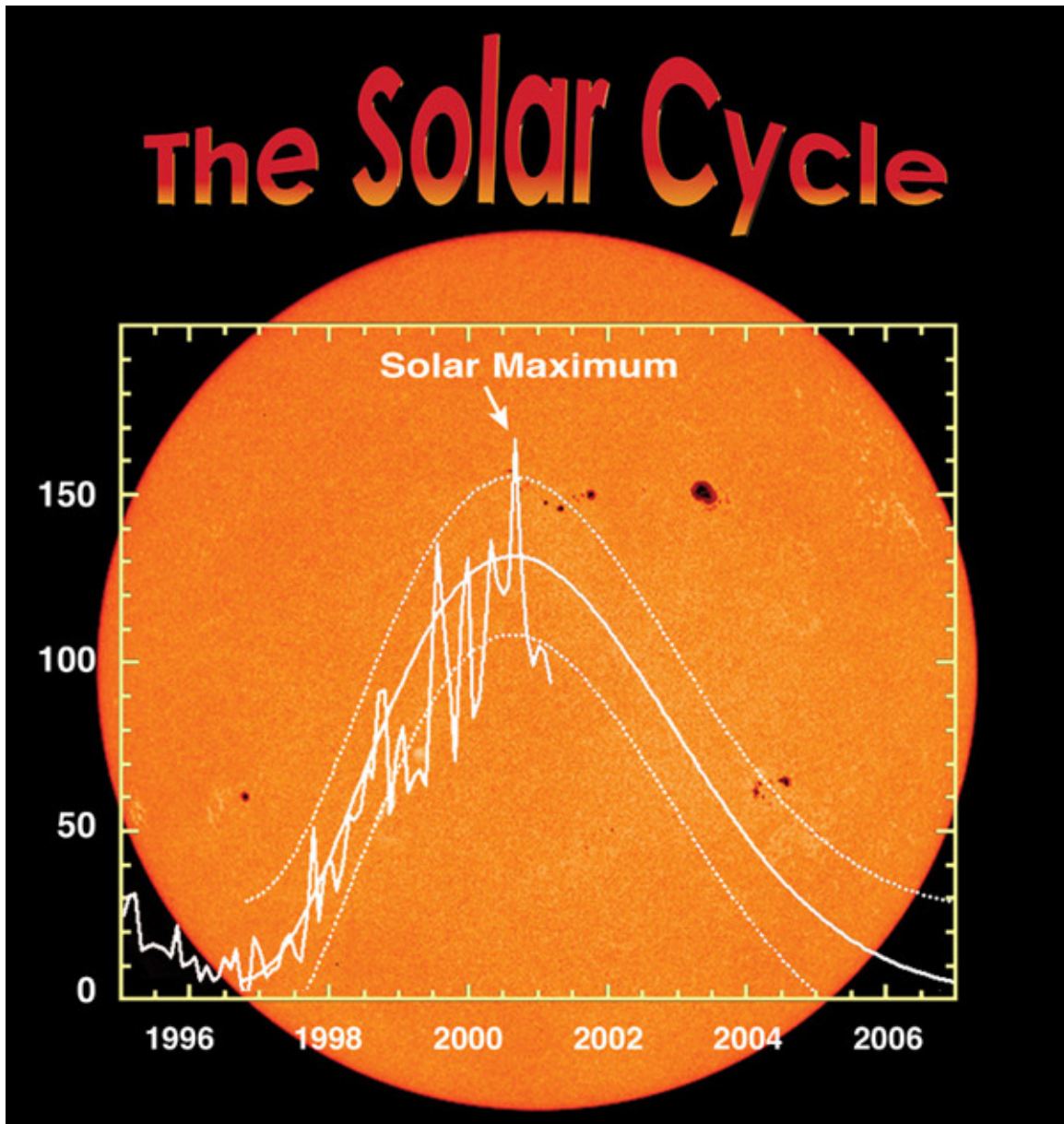


Longmont Astronomy Society

September, 2006



[SOHO](#)

This Month's Picture:

ANOTHER BACKWARD SUNSPOT: Evidence continues to mount that the next solar cycle is beginning. When one solar cycle gives way to another, the magnetic poles of sunspots reverse polarity. For the second time in less than a month, such a "backward sunspot" has appeared--and this time it's a big one. The solar minimum is over, and the number of sunspots will rise until the next maximum around 2011. You can watch the daily happenings on the sun at [SOHO](#) and the status of the magnetic field at [SolarSoft](#) (about the fourth line of data, and the color of the line indicates polarity) For the rookies in the crowd, the 11 year sunspot cycle you may have learned is actually a 22 year cycle, with the second one featuring a reversed magnetic field. The theories on why this occurs are fun to read, and you should review your graduate level math and physics knowledge first.

