



The always good looking Horsehead and Flame Nebulae by Gary Garzone

**Longmont Astronomy Society Newsletter**  
**February 2010**

## **Important Notice:**

**The next meeting will be on Thursday, February 18th, at the IHop Resturaunt, 2040 Ken Pratt Blvd., Longmont, CO. A group of us will meet for dinner shortly after 6 pm at the resturaunt. The meeting will begin at 7 pm**

**Please note that we no longer meet at FRCC, the meetings from now on will be at the IHop.**

### **From the President:**

It has been the objective of LAS since it began 23 years ago to have an observing site or facility available. The purpose of the next meeting is to begin planning for such a project. We will take a look at the many issues involved such as funding, site design, site selection, construction, and maintenance. I'll present a possible approach and an initial project. If you wish to make a short presentation about this or some other short topic, please feel free to do so.

Coming up next month on Friday March 19th, is the Skyline High School star party at Sandstone Ranch south shelter. Telescopes and volunteers will be needed.

### **In the sky this month:**

Meteor Showers

No major showers, but a good minor shower early in the morning of March 13<sup>th</sup>, the Gamma Normids. This shower produces only 4 meteors per hour at best, but the low radiant in the south and the New Moon should give long trails.

Planets

Mercury: superior conjunction on March 14, then climbing high enough to see in the west by the end of the month.

Venus: only 5 degrees above the western horizon, 12 degrees by the end of the month.

Mars: what's not to like? Still close to opposition, fading slowly through March

Jupiter: conjunction on February 28, pretty much invisible through the month.

Saturn: high in the southeast in late evening, opposition on March 21<sup>st</sup> and about as bright as it's going to get. The rings are beginning to open, 4 degrees at the beginning of March.

Vesta is in opposition, if you want to give that a try! Star chart and details at <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/observing/home/80433142.html>

Interesting Stars/Galaxies

Sky & Telescope makes a point about being a good time to start looking for Sirius B as it separates from Sirius A. Good luck with that one!

Astronomy magazine makes an editorial plea to start imaging some different topics – they're apparently getting tired of the same old Orion Nebula all the time.

### **Club Calendar:**

March 19: Skyline HS star party at Sandstone Ranch, east entrance then to the top of the hill.

March 20: 11:32 MDT – spring begins

### **Fiske Planetarium:**

[Many Faces of Hubble](#) // 02/19/2010 7:30 PM

Explore the construction and use of the Hubble Space Telescope in this show about the people behind the scenes, and various careers in space. From scientists to engineers to astronauts, this show contains interviews and stories that reveal the humanity behind the science and technology.

[Space Primer](#) // 02/20/2010 2:00 PM

This live, interactive presentation allows the audience to set a flight plan for any three planets in our solar system. You might explore the giant volcanoes of Mars, or fly through the rings of Saturn.

[Colorado Skies: Life After the Space Shuttle](#) // 02/25/2010 7:30 PM

Enjoy a night under the stars with a special topic of "Life After the Space Shuttle"

[Searching for Distant Worlds](#) // 02/26/2010 7:30 PM

More than 300 planets have been discovered since 1995. But why has it taken so long to verify the existence of other worlds? And could there be life on these distant extra-solar planets?

### **Internet Resources:**

What to know a bit more about black holes? This month's Astronomy magazine video has a nice introduction at <http://www.astronomy.com/asy/default.aspx?c=a&id=8572>  
Other videos available include Dark Matter <http://www.astronomy.com/asy/default.aspx?c=a&id=8513> which is a subject that hardly anyone understands enough about, and Winter Observing targets for larger telescopes at <http://www.astronomy.com/asy/default.aspx?c=a&id=8865>

### **Upcoming Space Missions:**

The Solar Dynamics Observatory is ready to launch, and will update those lovely pictures from SOHO that we've been watching for the past 10 years or so. The mission homepage is at <http://sdo.gsfc.nasa.gov/> and look for Vern to start stealing pictures for his weekly web update as soon as it's functional.

[http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2010/29jan\\_firefly.htm?list937934](http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2010/29jan_firefly.htm?list937934) Firefly mission to study terrestrial gamma ray flashes

### **This month's Wacky Idea:**

#### **Humor Dept:**

Plan ahead to take an astronomy cruise from December 13-23 in the Caribbean aboard the HAL Zuiderdam. A total Lunar Eclipse on the 21<sup>st</sup> combined with daily lectures. The seminars are \$1275 in addition to the cruise fee. [www.insightcruises.com](http://www.insightcruises.com) for the details.

If you have any money left, Orion has a new 8.3 megapixel imager available for a measly \$2500. A hundred more gets you monochrome.

Ok, we'll fill in the remaining space with a Kimball gallery:



IC 1805 by Brian Kimball