



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!!
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Volume 5, Issue I

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

Summer 2009

The NPO Photographs a Morning Occultation of the Planet Venus by the Moon.

by John Gilkison

Reading about an upcoming occultation of the planet Venus by the Moon I decided to make an attempt to photograph the event even though it was occurring on a Wednesday work day for me. So I set up my LX-55 German Equatorial Mount with our 6 inch Schmidt Newtonian telescope and had everything ready to assemble for a photographic run first thing in the morning. I awoke to a spectacular sight of a beautiful crescent Moon very near Venus in a clear morning sky.

I got a rough alignment done for the drive because I really did not need the Go/To function just the drive. With the Sony digital camera set up in a par-focal configuration I began working on focus and the exposure value. I had some problems because I was not full awake enough at first to realize that the camera lens was not locked down at infinity. However I got this setting changed just before the occultation started I managed to take several photographs of the event.



First of a Venus Occultation Series just before sunrise on the 22nd of April, 2009.

The NPO Photographs a Morning Occultation of Venus by the Moon cont.-

One of the problems with work like this is that you seldom just get to observe the event for yourself. I managed to stop now and then and observe through the finder and of course I could see the event on the display screen of the camera.

An hour later I grabbed my 11X80 mm binoculars and scanned for the Moon. Sure enough I found it (only then was it visible to naked eye once I knew where to look) and there was Venus reappearing from the dark limb of the Moon with the Sun to the east just above the horizon. Priceless.



Second of a series of Venus being occulted by the Moon on the morning of April 22nd, 2009. Both photographs were taken with a Sony digital camera through a 152mm Schmidt Newtonian telescope using a 40 mm Scopetronics 40 mm eyepiece and a timer actuated shutter.

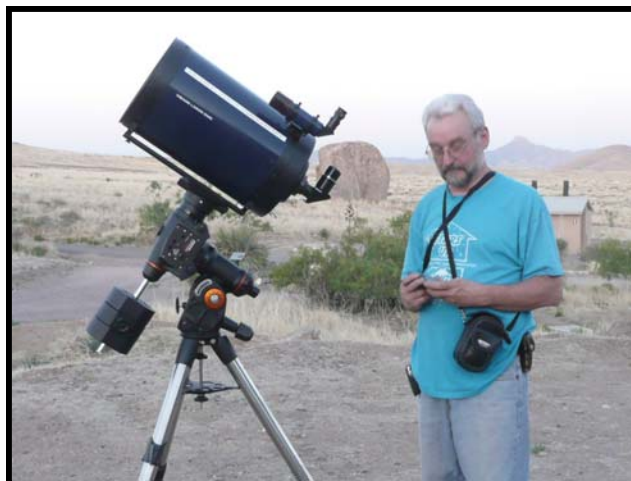
New NPO German Equatorial Mount makes it Debut at the Spring SNMSP

In March of 2009 we were preparing to accomplish a much needed repair to the NPO 12 inch Schmidt Cassegrain Go/To telescope mount and send the parts off to a aftermarket company for replacement. Then I found out the company was no longer in business and Meade Instrument Corporation was no longer supporting repairs to my Classic LX-200 which I bought from them new in 1998.

We just had too much money invested in the 12 inch Meade to abandon it or sell it at a loss, as the Optical Tube Assembly (OTA) is worth \$3,000 by itself. So I decided to sell the LX-200 mount and tripod and invest in a new Celestron German Equatorial Mount shown on the right. With Matt Wilson's help we sold the L-200 mount and the tripod on Astromart for \$200 each not including shipping.

We had to demount the optical tube before we did this of course. The OTA needed to have a dovetail mounting bar added to it which we purchased from Astronomics for \$176. I made arrangements to purchase a new CGEM from Starizona in April for \$1,399. With two extra counterweights and shipping the total came to about \$1,570. We received the new mount a couple weeks before the SNMSP started in May at City of Rocks State Park.

The new mount did great. There is a learning curve to get use to the differences between a GEM and Alt/Az mount but the Go/To functioned well putting objects in the field most of the time or just out of the field in a known direction. The 12 inch optics are worth this kind of investment as they routinely show deep sky objects not on most charts. The new mount will be able to do double duty in that we can mount other optical tube assemblies on it if desired. While we are near the limits for this mount (40 lbs) lighter OTA's should be a breeze for this new NPO mount.



NPO President next to the new NPO CGE Mount on which sets our 12 inch Schmidt Cassegrain OTA.

