



Are we doomed?

**Longmont Astronomy Society Newsletter
December 2006**

From the President:

Hello LAS astronomers, We have had a pretty good month again even with the mostly cloudy skies we have had. Pawnee cactus flats north new moon star party was pretty good for us, about 7 who showed up for views. Love those long nights in the winter months. We start about 6 PM till early morning hours, makes for a long night of great objects. We joke that we can still see the summer stuff like Ring, Dumbbell and then see Orion, Leo and Cancer winter stuff too if you stay up all night. Leonids meteor shower was not so spectacular, but we were looking. The Gemini meteor shower we missed, the clouds covered most of sky all night long here in Colorado. The Home Planet Stellar Views are what we long for in the great dark skies of Grasslands new moon star parties adventures. Winter months only slow us down some. We try to observe no matter how cold out, so keep posted for next new moon adventures thru FRAC or LAS members list.

Brian Kimball, LAS master astro photographer, got the cover shot of Reflector magazine, Orion nebula, then two others on next to last page of Reflector magazine, Mercury Transit and Veil nebula. Then in Sky and Telescope magazine, he got a half page picture of North American and Pelican nebulae. Very Cool Brian. We are always looking forward to getting your pictures in the e mails, keep them coming, you keep the rest of us trying to improve our pictures.

The LAS did two outreach star party programs this past month. Platteville elementary school had to be our all time low temperature night yet. It was 14 degrees when I got there on my car thermometer, around 7 for a low, We had 45 kids in groups of 15 or so came out from classroom to view at a time. Marc Willey, Bob Spohn, Birch, Dick Mallot, Jeff White, Jeff Laux, and myself. Thanks you guys for an awesome night despite the cold weather we did it again, way to go, brave souls indeed. The other star party was for Jesse Johnson, teacher from Shaw Heights middle school in Westminster. We had clouds and wind but we had several volunteers show up and try. Ken Otoole, Vern Raben, Terry Frazier, Marc Wiley, Birch, Dick Mallot, and myself. Kids all had fun, even us adults too. We joked and talked, not much sky was had. Thin clouds and bright city lights made for a not so good night. We get an A for effort from teacher Jesse Johnson. Two of the left over Geminids did come rolling through, and the Pleiades did look good in binoculars. There was one Iridium flash, which Birch and one student claim to have seen through the light haze.

LAS is 20 years old this January, so lets make this Banquet in January reflect what a great bunch of astronomers and talent we are as a group. We have Al Stern doing guest speaker spot about the Charon mission Pluto. We are very lucky to get a speaker like Al Stern, we are doing good as a club and hope to keep things rolling into new year. Vern is taking reservations and so is Bob Spohn. Try to make it if you can, this is our big get together of the year.

CU's Fiske planetarium this month's LAS meeting Gill Buller is doing show on the star of Bethlehem, hope you got to see it. Thanks Gill I know it took some work and effort to do it. We will be in more contact with Fiske in future. I plan to get LAS group together for science on a sphere when it gets installed in the planetarium lobby area.

We are donating a small telescope that we got from a donation to school kid who needs a scope. Dick Mallot is taking care of that. We are also getting a 16 inch scope donated to Club that we will donate to Boy Scout Camp at Red Feather lakes area. They

want to build a dome or roll off roof top observatory. Bob Spohn, Marc Wiley and myself were wondering what to do with such a big scope, not portable type. Kirk Schneider, old LAS member helps with scouts. We will have access to scope and will help get it set up for them. They will pay for building, if we give them the scope. Fair deal in my eyes. Red Feathers lake area is a dark sky place and high elevation too. We are rolling as a group. Now kids from all over will get to see and use the scope and LAS gets the hype and good PR out of it. Our outreach this past year has been awesome. Proud to be a part of it all. Thanks to LAS Executives and others in club who always come to the rescue and keep the spirit alive.

