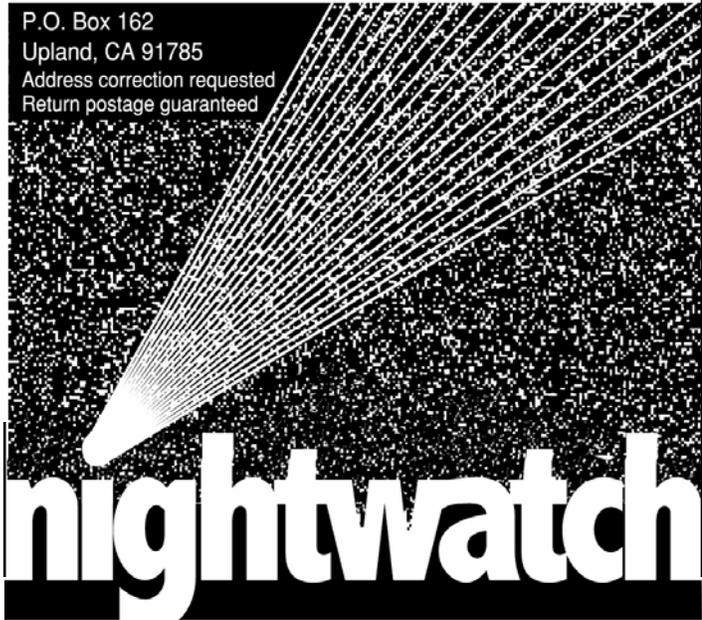


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Newsletter of the Pomona Valley Amateur Astronomers

Amateur
astronomers
just get better
looking . . .

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nightwatch

April 2002

President's ADDRESS

It was a great pleasure to listen Alson Wong and Bob Stephens in our last meeting. They had quite an adventure chasing the shadow of the Moon in Africa. Yes solar eclipses are awesome shows that can't be compared anything else. Every person pretty much feels the same excitement when the day turns into night. Wong and Stephens's lively description of the Solar eclipse reminded me my latest total eclipse in 1999, but I have one more feeling somehow attached to the solar eclipses that I am about to share with you; it's sorrow.

My first experience of a total solar eclipse was when I was 7 years old. I don't have a vivid memory of that one. All I can remember is meeting at the schoolyard and observing something with teacher approved dark glasses. My latest total eclipse was in 1999. It was a beautiful day on the northern Anatolian mountains very close to the Black Sea in the historic Paphlagonia region. We setup our telescope and observed the

spectacle. Sun disappeared slowly, it got dark and quiet, temperature dropped and a panicked stork circled overhead. In 140 seconds the totality was over and we were speechless. I could have never imagined that this was going to be the last pleasant memory that I would have for a long time.

Six days later shortly before heading for bed around 1 am I heard dogs howling. I am not a stranger to the dogs but this time it sounded very different, almost like a cry from the hell. Two hours later in the northwestern corner of Anatolia a 7.4 shock rocked the houses, collapsing buildings, burying people. As the ground was rocking,

PVAA Events Calendar

Month	Star Party	General Meeting	Board Meeting
April	13	26	5
May	11	31	3
June	8	21	14
July	6	26	12

methane from underground rushed in to the air, creating natural fire works. With all those fireballs in the sky and a loud roar from the trembling soil, it was judgment day. The whole Anatolian plate shifted towards the Aegean by 2 meters in 60 seconds. The whole coastline changed in few minutes. As the Sun was rising over the ancient city of Nicea a friend of mine saw the survivors sitting on the curbs in a state of shock, speechless and numb staring at their houses which were a pile of rubble now. Freeways and railroads were destroyed, terrain changed beyond recognition. The maps did not agree with the satellite photos from the following morning.

Three big quakes hit the region afterwards and everybody started to ask what in the world we did to deserve this. Politicians as always were blamed as if they broke the continental plate. The fundamentalists had a different answer; 1500-year-old religious structures were intact proving that this is a message to make up our minds. In about a week the real guilty party was found and declared in one of the greatest circulating newspapers: it was the solar eclipse!

Diagrams of gravity waves, tides and all kinds of absurd evidence presented to the public not to mention orrery diagrams with blood thirsty Mars in Scorpius (which was actually in Libra). Survivors had mentioned unbelievably strange, dark and quiet skies with millions of stars right after the quake - probably their first experience with dark skies due to destruction of power lines.

Three years after the quake I don't know how many people still think it was the solar

eclipse that caused all this destruction. Everybody became a geology and plate tectonics expert after reading one article after another. I heard many people making their own predictions of the next big one. I don't know if they are adding a solar eclipse term in their equations.

Nature presents us gifts in different forms. As the Moon revolves around the Earth, sometimes it casts it's shadow on us and sometimes continental plates break or move suddenly. In 1999 I was caught in between in a rare coincidence and I still feel the pain. This was what I was thinking when I saw Wong's slides of an eclipsed Sun. After our general meeting in the Fall of 99 I have never looked at my eclipse pictures again.

Alper Ates

..PVAA 24 HR. Hotline.

