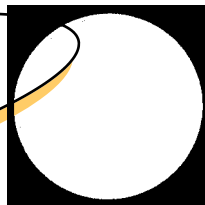


The Astronews



Volume 50, Issue 5

www.hawastsoc.org

May 2002

South Pacific Star Party by Clare Levin

Transparent skies, steady seeing, big Dobs, warm hospitality, and the fabulous Southern Skies – an unbeatable combination. This set the stage for the NSWAS' 10th Annual South Pacific Star Party. It all began when I was perusing Sky and Telescope and saw a notice for the Star Party on March 15th to 17th. I took it as a direct message to me, as my 80th birthday fell on March 17th and I wanted to do something spectacular. My luck held out. It was their first clear session in four years – the last three were rained out.

The three major areas we were interested in were the Eta Carinae Nebula, the LMC and the SMC, not to

(Continued on page 5)



Inside this issue:

President's Report	2
Observer's Notebook	3
Seasonal Musings	4
Meteor Log	5
HAS Membership	7
How I Got Started in Astronomy	12
Minutes	13
Treasurer's Report	14

Special points of interest:

- The next meeting is on May 7 at Bishop Museum
- **Sam Rhodes** Hanauma Bay shows have moved to the 2nd Monday of every month. Gates close at 7:30

Upcoming Star Parties

Public Party	May 4	Dillingham
Club Party	May 11	Dillingham
Public Party	May 18	Kahala Park
Public Party	June 1	Dillingham
Club Party	June 8	Dillingham
Public Party	June 15	Kahala Park

President's Report

Been out under the night sky looking up lately? Clouds, yes? Discouraging? Yes! But hey, you could be on the mainland and then you really would be frustrated! Just remember, we have it better here than most any other place in the U.S.. The coming month of May looks rather promising. Keep your eyes skyward and keep that optimism I continue to encounter from the Dillingham crew.

Astronomers, like all of you, are an imaginative group. You must be! You look up into the night skies and play dot-to-dot games with those tiny lights. At a recent public star party, a group of high school students lay on mats staring at the sky. One boy was overheard to say, "So, those constellations they keep talking about, where are they? I just don't get it, where are they?" Unimaginative? I don't think so! Uninitiated is more like it! After a few minutes of discussion, those same boys left happily talking about their newly acquired constellation skills. It is heartening that so many of us are willing to share those ancient patterns with others.

So judging from the turnout at the star party, there certainly are imaginative individuals in our group. Thanks for your participation and I hope to see more of you at upcoming events.



Hawaiian Astronomical Society P.O. Box 17671

President

Gretchen West
735-0482
gwest@pixi.com

Vice President

Barry Peckham
524-2450
barry@litebox-telescopes.com

Secretary

Chris Trusty
395-2525
ctrusty@hawaii.rr.com

Treasurer

Jim MacDonald
261-2162
jim.macd@verizon.com

Board Members-at-Large

Don Tucker
833-2134
Nick Bradley
735-3634

The Astronews Editor

Paul C. Lawler
395-8121
paul@lawler.net

The **Astronews** is the monthly newsletter of the Hawaiian Astronomical Society. It is not copyrighted, and may be freely copied and distributed. We do request, however, that authors and artists be given credit for their work. Contributions are welcome. Send them to the Editor via e-mail or to P.O. Box 17671, Honolulu, HI 96817. The deadline is the 15th of each month. We cannot be responsible for un-

Planets Close to the Moon

Times are Hawaii Standard Time

- May 3, 16h, M 4.2° SSE of Neptune
(92° from sun in morning sky)
- May 5, 03h, M 4.2° SSE of Uranus
(76° from sun in morning sky)
- May 13, 12 h, M 2.4° SSE of Mercury
(17° from sun in evening sky)
- May 13, 21h, M 1.1° NNW of Saturn
(21° from sun in evening sky)
- May 14, 09h, M 0.66° SSE of Mars
(27° from sun in evening sky)
- May 14, 13h, M 0.84° SSE of Venus
(29° from sun in evening sky)
- May 16, 02h, M 2.0° N of Jupiter
(48° from sun in evening sky)

Other Events of Interest

Times are Hawaii Standard Time

- May 3, 18h, Mercury at greatest elongation
(21.0° East of the sun)
- May 6, 18h, Venus, Mars, and Saturn all fit
within a circle of diameter 2.81°
- May 10, 10h, Venus 0.30° N or Mars
(28° from sun in evening sky)
- May 12, 00:46h, New Moon
- May 15, 02h, Moon 1.1° N of 4 Vesta
(36° from sun in evening sky)
- May 26, 01:51h, Full Moon
- May 26, 21h, Mercury at inferior conjunction
Passes into morning sky

Early May - all 5 naked eye planets will be visible in the western sky after sunset.

