

S.C.R.A.P.S.

Society's ChRonological Astronomical PaperS

From the President - Michael McCulloch



Introduction

I am excited, honored, and a bit overwhelmed to begin a new year as SMAS president. I am 40 years old and began my interest in astronomy at an early age. I remember being fascinated with the solar system entries in the World Book encyclopedia. I subscribed to Sky & Telescope in my early teens and bought several Sky Publishing books and charts. I bought parts and put together a 4 1/4" reflector and placed it on a camera tripod. However, I was never very good at finding objects with that scope (I needed SMAS!) and as college approached other priorities took over.

About 3 years ago I noticed the new and very affordable "goto" telescopes that were being offered by Celestron. A Nexstar 8 was my choice and I found the scope perfect for my needs. I could find objects quickly without requiring many hours of study. My first night out of the box included great view of the Ring Nebula. I was hooked -- again.

Fast forward to the past year where I've invested in new scopes and mounts. My knowledge of the night sky is light years beyond that first night with the Nexstar 8 only 3 years ago! However, I continue to learn and see the sights of new constellations. Every season is a new time of discovery.

I presently have a home business selling solitaire games over the Internet and a part-time job as an embedded software engineer for American Magnetics, Inc. in Oak Ridge. I reside in West Knoxville only a couple of miles from the PSTCC Hardin Valley campus.

Goals for 2004

Some of my goals for the coming year include:

- 1 An emphasis on observing with increased member attendance at star parties.
- 2 Continued promotion of our public star parties via all practical means.
- 3 With the help of my fellow officers, I hope to schedule a variety of speakers on topics of interest to club members. I will try to consistently provide a preview of the topics to be covered at upcoming meetings.
- 4 Provide at least two special astronomy-related events for public education this year.
- 5 Continuation of successful SMAS programs such as scopes for kids.

(Continued)

As a short-time member of SMAS, my primary interest has been observing and this will continue to be an important part of my activities with SMAS. In fact, observing was *the* activity which drew me to SMAS as a member. Many of our new members have had similar experiences. Please continue to enthusiastically greet visitors at our star parties, as you have in the past, as such hospitality was a big reason I joined SMAS. SMAS can and should accommodate members at every level of astro-interest. Club participation should be enjoyable for all - not a competition!

Upgrades to and dedicated transport for the club's large dob have been suggested, however we simply do not have the funds in this year's budget from membership dues alone to cover the anticipated costs. Some creative thinking by club members is needed on this topic.

March Meeting

Be sure to attend the March 12th meeting at PSTCC as the topics will include:

- 1 Unveiling and discussion of the proposed star party schedule for 2004.
- 2 Presentation of the meeting schedule for 2004, including the club picnic and Christmas party dates.
- 3 Proposed Astronomy Week activities presented by Erik Iverson.
- 4 Night Sky: Gemini

Some new ideas for star parties will be discussed that I hope members will find compelling. I desire feedback from club members on how SMAS can improve the star party "experience". This is the meeting to which to bring your ideas and influence the schedule for the coming year.