Hope you all have a fun Christmas with your families and friends and wish you all a happy, healthy new year, and let the stars shine bright for you. God Bless you all, see you in the Dark, bye. Gary Garzone

In the sky this month:

URSID METEOR SHOWER: A flurry of meteors may emerge from Ursa Minor (the Little Dipper) on Dec. 22nd between 18 and 23 hours UT when Earth runs into a filament of debris trailing comet 8P/Tuttle. Meteor forecaster Peter Jenniskens of the SETI Institute anticipates as many as 39 meteors per hour, best seen from Europe and Asia. *Reference: IAU Electronic Telegram #773.*

Quadrantid Meteor Shower: Coming Jan 3, but with a full Moon in the sky the same night, it's going to be a challenge to see the dim ones.

Planets:

Mercury: sinking and just about done, visible again Jan 15 in the evening

Venus: evening star through May; by the end of January it will be up for 2 hours

Mars: in East at sunrise, improves through December 2007

Jupiter: Currently rises at 5:30, improves through opposition in May.

Saturn: Currently rises at 9 PM, improves through opposition the end of Jan

Club Calendar:

December 21 – Winter Solstice at 5:22 PM MST, although the latest sunrise will occur on January 5! Fun thing to figure out the motions, eh?

December 25 – Happy Birthday, Isaac Newton (#364)

December 27 – Happy Birthday, Johannes Kepler (#435)

January 6 – Annual Banquet at Izaak Walton Clubhouse (Sunset south of 3rd Ave) at 5.

Doors open at 4:30 for setup, dinner from the Rib House for \$15. Presentation – Alan Stern on the New Horizons mission to Pluto. Book Sale (Tentative, list will be online)

January 8 – Happy Birthday, Stephen Hawking (#65)

January 11 – 220th anniversary of Herschel discovering Uranus's moons Titania and Oberon

January 18 – LAS Meeting at FRCC Topic: Joseph Diverdi from the Radio Astronomy Club

January 20 – New Moon observing party at Pawnee

January 27 – First quarter public viewing at Flanders Park

Internet Resources:

Check out the Mercury transit pictures from space at the Hinode satellite page at http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2006/17nov_xraytransit.htm?list937934

This month's field trip(cover story):

Meteor impacts with Earth: The editor recently visited Barringer Crater (<http://www.meteorcrater.com/index.php>) in Arizona (Exit 233 on I-40, 30 miles east of Flagstaff), and wondered “how many craters have been found in Colorado?”. The paper **AN ANALYSIS AND SURVEY OF POSSIBLE METEORITE IMPACT CRATERS IN COLORADO** (<http://www.aescon.com/aesconsulting/Presentations/gsa/geot5.htm>) took a look at some “local beliefs”, all of which were proved false. A list of world craters is at <http://members.cruzio.com/~aapollos/Crater.html>, <http://www.solarviews.com/eng/tercrate.htm>, <http://www.unb.ca/passc/ImpactDatabase/index.html> (the best), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_impact_craters_on_Earth (WikiPedia and pretty much the same), <http://www.smv.org/hastings/crater5.html> (pretty much the same). A glance through these sources leaves Colorado craterless! They're out there, just haven't been discovered yet. Most discoveries are from analysis of drilling cores – just unlucky in the location of the oil and gas wells so far. And more likely, the cores already have been taken, but no one was looking for the impact evidence!

A decent paper on Barringer Crater is at <http://www.psrhawaii.edu/Dec97/impactBlast.html> and a nice zoomable map of the major impacts around the world is at <http://geology.com/meteor-impact-craters.shtml>

And for the Biblical view, try <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2004/0524impact.asp>, which runs through the proofs that they aren't impacts at all....

Barringer Crater is privately owned. Admission is steep at 13 bucks. The associated museum is kinda lame, but Meteor Crater is one of those things you “have to see once in your life”. Nancy passed up going inside and did a walk around the parking lot instead, saving me 13 dollars and about a half hour of pointed griping in the car later....

Next month's field trip – Huntsville, Alabama and Marshall Space Center.

2007 is the 20th anniversary of the LAS, so we plan on revisiting those early days.