

Sonoma Skies

The Newsletter of the Sonoma County Astronomical Society
a non-profit scientific and educational organization

July 2003

Volume XXVII No. 7

SCAS Monthly General Meeting

7:30 pm Wednesday July 9, 2003

Proctor Terrace Elementary School, 4th Street and
Bryden Lane, Santa Rosa. Our guest speaker is:
John Westfall

“What to Do with the Moon”

The Moon is unlike any other astronomical body in that we can view it as an actual landscape. Thus we need to study it somewhat as a geologist would, and will find its features all the more interesting if we can recognize the many different types of lunar features, understand somewhat of the processes that formed and modified those features, and also become familiar through experience with how changes in lighting and libration affect what we see.

Present-day projects that amateurs are involved include watching at the right times for the impacts of meteoroids on the moon; observing, charting, and classifying the bright lunar rays; doing the same for lunar domes; measuring the heights of mountains and the depths of craters; conducting photometry of the changes of features' brightness with phase; and, when they occur, studying lunar eclipses.

The tools of study include telescopes (but their optical quality is more important than aperture) and CCD cameras, but recently amateurs have been getting excellent results with video and webcams. However, neglected by most amateurs (and professionals) is the rich record of past lunar photography and images, including but not limited to: high-resolution telescopic photographs going back to the late 19th century, Lunar Orbiter and Apollo photography

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SCAS Membership

by Harry Linder, Membership Director

A Reminder: Dues for the 2003-2004 year were due on June 1st, 2003. It may have slipped your mind. You might want to double-check your checkbook record.

WHAT DO YOU GET FOR YOUR \$25.00 ANNUAL DUES?

Well, you have access to, and can enjoy an assortment of things that may interest you, such as:

1. SCAS meetings, the programs of which I think are pretty interesting.
2. Our newsletter, Sonoma Skies, which tells you what's happening and when, plus a lot of other good stuff.
3. Meet people with similar interests, or other interesting people with different interests.
4. Share your enthusiasm for astronomy at star parties, public and otherwise.
5. Discounts on Sky and Telescope, and Astronomy magazines, the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Observer's Handbook, Calendars, etc.
6. An astronomy lending library, and telescopes you can rent.
7. Membership in the Astronomical League (An incentive to promptness: If you paid your SCAS dues on time, you

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SCAS Membership, Renewals and Subscription Information

SCAS new membership dues are \$25 from June 1st through November 30th; and \$12.50 from December 1st through May 31st. SCAS annual renewal membership dues are \$25 per year; due and payable on June 1st each year. Membership is dropped if dues become delinquent.

SCAS Membership and Meetings

As a benefit of membership, discount subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines are available. Membership meetings take place on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Multipurpose Room of Proctor Terrace Elementary School on Bryden Lane near Fourth Street in Santa Rosa unless otherwise announced in this publication. Star Parties are meetings held each month at our viewing site on the Saturday evening nearest to the new moon. The Public is invited to both.

New or renewal subscriptions for *Sky & Telescope* through SCAS: send your \$29.95 subscription check (**payable to SCAS**) along with your complete mailing address (for new subscriptions) or the *Sky & Telescope* **renewal card** and **return envelope** provided by *Sky & Telescope* (for renewals) directly to **Larry McCune, 544 Thyme Place, San Rafael, CA 94903**.

Subscriptions to *Astronomy* through SCAS occur yearly around October. Check *Sonoma Skies* for details.

Telescopes Available

As a benefit of membership, SCAS members are eligible to borrow telescopes for a \$5 a week donation. Four telescopes are available: a Celestron 8" SCT and a 5" Celestron SCT, complete with clock drive and inverter; an 8-inch Newtonian on Dobsonian mount; and a 80 mm refractor on a motorized equatorial mount. Contact Joan Thornton at 707-762-0594

Access To Palmieri Observing Site

The Palmieri Observing Site is locked to public access. For use during monthly star parties, SCAS members can obtain the combination to the gate lock to the site by contacting any board member listed to the right.

Publication

Sonoma Skies is the newsletter of the **Sonoma County Astronomical Society** (SCAS) and is published each month. Subscriptions to the newsletter are included as part of membership to the Society.

Articles, news items and member announcements for *Sonoma Skies* are welcome. The deadline for articles for next month is the 26th of this month. Submissions must be typed or, if on computer media, in a commonly used word processing and/or graphics format, and may have graphics (pictures, drawings, etc.) They are published on a FCFS basis, space permitting, and may be edited.