The Planets in May

♀ Mercury	♀ Venus	♂ Mars
Mercury is visible in the evening sky the first two weeks of May. It is near the moon on May 13.	Venus is visible low in the southwest just after sunset. Mag. -3.9.	Mars remains in the southwest at dusk near Saturn and Venus. Mag. +1.7
♃ Jupiter	♄ Saturn	♅ Uranus
Jupiter is about 50° above the western horizon at sunset. Diam. 34", Mag. -1.9.	Saturn is low in the west at sunset and is lost in the glare of the sun by the end of May.	Uranus rises about 1:30 in the morning and is high enough to observe before dawn. Mag +5.8
♆ Neptune	♇ Pluto	
Neptune rises about an hour before Uranus and is high in the eastern sky before dawn. Mag +7.9	Pluto rises at 8:20 pm and is high enough to observe by midnight.	

Editorial—Dillingham Star Parties

During the April public star party at Dillingham, we had several cars who came barreling in with full headlights. At least two cars (who were only there to pick up their children) then left by driving around the cones and onto the runway. Many cars returned because the gate was locked and they didn't know the combination. Several club members were forced to leave valuable equipment unattended for long periods of time to deal with these situations.

(Continued on page 8)

Things in Spring fly away much faster than Fall constellations do, or so



it seems. The impression comes from the fact that the sky darkens a little bit later each night in Spring and that gives the western stars more of a chance to hide themselves before we can see them. Added to this is our local weather in springtime. It often robs us of six weeks in a row, and in that amount of time the winter sky can disappear into the sunset glow. Curiously, the Gemini Twins can last nearly to the 4th of July, and yet they seem so close to Orion in February and March. By diving feet first into the western ocean, by being east of Orion and by diving into a more northerly spot than Orion does, Gemini's head stars Castor and Pollux last

longer than Orion's Rigel and Betelgeuse. The more northerly a star's journey is, the longer it lasts in our night sky. And lastly, the rosy glow of sunset swallows Orion's most famous feature more easily than Gemini's. The belt wears out while the twins keep their heads.

For every goodbye there is an opposite hello! April marked the return, for mid-evening observers, of Corvus the crow, of nearby bright Spica and of Hawaii's favorite star, Arcturus, and May heralds the smallest constellation in the sky, Crux, the Southern Cross, an object unknown to most mainland observers.

The sky seems more vacant in Spring: a seemingly intentional dramatic pause before the onslaught of the Summer Sky. The Spring Sky is about quality objects. Those who want quantity must have the guts and the aperture for probing "The Realm of Galaxies" in Leo and Virgo and Coma Berenices. Consider it a bonding exercise between you and your universe.

For those with more modest aperture, consider taking your (mounted) binoculars for a cruise through the sparse starfields west of Corvus. I did this late last night from my lanai on Punchbowl, when many of the neighborhood lights were finally turned off. A general scan of this celestial territory provides a sense of its relative emptiness. Once expectations are recalibrated, each star found becomes more precious, each asterism more suggestive, each color variation more colorful. A star chart will help you appreciate the patterns and attach memories to pieces of sky.

May heralds the return of the smallest constellation in the sky, Crux, the Southern Cross.

A great sky enhancer is a black T-shirt pulled over your head but left like a hood and used to shield neighborhood lights. The T-shirt waist can be closed around the viewing end of the binoculars and suddenly you are out of town and adrift in space. Why not find your own asterism, sketch it, name it and publish it in the Astronews? Those of us who love the night sky will appreciate your efforts, and so will you!

Southern Star Party (Continued from page 1)

mention the Southern Milky Way as it cuts through the 3 C's – Crux, Carina and Centaurus. We arrived a day early, as advised, to get undisturbed viewing. On March 14, we spent the entire evening on the club's 17" Dob using a 16 mm Nagler.

We first concentrated on Centaurus A (NGC 5128), a radio galaxy with a prominent dust lane through the middle – a spectacular sight our local friends call the "Hamburger" and the Aussie's prefer to call the "Cheeseburger". Then we compared the Omega Centaurus (NGC 5139) globular with 47 Tucanae (NGC 104). We decided in favor of 47 Tuc because of its density and compactness. Next, we scanned the Southern Cross,

Meteor Log — May 2002

Twilight gets longer this month and the only major shower, the Eta Aquarids is reasonably moon-free. There are several daylight radio showers.