Get the latest news on the star party, club meetings, special events and astronomy happenings.call 909/596-7274

Visit or website at:

<http://www.cyberg8t.com/patrick/PVAA.htm>

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Club Announcements

We had one visitor at our March meeting, Larry, who found us through our Web site. We hope to see him again at our Club gatherings. Our treasurer, Ludd, offered a special ½ year membership for new members who join soon as we are well into our membership year – only \$13 until August.

There is a Public Star Party coming up on Astronomy Day this year on April 20th on the North side of Cahuilla Park at Scripps Dr. and Indian Hill – north of Claremont High School. Club members will begin to gather between 6:30 and 7:00pm. Please come and bring your own viewing device and/or your friends and family for a fun night of viewing. We will be viewing the many planets which will be arrayed across the night sky and will be easily viewable even so near to city lights. We hope to see many of you there. Please call the Club hotline for current information on this event and others upcoming for our Club. Bob Marvos collected his prizes for following hotline instructions so it can pay to call in to see what your Club is up to.

Roy Schmidt has announced a change of date for the Club trip to the 200" telescope at Palomar where we will have a behind the scenes tour. The new date is July 20, 2002 at 2pm. We will verify the sign-up list at the next General meeting.

The Club will have a presentation by our own Roy Schmidt at our next meeting on April 26th. He will talk on the Keck Observatory in Hawaii and will be joined by Ray Magdziarz who has visited the site and

will have his pictures to share with us.

March Meeting

Roy Schmidt presented a What's Up for the group about the interesting items to be found around Canes Venatici.

Bob Branch led a discussion about viewing comet Ikeya-Zhang. Many members related their viewing experiences. For the remainder of April, look for the comet in the early morning hours. Also keep an eye out for another newly discovered comet which is also close to the sun, comet Utsunomiya.

Our speakers for the evening were Allison Wong and Bob Stevens and their presentation was entitled "Chasing the Shadow." We heard many tips from the two experienced eclipse watchers, including the important one to not try and watch and do too many things during the eclipse, especially if it is your first observation. Having too many things to concentrate on can result in doing many things half way and missing what you're really there to see. It can be very distracting to spend a lot of time with video observations – do just a little if you want but mostly sit back and enjoy the show! Bob and Allison brought slides of their trip to Africa for the 2001 eclipse there, which had a totality lasting just over 3 minutes. The rest of their trip was spent watching the many and varied African animals and birds on several safaris through African game preserves. Their next planned eclipse trip will have even more spare time for tourist activities as totality during the December 4, 2002 eclipse they will see from Australia will last only 26 seconds! A very interesting show for both sky and wildlife enthusiasts with good ideas for observing both during the darkness and the light.

Claire Stover

April's Star Party

Our PVAA star party this month was a local affair. We went up to Cow Canyon Saddle, near Mt. Baldy Village and set up on the turnout there. By coincidence the astronomy department of Mount San Antonio College was there for an outing as well. Thus (for the first half of the evening) we were joined by about one hundred college students and their instructors.

Jeff Schroeder of Mt. SAC had his 11-inch Volvo mounted refractor available for public viewing of the planets. According to Mr. Schroeder his telescope is the largest portable refractor in the world. It certainly is impressive looking and provided those in attendance with fine views of Jupiter and Saturn.

Early in the evening the view of the sky was somewhat obstructed by high thin clouds, but by

midnight the seeing was much improved. The first several hours were mostly spent looking at planets anyway. The thin clouds did not too adversely affect the viewing of the bright planets. Later (after midnight) we settled down to observing the deep sky. The one exception to this dedication to deep sky observing was the Comet Ikeya-Zhang. Ikeya-Zhang was a naked eye object but just barely. It was however a fine sight in binoculars. (Even small ones.) It was displaying a nice two-degree tail and looked like a comet. I think any comet that looks like a comet is a good one.

All in all we had a great time at this very close and convenient observing site. If the long drives have been keeping you away from the star parties next month's get together is for you. It is also scheduled for Cow Canyon Saddle. I hope many of you will be able to attend.

Ron Hoekwater

ASTRONOMY DAY

April 20, 2002 is Astronomy Day. We will have a public star party at Cahuila Park in Claremont. Go North on Indian Hill Boulevard from Foothill Boulevard, turn left (West) on Scripps Drive. The location is North of Claremont High School.. Five planets will be visible to the West.

UPCOMING STAR PARTIES

May 11: Cow Canyon Saddle. From Foothill Boulevard, go North on Mills Road a couple of miles, (Monte Vista is closed temporarily) turn east on Mt Baldy Road, go several miles, (go through two tunnels). When you enter Mt. Baldy Village, just past the school on the right side of the road, look for a left turn to Glendora Ridge Road. Go about three quarters of a mile up the hill. At the top of the hill there will be a clearing on your right side. this is the place. If you cross a bridge past the town, you have gone too far.

June 8: Cottonwood Springs campground, at Joshua Tree National Park. About 24 miles past Indio on Interstate 10, exit at Cottonwood Springs road (Sign will indicate Joshua Tree National Park. Go north about seven miles, turn right at the visitor center. About a mile down the road turn left to the campground. Meet half way around loop B. If you pass Chiraco summit, you have gone 4 miles too far on I 10.