



# Desert Skies

Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association

Volume LIV, Number 5

May, 2008



## Messier Marathon

### **Inside this issue**

- ◆ Learn about the
- ◆ School star parties
- ◆ Constellation of the month

**Cover Photo:** Arizona Astronomers Participate in the Messier Marathon. Photo by Ken Shaver

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TAAA Board Of Directors	All Board Members		taaabod@tucsonastronomy.org

#### 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

#### Join our Email Lists on YahooGroups

Announcements: <http://tinyurl.com/e7o3y> (TAAA news, no posting allowed, 15/month)  
TAAA Forum: <http://tinyurl.com/hwoau> (general astronomy discussion, posting allowed, 75/month)  
TAAA Dark Site: <http://tinyurl.com/3d8ts9> (discussion of dark site issues, posting allowed)

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### Vice President's Message

May brings us to the end of our current board terms and election of a new board. Please do not forget to come to the May meeting and participate in the Board elections. Remember that nominations for write-in board candidates will be accepted on the night of the meeting but only if the nominee is present, or provides a written statement accepting the nomination. Also the May meeting brings us member's night presentations.

I am very excited to introduce and welcome our newly appointed web master Debra Malmos. Since her appointment by Bill at the April board meeting there has been a great deal of activity on the new website. We will see some changes to our website in several phases over the next several months. As these changes are introduced we welcome comments to help us make the website useful and easy to use. Our long-term goal is to have a members' login that will allow access to useful resources for observing, an e-newsletter, and other club information such as the AFSIG and quarterly presentations.

The final touches are being added to the TIMPA observatory and we will be scheduling an opening dedication to the new facility as soon as we are sure everything is up and operating. Stay tuned - we will let everyone know as soon as we have a confirmed date set for the dedication.

Lastly, we are getting toward the end of the school year and I would like to thank everyone who helped out with the many star parties this season. We do have a few more star parties scheduled so please get involved if you are able. We also have our annual *Sharing the Sky* Star Party coming up on Saturday May 10. This event is a great way to help raise money for the future of astronomy education so please come out and help. As usual, there will be sign up sheets for all of the star parties at the general meeting.

Have a great May and clear skies,  
Ken Shaver

### Meeting Information and Calendar of Events

**TAAA MEETING DATE:** Friday, May 2, at the Steward Observatory Auditorium - Room N210

**Member's Night: 6:30 pm**

Tonight is your night to share the spotlight! If you have an astronomy-related topic you would like to present, contact Bill Lofquist to reserve a time slot during the main meeting.

Our May meeting is also our election night. All offices are open. Anyone wanting to run for an office is encouraged to talk to Mary Turner, Nominating Committee chair. See page 2 for contact information. Nominations from the floor will be accepted as write-in candidates and only after acceptance by the nominee in writing or in person.

Absentee ballots may be requested by contacting Terri Lappin. They must be presented to the President prior to the May meeting. Absentee ballots may not contain the name of late nominees.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING:** Wednesday, May 14, 6:30 pm. The meeting is held at Steward Observatory Conference Room N305.

#### STAR PARTIES AND EVENTS:

- 01 May - Marana High School Star Party
- 03 May - TAAA Spring Star-B-Cue at Kitt Peak
- 03 May - TAAA Star Party at Las Cienegas
- 05 May - Walter Douglas ES Star Party
- 06 May - Sabino High School Star Party
- 08 May - Astronomy Fundamentals SIG
- 09 May - Cottonwood ES Star Party
- 10 May - Sharing the Sky Star Party
- 10 May - Quail Run ES Star Party
- 10 May - KPNO Star Party
- 10 May - Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory Star Party
- 12 May - Emily Gray MS Star Party
- 16 May - Maxwell Middle School Star Party
- 24 May - TAAA and AF-SIG Star Party at TIMPA
- 31 May - TAAA Star Party at Las Cienegas

**NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE:** Deadline for articles: Sat, May 24. Printing: Mon, May 26. Folding Party: Wed, May 28. Mailing: Thu, May 29. 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: James Kevin Erwin, Scott Henning, Dennis L Paul, and Ed Post. 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.)

## Club News (cont.)

### Report of the TAAA Nominating Committee

The TAAA Nominating Committee has compiled a list of candidates for the election of TAAA board members held during the May general meeting. All listed candidates have agreed to have their names placed on the ballot. The candidates for the board positions are:

Ken Shaver	President
Keith Schlottman	Vice President
Terri Lappin	Treasurer
Steve Marten	Secretary
Teresa Plymate	Member at Large
George Barber	Member at Large
John Kalas	Member at Large

Submitted by the Nominating Committee:

Mary Turner  
John Kalas  
Charles Davis

### Astro-Imaging SIG Meeting

Monday, May 5, 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.

### Astronomy Fundamentals Special Interest Group

AFSIG for May

The Astronomy Fundamentals Special Interest Group (AFSIG) will meet on Thursday, May 8, at 6:30 pm. AFSIG meetings are now on the second Thursday of every month.

Recently, the AFSIG Committee has been busy developing plans for new programs, activities, and educational topics. Come to the May meeting and hear about these plans, and take the opportunity to voice your opinions and suggestions about the future direction of the AFSIG. We need your input!

The meeting will be held at the Environmental and Natural Resources Building (USGS and Weather Service) in room 253. The USGS building is on the northeast corner of Sixth Street and Park Avenue on the campus of the University of Arizona. Parking will be available in the lot to the east of the building. There are no restrictions on parking after 5:00pm. To get to the lot, go one block north on Park and turn east onto Lowell. The entrance to the lot will be on your right shortly past the building. From the parking lot walk through the breezeway to the open court yard. Take the stairway to the second floor patio area. Room 253 is immediately to the left side of the patio at the top of the stairs.