Monday the 6th, the Eta Aquarids. Radiant 22h32m -01 deg. Hourly rates can be as high as 30 or more. The major problem with this shower is that its radiant, in the little "Y"-shaped "Water Jar" asterism of Aquarius, rises in twilight only an hour or two before dawn. Here in Hawaii we luck out since we have about 2 hours of dark before twilight starts.

Monday the 20th, the Omicron Cetids. Radiant 01h05m -04 deg. This is usu-

May Meeting Speaker

Richard Wainscoat will be a speaker at our meeting. He is a UH Telescopes Support Scientist, galaxies. His research interests include the structure of our Galaxy and dwarf galaxies. In March, Richard attended a conference on light pollution in La Serena, Chile. He will

the Jewel Box (NGC 4775) and the Southern Pleiades (IC 2602), then the Eta Carinae Nebula with its large, brilliant, yellow-orange star Eta (bigger and brighter than we expected) – the Keyhole Nebula (NGC 3372) and the Homunculus Nebula (Trumpler 16) that looked like a figure 8 to us.

As we scanned the LMC with all its

(Continued on page 8)

by Mike Morrow

ally regarded as a daylight radio/radar shower, but a few meteors have been recorded visually from tropical areas.

If you are interested in observing Meteors contact Tom Giguere on Oahu at 672-6677

or write to Mike Morrow, Meteor Group Hawaii, P.O. Box 6692,

FOR SALE: Orion Shorty 2x Barlow

1.25" housing, 3" long
multi-coated glass, solid
metal, pristine cond. \$25
call Don: 833-2314

Marathon Training

by Glenn Nanamori

Now that the window has passed for the March Messier Marathon, isn't it a great opportunity to start training for the 2003 event? Like the running marathon, many hours of training time needs to be invested before the race. It would be difficult to show up on race day with no prior training, expect to complete the race and not suffer through it. The same would be true for a Messier Marathon. A good book is *The Year-Round Messier Marathon Field Guide*. But no book can substitute for actual training.

At every star party, add to your observing program a Messier training session. Look for as many Messier objects as you can in the sky and remember their appearance and location. Your target list will change each month but due to repetition, you will surprisingly find the prior month's objects much faster. During the summer, M15, M2 and M30 rise into darkness. Look for them soon after rising to get a sense of their location. Do the same for M74, M77 and M52 during the early spring, except watch them set in darkness. These are difficult because they are

Add new Messier objects to your observing plan at every star party.

near the horizon and not in a dark sky on marathon night.

Messier objects are some of the prettiest objects to observe in any night sky, so even if you never participate in a marathon, at



Charles Messier (1730-1817)

least you will have experienced the enjoyment of viewing them. And you can readily share them with others because you have added new objects to the star chart that is always with you.

There is one caveat. Unlike a running marathon, all the training in the world will not enable you to finish the event more quickly than one who attempts it with little or no preparation. The starry night trudges along at only one speed and even the best marathoners must wait for M30, which will always appear just before dawn during the March Messier Marathon. We are all equally challenged for this event so get inspired, get out your telescope and start training!

Editors Note: We have discovered that Glenn can quickly point out the location of any Messier object currently in the sky blindfolded and with both

Note: Names and addresses of HAS members have been deliberately removed from this on-line issue.

2002 State Science Fair Winners photos by Jim MacDonald



Matthew Jachowski of Maui H.S., winner in the senior division of the Earth & Space Science category. His research project involved determining the effects of observation timing on orbits of asteroids. To the left is Dr. Richard Linnehan, NASA Astronaut from the recent HST repair mission (STS-109).

Both recipients were given a certificate of recognition and a one-year HAS membership along with a subscription to *Astronomy* or *Sky & Telescope* magazine plus a free tour of the night sky by Barry Peckham. However, as both reside on a neighbor island, a second magazine subscription will be given in lieu of a star party.



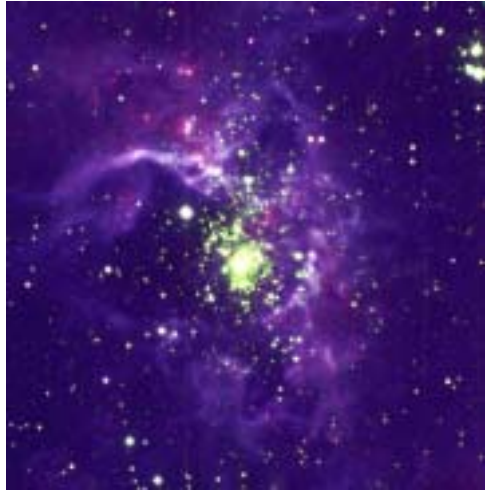
Brittany Johnston of Waiakea Intermediate was the HAS winner in the Junior Research category. Her project concerned the impact of varying amounts of light pollution on viewing dim objects.

