

LOS ANGELES ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

# BULLETIN

volume 82, issue 6 *June 2008*

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**OUR 82nd YEAR OF  
ASTRONOMY IN LOS  
ANGELES**

**Los Angeles Astronomical Society**  
Griffith Observatory  
2800 East Observatory Road  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

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**Editor's  
Message**

The April public star party was warm and clear. May's turned out to be cold with a lot of haze. Isn't it the other way around?

Please take note that in June, there are no dark skies scheduled. We'll have two in May and two in August. Also take note that occasionally the main route from the east is not available due to events at the Greek Theater. A map of the alternate route up Ferndale is on page 11.

My thanks to all who have contributed to the success of the bulletin. We always invite more input from members. Please consider writing or submit images. Please keep articles to 1,500 words or less. Please submit only a few well-chosen images, with captions if possible. The deadline for submitting bulletin material is the 10th of each month. Please if possible submit electronically to BulletinEditor@laas.org, or to dinakamoto@yahoo.com if the previous address fails.

All other material may be sent to the address listed at the top of the column at left, but timely reception and publication cannot be guaranteed. ✧

# *Griffith Observatory*

## *Public Star Party Procedure*

PJ Goldfinger handles our Griffith Observatory Public Star Party List. As patrons may drive up freely and reservations are no longer needed, we will continue to keep a sign up list for this event. Please note changes may occur in future PSP events and to read the policy below each month.

LAAS Members must still sign up on time - Deadline is no later than the Tuesday night prior to the Saturday GO Public Star Party each month. The list information required is:

- Your name, any LAAS Members and Non members in your car.
- Bring Telescope y/n.

**NOTE: Those attending without a telescope as a favor will be required to be of some assistance if asked, needed and able.**

It is primarily the main focus of any LAAS member who attends this event to be of Public Service with their telescopes in showing the patrons of Griffith Observatory the delights of the nighttime sky. New Members are not expected to adhere to this policy. Please feel free to come up and enjoy the event given you are signed up.

Parking will be on the east side of the Griffith Observatory Hill designated for GO employees. A guard will be stationed with the LAAS GO PSP list. It is always wise to have one's LAAS name badge and/or club ID on them just in case. Unloading telescope and equipment will remain the same procedure as well, with a drive up , drop off and park down hill routine.

The list currently has been updated to 30 spots for LAAS members. First come, first serve.

Please check the LAAS website and Yahoo list for changes and updates in any LAAS event, as there are many communication mediums and some are missed.

To sign up for the Griffith Observatory Star Party the email address is: [laas.starparty@gmail.com](mailto:laas.starparty@gmail.com). Attendance is only granted once a confirmation email has been received. Most important though is to have fun and enjoy! ✧

*PJ Goldfinger*

## *Astronomy Equipment for Sale*

Backyard Observatory

Meade EXT-80AT Telescope - New in the Box with tripod, backpack, self guiding electronics

Retail \$300. Offered at \$240

Sunspotter The safe way to view the sun. - Brand New

Retail \$350

Offered at \$275

Celestron Skyscout Personal Planetarium

Retail \$399

Offered \$310

Coronado PST Personal; Solar Telescope

Retail \$500

Offered \$500

Celestron Giant 20x80 binoculars

Retail \$348

Offered at \$150

Celestron Tripod

\$40

Paul Wicker – TheGalileoGuy

310 546-1437

## *Report on the New Member Star Party*

Did you miss the New Member Star Party and potluck Sunday, April 27? A lot of "old" members showed up, too. One really "old" member to show up was Galileo. Paul Wicker managed to get Galileo to come from Italy to Monterrey Park, where our deceased for about 400 years guest speaker livened things up with his talk about his discoveries and asked and answered questions. Galileo took us through his known solar system, out to Saturn. Our next guest speaker, Tim Thompson, younger and living closer than Galileo, using an excellent "slide" show, took us through our solar system and out into the Milky Way. Our last speaker, Dave Sovereign, discussed telescope basics. The speakers were followed by door prizes. Tara and Jeffrey Brooks won a night at Mount Wilson for two. Jake won a lens for his telescope.