Dinner will not be provided, so you should have dinner before the meeting, or feel free to bring a snack with you.

### 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.

### TAAA Spring Star-B-Cue at Kitt Peak

May 3 (Saturday)

The TAAA has scheduled a star party and pot-luck barbecue at the picnic grounds up on Kitt Peak on Saturday, 5/3, starting at 4:00 pm. A maximum of 70 TAAA Members and families will be allowed to participate. A gas-fired barbecue grill at the ramada will be fired up starting at 4:30 pm and members are invited to cook their dinners between 4:30 and 6:30 pm. Bring a dish to share with other members. The grill will be turned off at 6:30 pm. Telescope observing will commence after sundown and will be concluded by 11:30 pm. All members must be heading down the mountain by midnight. Be prepared for cool temperatures and mosquitoes.

There will be a sign-up sheet on the table at the back of the lecture hall at the start of the May 3rd meeting. Because of the popularity of this event, attendance will be initially limited to TAAA Members and their immediate family members only. If, after all TAAA Members have had an opportunity to sign up, there are any openings or cancellations, the attendance of guests will be considered. If you are unable to attend the May meeting, phone and e-mail reservation requests will be taken on a first-come, first-serve basis *after* 9:00 am Saturday, 5/3. Contact John Kalas at 620-6502 or via e-mail at <jckalas@cox.net>.

It is very important for all attendees to abide by the rules established by Kitt Peak and respect the facility. Adherence to the rules will help to continue TAAA activities on Kitt Peak in the future.

- No vehicles are allowed above the picnic grounds after 4:00 pm.
- Only the ramada gas-fired barbecue grill is permitted for cooking food at the picnic grounds. No open fires or use of the personal barbecue grills is permitted.
- All trash must be placed in the garbage receptacles.
- Use of cellular phones and radio walkie-talkies is prohibited. All cell phones must be turned off.
- No alcoholic beverages are permitted.

When leaving the picnic grounds after dark, if possible, use your parking lights until you have reached the main road and are headed downhill after exiting the picnic area.

### Club News (cont.)

#### SHARING THE SKY PUBLIC STAR PARTY

National Astronomy Day  
May 10, 2008

What better way to celebrate National Astronomy Day than to participate in the Sharing the Sky Public Star Party fundraiser hosted by David and Wendee Levy. You will have the opportunity to do so on Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 to 10:00 PM on the University of Arizona Mall across from Flandrau Science Center. The Sharing the Sky Foundation is a 501c (3) organization that is dedicated to motivating and teaching the public about the night sky.

As in years past, we will have telescopes set up for solar viewing in the afternoon and night sky viewing in the evening. Because it is National Astronomy Day, there will also be some special hands-on activities for children and adults. We will need members to help with these activities, so if you don't have a telescope and want to help, we would appreciate your assistance with the special activities and collecting donations.

Door prizes are always a fun part of this event. This year we are asking the TAAA to donate astronomy related items suitable for the general public. Books, star charts, and anything that the public would enjoy winning would be appreciated. All items must be in very good condition. So, do your spring cleaning early this year and donate those unused items that you keep around but are just collecting dust. We will be collecting the items at the May meeting. Please see Liz or John Kalas before or after the meeting.

In the past, the STS committee instituted corporate sponsorship as a means of increasing donations and it was very successful. Sponsor forms will be available at the May meeting. If you know of a company that would be interested in supporting this great event, please pick up a sponsor form or contact Liz Kalas.

David and Wendee would like to thank all of you for helping with this worthwhile event. Support from the TAAA is essential for the success of this activity. There will be a sign up sheet at the May meeting or you can call or e-mail Liz Kalas at 620-6502, lizkalas@cox.net.

#### Grand Canyon Star Party

North and South Rims  
21-28 June, 2008

Everything is shaping up for another great star party. The complimentary campsites have all been spoken for - in fact, about half the campers will be sharing space - standard operating procedure the last few years.

About the only things not finalized are twilight speakers and t-shirt artwork. I've heard from one or two folks working on talks, but it wouldn't hurt to let me know again about a talk you might be working on and if you have a preference for which night you get for your talk. Similarly, the t-shirt artwork will likely be submitted early (I've got a good excuse - I'm getting married June 7, so will be gone in the weeks leading up to the event). If you have any special requests for t-shirts, sweats, tote bags, or sizes that are small or larger than 2XL, please let me know before mid-may. It will be a great time! For questions, e-mail me at ketelsen@as.arizona.edu -Dean

#### Nametags

If you recently requested a nametag, it is now available at the meeting. You must pick up your nametag as we will not mail them out. If you forgot to request one, we will be placing another order in July. Please request one through the treasurer. There is no charge for the nametags. A suggested donation of \$5 will help offset the cost.

#### Upcoming Lectures

Please note that our July meeting would fall on the 4th of July this year. Instead it will be held on the following Friday night, July 11th. Mark your calendars!



## Our Sponsors

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<b>Club News (cont.)</b>		
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Jun 6	<i>Astronomy Essentials</i>	Steve Marten Ancient Astronomy, What They Already Knew
	<i>Invited Lecture</i>	Randy Jokipii Solar Heliopause and Voyager
Jul 11	<i>Astronomy Essentials</i>	Mary Turner Seasonal Objects
	<i>Invited Lecture</i>	<i>OPEN</i>

Our complete list of NSN toolkits is below. Any TAAA member can borrow these kits for any outreach or educational activity (school star party, private parties, and public events). They contain essentially all the materials needed. All projects are easy to do. You can pick and choose which parts you want to demonstrate. Contact Terri Lappin if you want to borrow a kit.

