

Sonoma Skies

Newsletter of the Sonoma County

A nonprofit scientific and

www.sonomaskies.org



Astronomical Society

educational organization

June 2006

Volume XXIX No. 5

MEMBERS! IT'S TIME TO RENEW!

Please use the form on Page 3. Support your Club so your Club can support you! Thank you.



Yosemite Challenge

Len Nelson has informed us that this year's Yosemite trip (July 28 and 29) is all booked up. That is certainly a positive sign! Last year's trip was quite fun, as all the members present would testify.

This year I would like to extend an invitation and challenge to any willing member to ascend half dome with the Zalunardo brothers. Last year's ascent was beautiful with Vernal and Nevada Falls overflowing and the Mist Trail lush and green. This year should be even wetter than last due to the late snowfalls. There are many other worthwhile hikes as well, such as the Taft and Sentinel Dome hike, Bridveil Falls, Glacier point to the valley floor (and back—a real killer), as well as Yosemite Falls and countless others. The only limit is time. So if hiking is to be part of your day I would encourage an early start and careful planning, because we do not want to miss the real reason we are here, Astronomy at Glacier Point!

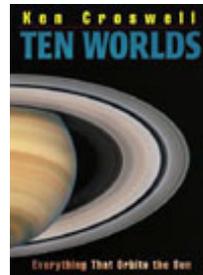
At approximately 7000 ft approximately the seeing has the possibility of being absolutely stellar, weather permitting. This year we will have a new moon. This should allow for some stunning deep sky views of summer constellations. If the crowd is anything like it was last year, be prepared to be swamped. Many members had lines ten to fifteen people long for prolonged periods. Every language and people imaginable wanders on by, the crowd thinning later and the diehards sticking through to the later hours. It does not take much to impress most visitors and a little enthusiasm goes a long way. Be prepared to have fun...there is no way not to!

Ten Worlds: Everything that Orbits the Sun

WITH KEN CROSWELL

At the June 14 SCAS meeting we welcome back Ken Crowell, who will tell us about his latest book *Ten Worlds: Everything that Orbits the Sun* (which was only released on May 15).

Ken is an astronomer and author living in Berkeley, California. He went to college at Washington University, majoring in physics and minoring in English literature, and earned his Ph.D. in astronomy at Harvard University for studying the Milky Way's halo. During his research, he discovered a halo star located 90,000 light-years above the plane of the Galaxy.



We will be one of the first groups to hear Ken talk about the discovery of the new world larger than Pluto and three times farther from the Sun. During this talk, Dr. Crowell will take us on an up-to-date tour of all of the kinds of objects orbiting the sun, showing spectacular color images of the planets and their largest satellites. He focuses on the latest developments beyond Neptune:

astronomers have spotted more than a thousand icy objects in the Edgeworth-Kuiper belt, whose largest members are Pluto and the newly discovered tenth planet, 9 billion miles from the Sun.

The Hubble Space Telescope has recently revealed that the tenth planet is the shiniest planet in the solar system, reflecting an incredible 86 percent of the sunlight striking it. Furthermore, we now know of three moons orbiting Pluto and one moon orbiting the tenth planet. What are these far-off planets and their moons like? What will the newly launched spacecraft to Pluto tell us? And do Pluto and the tenth planet even deserve to be called planets?

Dr. Crowell is the author of seven books on astronomy: *The Alchemy of the Heavens*, *Planet Quest*, *Magnificent Universe*, *See the Stars*, *The Universe at Midnight*, *Magnificent Mars*, and *Ten Worlds*. He has also written for *Astronomy*, *New Scientist*, *The New York Times*, *Sky and Telescope*, *Star Date*, and other publications. His books have been translated into Chinese, German, Polish, and even Serbian.

(continued back page)

NOTE: TELESCOPE AUCTION AT THE JUNE 14 MEETING!

Sonoma County Astronomical Society (SCAS)

Membership Information

Meetings: 7:30 PM on the second Wednesday of each month, in the Multipurpose Room of Proctor Terrace Elementary School, 1711 Bryden Lane at Fourth Street, Santa Rosa, unless otherwise announced in this publication. The public is invited.

