to the edge! Schmidt thus anticipated by 80 years the new "Ethos" 100° touted by Televue.

Despite being hailed as the greatest advancement in astronomical optics in 200 years Schmidt sold only one Schmidt camera and that one to Hamburg Observatory.

The primary was a 17.3" spherical mirror of 24.6" focus and a correcting plate 14.2" in diameter, giving sharp images to the very edge of its 15° field. The final focal ratio was f/1.75, unheard of at the time.

In the five years left to Bernhard Schmidt, not a single order for a Schmidt camera came in. The Depression was on.

Schmidt's Estonian stoicism helped him through this period of bitter disappointment.

If he had a little money and felt like drinking at his favorite tavern, he would order another round for his friends and exclaim, "The whole world is going to hear of Schmidt some day." How right he was.

Three out of every four telescopes sold at Stellar-Vision are Schmidt-Cassegrains, says owner Frank Lopez.

Bernhard Schmidt would be so pleased and proud that a telescope of his basic design would be in such wide use today.

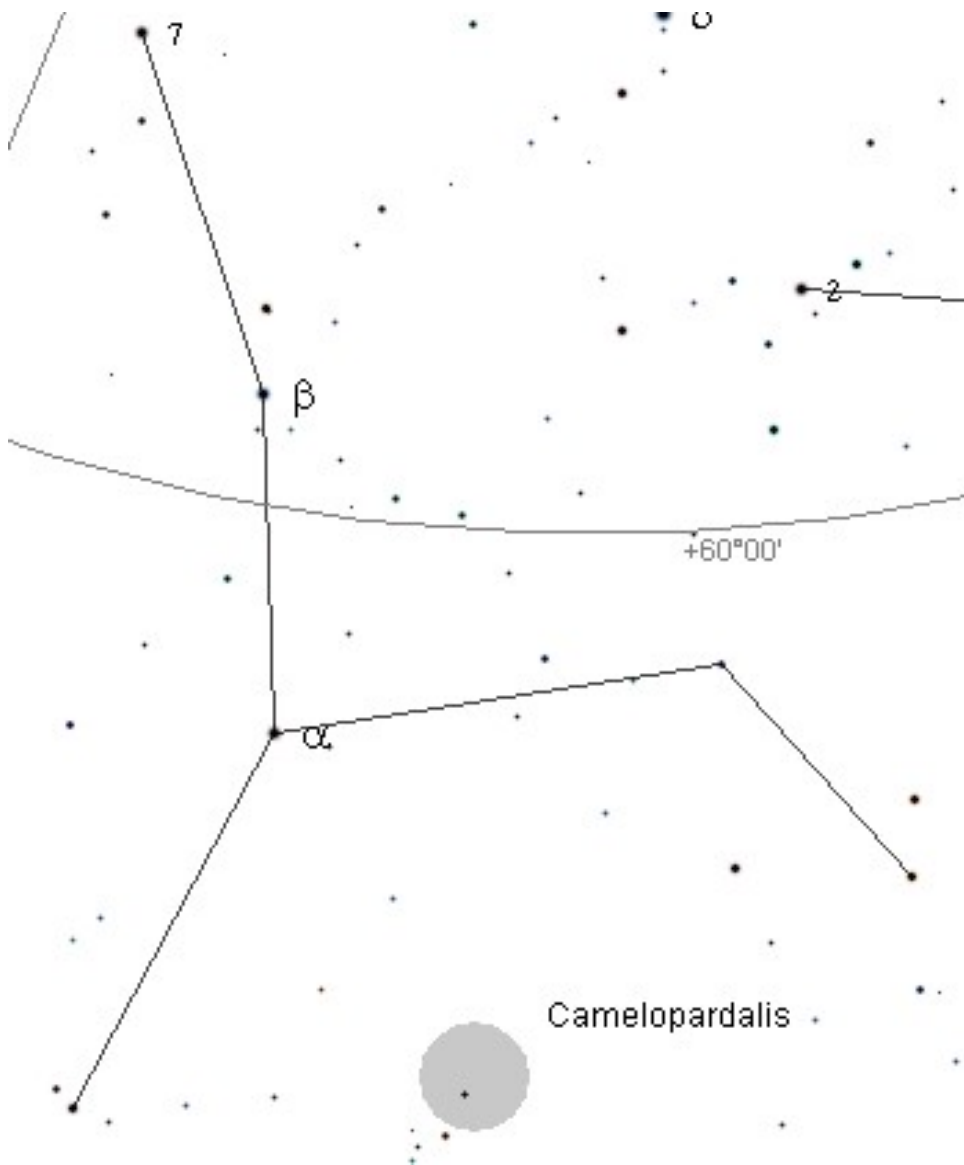
Constellation Report by Chris Lancaster

Camelopardalis

(kah mel o par' dahl is)

The camel leopard, or giraffe

One of the more challenging constellations, both to find and to pronounce, is nestled among Auriga, Perseus, Cassiopeia, Ursa Major, Draco, and Ursa Minor. If you make an imaginary triangle with Capella, Alpha Persei, and Polaris, the brightest stars of Camelopardalis will stretch across it. The rest of the constellation moves westward to the nose of the Great Bear and the tip of Draco's tail. You'll notice that this group of stars is not conspicuous at all. The brightest is only of magnitude 4. The constellation was established by the German astronomer Jacob Bartsch in 1624 to fill in a bland area of the northern sky and was named after the giraffe, or "camel-leopard," which is what the Greeks called the animal with the head of a camel and the spots of a leopard. On some star maps, Camelopardus, which is the older version of this constellation's name, is indicated.



