



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

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

Spring 2009

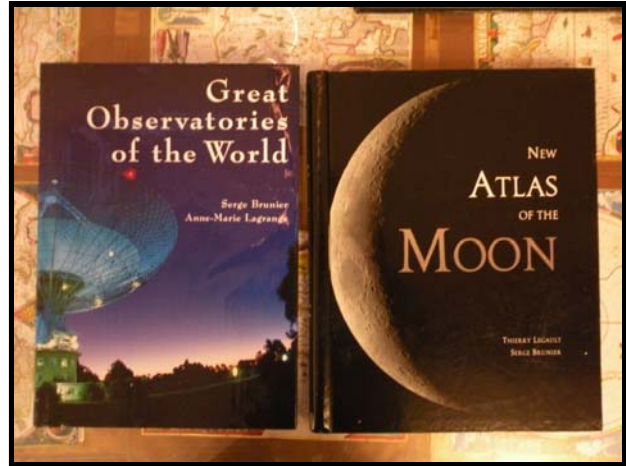
**Comet Lulin Featured During  
The NPO February Programs**

by John Gilkison

We had a rare treat of a nearly naked eye comet showing itself to the night side of the planet during the early evening hours making it a natural for presentation during our Reach For The Stars programming in the NM State Parks during the month of February.

We had to wait until 9:00 PM to show Comet Lulin to our patrons at our programs on Saturday the 21st of February with the comet only being 8 degrees above the eastern horizon. The comet was much better placed for Sally Allen’s program at Rock Hound State Park on the 28th being some 40 degrees above the horizon by 8:00 PM.

While the comet was a easy binocular object in 11x80 mm binoculars it was not easy to get used to tracking a celestial object moving some 5 degrees per day when it was near the opposition point. The retrograde orbit was responsible for Comet Lulin’s rapid apparent motion as the motion of the Earth contributed to this effect.



Two very nice astronomy books donated to the NPO Astronomy Library by Bob Cantrell in February.

**Four Nice New Addition to the  
Growing NPO Astronomy Library**

During February Bob Cantrell visited me bearing gifts. He had acquire two brand new large coffee table style astronomy book that he wanted to donate to the National Public Observatory. I was happy to accept them for the NPO. The Atlas of The Moon is particularly well suited for potential use in expanded NPO programming.

My brother Jim Gilkison from Oklahoma stopped to visit me on his way to Arizona bringing me another large picture book on Cosmos ( see page two upper right). Having succumbed to the charm of these large photograph based astronomy books, I contributed my own book to these donations, a book called Astronomica.  
story continued on page 2

**A photograph of Comet Lulin (lower right) as it sails by the planet Saturn (upper left) on February 23, 2009 and was nearest to the planet Earth at 34,000,000 miles. Photograph provided by Dave Oesper of Dodgeville, Wisconsin.**

## Four Nice New Additions to the Growing NPO Astronomy Library

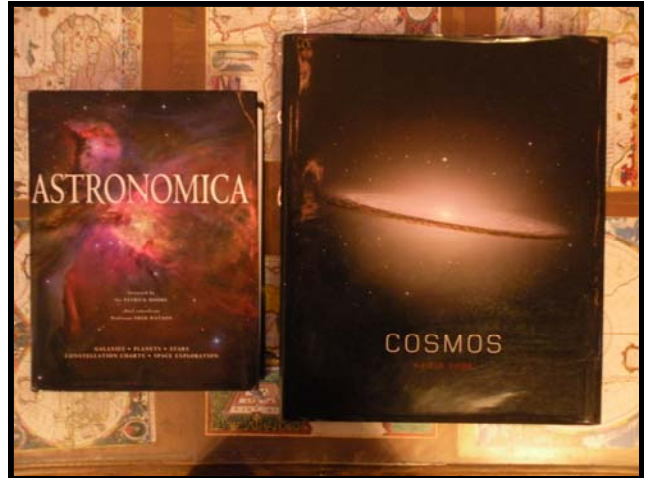
continued from page one

The COAS. Bookstore in Las Cruces has proved to be a rich goldmine of vintage astronomy books over the years for the NPO archives. One day while I was combing the shelves at the COAS bookstore I found a 1849 copyrighted book titled Elementary Astronomy for Academies and Schools. I bought it to be sure. Later I found a long searched for copy of The Realm Of The Nebula by Edwin Hubble.

We have acquired several general astronomy books ranging from the 1870's to the 1900's. For example there is Recreations in Astronomy by H. W. Warren published by the Chautauqua Press in 1886. Another gem is Astronomy With The Naked Eye by Garrett P. Serviss published in 1907. One of my favorites is The Friendly Stars by Martha Evans Martin published in 1907.

From books like these I have read in amazement a richer history of astronomy then can ever be gained from a simple modern history textbook. For example did you know that if you could ride on a railroad at the fast speed of 30 mph from the Sun to Le Verrier's planet (Neptune) it would take over 13,000 years which is several thousand more years than have elapsed since the "Creation". Apparently from the point of view of some astronomers in 1849 the radius of the observable universe could not be much more then 6,000 light years if you interpreted them literally.