Michael

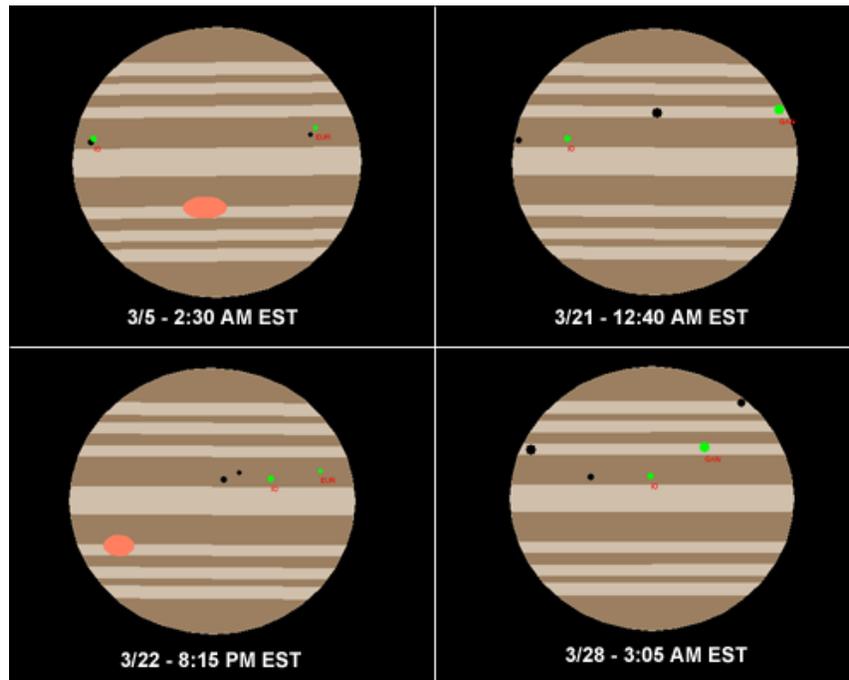
March Star Party at South View

Weather permitting, SMAS is planning a star party at South View on the Cherohala Skyway on the night of March 20th. If you decide to attend, please dress warmly. This may be the last chance until next fall to view the Winter Milky Way and the sights in constellations such as Monoceros, Canis Major, and Puppis under a dark sky. At around 1 AM, Omega Centauri should appear low in the southern sky. At approximately the same time, an interesting double shadow transit will occur across Jupiter.

(Please see the maps on the SMAS web site or ask for help in finding South View if needed.)

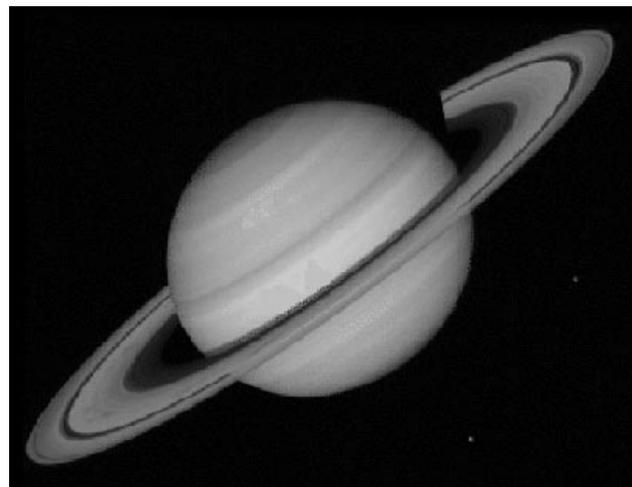
Jupiter in March—by Michael McCulloch

Several interesting shadow and moon transits across Jupiter are coming in March. Some of the highlights are noted in the image below. The rarest is the triple shadow transit early Sunday morning on March 28th, but a concern is that Jupiter will only be about 30 degrees from the horizon and the seeing may be less than desirable. Stay tuned to the SMAS Yahoo group as an observing party for the triple shadow transit may be planned.

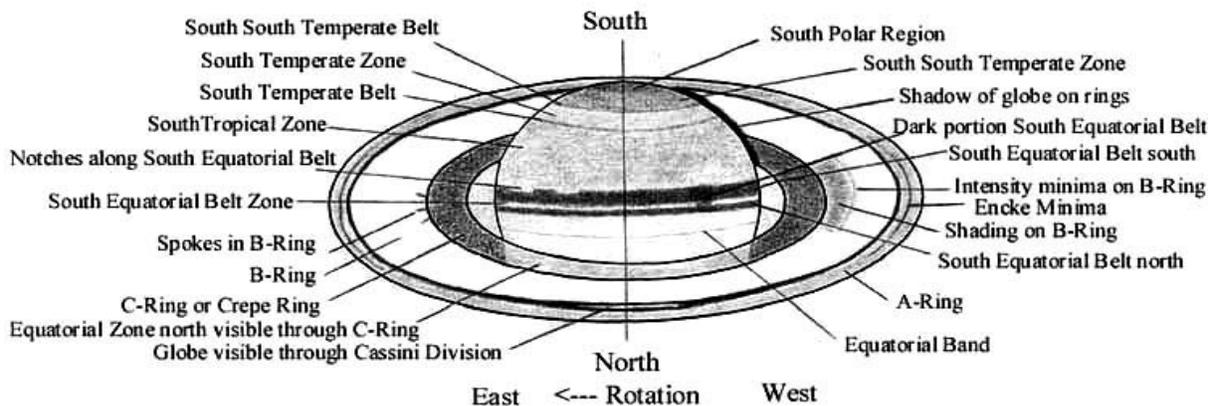


Saturn in March—by Bob Arr

Last August the big attraction was Mars, because it was at its closest to Earth; this year it's Saturn, for the same reason. Close, in the case of Saturn, isn't remotely as close as Mars was, but still it gives us a very fine look at the planet. And since it presents to us its (almost) maximum tilt of 27° (just a coincidence), it lets us see details in the rings ordinarily very hard to see. We currently see the south pole.