Dues: \$25, renewable June 1 of each year. New members joining between December 1 and May 31 pay partial-year dues of \$12.50.

Star Parties: See the Events section for dates and times.

Rental Telescopes: Members are eligible to borrow telescopes from the club. Five telescopes are available: 8" and 5" SCTs, 8" and 12.5" Newtonians on Dobsonian mounts; and an 80mm refractor. Contact John Roush at 792-1199, jroush@spamlion.com.

Egroup URL: Connect with other members about going observing, observing reports and chat about astronomy and news items from AANC and *Telescope*. Hosted by Robert Leyland at r.leyland@verizon.net. Any SCAS member is welcome to join. Visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/scas> and click the "Join" button, or send an email to scas-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Discount Subscriptions: For *Sky & Telescope*, new subscribers may send a check for \$32.95 payable to "SCAS", with your complete mailing address, directly to: Larry McCune, 544 Thyme Place, San Rafael, CA 94903. For renewals, send him your check with the completed renewal card and return envelope. Discount subscriptions to *Astronomy* Magazine occur annually in October. Check *Sonoma Skies* for details.

Library: SCAS Librarian Joan Thornton hosts a library of astronomy books that may be checked out by members at SCAS meetings, to be returned at the next meeting. Videotaped lectures on astronomy may be rented for \$3 per month.

Sonoma Skies is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Astronomical Society (SCAS). Subscription is included as part of membership. Articles and member announcements are welcome and are published on a first come, first served basis, space permitting, and may be edited. **The deadline for submissions is the last Wednesday of each month.** Mail to: Editor, SCAS, P.O. Box 183, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, or email publications@sonomaskies.org

SCAS Elected Board

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penumbra@sonic.net

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lennelsn@comcast.net

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chadz@sonic.net

Striking Sparks Program Coordinator: Dickson Yeager,
539-2385 sparks@sonomaskies.org

SCAS Appointed Positions

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Young Astronomers Advisor: Gary Jordan, 829-5288
SieraMolly@aol.com

Librarian: Joan Thornton, 762-0594 phonyjoanie@earthlink.net

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by
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*Now, that's organic astronomy!
Use a sunflower to guide a
solar telescope.*

Something New, Something Fun!

Notes From The Editor-by Chad Zalunardo

So let's try something different and see how it works. We will have a little more member input for next issue, of course with your help. I would like to approach next issue with our favorite online websites in mind, relating to astronomy, and tangential subjects if appropriate. Email chadz@sonic.net some of your favorite websites you browse. You know the ones, the kind you visit everyday, or set to your homepage. Perhaps they might be the sites you refer to for important info or good observational data?

Whatever it be, include a very brief description of what makes the site so special and I'll share it with everyone else. Since there is nothing to lose go ahead and shoot the email off today! If you would like recognition for your favorite website simply send your full name with the website links, if not, send no name (but you had better still send the links!). Simple enough, get cooking. As I am sure there will be some neat sites, I may be so inclined to use them in this newsletter from time to time as appropriate. Any help and all suggestions welcomed.

ROBERT H. FERGUSON OBSERVATORY

Public Viewing Saturday, June 24th

Solar Viewing: 12:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Night Viewing begins 9:00 PM

The Observatory: Three scopes are operating: The 14-inch SCT with CCD camera in the East wing, the 8-inch refractor under the dome and the 24-inch Dobsonian in the West wing. No admission fee for the solar viewing, but donations are appreciated. The Park charges \$6 per vehicle for entry. A \$2 donation is requested from adults 18 and over for admission to the observatory during night viewing sessions.

SCAS members may set up telescopes in the observatory parking lot to assist with public viewing. Auto access closes at dusk; late arrivals must carry equipment from the horse stable parking area.

