



# DESERT SKY

## Presidents Message - January, 2009

My son-in-law Matt, also a WNAS member, and I were talking recently about how this is certainly the "New Golden Age of Astronomy". The pace of planetary discoveries and deep space revelations is truly amazing. You must read every magazine and science related new item if you expect to attempt to keep up with things.

One example is in the February 2009 issue of Astronomy magazine. It contains a beautiful double page image of the Omega Centauri globular star cluster (NGC 5139). It is the largest globular cluster known, being composed of about 10 Million Stars, with a diameter of 150 light years. Astronomers recently discovered a 40,000 solar mass black hole in it's center. This newly detected black hole joins the estimated 3 Million solar mass one which is at the center of our galaxy.

Another new development, announced in an Associated Press release this New Year, is that astronomers now believe that our Milky Way Galaxy is much bigger than previously thought. In fact it rivals the Andromeda Galaxy in size. New 3-D mapping shows that it is 15% wider and is much denser, with 50% more mass. That would make the Milky Way about 140 Thousand Light Years in diameter and having around 400 Billion stars.

How cool is that!!  
Mike Thomas

## Special Event Announcement

We will have a Telescope and Binocular, Operations and Maintenance Clinic on Saturday, January 24th, at the Observatory, from Noon through the evenings regular Star Party. WNAS members and their guests are invited to bring their equipment and/or questions. Observatory telescope operators will be on hand all afternoon to assist in any astronomical gear issues. Do you have a new scope and need some tips? Do you want to be checked out on any WNAS or Observatory scope? Join us in the afternoon and stay for the Star Party.

**Note from the Editor:** There seems to be constant confusion on the time and dates of WNAS General Membership Meetings. Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm as reflected on the Events Calendar. Members should always feel free to email any of the WNAS Officers for confirmation of time and dates. Mike Thomas has done an incredible job the last 2 years in promoting monthly meetings and finding Guest Speakers. Please come join us at our next meeting and show offer your support for WNAS!!!!.

### WNAS Officers

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### January WNAS Membership Meeting GUEST SPEAKER!!

**"The Faces of Mars Revisited"** by Professor Robert Collier

The Planet Mars holds key answers to humankind's probing questions. Myths have been set aside and the scientific exploration of Mars is ongoing.

# Events Calendar

	January						February						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
18	19	20 WNAS Meeting @ 7:00 pm	21	22	23	24 Star Party, Dark Sky, Special Event	25 New Moon	26	27	28	29	30	31 Star Party, Dark Sky
1	2 First Qtr Moon	3	4	5	6	7 Star Party							
8	9 Full Moon	10	11	12	13	14 Star Party							
15	16 Last Qtr Moon	17 WNAS Meeting @ 7:00 pm	18	19	20	21 Star Party							



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