The actual star party began during daylight, thanks to two solar telescopes. It ended with conventional telescopes, using club and personal telescopes. The turnout of "old" and new members was good. Didn't go? Don't miss the next one. ✧

*Richard Roosman*



From the April public star party at Griffith. Thankfully, the lights from Griffith aren't THAT bright, but it does form a nice background to the nights activities, as you can see on the right side of the image below. The pictures were taken by Phillip N. Uttz





# Mt Wilson 60" Nights

We're in the process of arranging this year's schedule of

August 29th, Friday, full night  
September 26th, Friday, full night

Mt Wilson 60-inch telescope nights.

Only LAAS members are allowed to sign up. If there is still room two (2) weeks prior to the date, paying guests will be permitted. Everyone who shows up, whether family member, friend, or guest, will have to pay in order to be allowed to be in the 60-inch telescope observatory.

Herbert Kraus has taken over the responsibility of coordinating the effort and being the contact person. He can be reached at:

Herbert Kraus

P.O. Box 56084

Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

When we start accepting reservations, please remember that it's first come, first served.

Any LAAS member who has not been to a 60 inch night at Mount Wilson should consider it as an opportunity to visit astronomy history. To see the location and equipment used by giants such as Wilson and Hubble, will add to your appreciation of their contributions.

The scope belongs to LAAS all night except for those nights designated as half-nights, when it will be available only until midnight. We mutually agree upon which objects to view. Often, a member is the operator, so it is a very comfortable environment. (Do bring a coat, however) The viewing is without a doubt the best your are likely to see in your lifetime.

The cost is \$75 per person for the full night. You must sign up and pay for the full night if that is the night you're reserving. No half night reservations on a full -night outing.

Send your check payable to LAAS. Please send to the LAAS Treasurer at P.O. Box 56084, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413. ✧

## *Increased LAAS Membership Dues*

Last year, the LAAS spent about \$5000 more than it gained from its various income sources, mainly dues. This was due to mainly to increases in the daily and yearly operating costs we incur. We're projecting a similar deficit in 2008. Due to this, the governing board has made a decision to increase some of the dues.

Effective in May 2008, the dues for membership in the LAAS will be increased to \$45.00 a year for regular members, \$30.00 a year for senior members ages 65 and over, \$40.00 a year for senior family members, and \$60 a year for family memberships. In addition, members who require that printed copies of the bulletin be mailed to them, rather than access it from our website, will be charged an additional \$15.00 a year to cover the costs for that service. Youth memberships will remain at \$20.00 a year, and there are no changes in in our fees for star members.

As before, the benefits of regular and family memberships include subscriptions to the *Griffith Observer*. Other members may obtain a subscription to that publication through the LAAS for \$15.00 a year. All LAAS members still have the opportunity to subscribe to the magazines *Astronomy and Sky* and *Telescope* at our reduced club rates, currently more than 20% below the regular subscription rates for both publications, and amounting to less than 50% of the prices for individual issues at the newsstand. ✧

# *This Month in the Sky*

*By David Nakamoto*

Even though June is thought to be the beginning of Summer, a lot of Spring is still in the sky along the meridian in the middle of the evening (9:00 pm) in the middle of the month.

Of course, one problem with the night sky in the Summer time is that it doesn't really get dark until the "middle" of the evening, 9pm. If you think of evening as a set time, 6pm to 12am, then half the evening is over with before it gets dark. And daylight savings time makes it even worse. This puts a cramp on dark sky observing.

Saturn and Mars are getting close to each other, and closer to the setting Sun, fading fast into the West. They're both in Leo. Mars has been long gone for amateurs for the past several months. Its disk is too small to show any details. Saturn is not in the same situation, and still presents the most awe inspiring views for many amateurs, but it too will be pretty much gone by next month. Jupiter is still a late night riser as we go through June. It won't rise as the Sun sets until next month.

Planets put a premium on magnification and aperture, not to make the image brighter, although it really does help if you're trying to look at the various satellites. You need aperture to help discern small, faint, and fine details. You need magnification because planets are small. Jupiter is around 40 arc-seconds wide; Saturn is the same. That's around 1/60th the size of the Moon. Mars is, at its largest, maybe 15 to 20 arc-seconds large, half that size, and it won't be until midway through the next decade before it even approaches that size. But you'll need very good optics also, because at high magnifications, anything wrong with the optics will also be magnified, leading to distortion of the view. The focal length of the telescope should be on the high side also.