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benbarker@earthlink.net

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SCAS Elected Board

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jaas1@comcast.net

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SCAS Appointed Positions

Amateur Telescope Making

Steve Follett 542-1561 sfollett@sonic.net

Young Astronomers Advisor - Vacant

Striking Sparks Program & Sparks Day Coordinator

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SCAS "Public" Star party Coordinator

Loren Cooper 525-8737 lorenc@sonic.net

SCAS Library

Joan Thornton 762-0594

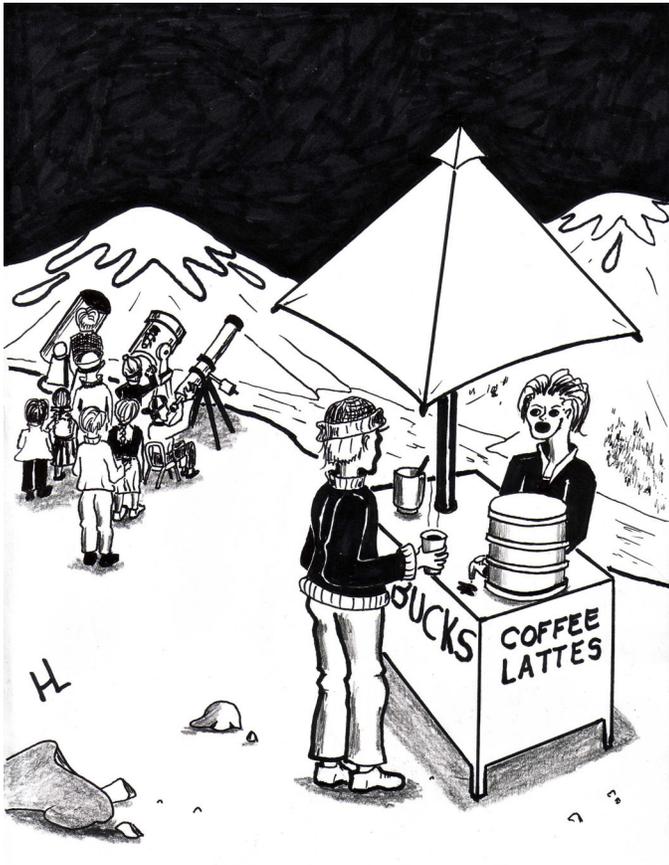
phonyjoanie@earthlink.net

SCAS has a library of over 70 books that may be checked out by SCAS members. A book may be checked out until the next meeting or for one month. Requirements to check out a book:

1. Be a SCAS member.
2. Give me (Joan Thornton) your name and phone number.

The Semi-Sirius Astronomer

by Herb Larsen



“Yep, our goal is to cover every astronomical event, including Messier marathons, planet oppositions, and public viewing, as well as being 1st on Mars.”

SCAS “Geysers” Star Party

Location: Palmieri Observatory, Mercuryville, CA
(on the slopes of Geysers Peak near The Geysers)

Altitude: ~2700 feet

Longitude: 122deg 49min

Latitude: 38deg 46min

The Palmieri family have asked that the observatory not be used during deer hunting seasons. This year’s seasons are July 12 - August 3 (archery) and August 9 - September 21 (general method, i.e., firearms). Consider the observatory closed from the night of July 11 until reopening on the night of September 22.

Public Astronomy

by Len Nelson

SCAS Community Activities Director

lennelsn@attbi.com (707)763-8007

School Star Parties, Young Astronomers and other astronomy programs are conducted by SCAS as a public service. Please join us.

1. Yosemite Trip, July 18-20:

Thus far, we have 26 people signed up for this trip. However, 4 of this number will be staying at motels outside the park so we still have room to add more at Bridalveil Creek Campground. If you’d like to come, contact me soon. I am in the process of contacting parties outside of the SCAS & RFO who might like to join us.

2. SCAS Star-B-Que!

Our annual outing at the RFO (Robert Ferguson Observatory) is **Saturday, August 2nd**. Put this date on your calendar and plan to come! At last year’s event, we were completely shrouded in fog so the viewing left MUCH to be desired. However, last year was an exception that we hope will not be repeated for some time.

To find Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, take Hwy 12 (Fourth Street) out of Santa Rosa towards Sonoma., then turn left onto Adobe Canyon Road just before you reach Kenwood. (The roadside signs says to turn here for Sugarloaf State Park.) It is 8.6 miles from 4th St. and Farmers Lane in Santa Rosa to the Adobe Canyon Road turn-off . Coming from Sonoma, it’s a right turn once you’ve gone past Kenwood. From the Adobe Canyon Road turn-off up to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park is 3.4 miles.

If you haven’t joined in this annual SCAS event in the past, we hope you will this year. This event is one of our most fun-filled activities of the year. This is an especially good time for beginners to get help with learning the sky or to use a telescope. There will be a sky tour, pointing out the different constellations and many interesting features and names in our Summer Sky. There will also be a sky quiz with prizes for the kids, so a clipboard, pencil and red flashlight will be handy.