Other Clubs:

Astronomy Magazine has just made its "outstanding outreach" award (\$2500) to the Celestial North Astronomy Club in Freeland, Washington. For the last decade, they have been producing a weekly show on public radio, and you can listen to the whole archive at [Celestial North](#), download them to your iPod, or burn a CD to listen to on the way to work!

Sky Calendar:

Equinox is this Saturday, September 23 – and Fall officially begins. The Moon occults the Pleiades on the night of October 9-10, from 10 P.M. to 1 A.M. MDT. Detailed predictions are at [IOTA](#), and a handy listing of other occultations coming up. The Moon missed the Pleiades by less than a degree for us on the night of September 12-13 on the previous orbit, but the folks in Europe got to watch an occultation.

Planets: Jupiter fading fast in the western sky at sunset.

Mercury at greatest elongation on October 16th for your viewing.

Saturn rises about 3 A.M. and is improving, as the Earth gains on its position

Meteors: The Orionid meteor shower is from October 20-24. Need a dark site, and you can expect somewhat less than 20/hour.

From the President:

Hello Astronomers:

We have had a long cloudy month for observing but we did manage to get a few nights in. The weather sure has been different this summer. I usually can go out and get at least yard views in most any night, just the opposite this summer, very few nights without clouds and poor seeing conditions. It will get better I hope as Fall sets in the Rockies.

I am doing a night for FRCC astronomy class for Adam Jensen again. We have been doing these for few years now. FRCC lets LAS club use the classrooms if we give them a few star parties per year, which we have been doing in my yard here in Niwot. Thanks to those who help as usual.

We are doing a Public night for 2 bus loads of people from Greeley Natural History Museum for Forest service again this year. It's at Crow Valley in Briggsdale on the 23rd of Sept. Meet us at the end of loop, look for us astronomers setting up. There is plenty of room for all so come if you can, best dark sky public party we do. Forest Service in turn lets us use the place thru the winter months when nobody else is around. They usually close Crow valley campground for winter , no campers anyway, only us die hards who brave the cold to get those dark sky views in. I like the place, flat and no cactus like Cactus flats north area we have been using . Pawnee grasslands are still LAS 's dark sky place but we can we use Crow Valley instead when campers are not there with their lights and fires.

We will miss Philippe , he has moved back to France to be with family as we all are getting older it seems. There are a few other star parties coming up so watch the e mails for more info.

Pete Petersen and I have been trying to get his dome scope fine tuned up. We got it to track pretty well now but I am having trouble with my laptop computer reading biggs camera. It works OK on Pete's laptop, but for some reason not mine. Vern offered to help me out, thanks Vern.

BASS and LAS club CU mountain research station adventure got rained out mostly. We did manage to get a few hours in Friday night, than clouds and rain for Saturday. Maybe next year will be better.

Brian Kimball and Vern Raben keep those great astro pictures coming, we enjoy seeing and sharing them. Maybe a few pictures from Pete Petersen and myself as I learn to use camera on C11 dome scope .

See you at the new moon star party at Crow Valley , do try to make it ,even if just a few hours, you will be amazed how much better the views are than back yard views, I am spoiled and loving it, too bad we have to drive to get to the dark skies we used to enjoy from my yard years ago. see you in the dark as I say, bye, Gary

From the Editor:

As a former space science teacher, I'm always watching the NASA sightings, and the ISS is looking good on Sept 23rd. From 6:24:00 until 6:29:40 A.M., starting in the SW and continuing overhead towards the NNW. Hint: make sure your watch is accurate. The installation of the 2 solar panels on the last shuttle mission should make the station nearly as bright as Venus (2 more panels are going up on the next mission, I think). You can always access the shuttle data at [Heavens Above](#). If you've never seen an Iridium flash, or watched the Hubble go over, register and get that data. (He never spams you).

This Month's Field Trip:

The views of the shuttle mission brought to mind a visit to Johnson Space Center last year. Located just south of Houston, the [JSC](#) is the center of NASA's space missions. The museum is not so hot, but the shuttle flight deck mockup is fun to stand on. Make sure you take the [Level 9 Tour](#) if you go. You get to see the water tank the astronauts practice their weightless motions in, the vacuum test chamber, the 3 control rooms, the mockup facility, see robots. When I went last July, the astronauts were practicing the "repair the damaged heat tiles", we got to meet the newest Japanese astronaut, we got a 30 minute talk by an engineer who was in the control room when the Columbia crashed, and we saw a mockup of the Orion capsule when it was still called the CEV. They only take 12 people a day, and it sells out in advance at \$70/head. If they advertised it better, it would always sell out a year ahead, it's that good! You have to be over 14 and must have picture ID. Next month: the BEST space museum in the United States, and you never heard of it....

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