**PlanetQuest:** explains planet detection techniques  
**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  
**Telescopes – Eyes on the Universe:** explains basic principles of optics, the human eye, and observing  
**Shadows and Silhouettes:** covers lunar phases, eclipses, and transits  
**Exploring the Solar System:** scale model of solar system and NASA exploration of planets  
**GLOBE at Night:** light pollution principles  
**SolarScope:** provides a white light image of the sun suitable for small group viewing.

All NSN toolkits include a Resources CD, a training DVD. You can also request a copy of the CD and DVD set at a meeting.

Contact information for Terri Lappin (our Treasurer) is on page 2.

### NSN Toolkits Featured at Sharing the Sky

Projects from four NSN toolkits (Black Hole Survival Kit, Telescopes – Eyes on the Universe, Shadows and Silhouettes, and Exploring the Solar System) will be used at the Sharing the Sky/National Astronomy Day event on May 10th. We need TAAA members to show the public some fascinating aspects of astronomy using these toolkits. Imagine having a hands-on way to explain the gravity field around a black hole. Answer someone's question about how a telescope works using simple props. They'll figure it out for themselves! If you've used these toolkits and can spend even an hour on May 10th, we'd appreciate your time. If you've not used the kits yet, this presents a great opportunity to find out how easy they are to work with. We hope to have a few people on hand who've used the toolkits that can easily show you what to say and do. Even your non-astronomer spouse could help kids create craters by dropping stones into flour. Please contact Terri Lappin (see page 2) if you can be available for this important outreach educational activity.

Details about the Sharing the Sky event can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. You can also sign up at the meeting to assist with NSN activities.

### Astronomical League Dues to Increase

The Astronomical League has instituted a new dues structure. To align ourselves with this new dues structure, the cost of Astronomical League membership will increase from \$5.00 to \$7.50. This new rate will become effective July 1st. Membership in the Astronomical League is an optional benefit of TAAA membership.



### New Supernova Toolkit Arriving Soon

Congratulations TAAA members! You've used our NSN toolkits at enough outreach projects to qualify us to receive the newest toolkit, called Supernova! It will be arriving soon.

This newest toolkit will highlight high energy astronomy. To give us some background, the NSN has scheduled a telecon on May 7th, starting at 6pm Tucson time. Lynn Cominsky, Research Scientist with GLAST and Director of NASA Education and Public Outreach Programs, will talk about the high energy space telescope GLAST scheduled for launch on May 16th.

A PowerPoint can be downloaded or viewed online after May 2nd. You need to log into the Night Sky Network at <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/>. If you don't have your own NSN login, enter the username TAAA\_Guest. The password is TAAA. (You can request your own login by asking Terri Lappin.) Then call toll-free 1-800-779-8164 anytime after 5:45 pm on May 7th. When asked for the passcode, say "NIGHT SKY NETWORK". If asked for the call leader, answer MICHAEL GREENE. Give your name and tell them you are a member of the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association and how many other people are listening with you.

## Member's Events

### TAAA Spring Star-B-Cue at Kitt Peak

May 3 (Saturday)

See article in the *Club News* section.

### TAAA Star Party at Las Cienegas (Empire Ranch)

Saturday, May 3

Saturday, May 31

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 AF-SIG Star Party at TIMPA

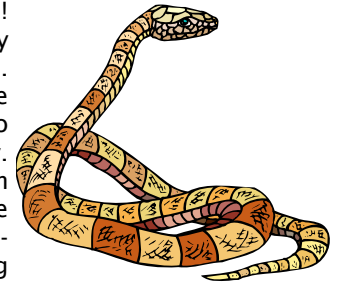
Saturday, May 24

Come on out and enjoy the spring 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. Be prepared for cold temperatures. Directions to the TIMPA site are located on the

### Rattlesnake Alert!

Be alert for rattlesnakes! Rattlesnakes are generally aggressive only if disturbed. If you see one, keep a safe distance and DO NOT try to interact with it in any way. Snakes are much faster than our reflexes, and should be handled only by professionals. Wear boots and long jeans. For more information, go to <http://www.friendsofsaguaro.org/rattlesnakes.html>.



Along with rattlesnakes, other desert critters, such as gophers and ground squirrels, make their home at TIMPA. These residents can leave holes and other potential tripping hazards, so be careful when walking.

Finally, the Tucson water department has declared the water at TIMPA is NO LONGER POTABLE. It is strongly advised that you bring your own water.

## Items of Interest

### Websites: Trips On The Internet Super-Skyway

By Rik Hill

Design on a Dime!

So you just became heir to an old telescope or one with a beat-up mount, or maybe you just got a great deal on some optics or an OTA and you need to get this in operation. The point is, you have optics or OTA and it's in the closet or shed and not being used. Are there some good ideas out there that can help you get this instrument going? Sure there are, a myriad of them.

If you got just the optics to a telescope you might consider the following for reflectors:

This guy, Bill James, designed his 14" newt. around a sawhorse! What a great and stable idea:

<http://www.geocities.com/telescope1999/14-5inch.html>

However, I really like this highly portable one by Willie Koorts:

<http://www.saa.ac.za/~wpk/scope/mount.html>  
<<http://www.saa.ac.za/%7Ewpk/scope/mount.html>>

in fact, I like his whole website!

