

Longmont Astronomy Society

October, 2006



This Month's Picture:

COMET SWAN: Last week you had to wake up at dawn for a good look at Comet Swan (C/2006 M4). This week the comet is moving into the evening sky. It's particularly easy to find after sunset on Oct. 13th and 14th. On those two nights, the handle of the Big Dipper curves toward the comet, guiding you right to it. Although Swan is too dim for the unaided eye, it is a good target for backyard telescopes. Seen through the eyepiece, the comet's head glows a pretty shade of emerald green. Why green? Visit <http://spaceweather.com> for the answer.

From the President:

Hello Astronomers and friends, We have had quite a good month for viewing ,despite the mostly cloudy nights, we did manage to get a few good nights in. The Greeley star party at Crow valley Sept 23rd was cancelled because of poor weather outlook. Some of the diehards showed up anyway, about 7 of us but most bugged out because of clouds, I thanked Bill Possel and others for coming , and told them it would clear as soon as they left, so I thanked them for going. Darn ,it did clear at 11 PM and we stayed up till 4:30 am. We chased as many photons as we could. Pam Wheaton, old astronomy friend showed up Saturday and we did so many objects, I did not keep a count. She sure lucked out for such a good night. I was hoping to use Crow Valley more in winter months, lets see what happens. I like the place for star gazing but do not like the car lights and campers at times. Compromise sometimes , most go to bed early and then from 11 on it's usually good and dark then.

The following weekend we went to Crow Valley again, moon went down at 10:50 PM Friday night and 11 :50 PM Saturday night which left us lots of good viewing hours in the darkness of the grasslands, Galaxies pop out at you there, nebula show more contrast and hue. Globulars leave you seeing spots like looking at the moon, so bright in 30 scope. Vern, Dan, Cheyenne, my wife Carol and myself had an extreme night session. We did over 80 objects in 6 hours of viewing. Found three of the comets up now also. I missed the third one, went to bed at 5 AM, comet was at 5 :30 right as dawn was about to break. The following day, Saturday, there was a birding group at Crow Valley with Hawks and Falcons and such. I invited them over to view thru the scopes and they all showed up. I thought they were cool but now I knew they were cool when they did come over for views. They even stayed up late till 11 PM before they went to bed. I got many shots of their birds on Saturday and talked with them during the day , so I had to invite them over to see. Glad I did, fun thing about camping is meeting friendly people, they were from Colorado Springs area.

The Lyons Elementary school Star Party was good, with huge turn out of people, except it was cloudy and no views were had. I was surprised to see 12 scopes and volunteers who showed up despite the weather and helped out once again this year, thanks you guys , this was impressive and they appreciate us coming . Leonard from BASS club put Saturn on laptop computer and put computer on fence across the field and Steve Hartung yelled I got Saturn, Not a bad view , then we did M57 ring nebula, pretty smart, only views with all these cool scopes waiting for clearing skies. Andrew P., Vern, Ken O'toole, Cheyenne, Steve Hartung and Leonard, several others, sure makes it easy and fun to do a star party with big group like this.

We also have the Burlington Elementary School star party this coming Friday Oct 20th. 7 to 9 PM. School is at South Pratt Parkway south of 119 highway, you can also get to it from Pike road if coming from the south side of Longmont. We need Volunteers for this again. Mark Wiley and Bob Spohn are doing it along with Andrew P. Jeff Laux Dick Mallot, Dick Laat Nick K and maybe a few others like myself if I do not go to the Grasslands for New moon weekend.

Altona Middle school night is on the 26th of Oct, 7PM to 9 PM or so.. another star party for schools. We seem to be getting in demand for these. We do more astronomy outreach

than most and I am proud to be a part of it. How many people we have inspired is hard to count. E mail me or Pam Wheaton for directions and more info. Thanks to volunteers who make it all work so smoothly .

Orionids Meteor shower is also Oct 20, 21st and 22nd . Pretty good one and no moon will be in the way., About 25 per hour early morning hours to watch . The Darker the skies the better. Might be worth a trip to grasslands or somewhere else that is good and dark is perfect for meteor watching. Good chair and warm clothes a little something to eat and drink will help deal with the cool nights again. . Seems like my best nights observing are in the cold. Even in summer months we do high country and it even in 20's 30' s degree range then too.

Pete Petersen's dome scope is ready for picture taking. I finally got it working with help from Vern R to fix my drivers on Laptop to work SBIGS camera. Pete P and I tried some pictures but clouds and seeing were horrible so none worth sharing yet We will be practicing soon, if weather is OK.

Mercury Transit on Nov 8th at noon or so. I plan to be watching the skies then with H alpha filter scope, maybe even get a few pictures out of it. I will send off an e mail reminder before then. If you care to join me let me know and we can maybe get a few people to get together for it. Vern I am sure will be watching it and a few others like Andrew with H alpha scope too.

We also did 29th street Mall grand opening in Boulder. We set up several Solar scopes and Steve Hartung's 15 inch obsession scope for displays We had pretty big turn out of people but clouds persisted for entire afternoon, so no views were had again. Darn , We had lots of people who wanted to see the sun. Thanks To Vern, Cheyenne, Steve H and myself, and few others from BASS who helped make it another public outreach for BASS and LAS clubs. Thanks to volunteers. I know how busy we all are and we do appreciate the help we do get from the members It could not be done without all of us helping in different ways, keep up the good work , see you in the Dark ?? for the next Home Planet Stellar views. bye, Gary

From: Vern Raben, LAS Treasurer

If you are interested in getting the "2007 Royal Astronomy of Canada Observer's Handbook" or the "2007 Observer's Calendar" please send an email note to Vern Raben to reserve a copy. The estimated price is \$17.45 for the Observer's Handbook and \$9.45 for the Observer's Calendar. For further information

see <http://www.rasc.ca/publications.htm>

This Month's Field Trip:

the [Kansas Cosmosphere](#) in Hutchinson, Kansas. This is in my personal list as the best unknown space museum in the United States. In 2004-5, I was collecting visits to the Apollo capsules, and the Cosmosphere has the Apollo 13. At that time, their website was really bad, so when I went online, there was very little information. I thought "blow in , take the picture, leave" would be a good description on my mission plan, but I wound up ruining the schedule with a 4 hour visit. If you check their website now, it is still pretty bad for information – try to find the list of attractions below!

When you enter the museum, you face a half a shuttle on one wall and a SR-71 Blackbird inverted over your head. Then the minor attractions: they have a lunar lander mockup, a lunar instrument, the Apollo 13 capsule, Apollo suits, Glamorous Glennis replica (Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier – the original's in the Smithsonian Air and Space museum), a rocket sled that they developed the g-suit with (and a movie of a test). The prize of the whole collection is a Russian Soyuz – the only one in America – so if that's on your list, it's off to Kansas.

Outside the museum, there's a couple of rockets and engines to take your picture with. The museum store is pretty decent. Warning: the museum isn't easy to find and there aren't very many signs around, so come equipped with an online map from Yahoo or Mapquest.

On the way to Hutchinson, stop at the [Sternberg Natural History Museum](#) beside I-70 in Hays, Kansas. They have the famous “fish inside a fish” fossil – a 25 footer that had just eaten a 6 footer- mounted on one wall. Nice introduction to the fossils of western Kansas, and easy to get to.

Suggestions for “what I want to see in next month's newsletter”, email [Birch](#)