Southern Star Party (Continued from page 5)

clusters, we were stopped cold by the Tarantula Nebula (NGC 2070). It was surely the most exciting thing we saw with all its dust lanes, loops and filamentary appearance. The Alpha Centauri triple and an edge-on spiral galaxy (NGC 4945) near Omega Centauri came next. Later, we stopped by Joe Couchi's 16" Dob, and saw more of Eta Carinae, and also, a garnet (carbon) star about 11 o'clock from Beta Crucis. Enough for the first night!

March 15th and 16th, we spent on Gary Mitchell's prize-winning 20" Dob with Mark Russell, Les Dalrymple (Sky and Tel. Southern Sky editor) and Steve Lee (colleague and successor to David Malin at the Anglo-Australian Observatory)—needless to say, they were extremely well-informed and generous teachers.

We studied the Tarantula again with an ultra hi-contrast filter (not as black as an 03). It was an incredible sight with its purple and greenish cast. The Eta Carinae Nebula had definite color, too. NGC2808, a globular in Carina, one of Les's obscure favorites, looked like 47 Tuc with a very concentrated core. Then, RU106, a globular un-



The Tarantula Nebula

der gamma Centauri and a small galaxy between Centaurus A and Omega Centauri. Next, NGC 3918, a beautiful blue planetary in Centaurus' S.W corner. We saw the Flame Nebula (NGC2024) and the Horsehead (IC434) in Orion. All were able to see the Horsehead against the diffuse glow of starlight except me—my old eyes just couldn't make it out. The upper lobe of M42 looked slightly blue, the lower pinkish. The skies were growing hazy, yet we were still able to see NGC 2440, a planetary in Puppis 5° south of M46 and M47, and IC418, a faint 11th mag. planetary in Lepus. Amazingly, it looked blue with a defi-

Editorial (Continued from page 3)

Perhaps we could encourage the general public to come to the Kahala Star Party as their first exposure, and then to Dillingham by invitation (handout), with clear rules and directions. There is a very real possibility that we could lose our privileges at Dillingham because of the actions of an ignorant few.

If you invite someone to a public star party at Dillingham, please make sure that they understand the rules clearly, and know the combination if they are going to leave early. If you need a reminder the rules are available on the web site at <<http://www.hawastsoc.org/directions/dillingham.html>>. Please be responsible for your guests. Because we currently have no good alternatives, let's make sure that we don't lose Dillingham due to negligence.

Pretty Fuzzies

On April 4th Comet Ikeya-Zhang paid a visit to the Andromeda Galaxy's neighborhood. This pretty sight was observed and photographed by amateur astronomers worldwide. Observers report that the comet's brightness is holding steady at magnitude 3.5 or so. The tail extends some 4° or 5° from Ikeya-Zhang's coma. The comet is currently (May 6) in the head of Draco moving diagonally to the West almost in a straight line toward M13. It will be close to M13 on May 16.



Celestron C-14 to be Auctioned

The club voted to auction off the Celestron C-14 scope, with bidding to start at \$2,500. Here is a link where you can see the scope in its current condition: <http://homepage.mac.com/macyoda/Personal2.html>

How I Got Started in Astronomy by Stephanie Choquette

I think I was always interested in astronomy. At the age of 7 or 8 I was already reading books about the moon and Mars (You may remember the books, they were part of a science collection—the Mars one was black with red lettering, and the moon book was white with blue letters).

On long car trips I would spend my time looking at the moon and stars. Whenever special astronomy programs were on television, I had to watch. As I grew, so did my interest. I kept buying books, tried to follow the space program and spent more time watching the stars and other night wonders.

One warm July evening in 1982 (a night that I will never forget), after a nice picnic by the lake, I noticed a man looking through a bright orange telescope (in retrospect, probably an old C-8). I had to go and see what he was doing. The man told me that if I waited a little longer, he could show me Saturn. I had never looked through

a telescope before, so I stuck around. As twilight turned into night I finally got to put my eye to the eyepiece and I was amazed! I could see the rings and different bands of color. I could not believe I was seeing the real thing! By then, more people had showed up wanting a peek through the telescope. I had to give up my place at the eyepiece, but I lined up again and again.

Since that night, my passion for astronomy has kept on growing. I now plan my vacations to include visits to major observatories and planetariums and trips to famous star parties. I attend as many lectures as possible, still buy astronomy books, and I have joined a number of astronomy clubs and organizations. I have no intention of stopping, and am looking for more challenges, discoveries and experiences!

