

Pajarito Astronomers

P.O. Box 1092, Los Alamos NM 87544

President	Robert Davenport	667-6935	MS K400
Vice President	David Hollowell	665-4223	MS T085
Secretary	Don Casperson	667-1475	MS D436

www.la.unm.edu/~beach/pajarito.html

May 23, 2005

Dear Members,

May County-Sponsored Dark Night: It was touch and go with clouds all day, but at the last minute the skies cleared for the May 7th Dark Night. There were six larger scopes, three SCTs and three Newtonians, and twenty to twenty-five people present. A 14" Meade was the largest scope and the club's venerable Criterion RV-6 was also present. It was a very nice evening with much sharing of views among the telescopes and pleasant conversation. The observing ended by 11:00 P.M.

June County-Sponsored Dark Night: The next dark night is scheduled for **Saturday, June 4th** beginning at sunset at Spirio Soccer Field at Overlook Park in White Rock. Please note that the location is the same as usual! It turns out the county will only be closing one of three soccer fields during amphitheater construction at Overlook Park. Here are some possible Dark Night highlights:

Venus will be the brightest object in the sky, visible low in the northwest sky. Venus, along with Mercury and Saturn, will be part of a spectacular dance of the planets in later in June. On June 25th Venus will be in conjunction with Saturn. Mercury will be in conjunction with Saturn June 26th and with Venus June 27th. If you get a chance and the weather cooperates, don't miss the show.

Saturn will make its last Dark Night appearance for 2005, albeit somewhat lower in the sky than in May. Saturn returns as a morning star this fall.

Jupiter is slightly dimmer than last month (magnitude -2.2 compared to -2.4 in May) and the disk size is slightly smaller (39.7 arcseconds compared to 42.6 arcseconds in May). The reason is Jupiter is now over thirty million miles farther from Earth than it was May 7th! The Great Red Spot on Jupiter should be visible early in the evening before rotating out of view by 10 PM. There will be no shadow transits during the evening. Jupiter will, however, be riding high in the sky and be well positioned for observing.

Last month it was suggested the reader try to see spiral structure in M51. Several observers at May's Dark Night did this in a variety of scopes as small as 8". This month the theme is seeing dust lanes in galaxies. **M64**, the Black Eye galaxy, in Coma Bernices is 19 million light years distant. William Herschel first observed the "Black Eye" feature in 1785. The feature may be glimpsed in a 4" scope and seen in a 6". Strangely, it is said that it may be difficult in moderate telescopes such as an 8". Try a variety of magnifications and if you can't see it in your scope, maybe you should try a smaller one! **NGC 4565** in Coma Bernices is an edge on spiral galaxy some 31 million light years distant. It looks like a needle of light. The dust lane that runs along the needle may be seen in moderate aperture scopes of 8" or more on a good night. **M104**, the Sombrero Galaxy, in Virgo provides another excellent chance to see a well-defined dust lane. In scopes of moderate aperture it really does look like a little sombrero with a dark band. For a bigger challenge, try to pick **NGC 5128**, Centaurus A, off the horizon. This galaxies' dark band may be glimpsed in instruments as small as 4", but its proximity to the horizon will make viewing difficult.

Pajarito Astronomers

P.O. Box 1092, Los Alamos NM 87544

May 23rd, 2005

Barranca School 6th Grade Astronomy Night: The Barranca Elementary School Astronomy night was held Thursday, May 12th. Jerry Foropoulos coordinated the event for the club. Several members and parents brought at least ten telescopes and approximately forty adults and children attended. The Moon, Saturn, and Jupiter were the evening highlights. The event was a definite success.

Second Chance Star Parties: Historically, many Dark Nights have been cancelled due to weather. So far this year we are one for two, with the one success being a close call. In an effort to provide more group observing opportunities the Pajarito Astronomers are going to schedule a second night of observing around each new Moon. The intent is not to dilute Dark Night at Overlook Park. We want members to continue to attend Dark Night! These "Second Chance Star Parties" may be observing sessions in Los Alamos or outside the county. Members of the public are welcome at these events, but we will not publicize these events in the Monitor until we are sure the observing sites are good and enough members will attend.