Although technically the end of Spring occurs in June, there's still enough of it left for those that like galaxies. The Spring time sky is known as one of the realms of the galaxies. The other is Autumn. The reason is that our own galaxy is straddling the horizon, and we're looking nearly perpendicular to its plane. In fact, the North Galactic Pole is in Coma Berenices. In autumn, the south galactic pole is in Sculptor. Thus, there is less of our galaxy in the way to obscure other galaxies. But this region of the sky is going to fade quickly enough to the West, to be replaced by the myriad of objects within our own galaxy, presented in all its glory as Summertime slides into view in the East. Aside from the famous

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Virgo group, there is the Ursa Major group, although we're seeing the hind quarters of both constellations. The Leo group is also setting in the evening as the month opens. For those that want a challenge, there's the group of galaxies in Hercules, although only those with light buckets should probably attempt this one.

If you look at the sky map here, you'll see how the distribution of the galaxies hints at both the local structure and the extragalactic structure. Look at the Virgo grouping, very obviously seen. Less obvious are the circles and threads here and there. Although only the brightest galaxies are shown in the map, even with this view there is a hint of the bubbles and threads that the entire universe seems to be constructed on. If you have trouble seeing the structures, try squinting, or remove your glasses if you're near-sighted. Curiously, there is a



cross effect, with the Virgo group extending north towards Ursa Major, with an east to west effect seen from Leo across to Hercules. Also noticeable is the thinning of galaxies along the Milky Way towards the left side of the image. This hints at the finest show of "fireworks" in July, the Summertime Milky Way. But more on that next month.

For those that want to sharpen their observing and recognition skills, you might consider scanning for objects. This simply means moving from one area of the sky to the adjoining area, or one object to another in the same field of view. It's the way Herschel scanned the skies when he did what is probably the first comprehensive all sky survey, at least from the Northern hemisphere. I recommend starting from an easy to find object or star, at one end of a series of objects. This type of observing can sharpen your skills at recognizing objects, especially if you don't know what you're looking at. You'll still need star charts

*(Continued on page 10)*

to plot those objects you find, but don't cheat and look for the next object by locating on the chart first !

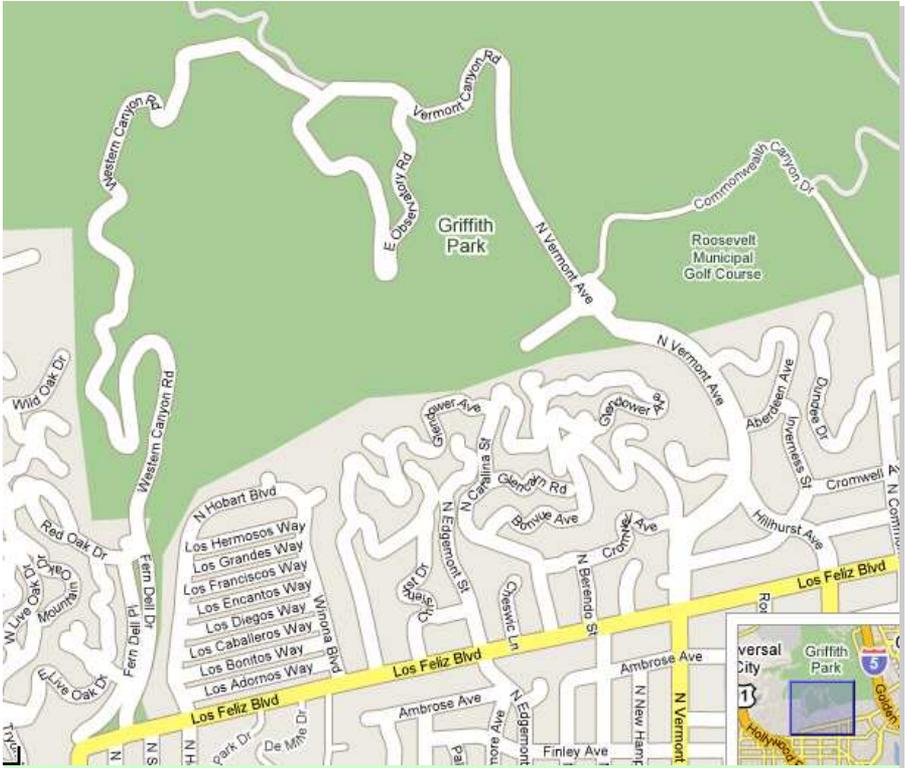
One of the first times I used this technique was with a 30-inch Newtonian. Of course, it was a slow sweep, because of the wealth of objects in the Summer time Milky Way, the 30-inches worth of light grasp, and the fact that the eyepiece was about 20 feet above the ground ! But I noticed a lot of planetary nebula, many more than what was on the Skalnate Pleso charts I was using. And of course many open clusters not plotted there too. I don't think I even made to Aquila that night, starting off in the lower regions of Sagittarius.

