

Links to Cool Stuff Starts Here

Want to know what the sky will be like tonight at your favorite observing spot? What will be the moon phase 12 days from now? What's happening at NASA, ESA, CNSA? Want to check out some pictures from Oki-Tex 2 years ago? You can do all that and much more right here on our website. Just sign in and start clicking around. Have an announcement to make or a story to tell, email it to the webmaster or put it on the site yourself. It's very flexible and created just for you.

AAC BIG WIGS

and wiglets

President for life

Jim Fitch

Vice President with nine lives

Gene Storlie

Secretary for a half life

Terry Zimmerman

Treasurer since life began

Don Chrysler

Editor wiglets in the pool of life

Dave McGaughy

Rich Merten

Webmaster with the jaws of life

Rich Merten



this issue

A New Threat?	P.2
HOT! HOT! HOT!	P.3
RMSS 2011	P.4
Website Updates	P.5
Tiny Earls	P.6

Editors Notes

Welcome to the second edition of the AAC Mini Newsletter.

The first order of business this month is to thank all of you who sent emails or called saying that you were happy with the new format. I'm glad you like it and that means things will continue in a straight line until we reach the next fork in the road.

I run out of new ideas easily, so if you have suggestions or would like to add, subtract or modify I am all ears.

Observing for me this month has been non-existent. I do however, have a nice report and some pictures from the cool Colorado Rockies and this summer's RMSS. Laura Hershey had a good time in general but was still affected by smoke on at least one evening. Read her report on page 4.

Do you enjoy a good pre or post apocalyptic movie? There seems to be more of them all the time. There are the movie retreads of robots and aliens taking over the world, science and scientists gone berserk and just plain old meteor storms causing worldwide panic. This month Robert Ashcraft gives us his thoughts on the dangers of rouge planets entering our solar system. Do I smell another CGI blockbuster?

Yes! Just in time for this month's news, we do have a new movie release about an impending world ending crash from a surprise collision between earth and a heretofore unobserved rogue planet.

The movie is called **Melancholia**, and is coming to a theatre near you, at a yet unspecified date and time. I guess you were wrong, Robert.

RM

A New Threat?

By Robert Ashcraft

According to an article that appeared recently in Time magazine, there are billions of Jupiters loose in the Milky Way galaxy:

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2072290,00.html>

These planets are either not in orbit around any star or are in a very loose orbit. They are thought to have been ejected from their original solar systems at some time in the past.

It's hard for me to visualize a planet in our galaxy that is not in some kind of orbit. At the very least, it would be in orbit around the center of the galaxy.

With billions of rogue planets on the loose, does this pose a threat to Earth in the near future? In my opinion, no. First of all, if a rogue entered our solar system, it would most likely go into an orbit around our Sun. Since the gravitational force of the Sun on the Earth is 10,000 times stronger than the forces due to all the other planets, a newcomer the size of Jupiter would have little effect.

Secondly, if a rogue was currently one light year away from our solar system, the time it would take to enter our neighborhood is huge. We know that Jupiter's average orbital speed is 13.07 km/s and that one light year is 9.4605284×10^{12} km. Assuming that the rogue is travelling that fast, the time needed to reach our solar system is

$$\text{Time} = (9.4605284 \times 10^{12} \text{ km}) / (13.07 \text{ km/s}) = 723,835,378,730 \text{ s}$$

That time, converted to years, is 22,937 years! Even if the rogue was moving at Earth's average orbital speed of 29.78 km/s, the time would be 10,067 years.

Hence, a rogue planet most likely takes at least 10,000 years to travel one light year, so it is very unlikely that one will pose a threat to our solar system in the near future. Now we can go back to worrying about asteroids. 😊

HOT! HOT! HOT!

Last month the fires in Arizona and New Mexico were all the news. This month the headlines are about the all time record breaking high temperature, followed by even higher record breaking heat, high winds and only a tiny teaser of a shower. With no relief in site, new fires continue to pop up and spread across the southwest. Our extreme heat and drought has replaced the fear of burning trees and grass with a fear of *spontaneous human combustion*, whenever we step out to get the mail.

That might be a bit of an exaggeration but here are two similar pictures I found on the web this week. The first, thanks to Wikipedia, is a dust storm rolling into Stratford Texas in 1935. The second is a larger dust storm coming over the south mountains into Phoenix just ten days ago (July 5, 2011).

Here is a link to 230 more pictures of the Phoenix dust storm.

<http://www.azcentral.com/photo/19440>



While dust storms are not unheard of in central Arizona the size of this one is exceptional. Especially since this is their monsoon season.

Of course that's just us in the southwest, head north and east a bit and you might be thinking of listing your home in town as beachfront property, what with all the water and sandbags around.

I am starting to get a bit concerned about the fate of our August picnic. We might want to think about having some options in place just in case we can't use the facilities at Buffalo Lake.

