



THE FIELD OF VIEW (F.O.V.)
National Public Observatory Newsletter
“Where the Public Meets the Stars”

Astronomy education, dark skies and quality experiences for ALL!!
www.Astro-npo.org

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STARS-N-PARKS PROGRAMS IN FOUR SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS

Spring 2007

NPO officers awarded for brochure work

By Jessica J. Savage

The National Public Observatory's efforts to educate the public about light pollution and how to prevent it were awarded by a state women's press organization.

Officers Lana Gilkison and Jessica Savage created a light pollution brochure under the New Mexico State Park's Reach for the Stars initiative. The women recently learned the brochure has been honored with a second place award in the four-color brochure category in the New Mexico Press Women's 2007 Communication's Contest. Gilkison and Savage will each receive a certificate in late April at the press women's annual conference.

"This award is very gratifying," Savage said, "Because we put a lot of effort and heart into this brochure. Many university and national lab communication's departments enter brochures in this category, so it's quite an honor to receive a second place."

The brochure explains what light pollution is by describing the three different kinds: glare, sky glow and light pollution. Readers then learn the three guidelines of outdoor lighting use: point down, shield and use only

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A digital photograph capturing Venus (upper left) and The planet Mercury (lower right) taken on February 10, 2007 from the Gilkison residence in Radium Springs, NM. Sony DSC-W1 5 Mega Pixels for four seconds.

when people are present. After a minor revamp, the NPO will release the brochure to the public at our fall Stars-N-Parks astronomy programs.

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**Orion Nebula in four minutes using a Celestron Next Star GPS 11 inch SCT at F/5 with a Giant Easy Guider. Taken from suburban Las Cruces, NM under a nearly Full Moon through a Hutech modified Cannon Digital Rebel camera. IDAS LPS light pollution filter used. Off axis guiding done with GEG Guide Dog. Exposures 3 x 2 seconds, 3 x 8 seconds, 3 x 30 seconds, 1 x 2 minutes @ ISO800. Stacking and processing with Nebulosity And Photoshop CS respectively on a Mac, by Rich Richins**

## Matt Wilson is leaving his role as a NPO Presenter at City of Rocks State Park

By John Gilkison

Matt Wilson who lives in Hurley, New Mexico, and has been a NPO Presenter at City of Rocks State Park since the inception of the Astronomical Observatory there, is moving on to take a full time job in long distance trucking. Matt said, "it is with much regret he is having to make such a drastic change. "Matt said " I will miss giving presentations, and hopefully it will be for the short term, and I will be able to return to giving presentations, and bringing the night sky to the public again." We will miss Matt and hope he can return soon. The NPO currently does not have anyone else in the

Continued lower right



Matt Wilson seen here at a summer camping star safari at Datil Wells in 2005 to observe the NASA deep space probe impact of a comet. While difficult to observe, the comet and the impact were successfully observed.

## The NPO captures a rare Triple Planetary Conjunction of Mercury, Jupiter, and Mars.

By John Gilkison

Getting out of bed before 5:00 AM on Sunday December 10, 2006, NPOers John Gilkison and Jeff Jenkins captured a rare triple planetary conjunction from the Saint Augustine Pass. Using Jeff's eight inch Meade LX-90 with a f/6.3 compressor and a Sony digital camera we took the picture below. "It was cold, cloudy, and windy, so we didn't think we had much of a chance", Jeff said. However we set up anyway, and waited for a developing hole under the clouds near the eastern horizon to catch the conjunction using the go/to function of the LX-90 to located the planets. We got lucky.



Matt Wilson continued

Hurley/Faywood area to do programs for us at City of Rocks State Park, but we need to recruit and train someone who has Matt's enthusiasm for the work.

Currently Sally Allen of Deming, NM and Rich Richins of Las Cruces, NM have agreed to fill in for some of the programs scheduled at CoR State Park. NPO President John Gilkison will be filling in during the spring and fall Southern New Mexico Star Parties to conduct the programs at the observatory. If you know of anyone in the Hurley/Faywood area who is an amateur astronomer and is interested in doing programs at the observatory please let us know at [astronpo@wildblue.net](mailto:astronpo@wildblue.net)

We will continue to do as many programs as we can at the observatory, but given the extreme distance from Las Cruces, NM, and conflicting schedules of the three presenters available to do the work we may have to cancel some programs this fall! We will be looking at the schedule closely and see how things work out. Having someone with a short travel distance is of primary importance.

