



Inaugural Issue

Volume 1, Issue 1

Summer 2001

Southern California Observers

Welcome to the Southern California Observers

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Mars... Did you Know?

- Gravity - 0.38 of Earth
- Surface Temperature -143°C to 17°C
- Polar caps of water and carbon-dioxide ice
- Mars Year - 687 days
- Rotates - 24 hr 37.5 min
- Elliptical Orbit 1.38 to 1.67 AU
- Axis Inclined 25 degrees

Welcome to the first issue of the publication for the Southern California Observers. No, we don't have a name for it yet, but if you can suggest a good one, who knows, we might select it and you can have the satisfaction of naming this journal. So put your thinking cap on and come up with a creative name!

The SCO is geared towards those persons interested in astronomy. We are trying to get away from the 'typical' club atmosphere that most of us don't have the time for anymore. SCO members would rather spend their valuable time observing rather than listening to a lecture on the effect of astronomy has had on the art world. This is a no frills organization, with many of the same benefits of larger organizations. And at NO COST!

I have seen club membership dues increase over the past few years with no increase of club benefits.

One of the main costs of any astronomy club is the cost of printing and mailing the monthly newsletter. Well, the SCO does not mail the newsletter and it is a quarterly publication available for download on our web page. The schedule of publication of the newsletters is January, April, July, and Oc-

tober. This first issue is the July 2001 (Summer 2001). If you would be interested in writing an article or even taking over the editor position of the newsletter, please contact me.

Among the other benefits of membership in the SCO is an active newsgroup on Yahoo. There you can ask questions, answer questions, and get the latest information from the world of astronomy and space exploration. It is YOUR newsgroup. We will be holding twice monthly star parties for most of the year, the current schedule is listed elsewhere in this newsletter. One of the star parties will be held at the famous Mt. Pinos in the Fraizer Park area, a 2-hour drive from Simi Valley. The second star party will be held at a private site, which is open ONLY to members of the SCO. It is located in Ventura County, within an hour's drive from Simi Valley.

Would you observe more often if you had an observing partner? Someone who shared your interests in the hobby? One of the benefits of the SCO is the Observing Partner Program. You can register on our web page and list your interests and review

those other members with the same observing interests as yours. Drop them an email and setup observing sessions at your favorite observing site. Or you can use it as a car pool to Mt. Pinos or other sites!

And lastly, you can get your subscription to Sky & Telescope magazine renewed at a 25% decrease! Just mail your subscription card and payment to the SCO and we'll take care of the rest. It is normally \$39.95, NOW you can get it for only \$29.95. In addition, you get a 10% discount on all of your Sky Publishing purchases.

Like most amateur organizations, they are run by an active group of volunteers. I have taken on the responsibility to jump-start this group, but it will only survive with your assistance. We are not asking for money, only your time. If you would like to assist in any of the items I have mentioned here so far, please contact me.

Tim Robertson
Cometman@cometman.net

Highlighted Web Page

The Association of Lunar & Planetary Observers

<http://www.LPL.Arizona.EDU/alpo/>

Founded by Walter Haas in 1947, the A.L.P.O. now has about 600 members. Our dues include a subscription to the quarterly Journal, The Strolling Astronomer, and are

\$23.00 for one year (\$40.00 for two years) for the United States.

The ALPO is a group of amateur and professional astronomers who's love for observing the moon and planets is evident in the publications they produce.



SCO Section Leaders Wanted

Do you specialize in an area of astronomy that you would like to help others with?

Why not volunteer to become a Section Leader in the SCO.

We have developed Observing Sections for members to

"Volunteer to be a Section Leader in the SCO"

join and have their observations posted on the SCO's web page for the world to see.

There are openings for lead-

ers in Solar, Lunar, Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn. Comets, Meteor, Minor Planet, and Deep Sky. Join us, and help promote your hobby!

Summertime Star Parties

This Summer we will be treated to the finest views of Mars that we have had since 1988. Our monthly Star Parties will highlight this wonderful event.

June 16, Local Star Party at Ventura Location

June 23, Dark Sky at Mt. Pinos

July 14, Local Star Party at Ventura Location

July 21, Dark Sky at Mt. Pinos

August 11, Local Star Party at Ventura Location

August 18 Dark Sky at Mt. Pinos

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!



Product Review- Meade 12mm Astrometric Illuminated Reticle

If you have a desire to do actual science with your telescope, there are many types of useful observations you can make. Double star measurements is one of my favorites. To measure the distance between double stars and the position angle of the stars are usually accomplished with the use of a filar micrometer. These instruments are costly and take a lot of practice to use. Meade Instru-

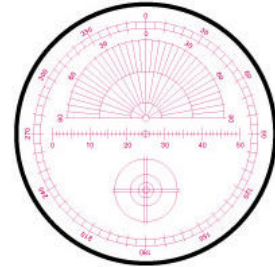


ments has a very easy to use and relatively inexpensive accessory that should be added to every amateur astronomer's eyepiece collection.