Now the Southern Hemisphere beckons and I will answer the call. I will finally get to see the famous Magellanic Clouds in a trip down under

Waldeman's Laws

1st Law: The skies are never clear within 3 days of new moon, since there is not enough solar energy reflected off the moon to dissipate the clouds.

2nd Law: Rare astronomical events usually occur within 3 days of full moon and/or within 30 apparent degrees from the sun.

3rd Law: When observing, the object you want to see will always be below the horizon or less than 10 degrees from the horizon with the most light pollution (since frustration is related to entropy, it must always increase).

4th Law: Supernovae, comets, and asteroids are always discovered by someone else (because no matter where you are, the sun will always set earlier somewhere else, and therefore someone else will find it first).

5th Law: 90 percent of meteors occur behind you when everyone else is facing you (so they can all say, "ooh!... You missed a good one!")

Minutes

by Don Tucker

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by **Gretchen West**. There were thirty-six in attendance, 33 members and 3 visitors. Gretchen and **Barry Peckham** talked about the Messier Marathon participation and a tentative marathon workshop with Barry (see Barry). Use and renting of club scopes was urged for those who do not have their own scopes. A membership list is to be published in the May Astronews.

New Business: Astronomy Day is April 20th. HAS will be providing exhibit at Kahala Mall, outside Barnes & Noble. Sign-ups for help were passed to members for help. Shifts begin at 12:30 onwards in 2 hour shifts. Kahala Star Party will follow at sunset, at Kahala Recreation Center.

Sign-ups for April School Star Parties were sent around. Scheduled parties are **Lanakila** (Nu'uuanu area)

on Wednesday, April 17th and **Ala Wai School** on Thursday, April 18th.

Barry related his experience during two occultations using club scopes. He urged more members to attend the Kahala Star Parties and three star parties in April.

There was a discussion about the now returned C-14. Club members voted to sell the club's C-14 by sealed bid at the next meeting. \$2,500 price is the starting price. Vote was 32 for/1 against. All agreed that notification of the sale should appear in the May Astronews. **Sam Rhodes** will be informed of the sale, and **Gary Ward** has volunteered to store the C-14 at his residence.

Glenn Nanamori spoke of his astrophotography experiences with a digital camera. **Joanne Bogan** related her trip to Alaska last month, to see

(Continued on page 11)

Treasurer's Report

by Jim MacDonald

HAS Financial Report as of April 15, 2002

Initial Balance:	\$5,732.76
Receipts:	
Astronomy Payment	58.00*
Donations	275.00
Dues Received.....	175.00
Interest Income.....	1.21
S&T Payments	59.90*
Telescope Fee.....	20.00
Total Income:	\$589.11
Expenses:	
Astronews.....	147.93
Magazine Subscription Payment	147.85
Refreshments.....	7.15
Total Expenses:	\$302.93
Final Balance	\$6,018.94

*\$117.90 in accounts payable to the magazine publishing companies when billed.

Since last month, we have had nine new members join us. They are **Dave and Dee Verret; Roger Morikawa; Ken Kajihara; Jeff Nathan; Myra Vega; Jean and Tosh Taniguchi; Jeffrey, Jamie, Brandi, and Christopher White.** Welcome to the club. Many thanks to **Cathy Kaonohi, John Proud, Jean and Tosh Taniguchi, Momilani Elementary School** and the **family of the late Charles Fujimoto** for their generous cash donations.

Clear skies to the many members renewing this month!

Minutes (Continued from page 10)

the Aurora Borealis. **Steve Hoffman** talked about seven web sites to visit related to astronomy.

AstroLottery participant numbers were drawn by guest **Mayra. Jay Wrathall** won the prize and at our next meeting **Glenn Nanamori, Stephanie Choquette, Clare Levin, Kevin Polk** and **Chris Peterson** were our working winners.

Chris Peterson spoke of his trip and the sights and sound of LPSC in Houston, Tx. **Mel Levin** related his

and **Clare's** experience at the New South Wales Star Party, in Australia.

Barry reported on the Hawaii State Science Fair at which he and **Jim Mac Donald** judged presentation for the club award to be presented April 5 by the club president.

The club asked that **Jim Mac Donald** research prices for Polo club shirts.

The meeting adjourned to the Planetarium. We thank **Ron Paul Smith** for his donation of a book to be used as a lottery prize.

**Hawaiian Astronomical Society
P.O. Box 17671
Honolulu, HI 96817**



Post Office
will not de-
liver mail
without
postage