<http://www.saa.ac.za/~wpk/scope/scope.html>  
<<http://www.saa.ac.za/%7Ewpk/scope/scope.html>>

Mel Bartels has about the lightest design for a dobsonian mount I've ever seen:

<http://www.bbastrodesigns.com/ul-dobs.html>

One could easily design a very big telescope like this and fit it in a subcompact car.

Several more smaller but nice dobsonian designs for newtonian telescopes:

### Items of Interest (cont.)

<http://www.tulsawalk.com/projects/telescope/mirrorcell.html>  
<http://www.charm.net/~jriley/sky/skytel.html>  
 <<http://www.charm.net/%7Ejriley/sky/skytel.html>>

several step-by-step dobsonian designs for refractors:

<http://members.leapmail.net/~ericj/refractordobmounts.html>  
 <<http://members.leapmail.net/%7Eericj/refractordobmounts.html>>

if all you have is optics and you like to travel to remote sites, or even hike to them, you might consider one of the above or even better, the "Windcheater" design at:

<http://www.deep-sky.co.uk/telescopemaking/tm12.htm>

It too is highly portable. I'm tempted to do one of these out of my old thin mirror 10.5" f/3.95 optics, myself!

Well, I think you get the idea. This only scratches the surface of the great inspirational and functional ideas being posted by creative amateurs around the world. Get those optics out of the closet and back under the night sky!

{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](mailto:rhill@lpl.arizona.edu) <<mailto:rhill@lpl.arizona.edu>>}

### Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory Star Party

Saturday, May 10

See the Stars through a Telescope  
Free and open to the public

Smithsonian Institution  
Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory  
Visitors Center near Amado, Arizona

Observing will begin after 7:45 p.m. with telescopes provided courtesy of the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association (TAAA) and the Sonoran Astronomical Society (SAS).

6 p.m. Visitors Center opens  
7 p.m. Informal lecture presented by Observatory staff  
~7:45 p.m. Observing begins (next to Visitors Center)

Dress for cool evening temperatures. Small flashlights and binoculars are useful to bring. Lecture seating is limited, so you might want to bring a lawn chair.

Please cooperate with staff directing parking when you arrive. The parking spaces nearest the building are reserved for TAAA/SAS members and their telescopes. Visitors should park along the driveway or in the parking area outside the gate or along the road as directed.

<http://www.cfa.harvard.edu/facilities/flwo/starparty.html>

For more information call 670-5707. In case of threatening weather, call 670-5707 after 5 p.m. on the 10th for information about star party cancellation.

Directions and map: <http://www.cfa.harvard.edu/facilities/flwo/directions.html>

### 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.

#### Marana High School Star Party

Thursday, 5/1/2008

Marana High School will be holding Stepping Out to the Stars: Family Night at MHS at 12000 W. Emigh Rd... Take Freeway I-10; go 15.1 miles north; Take exit 242 (Avra Valley Road); go 0.4 mi; turn left on W. Avra Valley Road; go 5.2 miles; turn left on N. Sandario Road; go 2.5 mi; turn right on W. Emigh and you will see the high school on the right side. Viewing will be on the soccer field. Contact person Gloria Gorosave can be reached at 682-1037 or email [G.N.Gorosave@maranausd.org](mailto:G.N.Gorosave@maranausd.org). Set-Up Time: 7:30pm. Observing will be from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Sunset: 7:05pm, Dark Sky: 8:03pm Moon Phase: (no moon during viewing).

#### Northwest

No. of Scopes: 4

#### Walter Douglas ES Star Party

Monday, 5/5/2008

Walter Douglas ES will be hosting Fun and Learning the Night Sky at 3302 N. Flowing Wells. From Speedway and Campbell go north on Campbell to Prince and turn left. Travel west on Prince to Flowing Wells Road and turn left. Head south on Flowing Wells Road for two blocks and the school is on the left-hand side. Parking is available on the Flowing Wells side of the school and off of the alley on the back (east side) of the school. Viewing will be on the basketball courts on the playground south of the school and behind (east side) of the gymnasium (MPR). Contact person Aaron Miller can be reached at 520-696-8351 or email [MillerA@flowingwells.k12.az.us](mailto:MillerA@flowingwells.k12.az.us). Set-Up Time: 7:30pm. Observing will be from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Sunset:

#### North-Central

No. of Scopes: 2



## Public Star Parties and Community Events (cont.)

7:08pm, Dark Sky: 8:06pm Moon Phase: (no moon during viewing).

### Sabino High School Star Party

Tuesday, 5/6/2008

**East**

No. of Scopes: 2

Sabino High School will be planning Night Sky Adventure at 5000 North Bowes Rd. Speedway east to Wilmot-north to Tanque Verde-east on Tanque Verde to Bear Canyon-north on Bear Canyon to Snyder-east on Snyder to Bowes Rd.-north on Bowes to High School. Viewing will be Baseball fields. Contact person Maryanne Carpenter can be reached at 584-7753 or email [Mary-Ann.Carpenter@tusd1.org](mailto:Mary-Ann.Carpenter@tusd1.org). Set-Up Time: 7:45pm. Observing will be from 8:15pm to 9:45pm. Sunset: 7:09pm, Dark Sky: 8:07pm Moon Phase: Crescent after New Moon.