Other books in our library much recommended are, The Neptune Files by Standage, Parallax by Hirshfield, the Planets by Sobel, Calendar by Duncan, and of course A signed copy of Out Of The Darkness by Clyde Tombaugh. We have many more too numerous to list here now.



**Cosmos on the right donated by Jim Gilkison, and Astronomica which was donated by John Gilkison.**

**The Southern New Mexico Star Party is scheduled to run from Wednesday May 13, 2009, until Noon Sunday May 17th, 2009.**

by John Gilkison

The schedule is set for the Spring 2009 Southern NM Star Party to run from Wednesday May 13, 2009 ending at noon on Sunday May 17th, 2009. It is being held at City of Rocks State Park at the pavilion in the Orion Group Area where we will have access to the State Park Observatory and shielding from park traffic.

We have two scheduled Reach For The Stars programs that will be held during the SNMSP and they are on Wednesday night and Saturday night respectively. Matt Wilson will conduct one and I will conduct the other. See schedule on page three. We of course will appreciate any help we can get from attendees of the star party and you can deduct one night of registration for helping us during the public nights.

Since we are operating under a New Mexico State Parks grant for conducting Reach For The Stars programming in the spring the NPO is able to offer all the programs you see on page three. We have already done six programs in January and February under the grant.

Hope we see you at the Spring SNMSP in May.



**A nearly three day old Moon sails by the planet Venus as seen from our Earthly skies on February 27th, 2009. Photograph taken by Ashley Gilkison.**

**National Public Observatory  
Stars-N-Parks New Mexico State Parks  
program schedule from  
March of 2009 through June 2009**

**SP = State Park SS = Sunset, PS = Program Start, PE = Program End  
Stars-n-Parks Programming ends in June,  
resumes in August 2009  
N.M. State Parks Reach For The Stars Grant**

**Daylight Savings Time starts at 2:00 AM Sunday  
March 8, 2009**

1: Saturday March 14, 2009, Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:10 PM, PS 8:20 PM, PE 9:50 PM, the Spring Sky and Saturn (at opposition in Leo on the 8<sup>th</sup>) are becoming well presented by program end, Jeff Jenkins presenting

2: Saturday March 21, 2009, City of Rocks SP, SS 7:15 PM, PS 8:25 PM, PE 9:55 PM, the Spring Sky and Saturn (at opposition in Leo on the 8<sup>th</sup>) are becoming well presented by program end, Matt Wilson presenting.

3: Saturday April 18, 2009, Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:30 PM, PS 8:40 PM, PE 10:10 PM, the Spring Sky and Saturn are becoming well presented by program end, the Moon rises at 10:06 PM, Mercury at elongation on the 26<sup>th</sup> near the moon and the Pleiades, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

**Sunday April 12, 2009 is Easter Sunday**

4: Saturday April 18, 2009, City of Rocks SP, SS 7:35 PM, PS 8:45 PM, PE 10:15 PM, the Spring Sky and Saturn are becoming well presented by program end, Mercury at elongation on the 26<sup>th</sup> near the moon and the Pleiades, Matt Wilson presenting.

5: Saturday April 25, 2009, Rock Hound SP, 7:35  
Continues upper right

Cont.

PM, PS 8:45 PM, PE 10:15 PM, Spring Sky well presented, Mercury, the Moon and Saturn are observable, Mercury at elongation on the 26<sup>th</sup> near the moon and the Pleiades, Sally Allen presenting.

6: Saturday April 25, 2009, Rock Hound SP, 7:35 PM, PS 8:45 PM, PE 10:15 PM, Spring Sky well presented, Mercury, the Moon and Saturn are observable, Mercury at elongation on the 26<sup>th</sup> near the moon and the Pleiades, Sally Allen presenting.

**The Spring Southern New Mexico Star Party begins on Wednesday May 13 2009, and ends on Sunday May 17, 2009**

7: Wednesday, May 13, 2009 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:50 PM, PS 9:00 PM, PE 10:30 PM, the Milky Way is all around on the horizon, Saturn and Omega Centaurus observable, John Gilkison.

8: Saturday, May 16, 2009 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:55 PM, PS 9:05 PM, PE 10:35 PM, the Milky Way is all around on the horizon, Saturn and Omega Centaurus observable, Matt Wilson.

9: Saturday May 23, 2009, Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:55 PM, PS 9:05 PM, PE 10:35 PM, the Milky Way is all around on the horizon, Saturn and Omega Centaurus observable, Nils Allen.

10: Saturday June 13, 2009, City of Rocks SP, SS 8:10 PM, PS 9:20 PM, PE 10:50, Saturn and Omega observable, The Summer Milky Way is rising, Matt Wilson presenting.

11: Saturday June 13, 2009, Leasburg Dam SP, SS 8:10 PM, PS 9:20 PM, PE 10:50, Saturn and Omega observable, The Summer Milky Way is rising, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

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Libraries	\$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
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*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.*

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