However, galaxies aren't the easiest objects to start off with. For one thing, the vast majority are small and faint. For another, spirals are rarely more than fuzzy dots of faint light, the core of the spiral which is normally about 5 magnitudes brighter than the spiral arms. Elliptical galaxies are the same. And irregular and peculiar galaxies are even worse. But if you're used to how galaxies appear in your telescope, then try this method.

One thing you will find, if you're not familiar with this fact already, is that most objects appear much fainter than their published magnitudes, and a few are brighter, or at least more obvious than one would think. This is because most published magnitude estimates are based on photographic images, which in decades past were much more sensitive to the red end of the spectrum than the human eye is, so faint objects to the eye appear brighter to most old photographic glass plates or film. This is especially true for the three glowing lines of hydrogen gas that can be quite prevalent in some galaxies. The red line is not as visible to the eye as the green line, while the opposite is true for photographic equipment. CCDs used to have the same problem, but recent developments in these sensors make them a bit more like the eye in their wavelength response.

There is an additional joker in the deck, and that is that the magnitude estimates are often done by assuming all the light in the object is condensed to a point, which for extended objects like galaxies leads to wildly erroneous magnitude estimates. For instance, M101 is listed as magnitude 7.8, which makes it roughly the same brightness as Saturn's moon Titan, so since you can see Titan in small telescopes with apertures 2-inches or larger, it should be a snap to see this object, right? Well, that might be true if it weren't spread out over a 22 arc-second disk, 2/3rds the size of the full moon !

Good luck and Happy Observing ! ✧



With coming Greek theater events causing closure of Vermont Ave to through traffic, many have asked for a map of the local area and the alternate directions in case Vermont is closed. Please save this map for future reference. I will post it in the bulletin from June to September, and then not for the rest of the year.

The alternate route is to use Ferndale, which changes into Western Canyon Road. Ferndale is about 1 mile further west on Los Feliz than either Hillhurst or Vermont. Ferndale becomes Western Canyon Road once you enter the park. Western Canyon Road is very windy, so drive carefully. You will have to go through the tunnel at the top of the road and turn right onto East Observatory Road. ✧



The picture below is of youngsters using our LAAS solar telescopes at Overland Elementary School, West Los Angeles, on April 17. The picture above is of Dave Sovereign and the Tasco refractor that he raffled off at Empire Elementary School in Temple City on May 9. Pictures by Herb Kraus.



# Outreach Program

Come on out to the school and show all the enthusiastic kids, parents, and teachers the night sky. They always appreciate it. And if you get WOW's when they look through you scope, you'll feel good. If no scope, come out anyway and help up set up or answer questions from the kids. So, Outreach volunteers, let's pitch in. I'm sure the kids and adults will appreciate our effort.

Thanks !

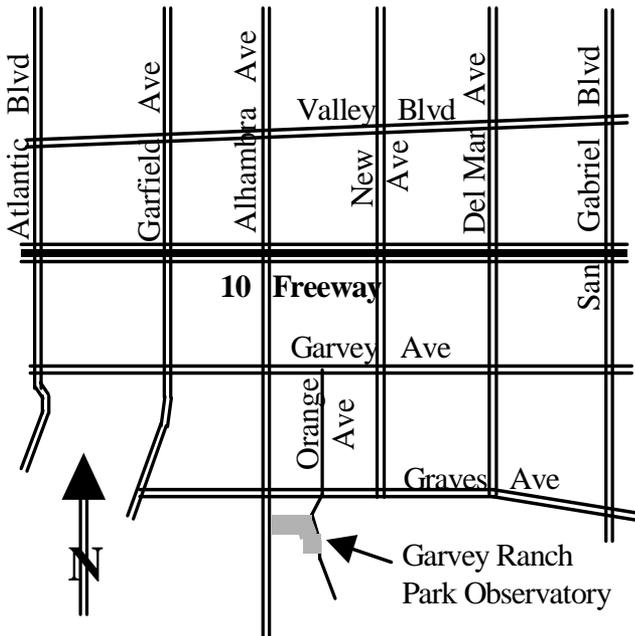
Outreach@laas.org

(818) 891-3087 ✧

*Don DeGregori*

## Map to Monterey Park Observatory

(The place to build your telescope)



## LOANER CORNER



It might not look like it, but the spring and summer star parties are just around the corner. Now is the time for new members and existing members that would like to try out something new to check out one of the LAAS loaner telescopes. At the present time there are several available. All are fully equipped with a set of eyepieces. A simple collimating tool is included with all reflectors and a star diagonal is included with refractors.