### Cottonwood ES Star Party

Friday, 5/9/2008

**Southeast**

No. of Scopes: 6

Cottonwood ES will be hosting Night Sky Adventure at 9950 East Rees Loop Road. Drive east on Speedway and turn south (left) onto Houghton. From Houghton turn west (right) onto Rita Rd. After turning onto Rita Rd. get into the left turn lane to turn onto Rees Loop. Cottonwood is at the top of Rees Loop. Viewing will be on the Basketball Court. Contact person Sheila Beth Kalota can be reached at 520-879-2600 or email [kalotas@vail.k12.az.us](mailto:kalotas@vail.k12.az.us). Set-Up Time: 7:45pm. Observing will be from 8:15pm to 10:15pm. Sunset: 7:11pm, Dark Sky: 8:09pm Moon Phase: Waxing Crescent.

### Quail Run ES Star Party

Saturday, 5/10/2008

**Northwest**

No. of Scopes: 5

Quail Run ES will be holding Family Space Night at 4600 W. Cortaro Farms Road. Connie Walker from NOAO will be bringing a visiting astronomer from NOAO-South, in La Serena, Chile to our PROJECT ASTRO event to see how they are run in the U.S. Exit I-10 at the Cortaro Farms Road exit and head east. Continue on Cortaro for about a mile. The school is a couple blocks east of the Camino deOeste stoplight, on the left hand side. Viewing will be School outdoor amphitheater. Contact person Melissa Wilburn can be reached at 520-579-4700 or email [M.A.Wilburn@maranausd.org](mailto:M.A.Wilburn@maranausd.org). Set-Up Time: 7:45pm. Observing will be from 8:15pm to 10:15pm. Sunset: 7:12pm, Dark Sky: 8:11pm Moon Phase: Waxing Crescent.

### KPNO Star Party

Saturday, 5/10/2008

**Southwest**

No. of Scopes: 6

Kitt Peak National Observatory will be celebrating Family Night at Kitt Peak. Take Ajo Way through Three Points to the junction of 86 and 386. Turn left and drive 12 miles to the Kitt Peak Visitor Center. Check in at the visitor center for directions to the set up area and parking. Viewing will be in the parking lot of the .9-meter, near WIYN. Contact person Robert Wilson can be reached at 318-8440 or email [rwilson@noao.edu](mailto:rwilson@noao.edu). Set-Up Time: 6:30pm. Observing will be from 8:15pm to 9:30 pm. Sunset: 07:12pm, Dark Sky: 08:11pm Moon Phase: Waxing Crescent.

### Emily Gray MS Star Party

Monday, 5/12/2008

**East**

No. of Scopes: 3

Emily Gray MS will be holding Exploring the Night Sky at 4201 N. Melpomene Way. Traveling East on Speedway, turn (left) on to Wilmot, which becomes Tanque Verde. Then turn left on to Catalina Hwy. Then turn right on to Prince. Then turn left on to Melpomene. Driving time is about 20 minutes after you leave Speedway. Viewing will be on the campus athletic fields. Contact person Michael Stock can be reached at 520-749-4948 or email [michael-jstock@msn.com](mailto:michael-jstock@msn.com). Set-Up Time: 7:45pm. Observing will be from 8:15pm to 10:15. Sunset: 7:13pm, Dark Sky: 8:12pm Moon Phase: First Quarter.

### Maxwell Middle School Star Party

Friday, 5/16/2008

**West**

No. of Scopes: 4

Maxwell Middle School will be celebrating Starry Night at 2802 W. Anklam Rd. Go west on Speedway to Greasewood. Turn left (south) on Greasewood to Anklam. Turn right on Anklam and school will be approximately 0.3 miles on the right side of the street. Viewing will be on the basketball courts to the east of the school buildings. Contact person Dave Jones can be reached at 225-2065 or email [dvja@cox.net](mailto:dvja@cox.net). Set-Up Time: 7:45pm. Observing will be from 8:15pm to 10:15pm. Sunset: 7:16pm, Dark Sky: 8:15pm Moon Phase: Waxing Gibbous.

**PLAN TO ATTEND!**  
**Sharing The Sky Public Star Party**  
**Saturday, May 10**  
 University of Arizona Mall

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

*The July meeting will be held on Friday, July 11.*

**TAAA Board of Directors Meeting - Wednesday, April 9, 2008****TAAA Board of Directors April 2008 Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:** TAAA Board Members present (6): Bill Lofquist, presiding, Ken Shaver, Steve Marten, Terri Lappin, George Barber, and Teresa Bippert-Plymate. Members present (3): John and Liz Kalas and Debra Malmos.

The President called the meeting to order at 6.35pm.

**March Minutes.** Ken was present for March meeting. Minutes, as amended, accepted unanimously.

**Nominating Committee** - Steve Marten

Steve reported that the Nominating Committee has reported the following slate for the May elections:

President - Ken Shaver

Member-at-Large (1) - George Barber

Vice President - Keith Schlottman

Member-at-Large (2) - John Kalas

Treasurer - Terri Lappin

Member-at-Large (3) - Teresa Plymate

Secretary - Steve Marten

**Announcements**

Steve stated that he and Terri are preparing a modified version of Robert's Rules of Order for Board meetings.

**Treasurer's Report** - Terri Lappin

Terri reviewed routine expenses and reported that they were within our budget. The Strategic Planning Group is expected to soon draft a capital budget for site development and an operating budget. Terri reviewed current budget and provided a major funds report. Expenses included \$734 for 121 nametags. Terri proposed AFSIG support, up to \$25 monthly, to be drawn from Education Acct. Bill motioned for AFSIG reimbursement for March for \$15.67 and for up to \$25/mo for AFSIG, seconded and approved unanimously. Cost of *Desert Skies* newsletter through April is \$1,144 (on budget.)