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A Triple Planetary Conjunction captured by John Gilkison and Jeff Jenkins of the National Public Observatory on December 10, 2006 at dawn. Jupiter with Mercury (above) on the right, Mars is on the left. A cloud bank is below with the shadow of the secondary of the Meade 8 inch SCT prominent in the center. While the photograph is essential a snap shot, focus was a crucial problem, as well as wind gust bobbling the telescope. We had to shield the rig with our bodies.

Spring 2007 Star-n-Parks Schedule for the National Public Observatory

Spring 2007 SS = Sunset, NT = Nautical Twilight
PS = Program Start, PE = Program Ends

1: Saturday March 10, 2007 Pancho Villa SP, SS 6:05 PM, PS 7:15 PM, PE 8:45 PM, Canis Major on the meridian, Andromeda setting in the west, Saturn 45 degrees up, Venus 17 degrees high, Sally Allen presenting.

Daylight Savings Time begins on the second Sunday in March in 2007

2: Saturday March 17, 2007 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:10 PM, PS 8:20 PM, PE 9:50 PM, Canis Major on the meridian, Andromeda setting in the west, Saturn 45 degrees up, Venus 17 degrees high, Rich Richins presenting

3: Saturday March 17, 2007 Rock Hound SP, SS 7:10 PM, PS 8:20 PM, PE 9:50 PM, Canis Major on the meridian, Andromeda setting in the west, Saturn 45 degrees up, Venus 17 degrees high, Sally Allen presenting.

4: Saturday April 7, 2007 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:25 PM, PS 8:35 PM, PE 10:05 PM, Hydra, Ursa Major, and Leo on the meridian, Vela on the south point, Venus 22 degrees, Saturn 72 degrees, Jeff Jenkins presenting

5: Saturday April 14, 2007 Rock Hound SP, SS 7:30 PM, PS 8:40 PM, PE 10:10 PM, Hydra, Ursa Major, and Leo on the meridian, Vela on the south point, Venus 22 degrees, Saturn 72 degrees, Sally Allen presenting.

Tuesday April 17, 2007 SNMSP starts at noon at City of Rocks SP

6: Wednesday April 18, 2007 City of RSP, SS 7:33 PM, PS 8:45 PM, PE 10:15 PM, Hydra, Ursa Major, and Leo on the meridian, Vela on the south point,

Venus 22 degrees high, Saturn 72 degrees high, John Gilkison presenting.

7: Saturday April 21, 2007 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:35 PM, PS 8:50 PM, PE 10:20 PM, Hydra, Ursa Major, and Leo on the meridian, Vela on the south point, Venus 22 degrees, Saturn 72 degrees, John Gilkison presenting.

Sunday April 22, 2007 SNMSP ends at noon at City of Rocks SP.

8: Saturday May 12, 2007, Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:50 PM, PS 9:00 PM, PE 10:30 PM, Virgo on the meridian, Centaurus well up, Saturn high up, Jupiter rises by programs end, Jenkins

9: Saturday May 19, 2007 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:55 PM, PS 9:05 PM, PE 10:35 PM, Virgo on the meridian, Centaurus well, Saturn high up, Jupiter rises by programs end, Sally Allen

10: Saturday June 9, 2007 Caballo LSP, SS 8:07 PM, PS 9:20 PM, PE 10:50 PM, Bootes, Libra, and Lupis on the meridian, Sagittarius and Scorpius rising, Jupiter 27 degrees up Saturn 17 degrees high by programs end, Bobby Franzoy.

Comet Mc Naught captured through a pair of 11X80 mm Binoculars from Leasburg Dam State Park on January 17, 2007 just after sunset. The comet was definitely naked eye, while it was still bright enough to see people's faces.



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**ABOUT THE NATIONAL PUBLIC
OBSERVATORY PROJECT**

Tens of thousands of people visit major U.S. research astronomical observatories every year. These research facilities do not advertise, and quite altruistically, set aside monies and time from their limited budgets to accommodate the public. Many people travel great distances for the opportunity to observe through a world-class telescope but due to the high cost of telescope time, this generally is not feasible. Where observatories have been able to set aside a night for public observing, it is often booked up well in advance.

While some upscale observatory/lodge facilities have been developed, none have been established to reach families or individuals looking for an intimate public park/camping experience with the proper telescopes, facilities, and knowledgeable tour guides.

The National Public Observatory, Inc. has been established to provide this kind of facility and we need your help.

Please join the National Public Observatory or make your tax-deductible contribution today!