LAAS-1: 4.5" f/8 Celestron reflector on a Polaris mount.



LAAS-2: 4.5" f/8 Tasco reflector on an Edmund equatorial mount with a clock drive. This telescope has been upgraded with a 1.25" focuser and 6x30 finder.

LAAS-4: 6" f/5 Telescopics reflector on a Dobsonian mount.

LAAS-6: 10" f/4.5 Discovery reflector on a Dobsonian mount. This fast telescope is also equipped with a Tele View Paracorr to correct off axis coma common with fast paraboloids.

LAAS-4

LAAS-7: 80mm f/15 Meade refractor on an Orion Sky View Deluxe equatorial mount. This is an excellent instrument for the Moon and planets.

LAAS-2



LAAS-8: 80mm f/11.4 Selsi refractor on an equatorial mount.

LAAS-9: 80mm f/6.25 refractor with University Optics objective on an equatorial mount. This fine Rich Field Telescope is good for going through the Messier Catalog.

For more information call: David Sovereign at (626) 794-0646. ✧

*David Sovereign*

# EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location and Information
June 7th (Sat)	Public Star Party	Griffith Observatory. See pg 3 for details on how to attend.
June 9th (Mon)	General Mtg	Griffith Observatory Speaker to be announced
July 5th (Sat)	Dark Sky Night	Lockwood Valley
July 12th (Sat)	Public Star Party	Griffith Observatory. See pg 3 for details on how to attend.
July 14th	General Mtg	Griffith Observatory Speaker to be announced

The board meeting is held at 8pm on the Wednesday night prior to the general meeting, at Garvey Ranch Park. The Monday general meetings start at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted. See each month's bulletin for updates.



LAAS Home Page: <http://www.laas.org>  
 LAAS Bulletin Online: [http://www.laas.org/Resources\\_Newsletter.htm](http://www.laas.org/Resources_Newsletter.htm)

## *LAAS Yahoo Group—how to join*

The group is private, and therefore does not come up in a search. To join, send email to: LAAS-subscribe@yahoo.com. Include your full name so the moderator can verify your LAAS membership. Your full name is necessary so we can check our records to see if you really are a LAAS member. If approved, you will receive further instructions via email. ✧

## *Sky and Telescope Subscriptions*

Sky and Telescope subscriptions renewals should be sent directly to Sky Publishing. To start a Sky and Telescope subscription, contact the LAAS Treasurer (see the contact information on page 2) directly to get the club rates, then thereafter send the renewal bills directly to Sky Publishing. ✧

## *Astronomy Magazine Subscriptions*

For those that subscribe to Astronomy Magazine through the LAAS, the rate has gone up to \$34 a year, \$60 for two years. ✧

## *New Members Corner*

Welcome to the Los Angeles Astronomical Society! Right now, we have lost our previous New Members Coordinator to college, so we're looking for someone to take over this position. If you're interested, please contact one of the board members on page 2. ✧

### **Membership Annual Dues:**

Youth	\$ 20.00
Regular (18-65)	\$ 45.00
Senior Citizen (65 and up)	\$ 30.00
Senior Family	\$ 40.00
Family	\$ 60.00
Life	\$ 500.00

### *Additional fees:*

Charter Star member	\$ 30.00
Star member, with pad	\$ 70.00
Star member, no pad	\$ 60.00
Printed Bulletin	\$ 15.00

**(Membership due date is indicated on the mailing label)**

## **HANDY PHONE LIST**



LAAS Answering Machine .....	(213) 673-7355
Griffith Observatory	
Program.....	(213) 473-0800
Sky Report.....	unavailable for now
Lockwood Site .....	(661) 245-2106
	(not answered, arrange time with caller.
	Outgoing calls – collect or calling card)
Mt. Wilson Institute.....	(626) 793-3100