So drag out those telescopes you’ve been wanting to learn how to use, find its instruction manual (if you still have it),

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2003 SCAS Calendar

Wed. July 9 7:30 pm General Meeting at Proctor Terrace Elementary, 4th Street and Bryden Lane, Santa Rosa

Thu. July 17 SCAS Board meeting at Len's.

Fri.-Sun. July 18-20 Yosemite Star Party

Sat. August 2 Star - B - Que at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park (see story, page 3)

Thu. August 21 SCAS Board Meeting at Lucy's.

Sat. August 30 Public Star Party, 8 p.m. Youth Community Park, Fulton Rd., Santa Rosa

SCAS "Public" Star Party

Loren Cooper, Coordinator (707) 525-8737
lorenco@sonic.net

Location: Youth Community Park, located in Santa Rosa on the west side of Fulton Road, between Guerneville Road and Piner Road, just opposite Piner High School.

The next SCAS "Public" Star Party is Saturday evening, August 30, 2003

SRJC Planetarium

<http://www.santarosa.edu/planetarium/>
(707) 527-4465 or 527-4371

Santa Rosa Campus, Lark Hall, Room 2001
No Summer Shows.

Silicon Valley Astronomy Lecture

<http://www.foothill.edu/ast/>
(650) 949-7888

No Summer shows scheduled at press time.

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What your SCAS dues do for you:

will get all four quarterly issues of the AL newsletter. If you pay them now, well, you will still get the remaining three issues).

8. To name a few more — The Striking Sparks program. Young Astronomers. Access to good viewing sites. The Palmieri Observatory. You can bring your telescope to the Robert Ferguson Observatory on Public Viewing Nights, free. Yosemite (Star Party) weekends.

9. Cool social events like the SCAS Bar-B-Ques, our December meetings, food, and at some monthly meetings even coffee.

That's a lot for \$25 bucks. But I'll bet if you haven't paid, you really just forgot. (Ed. note- I confess, Harry had to give me a dope slap, too. DOH!)

SSU Dept. of Physics & Astronomy Observatory - Public Viewing

(707) 664-2267

August 29 9:00 - 11:00 Star Clusters, Swan Nebula

The observatory is inside the football field at the SE corner of the campus, East Cotati Avenue and Petaluma Hill Road, 2 miles east of U.S. 101 at Cotati.

SSU Lecture Series

"What Physicists Do"

<http://www.phys-astro.sonoma.edu/wpd/>
(707) 664-2119

No Summer shows scheduled at press time.

Morrison Planetarium

Dean Lecture Series

<http://www.calacademy.org/planetarium/>
(415) 750-7141

Fall 2003 - Series Planning is underway for the Fall 2003 Dean Lecture Series. The planned theme is cosmology.

Chabot Space and Science Center

<http://www.chabotspace.org>

(510) 336-7373

“SUMMER OF MARS” Lectures

With Mars approaching its best view from Earth in over 10,000 years, leading scientists in the field of Martian exploration will take us on journeys to the Red Planet through the latest in research.

Thursday, July 10, 2003- 7:30 pm

Taylor Perron, UC Berkeley

Water & the Martian Landscape

The quest for locating water on Mars is the key to understanding its past, interpreting its present and humanizing its future.

Thursday, July 24, 2003 -7:30 pm

Nathalie Cabrol, SETI & NASA

The MERS: Mars Exploration Rovers

Dr. Cabrol is a Planetary Geologist and a Principle Scientist with NASA's Mars Exploration Rovers. She'll provide an update with the latest on the Mars Explorations Rover Missions.

Saturday, August 9, 2003 - 7:00 PM

(sponsored by the Eastbay Astronomical Society)

Dr. Chris McKay, NASA

Mars: the Search for Life on the Red Planet

Dr. McKay is part of the team that announced the possibility that fossilized microbes exist inside Martian Meteorite ALH84001. He will tell us about the experience and what it means to our understanding of the history of the solar system.

Thursday, August 21, 2003 7:30 pm

Dr. Margaret Race, SETI

Mars, Astrobiology and Planetary Protection

Hear one of the most renowned experts in planetary protection, the discipline of keeping Earth microbes from contaminating other bodies we visit. Dr. Race will tell us why such protocols are important in our plans to explore our nearest neighbors in the quest to find life.

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Robert H. Ferguson Observatory

Public Observing

Phone: (707) 833-6979

<http://www.rfo.org>

The CCD observatory in the east wing is being equipped with a new 16-inch SCT on a robotic mount. It may be in service by the next public nights. Bill Russell's lovely 24-inch Dobsonian continues in the west wing. The 8-inch refractor donated by Dominican College has been refurbished and is now in service on public nights.

