



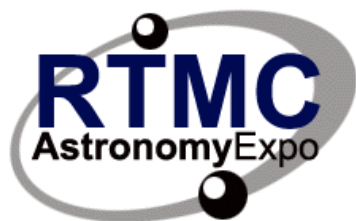
Issue Number 4

Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring 2002

Southern California Observers

Astronomy Expo 2002 (Aka RTMC)



The 33rd Annual RTMC (Riverside Telescope Makers Conference Astronomy Expo) will be held Friday, May 24, 2002 through Sunday, 26 May 2002 (Memorial Day weekend). It will be held at the Y.M. C.A. Camp Oakes (eight miles east of Big Bear City on Highway 38 at Lake Williams Road - that's between mileposts 44

and 45). This location is about 50 miles northeast of Riverside in the San Bernardino mountains.

Every year scores of astronomers come to Astronomy Expo, and this year the SCO should make an appearance as well. If you have never been there before, come for a day, or if you like to camp stay the weekend. Local area hotels are also available if you don't want to camp. But this is one astronomy event that should not be missed by anyone!

RTMC offers a chance to see and look through a large variety of telescopes (with relatively dark skies and high altitude), attend talks by professional and amateur astronomers on different aspects of telescope construction and use, see some astronomical equipment and software in use, and buy astronomical equipment and software (often at reduced prices). The vendors contribute door prizes for Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Vendors ranging from major telescope manufacturers to people selling t-shirts have booths at the telescope field and along the lanes leading to it. Software vendors are in the meeting hall annex, because computer displays aren't easily visible in sunlight.

And lets not forget the raffles on Saturday and Sunday night!

For more information visit their web page: <http://www.rtmc-inc.org/index>.

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Who is Charles Messier?

Born- Lorraine, France
June 26, 1730

He was the 10th of 12 Children

First interest in Astronomy at age 14 with the Great 6-tailed Comet

First documented observation Mercury transit of May 6, 1753

Discovered comet-like patch in Taurus on August 28, 1758. Believing it was a comet until no movement was observed. M1 became first of 110 objects.

Discovered 20 Comets

Died- April 17, 1817

Highlighted Web Page

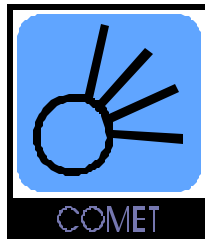
" Big Bear Solar Observatory"

The Big Bear Solar Observatory (BBSO) located in Big Bear Lake, Ca. is operated by the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). The main interest is the physics of the Sun and we observe solar phenomena every day with our dedicated telescopes and instruments. In addition to their own instruments they host two different helioseismology experiments; the TON and the GONG. The Center for Solar Research at NJIT also studies the Sun in radio wavelengths at the Owens Valley Radio Observatory.

You can also see the latest images of solar activity through many wavelengths of light.

<http://www.bbso.njit.edu/>

Comet C/2002 C1 (Ikeya-Zhang) may become naked-eye in March



IAU Circular 7812 (Feb 1, 2002) reported the discovery of a comet of 8.5-9.0 magnitude by Kaoru Ikeya (Japan) and Daqing Zhang (China). This comet, located in the evening sky at about -17.5 degrees declination at discovery, is moving northward. IAUC 7813 (Feb 2, 2002) reported a preliminary orbit that indicates that this comet will come to perihelion on March 8.9, 2002 UT at a perihelion distance of 0.49 AU. The predicted peak brightness is $m_1=4.5$. However, the comet will be poorly placed when at it's brightest in March being less than 30 degrees from the Sun. The Northern Hemisphere will be favored during much of the apparition.

For up to date information visit: <http://encke.jpl.nasa.gov/>

Spring Star Parties

This Spring, the giant planets are in the evening sky. Our monthly Star Parties will highlight these and other wonderful events. Early on it is too cold to venture up to Mt. Pinos, so all Spring Star parties will be at the Santa Paula site!