**Website Update** - Bill Lofquist

Bill discussed current website status including the impressive preliminary work by Debra Malmos. The Board is disappointed that Loretta McKibben will not be part of the website team. Terri, Ken, Steve, and George offered to meet with Debra next week to help her continue building a comprehensive plan for new website development.

**TIMPA Observatory** - George Barber

George discussed the few remaining construction items and a plate for mounting the scope to complete the observatory. Dedication planning is underway. The Board discussed the possibility of moving "first light" to after the monsoons due to a very full TAAA calendar. George hopes to complete the observatory within the next few weeks to allow the "first light" to occur in May.

**Master Calendar** - Steve Marten

Steve reviewed current status of the 2008 Master Calendar (MC) and plans for the 2009 MC. In past years the calendar was prepared in November and completed in late December or early January due to late reporting of significant events hosted by other Arizona clubs. Steve suggested the MC could be drafted in advance every June with notation that the MC is missing particular significant events. Also, some TAAA events may be affected by late reporting of other statewide significant events. The Board generally encouraged an early MC every June with annotation. Steve will present the 2009 MC at the June Board meeting.

**Dark Site Land Development** - Bill Lofquist

Bill reviewed activity at the recent Dark Site meeting at his home on April 12. The group exchanged ideas on development of the dark site including location of observing areas, multi-purpose building or group of buildings for meetings, storage, kitchen, and lavatories including showers. The group will meet again next Saturday April 19 to continue development planning.

**SARSEF Awards** - Steve Marten

The 2008 TAAA Southern Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair (SARSEF) judges found that entries by younger students provoked interest but did not include scientific principles. To encourage these students to continue working on science and particularly astronomy exhibits, the judges suggested that the first, second and third prizes be maintained but add a new award for Excellence per Age and Experience. The Board asked that additional data be provided for the suggested new award for review at the May Board meeting. Steve asked that a donated AstroScan scope be awarded to a young student that was awarded an Honorable Mention in lieu of the new award. The Board approved using the donated scope as an award for David Quinones at the May meeting.

**Astronomical League** - Terri Lappin

The TAAA's relationship with the Astronomical League (AL) was reviewed. The AL no longer requires 100% membership of an organization to belong to the AL. Currently about 30% of TAAA members belong to the AL through the Tucson society of the Astronomical League (TAL) sub-group. AL dues structure states that when fewer than 95% of members belong to the AL, the AL dues are to be \$7.50. The board approved the increase from \$5 to \$7.50 to go into affect on July 1st.

Adjourned at 9:17 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Marten

Secretary

**Desert Skies Classified**

SERVICE	Green laser pointer need repair or tune up? Contact Donald Arndt at (415) 215-2409 or donaldja@pacbell.net. Typical repairs cost \$25-50, including return shipping.
FOR SALE	<u>New</u> Orion Finder Scope: 9 power - 6 degree field - 50 mm aperture - cross hair eyepiece - coated primary lenses for antiglare - "Straight Through" optics - two screw alignment system - includes mounting bracket - ideal upgrade for 1X spotting ring finder - Factory price \$80 - sale price \$45 - call Lou Faix at 520 - 825 - 7421 [08/08]
FOR SALE	Orion Megaview 15X80 binoculars with hard case, and Sunpak Platinum Plus 7500 Pro tripod with soft case. Like new, \$365 for both. Tim 398-6590 hm, 663-9350 wk. Review at: <a href="http://excelsis.com/1.0/entry.php?sectionid=21&amp;entryid=150">http://excelsis.com/1.0/entry.php?sectionid=21&amp;entryid=150</a> [07/08]
FOR SALE	1. Orion 80ED OTA - New Cost \$529.95 - Sale for \$400.00. 2. Orion glass solar filter for 80ED - New cost \$74.95 - Sale for \$50.00. Reasonable offers will be entertained. Contact Neal Scofield @ 883-5456 or email <a href="mailto:Retired-Badge@msn.com">Retired-Badge@msn.com</a> . [07/08]
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]

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 May 2008**

**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

We/Th 30/ 1	20:34 - 3:00	Su/Mo 11/12	1:22 - 3:55	Th/Fr 22/23	20:56 - 22:03
Th/Fr 1/ 2	20:35 - 3:30	Mo/Tu 12/13	1:52 - 3:54	Fr/Sa 23/24	20:57 - 22:47
Fr/Sa 2/ 3	20:36 - 4:02	Tu/We 13/14	2:19 - 3:53	Sa/Su 24/25	20:58 - 23:25
Sa/Su 3/ 4	20:38 - 4:04	We/Th 14/15	2:45 - 3:52		
		Th/Fr 15/16	3:12 - 3:51	Su/Mo 25/26	20:59 - 23:59
Su/Mo 4/ 5	20:39 - 4:03	Fr/Sa 16/17	3:40 - 3:50	Mo/Tu 26/27	21:00 - 0:30
Mo/Tu 5/ 6	20:40 - 4:02	Sa/Su 17/18	- - -	Tu/We 27/28	21:01 - 0:59
Tu/We 6/ 7	21:09 - 4:01			We/Th 28/29	21:02 - 1:28
We/Th 7/ 8	22:18 - 3:59	Su/Mo 18/19	- - -	Th/Fr 29/30	21:02 - 1:58
Th/Fr 8/ 9	23:18 - 3:58	Mo/Tu 19/20	Full Moon	Fr/Sa 30/31	21:03 - 2:30
Fr/Sa 9/10	0:08 - 3:57	Tu/We 20/21	- - -	Sa/Su 31/ 1	21:04 - 3:08
Sa/Su 10/11	0:48 - 3:56	We/Th 21/22	20:55 - 21:14		