July 19 Solar Viewing 12:00 noon - 4:00 pm
Night viewing 9:00 pm - midnight

August 19 Solar Viewing 12:00 noon - 4:00 pm
Night viewing 9:00 pm - midnight

There is no admission fee for the solar viewing, but donations are appreciated. There is a \$2 admission fee for the night viewing sessions.

SCAS members are welcome to set up telescopes to assist with the public viewing. However, automobile access is closed at dusk, so arrivals after dusk will need to be able to carry their equipment in from the parking area by the horse stables.

Thursday, August 28, 2003 - 7:30 pm

Dr. Tim McCoy & Dr. Cari Corrigan,
Smithsonian Institution

Martian Meteorites:

What They Tell Us About Mars & Life

Take a look through the eyes of a geobiologist and a meteorite expert at what rocks from Mars can tell us about the formation of our solar system and the life that may have existed in those early formative periods. View Martian Meteorite ALH84001 during special public workshops Aug. 26, 27 & 28 free of charge.

Saturday, August 30, 2003 - 6:30 pm

William Hartman

Travelers Guide to Mars

Internationally known astronomer and artist William Hartman takes us on a travelogue to Red Planet in this look at what a tourist to Mars would discover.

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Annual Star-B-Que, August 2

bring your planisphere if you've got one, make a list of questions you'd like to ask, get some red cellophane for your flashlight and let's have a great night at this year's Star-B-Que! Please remember that the Star-B-Que is **only** for SCAS members, their families, and a few guests who come with the SCAS member (RFO docents have also been invited).

The FERGUSON OBSERVATORY includes a 24" reflecting telescope, an 8" refractor and a new motorized 16" SCT with a CCD camera. An 8" SCT fitted with an excellent hydrogen-alpha filter will be available for viewing the Sun. Immediately around the observatory is the Group Campground parking area, campsites, running water, large barbecue pits, and outhouses. We are allowed in at noon. Solar viewing will begin at 2 pm. You may camp overnight (no RV hook-ups). Everyone must leave by noon on Sunday.

At the entrance kiosk identify yourself as part of the Sonoma County Astronomical Society headed for the Star-B-Que at the Ferguson Observatory. You will be directed to the site. Since SCAS is paying for the campsite and the Observatory, there will be no individual fees. If you bring pets, you will be charged \$1.00 per animal at the gate, and must keep them on a leash at all times (Park regulation). Since campsite parking is limited to 30 cars, please carpool if possible. ***Park by backing in to minimize offensive white light from backup lights if you leave in the dark. Park close together, leaving just enough room to open your car door. Parking anywhere except the gravel parking area is prohibited.***

If you arrive after 8:30 pm, or if the campground parking area is full, park next to the group campsite entrance gate, about 100 yards away.

The barbeque fire will be started about 5:00pm so we can begin cooking about 6:00pm. SCAS will provide the barbecue fire and marshmallows. You bring marshmallow sticks, food to barbecue, **a favorite potluck dish to share**, whatever else you want to eat or drink your own utensils and a measure of good cheer.

Call or email me if you have questions- Len.

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July 9 Program "What To Do With The Moon" -John Westfall

in the 1960s, and the multiband Clementine imagery from 1994. Much of this material is available online, on CD-ROMs, or both. Being unaware of this historical trove has led to more than one embarrassing mistake in interpreting possible lunar transient phenomena.

Biographical notes:

John Westfall was a cartographer in the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey from 1960 to 64. He received his doctorate in Geography in 1969 from the George Washington University. He has taught for the past 35 years in the Department of Geography and Human Environmental Studies at San Francisco State University. His research interests include historical geography, aerial photography, and remote sensing and cartography as applied to planetary science. Cambridge University Press published his book, *Atlas of the Lunar Terminator*, in 2000.

As an amateur astronomer, Westfall has been a member of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers for 50 years; has been an editor of its Journal, *The Strolling Astronomer*, since 1985; and directed the organization for the period 1985-95. He is currently an A.L.P.O. Board member, and directs the observational Sections concerned with the transits of Mercury and Venus, and with timing the eclipses of Jupiter's Galilean satellites.

A native of San Francisco, he currently lives 50 miles east of his birthplace, where he enjoys clear skies 70 percent of the time, using a 14-inch reflector in his backyard observatory. He and his wife Beth chase solar eclipses (11 for John, 10 for Beth), transits of Mercury (1993 in Australia, 2003 in Cyprus), and supernovae (1987a from Fiji); they are looking ahead to a return to Cyprus in 2004 for the first transit of Venus since 1882.