

Sonoma Skies

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Astronomical Society
A nonprofit scientific and educational organization
www.sonomaskies.org



May 2006

Volume XXIX No. 4

Newsletter Editor Needed!

As announced at the last meeting, our newsletter editor is retiring and SCAS is looking for a volunteer to replace her.

A four-page issue like this one would be easier for a new editor and would meet the club's basic needs. The 8-page version with articles and non-SCAS event listings is optional. Training will be provided. If you are interested, please contact any board member listed on page 2.

For Sale! SCAS Telescopes

We find we are accumulating telescopes faster than we can loan or rent them out. We think it would be a good idea to hold a silent auction. Take a look at these photos and suggested starting prices and think about your offer. Contact any member of the Board of Directors for more information.



8" Dobsonian
\$250



Celestron 5"
\$250



12" Dobsonian, \$250



8" SCT, \$275

A History of Astronomy Catalogs

SCAS May 10 Meeting, Proctor Terrace School

Steve Gottlieb has been an active observer and catalog sleuth for over twenty-five years. For the past two decades he has been involved with a group of amateur and professional astronomers whose goal has been to re-examine the 100-200 year old source material used by J. J. Dreyer to compile the NGC and IC and to then produce a historically correct set of these catalogs.

A staggering 15-20% of all NGC entries have known or potential identification problems—poor positions, misidentifications, duplicate entries, incorrect classifications and confusion with single or multiple stars. The group's catalog sleuthing has resulted in recovering literally hundreds of mistaken identities, lost objects and other mysteries that have created a maze of confusion in today's professional astronomical databases and amateur software.

At the May 10 SCAS meeting Steve will discuss the original observers who contributed to the NGC and the results from the group's catalog sleuthing.

A member of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers, Steve lives in the East Bay and teaches mathematics at Albany High School. He has written numerous deep sky observing articles for *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines (see page 68, in February's *Astronomy*). He has a website of observing challenges www.angelfire.com/id/jsredshift/ (*Adventures in Deep Space*) and his favorite deep sky objects are featured in the popular *Orion Deep Map 600* star chart. <http://pages.sbcglobal.net/raycash/dm600.htm> He can often be found observing at Lake Sonoma.



Steve Gottlieb with daughter Andrea at Sierra Buttes

Young Astronomers See page 3

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

President: John Whitehouse, 539-5549 jmw@sonic.net

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Publications Director: Cecelia Yarnell 569-9663,
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Striking Sparks Program Coordinator: Dickson Yeager,
539-2385 sparks@sonomaskies.org

SCAS Appointed Positions

Amateur Telescope Making: Steve Follett, 542-1561 sfollett@sonic.net

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

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

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Hubble has been able to photograph the newly discovered object in Ophiuchus. It appears to be a large ball of lost socks.

SCAS YOSEMITE PUBLIC STAR PARTY

July 28 and 29

Each year for over 16 years, the SCAS and a number of other California astronomy clubs have gone to Yosemite to do public astronomy at Glacier Point. In return for this public service, the park district allows us free entry (usually \$20) to Yosemite and free camping at Bridalveil Campground, about 8.5 miles from Glacier Point. If you wish to come, you are obligated to bring your professional telescope to both the Friday and Saturday star parties at Glacier Point.

This year, we are scheduled just 3-4 days after the New Moon and during the peak of the Delta Aquarid meteor shower. This means you'd need to arrive at Bridalveil Campground on Friday, July 28 early enough to set up your tent and then head off to Glacier Point for public astronomy until at least 10PM. It's a fun experience and, of course, the views are out of this world.

The campground can only accept 30 people so this offer is available first come first served. Please contact Len Nelson at 763-8007 if you are interested or have questions.

TELESCOPE FOR SALE

Celestron Nextstar 8 automated telescope in mint condition. Original cost: \$1,500. Will sell for best offer over \$1,000. Call (707) 894-0426 or email Fred Mann at dcfred30@yahoo.com

ROBERT H. FERGUSON OBSERVATORY

Public Viewing Saturdays, May 6 & May 27
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

- May 23 Night Sky Summer Series, 7:30 PM
- June 6 Night Sky Summer Series, 7:30 PM
- June 20 Night Sky Summer Series, 7:30 PM

Classes are held at the Observatory. Reservations recommended. (707) 833-6979, <http://www.rfo.org> or nightsky@rfo.org

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY SERIES “WHAT PHYSICISTS DO”

Mondays at 4:00 PM

Schulz Hall Room 3001 (Coffee at 3:30 PM)

May 1—Nanoscale Transport of Heat, Liquids and Macromolecules

Dr. Arun Majumdar of the University of California at Berkeley will describe how he and his colleagues combine the science and engineering of nanometer scales to develop novel systems and technologies.

May 8—Spin Electronics: Magnets and Semiconductors

Dr. Frances Hellman of the University of California at Berkeley will discuss the science and technology of using both the spin and charge of the electron in modern solid state electronics, focussing particularly on how to make a magnetic semiconductor.

Contact <http://phys-astro.sonoma.edu/wpd/>

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



SUMMER ANNOUNCEMENT

The April Young Astronomers meeting was the last of this school year. Meetings will resume again in September when the next school year starts up. Stay tuned to the newsletter throughout the summer for more fun SCAS activities and interesting articles. Also, just because we aren't having meetings doesn't mean there's nothing to see in the sky. Break out that telescope and discover the wonders of summer nights for yourself!

APRIL YA MEETING UPDATE

At the April Young Astronomers meeting, adult advisor Gary Jordan gave a fun and interesting presentation on the probability of extraterrestrial life in our universe. He opened by showing a picture of what usually comes to mind when aliens are mentioned—a human-like organism with green skin, large black eyes, tall body, and a desire to take over the world! Is this what aliens would really look and act like? Gary answered this with a resounding, “No”! As it turns out, it is much more likely that life exists in the universe at the microscopic level. Other interesting related topics were discussed at the meeting including recent discoveries of Mars rocks which may hold fossilized bacteria-like organisms and what life needs in order to develop on a planet.

Although the weather was rainy there was still a good turnout at the meeting. Let's carry on this enthusiasm through the summer and well into next school year's meetings!

YOUNG ASTRONOMERS

Meetings: 7:30 PM the second Friday of each month of the school year, at Apple Blossom School, 700 Water Trough Road, Sebastopol, in the Multipurpose Hall. Open to all Sonoma County students. **Telescope viewing** is held in the upper parking lot after the meeting. **Directions:** From Hwy. 116 in Sebastopol, turn west onto Bodega Ave. Continue on Bodega Ave. almost two miles to Water Trough Rd. Turn left and go about 1/3 mile to the school, on your right. From Hwy. 12, go straight through Sebastopol, past Main Street, and continue as above.

YA Elected Officers

President: Melissa Downey 632-5661
VP/Program Director: Olivia Turnross jtec@sonic.net
Recorder: Marie-Pierre Frigon 773-3206
Newsletter Editor: Scott Grubb fivegees@sonic.net
Librarian: Rachel Loughman stop_rachel_4_insanity@yahoo.com
Adult Adviser: Gary Jordan 829-5288

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.

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Astronomical Society**

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MAY 10

**History of
Astronomy Catalogs
Steve Gottlieb**