CLASSES, OTHER EVENTS

Jun 6: The Night Sky Spring Series #2, 7:30 pm

Jun 20: The Night Sky Spring Series #3, 7:30 pm

Jun 23: Observing Lab (Summer) Star Birth, 7:30 pm

Jun 27: The Night Sky Spring Series #4, 7:30 pm

Classes are held at the Observatory. Reservations recommended.

(707) 833-6979, <http://www.rfo.org> or nightsky@rfo.org

Ten Worlds with Ken Crowell (from page 1)

Ken says that his talk will be adult-level, but *Ten Worlds* is appropriate both for children (nine and up) and for adults who want a simple but spectacular introduction to astronomy. He suspects that our more sophisticated members will buy TEN WORLDS for their kids, grandkids, and astronomy-challenged adult friends. According to Amazon.com, the book is aimed at young readers (ages 4-10), has 56 pages, and the list price is \$19.95. You can find out more about *Ten Worlds*, including several sample pages from the book on Ken's website <http://kencrowell.com/talks.html>

Ken will have copies available for sale and be glad to sign his books for you.

AUGUST IS STAR-B-QUE MONTH!

We'll be reminding you, but be sure to include Saturday, August 19, in your summer viewing plans. The party will be held at Sugar Loaf Ridge State Park at the group campground next to the Robert Ferguson Observatory. We have the space for the day and overnight, so you can plan to camp, bring family and friends and enjoy all the telescopes and the park for the entire weekend.

Remember, the Star-B-Que is held instead of the regular meeting, so there will be no August meeting at Proctor Terrace School.

Details will follow. Hope to see you there!

Sonoma County Astronomical Society Membership Application/Renewal

The \$25.00 Annual Membership fee for 2006-2007 is due June 1.

Please complete this form and give it to Walt Bodley with your check, payable to "SCAS," at the next meeting, or mail them to: SCAS, P.O. Box 183, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

New Renewal (If renewing, provide name only, plus any information that has changed).

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Check here if you are willing to receive the newsletter via **email only**. Save a tree, keep your dues low!

Your renewal dues include membership in the Astronomical League, our monthly newsletter *Sonoma Skies*, discounted subscriptions for *Sky and Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines, great guest speakers at our monthly meetings, and opportunities to meet new and interesting people who share your interest in many aspects of astronomy and science.

MT. TAMALPAIS ASTRONOMY

July 19, 7:30PM: "Crowds Around Asteroids"—Franck Marchis Ph.D. Assistant Research Astronomer, UC Berkeley

Sponsored by the Mt Tamalpais State Park and coordinated by volunteers of the Mt Tam Interpretive Association. All programs are FREE and open to the public. Families and students encouraged to come.

Presentations held in the Mountain Theatre. Viewing afterwards in Rock Springs Parking Area, provided by San Francisco Amateur Astronomers. Dress warmly and car pool if possible. Bring a flashlight! Hotline: 415/289-6636; Info: <http://www.mttam.net/>

JUNE 14

*Ten Worlds: Everything
that Orbits the Sun
with Ken Crowell*

SHINGLETOWN STAR PARTY

June 21-26

Registration is now open for the 2006 Shingletown Star Party. The dates are Wednesday, June 21 (gates open at noon) to Monday, June 26 (must depart by noon). The location is on Hwy 44, about 30 miles east of Redding at an abandon airstrip east of Shingletown. Good dark skies at about 4,000'. Cost is \$40.00 for the full five nights. So far, SCAS members planning on going are Dickson Yeager, Len Nelson and John Whitehouse. See you there.

For details and registration, visit www.shingletownstarparty.org.

SCOPE CITY *New Member Bonus!*

Scope City at 350 Bay Street, San Francisco, is offering a **\$25 merchandise discount to new members.**

Manager Sam Sweiss has supported SCAS and Striking Sparks and offers a huge selection of telescopes, accessories and more. Obtain a receipt from Walt Bodley, Membership Director, showing you have paid the \$25 SCAS membership dues. To arrange for your merchandise discount, contact Sam at 415/421-8800 or at sanfrancisco@scopecity.com

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