Weekend	Sun	Sun	Mercury	Venus	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn		
Sa/Su	Set	Rise	Set Vi	Rise Vi	Set Vi	Rise Vi	Set Vi	Vi=Visibility	
3/ 4	19:05	5:32	20:35 3	5:09 7	0:33 1	0:03 -2	2:24 1	-3	brilliant
10/11	19:10	5:27	20:56 3	5:07 8	0:19 1	23:36 -2	1:57 1	0	conspicuous
17/18	19:14	5:22	20:58 4	5:07 9	0:04 2	23:08 -2	1:29 1	3	moderate
24/25	19:19	5:18	20:40 7	5:08 -	23:49 2	22:40 -2	1:02 1	6	naked eye limit
31/ 1	19:23	5:16	20:03 -	5:11 -	23:34 2	22:11 -2	0:36 1	9	binoculars limit

By Erich Karkoschka

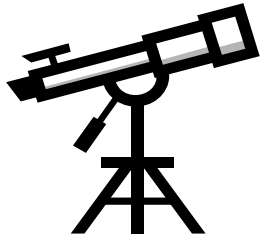
**SAIDA NEEDS MORE HELP FROM MORE TAAA MEMBERS. AFTER ALL, WE WILL ALL BENEFIT FROM DARK SKIES IN OUR AREA !!!**

For more information, go to: [www.sa-ida.org](http://www.sa-ida.org), Or feel free to contact:

John Polacheck, President of SAIDA  
 E-mail: [jpolach@dakotacom.net](mailto: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 !!!

## 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 LX200**  
**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.

## MEMBER'S FORUM

### 2008 ALL ARIZONA MESSIER MARATHON – NOT

By Tom Watson

When the time came to make the choice, I decided not to run. No, I'm not talking politics. I'm talking marathon. This decision was in part due to the need to simply relax and not work too hard at having fun. Three weeks of jury duty would put anyone in such a frame of mind. At the same time, I was aware of how little time I've spent under dark skies in the past year. It seems that my observing projects have all stalled out. The thought of a night under dark skies filled me with an urge to make progress on at least one of these, and so my priorities changed. I chose to leave the Marathon to folks such as Ken and Carter, who set up slightly to the south of me in the field, and approached Messier's catalog in a different way.

The day of the Marathon was warm and windy, not unusual weather for the season. It made for a somewhat unpleasant wait for sundown. But the sun finally slipped down into the west and the wind died to a whisper. There were enough thin clouds in the northwest to paint a pretty sunset, and to balk marathoners (far fewer this year than last) seeking objects in and around Andromeda. Par for the course; seems there are clouds in the west-northwest for every Messier Marathon. These clouds drifted north and east in the first hours of the night, no doubt altering the course of the marathon for those participating. But it was an otherwise clear night, even if the seeing conditions were on the poor side until very late. While most in attendance worked to see as many "M" objects as possible, I settled in to observe and sketch only a few. Over the course of the night I observed and sketched seven objects (M79, 1, 93, 50, 48, 106, and 68), which was a good bit of work, considering three open clusters were involved. I find plotting the stars of an open cluster to be very time consuming.

Of course, time was consumed by other matters as well. Several Cloudy Nights forum friends were set up nearby.

With the exception of Jim (who is also a TAAA member) these were from the Phoenix metro area. One forum friend, Ron, brought over a succession of eyepieces to see how they performed in the Newt. We used M42 as our test object and I had a chance to see how several eyepieces that, until now I've only read about, displayed the Great Nebula. I was especially taken with the 28mm Pentax XL – an eyepiece that I believe is no longer in production (and doesn't that just figure?)

I did not limit myself to Messier objects, taking in (among other things) Saturn and Omega Centauri. The latter became one of the high points of the night when Ken shared the view of the great glob through his big dob. That was worth the price of admission all by itself. It was also just about the end of the event for me. Sometime around 1:30am, Sunday morning (when Carter was no doubt just hitting his stride), I decided to call it a night, satisfied that the time under the stars had been well spent. After day-break, as I drove home, I did so with a sense of progress having been made and with new memories of yet another night beneath the stars.

Editor's note: Due to space limitations, **A 16" Ritchie Lives Again**, by Richard Crump, could not be included. Watch for it in the June newsletter!