The 12 mm Astrometric Illuminated Reticle.

For only \$120, you can turn your telescope into a scientific instrument capable of precision measurements of double stars and comet coma diameters., and position angles. The instructions provided are easy to

use and calibration to your instrument can be accomplished in one evening. The Astrometric Illuminated Reticle is an accessory you should not be without!



Mars 2001- By Jeff Beish

Mars approached the Earth closer during this apparition than at any time since 1988. Still an intriguing world, Mars offers the casual and serious observer many challenges and delights. This planet offers astronomers a free laboratory for the study another planet's atmosphere and the behavior of condensates and effects on its atmosphere. Mars is similar to Earth in that it has four seasons, exhibits global climates, changing weather patterns, annual thawing of polar caps, storm clouds of water ice. Mars also exhibits howling dusty winds, and a variety of surface features, which predictably change with color, size, and move around the surface over long periods

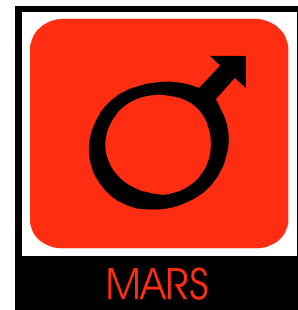
Opposition was on June 13, 2001 and closest approach on June 21st with an apparent size of 20.4 seconds of arc (arcsec) and a distance of 0.45016 A.U. (41,844,902 miles or 67,342,977 km). This next apparition is considered **Perihelic** because the orbital longitude at opposition is only 73 degrees from the perihelion longitude (250° Ls). Opposition occurred on June 13, 2001.

Even at its best, Mars is challenging to observe. The disk is tiny and its markings are blurred by the Earth's atmosphere. A telescope for planetary work should provide sharp images with the highest possible contrast. A long-focus refractor is generally considered the best, followed by a long-focus Newtonian or Cassegrain reflector. Telescopes with large central obstructions do less well.

Anyone who observes Mars will find it rewarding to make a sketch of whatever is seen, both to create a permanent record and to help train the eye in detecting elusive detail. Start with a circle 1-3/4 inches (42 mm) in diameter. Draw the phase defect, if any, and the bright polar caps or cloud hoods. Next shade in the largest dark markings, being careful to place them in exactly the right locations on the disk. At this stage, record the time to the nearest minute. Now add the finer details, viewing through various color filters, starting at the planet's sunset limb. Finally, note the date, observer's name, the instrument(s) used, and

any other relevant information.

It is highly recommended that all observers, visual as well as photographers and CCD camera users, use at least a basic set of tricolor filters according to the following guide: Red or Orange (W-25 or W-23A); Green (W58); Blue-Green (W-64); Blue (W-38A or W-80A); and Violet (W-47). Observers with smaller telescopes, such as 3 to 6-inch apertures may find a Yellow (W-15) useful and may provide better performance than the deep red filter. Those employing larger instruments, such as 8 to 16-inch apertures, will find the deep Red and Blue filters most useful for fine surface details or atmospheric cloud detection.



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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

GRAND CANYON STAR PARTY 2001

16-23 June 2001

South and North Rim

What is the Grand Canyon Star Party?

Its current revision started in 1991 It was noticed that a telescope set up looking at the Canyon or sky soon gathered a crowd, so a public oriented event was planned.

Though tens of thousands visit every day, a small fraction stay overnight to be treated to the spectacular views of the night sky there. The appreciative tourists tend to leave early, leaving the astronomers in solitude for observing far into the night.

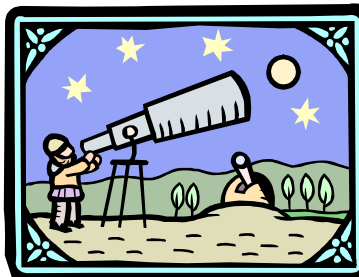
Seeing conditions are excellent. The nearest town, Flagstaff - population 45,000, is 80 miles away, while Las Vegas and Phoenix are both about 170 air miles away making for very

dark skies. (Blackout Wardens are on duty for your viewing protection!)

Elevation at the South Rim is about 7,000 feet with the North about 8,000 feet.

For more information visit the web page for the Grand Canyon Star Party.

<http://www.tucsonastronomy.org/gcsp.html>



“Ideals are like stars: you will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you reach your destiny.”

Schurz, Carl