Navigating through Camelopardalis by star hopping could be difficult due to the scarcity of bright stars, but there are two bright deep sky objects which should still be easy to find. The first is NGC1502. This is a sparse open star cluster of magnitude 5.5 located at RA 4h 7.5' Dec +62d 18'. This cluster sits roughly in the center of the five brightest stars that make up the main shape of the constellation. You can find it by moving 56' west in RA and 2 degrees north in dec from Beta Camelopardi. It contains about 25 stars having a wide range of brightness plus two notable double stars.

If you have a keen set of eyes and a sizable telescope, try searching for NGC1501 only 1.5 degrees directly south of NGC1502. This is a magnitude 12 planetary nebula about 50" in size with a central star shining weakly at magnitude 13.5. Some reports give this nebula a bluish tint with uneven texture across its face. It is found at RA 4h 7' Dec +60d 54'.

Toward the east is a striking spiral galaxy, NGC2403, which resembles M33 in Triangulum, except that it is only about 1/15 the size. At magnitude 9, this galaxy is an easy target through any telescope, and can even appear in binoculars as a soft oval smudge. Through a telescope, its nearly face-on orientation is evident and some mottling across its broad arms may be seen in larger instruments. Two foreground stars make an interesting sight on opposite flanks of the galaxy, giving the

impression of dual supernovae occurring within the galaxy's outskirts.

To escape the more well-known constellations, try turning your telescope toward Camelopardalis, which some observers may find as unfamiliar territory.

Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association
P.O. Box 41254
Tucson, AZ 85717

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Please consider renewing your membership on time. Renewal month and dollar amount appears on your address label. Magazine subscriptions are not included. TAL fee is included if participating in TAL. See details on page 2.

Directions to TIMPA and Empire Ranch

Directions to TIMPA Site

GPS coordinates: 32 deg 15.868' N, 111 deg 16.390' W

From the North:

1. Take Ina Rd. west about three miles past I-10.
2. Turn left (south) on Wade Rd.. Wade Rd. becomes Picture Rocks Rd. when the Rd. bends to the right (west).
3. Take Picture Rocks Rd. west to Sandario Rd..
4. Turn left (south) on Sandario Rd. to Manville Rd..
5. Turn right (west) on Manville Rd. to Reservation Rd..
6. Turn left (south) on Reservation Rd. (dirt Rd.) and go about two miles. The TIMPA entrance is on the left.

From the East:

1. Take Speedway Blvd. west and it turns into Gates Pass Rd..
2. Go over Gates Pass and continue west to Kinney Rd..
3. Turn right (north) on Kinney Rd. and continue past the Desert Museum.
4. Kinney Rd. bends left at the entrance to Saguaro National Park West and becomes Mile Wide Rd..
5. Take Mile Wide Rd. west about five miles to Reservation Rd.. Mile Wide Rd. ends at Reservation Rd. and you must turn right (north) onto Reservation Rd..
6. Take Reservation Rd. north about one mile. The entrance to TIMPA will be on the right.

NOTE

A gate card is required for TIMPA access. Please **DO NOT** ask the caretakers for entry to the TIMPA SITE. A list of TIMPA key keepers is available on the TAAA website, or by contacting a board member. For scheduled TIMPA star parties, a designated TAAA representative will provide access to the site.

Directions to Las Cienegas (Empire Ranch)

GPS coordinates: 31 deg 47.356' N, 110 deg 37.913' W

Take I-10 East from Tucson. Take Exit 281 (Route 83 Sonoita-Patagonia Highway South). Travel south on Route 83 for about 19 miles, watch for green and white milepost 40 sign on the right side of the road. Approximately ¼ mile past milepost 40, turn left into Las Cienegas. The road is dirt and is "washboarded" so go carefully. At about 2.9 miles, there is a fork in the road. Stay to the right. When the road ends in a "T", take a left. Cross over a concrete section of the road down in a wash. Just up the hill from the wash (about .2 mile), turn left. 0.1 mile ahead will be the end of an abandoned airstrip with a covered ramada. The club members have been setting up several tenths of a mile down the runway. If you arrive after dark, as a courtesy to other members, use only your parking lights to approach the set-up location.