**PLAN TO ATTEND!**  
**Sharing The Sky Public Star Party**  
**Saturday, May 10**  
 University of Arizona Mall

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

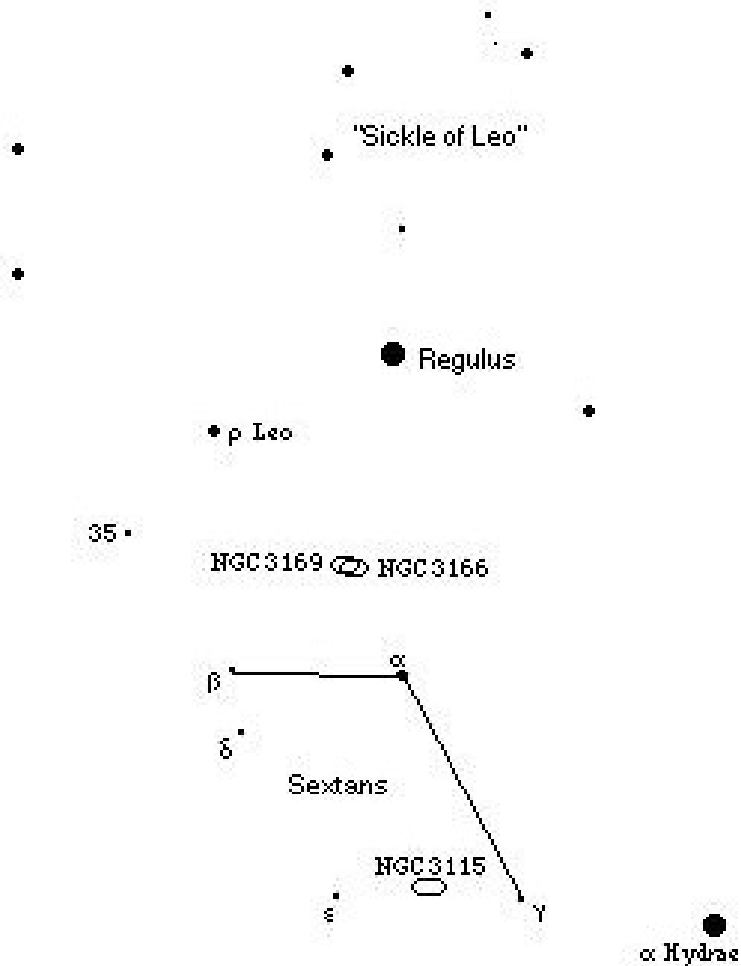
*The July meeting will be held on  
 Friday, July 11.*

Constellation Report by Chris Lancaster

Sextans

The Sextant

This is an obscure little constellation that owes its creation to Johannes Hevelius, a 17th century German-Polish astronomer who is responsible for also naming other small, dim constellations (namely Canes Venatici, Lacerta, Leo Minor, Lynx, Scutum, and Vulpecula) to fill in some rather blank areas of the sky. He named this one after his astronomical sextant, a tool which allowed him to make a detailed star atlas which was published by his wife as a posthumous work three years after Hevelius's death in 1687.



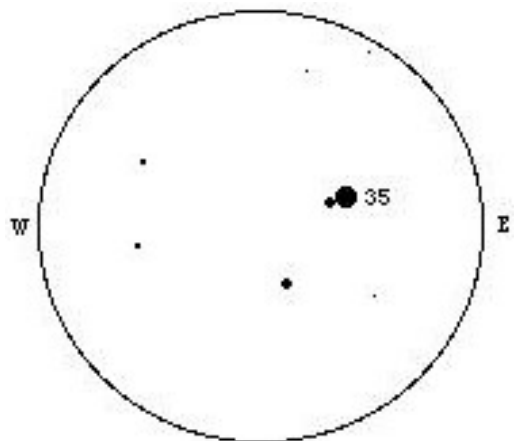
Sextans lies south of the front half of Leo, and since it contains only 4th and 5th magnitude stars, a dark sky is necessary to adequately pick out its shape. It begins to rise at 7 pm and reaches the meridian just after midnight during the month of February. The handle of the familiar sickle that shapes Leo's head and shoulders points straight to Alpha Sextantis, the constellation's brightest star.

Having a careful aim is important to finding the noteworthy objects in this area of the sky since there are no easily visible landmarks nearby to help guide the way. Star hopping from Regulus to the north or Alpha Hydrae to the southwest will require sizable jaunts, but with perseverance you will find some rewarding sights.

Let's start with 35 Sextantis, a double star whose components are of spectral type K3 and K0 and shine at magnitudes 6.5 and 7.5. Starting from 1st magnitude Regulus, move 6.5 degrees to the southeast to 4th magnitude Rho Leonis, then another 2.5 degrees SSE to 5th magnitude 48 Leonis, and finally another 3 degrees to the SE to 35 Sextantis (or on your setting circles, RA 10h 43.3' Dec 4d 44.8'). Otherwise, envision 35 Sextantis forming a flat triangle with Regulus and rho Leonis. This pair of yellowish-white stars shows a distinctive brightness contrast and separated comfortably by 6.5 seconds of arc. They form one corner of a trapezoidal pattern of four stars having a shape almost identical to that of the trapezium at the center of the Orion nebula, only on a scale that's about 21 times larger. 35 will be the brightest of the four. The finder chart spans about 20 arc minutes with north at the top.

A small but bright galaxy sits in the southern environs of Sextans halfway between and just north of a line drawn from Epsilon to Gamma Sextantis. Cataloged as NGC3115 but popularly named the "Spindle Galaxy," this is a lens shaped assemblage of stars measuring 4' x 1' and glowing at magnitude 10. Its high surface brightness, which is evenly spread across its face, allows it to withstand high magnification very well. It appears as a spiral seen edge on, but there is no appearance of dust lanes or any other features of differing contrast. Gently tapering on each side from its central mass are thin extensions which barely hint at a flat disk. The Spindle is located at RA 10h 5.2' Dec -7d 43.1'.

A pair of more challenging galaxies lies farther north. When you find them, you will see both sitting side by side less than 8 arc minutes apart. This pair of 11.5 magnitude galaxies is NGC3169 and NGC3166 which appear quite similar to each other. Both have a noticeable nucleus surrounded by very faint disks covering only 4 to 5 arc minutes in their longest dimension. To track them down, start at a Sextantis and move 4 degrees north and then six minutes of RA east, or center your view at RA 10h 14' Dec +3d 26'.



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.