



Surface of Mercury – the Messenger Mission
Longmont Astronomy Society Newsletter
April 2011

From the President:

LAS Meeting – Thursday April 21st

The April meeting of the Longmont Astronomical Society is Thursday, April 21st, at the IHop Restaurant, 2040 Ken Pratt Blvd., Longmont, CO. Please join us for dinner around 6 pm at the restaurant. The general meeting will begin at 7 pm.

The speaker will be Mike Hotka and his presentation is "Evolution of My Telescope - A Case Study of 40 Years of Procrastination".

Summary of Mike's talk:

I will talk about how the dream of owning my own telescope started in 1971. I have pictures of the evolution as my dad and I tried various combinations of materials to achieve a stable, RA and Dec motor driven, clock drive telescope. That design evolved into the Dob scope most of you are familiar with that I used for many years. I am finally finishing the telescope I once dreamed of in 1971 this month. It has been a long road of trial and error, culminating in the scope I wanted in 1971.

Following Mike's talk will be a business meeting and discussion of possible plans for the annual spring astronomy day on Saturday, May 7

Front page:

http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/messenger/main/index.html for the latest in Messenger pictures.

In the sky this month:

Meteor Showers

Lyrids night of April 21 Moon rises after midnight

The Lyrids are a modest shower, with a dozen or two meteors per hour at best. The peak this year is during the day on April 22, so North American skywatchers get their best view before dawn that day. The gibbous Moon is in the way, however, so only the brightest meteors will shine through. Best time to observe is just after midnight, before that Moon comes up and spoils the whole thing.

Eta Aquarids night of May 5 Moon sets in early evening

Planets

Mercury: pretty much out of the picture, will be back as a morning star in a week or so, not a very good month as it never gets very high

Venus: low in the East at sunrise(rises about 4:30) and about the same during the month of April

Mars: other side of the Sun, slowly improving as a morning star, rising after 5 AM

Jupiter: just coming into view in the morning, will improve rapidly and be in opposition by mid-July for your summer enjoyment

<http://www.astronomy.com/en/News-Observing/Intro%20Sky/Discover%20the%20Solar%20System/2011/03/Tour%20the%20solar%20system%20Jupiter.aspx> Astronomy Magazine's video on Jupiter, now fading in the western sky....

Saturn: at opposition on April 4th, so its moving west slowly and diminishing in size. The return of warmer weather couldn't be timed any better for observers of the most beautiful planet. Saturn reaches its peak in early April, when it's the lone planet visible after darkness falls. The ringed world then lies opposite the Sun, so it rises in the east at sunset and reaches its highest point above the southern horizon at local midnight.

Those who like to view planets in bunches will have to wait for the approach of dawn. Venus rules the sky as you sip your morning coffee, a beacon that you won't mistake for any other celestial object. As April winds down, a closer look will reveal Mercury and Jupiter not far from Venus. Mars, Uranus, and Neptune also gather nearby, but viewing these fainter objects presents a challenge.

Shuttle Mission:

The last mission of Endeavor is scheduled for launch on April 29th as STS-134. Space shuttle Endeavour will deliver the Express Logistics Carrier-3 (ELC-3) and the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS) to the International Space Station.

Club Calendar:

May 7: Astronomy day outreach of some sort? (TBD)

May 19: May meeting of LAS

Fiske Planetarium: Admission costs \$3.50 for kids and seniors and \$6 for adults

+ Many Faces of Hubble (April 1, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5457&information_id=22064&type=&syndicate=syndicate

Explore the construction and use of the Hubble Space Telescope and the people behind the scenes, along with various careers in space. From scientists to engineers to astronauts, this show contains int...

+ The Edge of the Visible Universe: Dr. Mike Shull (April 7, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5462&information_id=22074&type=&syndicate=syndicate

This talk will discuss recent observations of light from the most distant objects and events in the Universe. These include the Cosmic Background Radiation left from the hot Big Bang and recent discov...

+ The Edge of the Visible Universe: Dr. Mike Shull (April 8, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5463&information_id=22076&type=&syndicate=syndicate

This talk will discuss recent observations of light from the most distant objects and

events in the Universe. These include the Cosmic Background Radiation left from the hot Big Bang and recent disc...

+ Navegacion Estelar (April 12, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5524&information_id=22263&type=&syndicate=syndicate

+ Colorado Skies: The DAWN Mission (April 14, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5525&information_id=22265&type=&syndicate=syndicate

+ Colorado Skies: 2012, Fact or Fiction (April 21, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5593&information_id=22424&type=&syndicate=syndicate

Come and enjoy an evening under the stars with a special topic on 2012, Fact or Fiction.

+ City of Stars (April 22, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5594&information_id=22426&type=&syndicate=syndicate

Look into the night sky and see the lights shining from our cosmic neighbors. In this presentation, learn about our city of stars-the Milky Way-and galactic neighbors that include nebulae and clusters...

+ Colorado Skies: Celestial Navigation (April 28, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5597&information_id=22432&type=&syndicate=syndicate

Enjoy an evening under the stars with a special topic of Celestial Navigation.

+ Many Faces of Hubble (April 29, 2011, 7:30 pm)

http://events.colorado.edu/EventList.aspx?view=EventDetails&eventidn=5598&information_id=22434&type=&syndicate=syndicate

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 cont...

Internet Resources:

<http://vimeo.com/21419634>

Nice time lapse of the northern lights

<http://www.astronomy.com/en/Multimedia/Videos.aspx> Access to all the Astronomy magazine's videos – they've added a half dozen in March. This gives you something to do while the camera is adding up the photons, and also prevents you from messing with the calibration during the shoot.

Upcoming Space Missions:

The Dawn mission will arrive at Vesta in July, so we have a new video on “what we might see”. Very good guesswork, and probably wrong. Watch the video at <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/video/index.cfm?id=974>

This month's Wacky Idea:

In an act of political favoritism, the Longmont Museum lost out on its application to get one of the shuttles to larger and more popular venues.

Shuttle Atlantis will stay in Cape Canaveral at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, just miles from the pair of launch pads where it was shot into space. Endeavour is headed to the California Science Center, miles from the plant where the shuttle was built; and Discovery's new home will be the Smithsonian Institution's branch in northern Virginia.

The Smithsonian is giving up the prototype Enterprise, which NASA said Tuesday will now go to New York City's Intrepid museum. Enterprise was used for test flights in the 1970s.

Humor Dept:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/millerphysics1#p/a/f/1/qybUFnY7Y8w> for the best Rube Goldberg I've ever seen!

Gary's choice:

