

SNAKE RIVER SKIES

Magic Valley Astronomical Society

MVAS Meeting: Saturday June 12th, 2004, 7pm Herrett Center, College of Southern Idaho

Our MVAS meeting will feature a **tour of the new Herrett Observatory and the Observatory Desk**. Chris Anderson will give us an introduction to the Telescope operation and how the training program will work.

We will have a public star party afterwards, weather permitting (forecast calls for clear skies). The observatory will be in use for the star party, so it will be an opportunity to see

Message from the President: Phil Hafer

It's finally here! The Centennial Observatory is ready for visitors and the telescope can now be put to work searching out the wonders of the night sky. This month marks a new era in the history of Twin Falls and the Magic Valley Astronomical Society. We will have the opportunity to be Ambassadors to thousands of first time night sky observers.

But this new opportunity comes with a cost. We have to be willing to devote the time and effort it will take to help Chris make the new observing programs a success. It would be easy for Chris to say that he will handle the Star Parties himself, but he realizes, that with the help of the members of the Magic Valley Astronomical Society, he can spread the work load over a broader number of people and each event can be more successful.

We have to realize, that those of us who want to become proficient in the use of the new telescope will have to endure many hours of training to become certified to man the Observatory. This will not be just a couple of evenings and you are good to go. It will require becoming proficient in the use of TheSky software, as this is the software used to control the telescope. We will learn the proper start up and shut down of the telescope and the dome. We will also learn the proper observatory etiquette, so we don't knock someone out of the way with the telescope as it is slewing from one target to the next.



There are also a number of telescopes the Observatory owns and we will need to be trained in how to use them also. By learning how to use the telescopes at the observatory, we will not have to bring our own telescopes to every Star Party.

I encourage everyone to make sure you are signed up for the training sessions with Chris, so he can get everyone who wants to be trained, on the schedule.

Our speaker for June will be Chris Anderson who will speak on the training as well as give a tour of the Observatory and the Observation Deck. I encourage all members to attend because it will be a very informative program.

Until next month, wishing all, clear nights and dark skies.

Phil Hafer
President, MVAS

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If you would like to write an article or otherwise make an entry for the club newsletter, contact Jay Sneddon, 736-2447, jaysneddon@yahoo.com.

Yearly membership is \$20 per person, \$20 per family \$10 per student, Sponsor \$100



Craters of the Moon Star Party—June 18th & 19th

Join us June 18th & 19th for our semiannual Craters of the Moon Star Party, sponsored by the Craters of the Moon National Monument, the Magic Valley Astronomical Society and the Idaho Falls Astronomical Society.

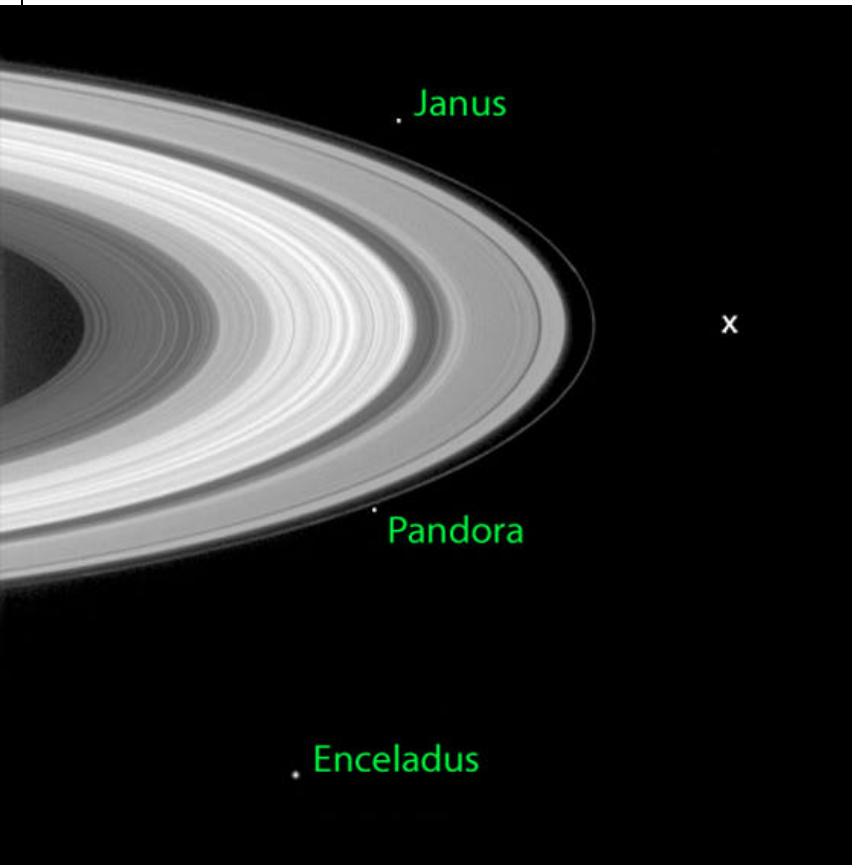
The star party starts at dusk Friday and Saturday in the Caves area, five miles inside the monument. There is no charge for the party but all park fees apply. The public is invited.

52 camping sites are available first come first served. Water and restrooms are available at the campground. The Caves observing area has restrooms but no power or water. A camping spot costs \$10 per night.



NASA Cassini Saturn Image: Passage through the Ring Plane on June 30th

From Jet Propulsion Laboratory



The path that lies ahead for the Cassini-Huygens mission is indicated in this image which illustrates where the spacecraft will be on June 30th, when it arrives at Saturn and crosses the ring plane 33 minutes before performing its critical orbital insertion maneuver.

The X indicates the point where Cassini will pierce the ring plane, going from south to north of the ring plane, 33 minutes before the main engine fires to begin orbital insertion. The indicated point is between the narrow F-ring on the left and Saturn's tenuous G-ring which is too faint to be seen in this exposure.

The image was taken on May 11, 2004 when the spacecraft was 26.3 million kilometers (16.3 million miles) from Saturn. Image scale is 158 kilometers (98 miles) per pixel. Moons visible in this image: Janus (181 kilometers or 113 miles across), one of the co-orbital moons; Pandora (84 kilometers or 52 miles across), one of the F ring shepherding moons; and Enceladus (499 kilometers or 310 miles across), a moon which may be heated from within and thus have a liquid sub-surface ocean.

Spectators Turn Out to See Venus Transit *from the Associate Press*

By RACHEL GOULD

GREENWICH, England (AP) - The spectacle of tiny Venus passing across the face of the sun drew gasps around the world on Tuesday, as people from Australia to the United States squinted skyward or hunched over telescopes for the rare event.

People in Africa, Europe and the Middle East could see the entire transit, while the northeast corner of the United States and Canada would see only the tail end of the event.

"The hook that got people was that there was no one in our lifetime who had ever seen it. My son Daniel got gripped by that," said Debbie Musselwhite, who came with 10-year-old son to join several hundred people at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England.

Some people were waiting in line at 6 a.m. for a chance to use one of the filter-equipped telescopes provided by the observatory, said Emily Winterburn, curator of astronomy.

The Royal Observatory, beside the Thames in southeast London, has a historic connection to the transit, which occurs twice - eight years apart - about every century. In 1716, Edmond Halley of comet fame observed the transit at Greenwich to calculate the distance between the Earth and the sun.

A key viewing location in Britain was Carr House in Much Hoole in north-west England. A telescope was set up in the bedroom where astronomer Jeremiah Horrocks observed the transit for the first time on Nov. 24, 1639.

"It was a bit surreal to be stood here and think this is the spot where Jeremiah Horrocks was when he saw the transit all those years ago," said Riddhi Gupta, 16, one of three New Zealand students who won a competition to come to the event.

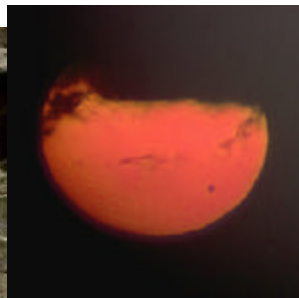


Rick Fienberg captured this image of the transit with an 85-millimeter refractor in white light shortly after second contact from Florence, Italy. Courtesy Sky & Telescope.



Top Left: An Italian 'gladiator' at the Colosseum peers through a solar filter to see planet Venus move across the sun in Rome June 8, 2004. REUTERS/Tony Gentile

Bottom Left: Two observers point their telescopes at the sun in Munich, to see rare transit of Venus across the face of the sun. (AFP/DDP/Joerg Koch)



Top: A fog bank created a natural solar filter for this image of the just-risen Sun over Cambridge, Massachusetts. Venus is clearly visible under the clouds, as seen in this image taken through a 70-millimeter refractor. Courtesy Jessica Dawn Tytell.

Middle: Venus passes across the sun as seen from Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. Photo by Ilya Naymushin/Reuters



Top Right: American Michael Tempel, a research scientist from New York, holds special dark glasses to observe the transit of Venus across the sun, at the site of the Sphinx in Giza, Egypt, (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

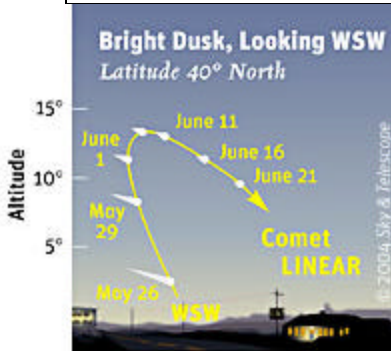
Bottom Right: Youths in Toulouse, France, use protective glasses to view the transit of (VenusAFP/Eric Cabanis)



Magic Valley
Astronomical Society

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Planet Roundup courtesy skyandtelescope.com



Comet LINEAR (C/2002 T7) is also still in binocular view; scan for it above the west-southwest horizon at the end of twilight, as shown here. This week the comet is more or less directly below bright Jupiter.

Jupiter (magnitude -2.1 , between the feet of Leo) shines in the west-southwest during evening

— the brightest point of light in the sky. Look for fainter Regulus a fist-width at arm's length to its lower right. Jupiter sets in the west around 1 a.m. daylight saving time. Being near eastern quadrature (90° east of the Sun), Jupiter in a telescope looks noticeably brighter on its western side.

Saturn (magnitude $+0.1$) is very low in the west-northwest in twilight this week. Don't miss little **Mars** to its upper left.

Uranus and **Neptune** (magnitudes 6 and 8, respectively, in Aquarius and Capricornus) are well up in the southeast before the first light of dawn.

Club & Star Party Calendar

The Magic Valley Astronomical Society meets the second Saturday of each month at the College of Southern Idaho, Herrett Center at 7pm. Star Party at the Herrett Center follows.

Saturday June 12th MVAS Club Meeting, 7pm Herrett Center. Public Star Party follows.

Saturday July 10th MVAS Club Meeting 7pm Herrett Center.

STAR PARTIES

Friday & Saturday June 18th-19th Craters of the Moon Star Party at the Craters of the Moon National Monument.

August 13th & 14th Lava Hot Springs Star Party, held at the airport in Lava Hot Springs, Idaho.

September 10-12th Idaho Star Party, Bruneau Dunes State Park.