March 9, Santa Paula

March 16, Santa Paula- Messier Marathon

April 13- Santa Paula

April 20, Santa Paula

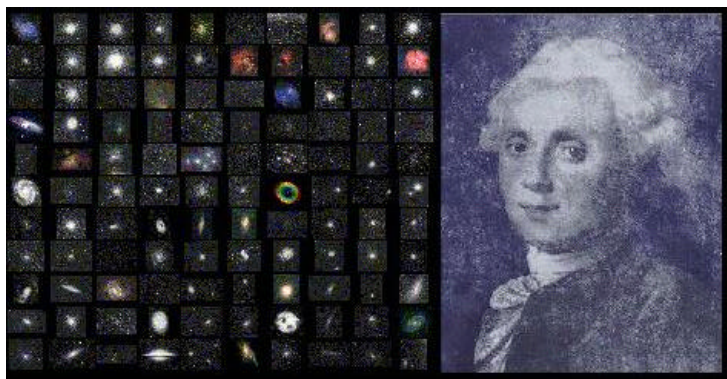
May 11, Santa Paula

May 24-27, Astronomy Expo (RTMC) in Big Bear

Everyone is invited to the Star Parties and car pooling is suggested! Bring a friend or co-worker and teach them to love the night sky as much as you do!



SCO Messier Marathon 2002



This year the Southern California Observers will hold their first annual Messier Marathon on March 16 at the Santa Paula site. What is a Messier Marathon you ask? Well it IS an all-night star party where the goal is to observe and record all of the Messier Objects in one night.

This year, there will be a considerably good chance to combine the Messier Marathon with an all-planet marathon, i.e. you can ob-

serve all solar-system planets during this night, though Neptune and Venus might be difficult. Some comets brighter than about mag 14.0 will be visible as well.

Messier Marathon is a term describing the attempt to find as many Messier objects as possible in one night. Depending on the location of the observer, and season, there is a different number of them visible, as they are not evenly distributed in the celestial sphere. There are heavily crowded regions in the sky, especially the Virgo Cluster and the region around the Galactic Center, while other regions are virtually empty of them. In particular, there are no Messier objects at all at Right Ascensions 21:40 to 23:20, and only the very northern M52 is between RA 21:40 and 0:40. This chance effect leads, at considerably low northern latitudes on Earth (best around 25 degrees North), to the chance to observe all 110 Messier objects in one night! This opportunity occurs once every year, around mid- to end-March; the best time to try is of course when the Moon is near its new phase.

The SCO will present certificates to ALL participants of the marathon, noting the number of objects observed. The SCO will charge a nominal fee of \$5 to enter the event to cover awards to those individuals that observe the most M-objects during the evening. The awards will be broken down into the following categories; Most Objects with Binoculars, Most Objects with telescope under 4-inches aperture, Most objects with telescope over 4-inches.

Unlike other Messier Marathons, Computer controlled telescopes can participate, but they cannot win an award for most objects. (They will receive the certificate of participation however.)

Registration will take place at the observing site, and observing forms will be handed out along with a Messier Marathon Guide to the objects. Following the event, I will post all of the participants and their M-numbers on our website.

This is a great event to participate in, for both experienced and beginner. What a better way to discover the universe, than with a Messier Marathon! There is more to life than M-31 and M-42! Check them out!

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▶ Observing for everyone



Benefits of Membership in the SCO:

- No membership fees- This is an on-line organization
- Online Newsletter- downloadable
- Open to anyone interested in furthering their knowledge and experience of astronomical observing techniques
- Nightly Chat sessions to share ideas, and observing experience
- Immediate notification of new comets, asteroids, nova, or other astronomical events
- Observing Partner Program
- Observing Sections with specialists in every area of observing

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This is just ONE MORE benefit of being a member of the **Southern California Observers** that you might get from another club, but with NO DUES!