June Second Chance Star Party: Friday, June 10th. The El Valle Astronomers have invited the Pajarito Astronomers to attend their Star Party in El Rito. This location is supposed to be quite dark and has an observatory with a 16" Meade SCT. There is power available and rest room facilities on site. If enough members attend we can reciprocate and invite the El Valle Astronomers to one of our Dark Nights. Some of our members belong to both clubs.

Location and Directions: Football field on El Rito Campus of Northern New Mexico Community College. From Española, go north toward Abiquiu' (84/285) about 20 mi. Turn right a few miles before Abiquiu' at the sign for El Rito and Northern NM Community College (State Road 554). Go ~ 12 miles, reaching El Rito. The college is on left side of road, look for the water tower. Call Bob Davenport or Roger Salles (El Rito Coordinator for El Valle Astronomers) at 665-2078 if you have any questions.

July Second Chance Star Party: Sunday, July 3rd. If all goes well, NASA's Deep Impact spacecraft will slam into Comet Temple 1 around midnight, July 3rd. Now you could watch this on television, but why not stay up a little late on try to catch the original photons from the event with your own eyes? While waiting for the event or non-event as it turns out, there will be plenty of time to look at other objects.

Location and Directions: Large trailhead in Rendija Canyon (off Barranca Mesa). Proceed down Canyon towards Sportsmans Club. Approximately one half mile into canyon where pavement turns to dirt road there is a large trailhead on the left. Check next newsletter and website prior to actual event. We must double-check that event will be viewable from this location. Note this location has no facilities!

August Second Chance Star Party: Saturday, August 6th. Many members have indicated interest observing in Valle Grande. The Preserve has scheduled monthly tours and star parties in the preserve that include transportation into the Valle and viewing through a 24" telescope. Cost is \$30 per person. Please call Bob Davenport if you interested. If another club member would like to coordinate this event please contact me as well.

September – November Second Chance Star Parties: Dates currently schedules are September 2nd, September 30th, and October 28th at Rendija Canyon trailhead unless a different site is found.

Pojoaque Astronomy Night: Club member Pat Colestock has been asked to put on an astronomy night for a local teen group on June 28th at Pojoaque High School. The teen group consists of kids looking for extra educational opportunities. Alan Hale (of Comet Hale-Bopp fame) has agreed to participate as well. Pat is looking for volunteers to come with telescopes and help put on a show for the kids. Please contact Pat at 665-3565 if you can volunteer.

Club Talks: We have had a couple of people volunteer to give talks on Astrophotography and we'll try to finalize something before the next newsletter comes out. We have several good ideas for more talks. For example, this is the 100th anniversary of Einstein's 1905 papers that revolutionized physics. Perhaps it would be nice to have a mini-lecture series on Einstein's Universe (whatever that means would depend on the speaker). Other ideas include the VLA, VLBA, string theory, relativity, SETI, unexplained phenomenon, planetary exploration, astronauts, extra-solar planets and brown dwarfs.

Now the hard part seems to be finding speakers. If you or someone you know could give a talk on one of these subjects or something else of interest to the general public and club members, please contact a club officer. We'll do the rest.

Telescope Lending: We seem to have a critical mass of consensus to start a telescope-lending program. Initially this will be targeted toward lending to local kids (and parents) with smaller scopes. Look for an update, and hopefully implementation details, in the next newsletter!

Star Party Trip(s): Two star parties look most favorable for a club trip. They are Enchanted Skies (October 4-8 <http://www.socorro-nm.com/starparty/>) and Okie-Tex (October 1-9 <http://www.okie-tex.com/>).

Enchanted Skies, in Socorro, is about 180 miles distant. Cost is \$45 for individual and \$70 for a family. Please check out their website for details.

Okie-Tex is just over the New Mexico Oklahoma border. It is about 300 miles distant. Cost is \$40 for individual and \$15 for each additional adult. Please check out website for details.

The next step is to find people who will become the nucleus around which a trip is organized. If we have two groups going to two star parties – that is fine too! So, please think about if you'd like to go to either event and contact one of the club officers by June 15th so we can get your name and number in the next newsletter. This might be fun!

For Sale: If anyone has any astronomy gear you want to give club members a chance to buy before selling on the Internet, contact Bob Davenport and we'll put it in the newsletter or perhaps the web page.

For Sale: Pat Colestack has a 6" Schmidt camera (f/1.95) astrophotography system for sale (665-3565).

Input: Keep those cards, letters, phone calls and surveys coming. If you have an idea or need something please contact a club officer.