(Continued)



In the drawing (above), details of the rings are clearly labeled. None of us will be able to see all of them in our telescopes, but it doesn't hurt to become familiar with them. Here's what I usually see: rings A and B, the Cassini division, and (sometimes) the Encke minima and some faint bands on the clouds. When the tilt is right, I see the shadow of the rings on the planet, and the shadow of the planet on the rings. The planet never looks yellowish to me; it's always bright gray.

Disappointingly, here's what I never see: ring C, spokes, the intensity minima on the B ring, a distinction between the polar region and the temperate zone. Saturn's moons will run you ragged: you really need an accurate sky chart (or computer) that will show their position within the closest hour if you want to identify them. Titan, of course, stands out prominently, but since its orbit is so big, you may need your largest field of view eyepiece to find it.

As a crowd pleaser, Saturn has no equal. It's just exquisitely beautiful, never more so than right now. Almost at the meridian at dark in the evenings of early March, it will remain in

Thank You—by Bob Arr (Past President)

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my retiring appointed staff. Well done, and Thanks!

Winter Star Party organizer - Frazier Butov
SCRAPS Reporter - Scoop Poop
Japanese Star Party refreshments - Hava Nip
Dead star archivist - Mort Titian
Open cluster statistician - Adam Up
Observing chair tester - Omai Keester

Probability investigator - Betty Cant
Sasquatch assembler - Donna Wanna
Grain Field of View controller - Al Falfa
Depression therapist - Pat Yrbut
Orientation Analyst - Izzy Arnot
Voting commissioner - D'manda Recount

The Wiz

Hey Wiz, this is the pits. Every time it gets warm enough (40° Ha!) to take my scope out, the clouds roll in. This is a bummer. Should I take up bowling instead?

S. Plit

Dear Seventens,

All year long you put off getting fresh batteries for your flashlights; you put off finding covers for your car's interior lights; you put off getting a good set of sky charts; you put off organizing a good form to start work on your AL club log; you deliberately forgot your promise to write an article for SCRAPS; you put off buying a new Thermos so you wouldn't have to mooch hot chocolate at star parties; you put off assembling your own tool kit by buying a cheap pair of pliers and a screwdriver at Big Lots; you put off getting a dew shield because you could always borrow someone's dew remover; you put off returning that overdue SMAS library book because you knew there was no late charge; you put off finding out what's really wrong with your secondary mirror mount; you put off getting that aluminum carrying case because you weren't sure if Home Depot or Lowe's was cheaper...

And now you haven't got anything to do. Darned shame!

Editor—Peter Bush

I'd like to thank Mike Littleton for his years of service in putting together this newsletter. He's done an admirable job! Time constraints at work have made it very difficult for Mike to continue, so I've agreed to step in and help out. Please direct articles and pictures to me at: **865-453-8376** or **pbush1@bellsouth.net**.

Also note the deadline for submissions posted on the calendar (attached). It's my goal to work on the newsletter the last week of the month so members will receive it by the 1st of the following. If you are uncomfortable writing an article, please call me and we can conduct a telephone interview. Any and all ideas regarding SCRAPS content are welcome, and will be given due consideration.

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March 2004

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5 UTK	6 TAO
Saturn and Jupiter in excellent viewing position early evening all month long						
7	8	9	10	11	12 SMAS Meeting PSTCC RM 223 7 PM	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 UTK	20 <i>New Moon</i> <i>1st Day Spring</i> Star Party South View 7 PM TAO
21	22	23	24	25	26 SCRAPS Submission Deadline *****	27
For the next two weeks, all five naked eye planets plus the Moon will be visible spread across the early-evening sky						
28 Triple- Shadow, Double- Moon Transit of Jupiter 3:05 AM	29	30	31	UTK—roof of Neilson Physics Building on The Hill at UT TAO —Tamke-Allan Observatory Public Stargaze Watts Bar Lake, Roane County		