The Fall Southern New Mexico Star Party runs from Wednesday October 7th, 2009, until Noon Sunday October 11th, 2009.

by John Gilkison

The schedule is set for the Fall 2009 Southern NM Star Party to run from Wednesday October 7, 2009 until noon on Sunday October 11th, 2009. The SNMSP is 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 NPO Stars-n-Parks programs that will be held during the SNMSP and they are on Wednesday night and Saturday night respectively. Matt Wilson will present on Saturday and I will conduct on Wednesday. See schedule on page three. We of course would appreciate help from attendees of the star party. You can deduct one night of registration for helping us with public programs during the SNMSP.

Since we were 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.

Hope we see you at the Fall 2009 SNMSP in October at City of Rocks State Park.

Eric Ramesh of Las Cruces on the left with his 10 inch Meade and a 4 inch Celestron. Paul Temple of Deming, NM at the right of page three is shown at the Spring SNMSP with his six inch Celestron refractor.

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

2: 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.

NPO Programming Resumes in August, 2009

1) Saturday August 22, 2009 LDSP, SS 7:35 PM, PS 8:45 PM, PE 10:15 PM, Jupiter low in the SW near Neptune, Summer Milky Way well presented, Epsilon Auriga due for 27 year minimum this fall, Jeff Jenkins presenting

2) Saturday September 12, 2009 CoR SP, SS 7:10 PM, PS 8:20 PM, PE 9:50 PM, Jupiter in the SW near Neptune, Uranus rising, Summer Milky Way well presented, Andromeda Galaxy in the east, Matt Wilson presenting.

**The Fall 2009 Southern New Mexico Star Party
Starts Wednesday (at noon) October 7, 2009, and
ends noon on Sunday Oct. 11, 2009. See registration
form for joining us at City of Rocks State Park for
this event.**

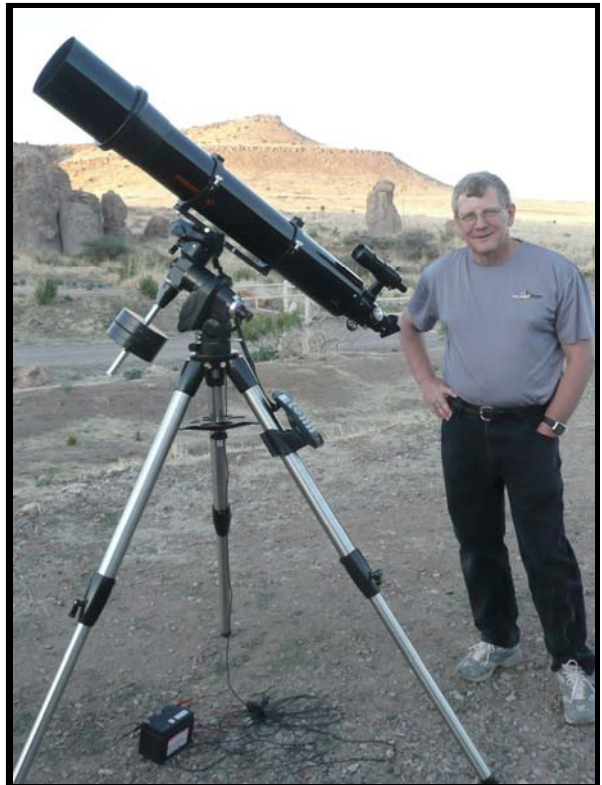
Cont.

3: Saturday October 10, 2009 CoR SP, SS 6:35 PM, PS 7:45 PM, PE 9:05 PM, Jupiter high in the SW near Neptune, Scorpius setting, Andromeda well up, Matt Wilson presenting.

4) Saturday October 17, 2009 LDSP, SS 6:25 PM, PS 7:35 PM, PE 9:15 PM, Jupiter high in the SW near Neptune, Scorpius setting, Andromeda well up, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

5) Saturday November 16, 2009 RHSP, SS 5:00 PM, PS 6:10 PM, PE 7:40 PM, Jupiter on the meridian near Neptune, Uranus well presented, Sagittarius setting, Andromeda Galaxy high up, Sally Allen presenting.

6) Saturday December 5, 2009 CoR SP, SS 4:55 PM, PS 6:05 PM, PE 7:35 PM, Mercury at elongation on the 18th, Orion well up by the program's end, Matt Wilson



Annual Membership Application or Renewal:
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Astronomy clubs < 80 members \$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Libraries \$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Corporate & Government \$100	\$200	\$400	\$1,500	\$2,500

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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!