RM

RMSS 2011

By Laura Hershey

The Rocky Mountain skies gave another show in 2011. I arrived mid-afternoon on Wed. June 29th. There was plenty of space. I found friends last year down in Hermit Cove so back to Hermit Cove I went. Several of us set up but we began to notice a haze. There was discussion about smelling smoke but we checked for fires in the area and there were none. We convinced ourselves it was just a Rocky Mountain haze when reports came down that it was smoke from the Los Alamos fires. The first night was a loss for star gazing. We did hear that it cleared about 2:30 but by 4:15 the first light arrives.

Thursday, I attended a session on Astronomy for the blind. Can't find the fellows name anywhere but they said he had given the presentation previously at RMSS. He was able to obtain four North Face base tents in which he glued washers and nuts to represent the constellations. The tents were each of the four seasons and the size of the nut indicates it's magnitude.

Viewing Saturday night was fabulous. The sky cleared perfectly about 11:00. We were viewing through an 8" Celestron, a 8" & 12" Orion dob and a 24" Starmaster. The Starmaster owner is actually friends with Mike Lockwood; the fellow who grinds for Starmaster. Last year they brought a 30" home built with them from Illinois but they are reworking it because of weight issues. We caught a fabulous pass of the space station and I was able to track it with binoculars the entire pass.

Friday was the walkabout and we view a 20" homebuilt dob, a counter balance mount for binoculars, and 'portable' homebuilt dob, and box built refractor and a set of one way casters. During the walkabout I met the web master of CSAS and she asked me to help judge the photo contest. It was a great experience but especially getting to know the CSAS members better. Here is a link to all the photos:

<http://tinyurl.com/6bp8wtq>

The winning photo is #7 of 16 "Fantastic observing from Starry Meadows." Scope is the 20 inch Starmaster belonging to Bob V. Photo by - Ginger (Ginger).

<http://tinyurl.com/5wy2wdk>

Some of the others may look better but they were over worked in Photoshop. Saturday evening was the door prize drawing but I got nothing! The club president won the Ethos! Viewing was great but not wonderful. I went to bed kinda' early... the air is thin up there!

I stayed around for a Bluegrass festival in Westcliffe the next weekend. :)

Laura Hershey (nomad of the stars)

Editors Note: Laura also sent us some of her pictures. They are in our Photo Gallery in the "Everyman" section under RMSS 2011.

Thanks Laura

Website Updates

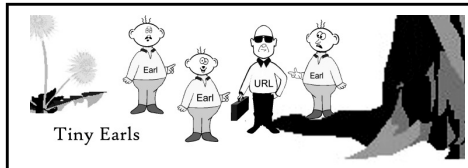
Our website is slowly evolving. This month the picture gallery has been updated. Same idea, just a new version and a new face. Changes make it much easier to upload your photos. The first thing to do is move the mouse over all of the little icons and see what they do. New top level menus make it easy to create albums and then upload pictures. You don't need a special password to view the pictures but since the Gallery is a program separate from the main website you need a separate login in order to upload new pictures. Your login and password can be the same as the main site but I will have to activate it for you. If you already have a name and password from the old Gallery it should still work, if not, just send me an email and I will get you in.

There are a few things you should know before uploading your pictures:

1. Pictures cannot be larger than 2 MB. Any larger and they will not upload.
2. Try to keep photo sizes 2048 pixels or less on the longest side. If you need a program to resize your photos I suggest 'Faststone Image Viewer' or 'Irfanview.' Both are free, easy to learn and work great to resize, email and display pictures on your own computer.
3. Try to use only numbers and letters in the title of the photo, some non-alphanumerics are OK, some others cause problems. Especially, do not use the '&' character. The & causes that picture to be skipped when running the slideshow. Weird!
4. This is another oddball; it took me half a day to find this answer. Do not use Adobe's PhotoShop Elements to edit and save your pictures. Version 8 is the only one that I am sure of but it probably applies to other Adobe products as well. Elements puts into every file header a long string of filler characters that cause the server on the GoDaddy site to hang and/or disconnect.
5. If you still have problems getting your pics online you can always send them to me and I will upload them for you.

Just for fun.





Tiny URLs take the place of those long untypeable web links. However, the Web is a slippery place. There is no guarantee how long these links will remain available.

Proposed Cancellation of James Web Space Telescope

<http://tinyurl.com/67ad82r>

AURA Reaction to Proposed Cancellation of JWST

<http://tinyurl.com/685jwel>

Texas Radio Astronomy Program Defunded

<http://tinyurl.com/6hcf82d>

UC Riverside Physicists Discover New Way to Produce Antimatter-containing Atom

<http://tinyurl.com/6j69atq>

Exploding Star Provides Clues To Origin Of Solar System

<http://tinyurl.com/6kqqw8j>

The Truth About Neptune's Spin

<http://tinyurl.com/5vpvy64>

Asteroid Flyby Yields New Thinking

<http://tinyurl.com/6kk39kr>

Saturn's New Bright Storm

<http://tinyurl.com/2b96o8r>

"Zombie" stars key to measuring dark energy

<http://tinyurl.com/5wlqcxr>

Space Probe Swarms to Slam into Planets for Science

<http://tinyurl.com/6jq5drj>