



Presidents Message - July, 2010

The globular cluster M4 (NGC 6121) is very easy to locate. It is about 1 degree west of the reddish star Antares, in the constellation Scorpius. This time of year Scorpius is roughly 20 degrees above the Southern horizon. M4 is visible as a small faint fuzzy ball with binoculars or a small refractor telescope. Not very impressive?

Well, M4 was discovered by Philippe de Cheseaux in 1746, and Charles Messier included it in his catalog as item #4 in 1764. Since that time we have learned much about this object. It is quite close to us at a distance of 7,000 light years, and contains a few hundred thousand stars within it's 50 to 70 light year diameter. This is not a heavily populated globular cluster, which is why it appears faint and sparse in the eyepiece.

Scientists became very interested in M4 in 1995 when a Hubble image of it revealed that the cluster contained many White Dwarf stars. It takes billions of years for stars to get to their white dwarf stage. This discovered has enabled astronomers to date the age of the cluster back 9 to 13 billions years! This makes M4 one of the oldest known star clusters, telling us a lot about the age of our galaxy, the Milky Way. The cluster was NASA's Astronomy Picture of the Day on May 23, 2000. You can find that in the archives at: <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/>

A few years ago I recall observing M4 with binoculars, and I was not very impressed. However, at a recent Saturday star party at the Observatory, I got another look at it. This time I viewed it through, the Observatory's Board of Governors President, Brian Guerin's terrific Astro Physics large refractor. The faint fuzzy ball was now a sharp image of a multitude of bright diamonds. Quality equipment gives quality results. Regardless of what you use to view the sky, get outside and take a look.

Mike Thomas

June 2010 Minutes

The June meeting highlights were:

- Professor Collier gave a report on the progress being made on the installation of the new computers and a new camera for the research telescopes.
- Mike displayed Celestron's new "Travel Telescope", which is a 70mm refractor.
- A PowerPoint lecture presentation, "Leonardo da Vinci" was given by Mike.

WNAS Officers

President
Mike Thomas
mnethomas@sbcglobal.net

Vice President
Robert Collier
collier@wncc.edu

Treasurer/Secretary
Brian Guerin
zapkbg@msn.com

Newsletter Editor
James Bean
jbean@carson.k12.nv.us

Webmaster
Doug George
doug_george@msn.com

Speaker info for the ***Tuesday, July 20, 2010 @ 7pm***membership meeting:

The July 20th monthly meeting program will be the presentation

"Astro Physics"

A lecture by Observatory Director Professor Robert Collier

Events Calendar

~ July 2010 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 Star Party
4 Moon Last Quarter	5	6	7	8	9	10 Star Party Dark Skies
11 New Moon Total Solar Eclipse S. Pacific Ocean	12	13	14	15	16	17 Star Party
18 Moon 1 st Quarter	19	20 <i>WNAS Meeting 7pm JCDO</i>	21	22	23	24 Star Party
25	26 Moon Full	27	28 Southern Delta Aquarids Meteor Shower	29 Southern Delta Aquarids Meteor Shower	30	31 Star Party

~ August 2010 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Moon Last Quarter	4	5	6	7 Dark Skies Star Party
8	9	10 New Moon (perigee)	11	12 Perseids Meteor Shower	13* Perseids Meteor Shower	14 Dark Skies Star Party
15	16 Moon 1 st Quarter	17 <i>WNAS Meeting 7pm JCDO</i>	18	19	20 Neptune at Opposition (closest approach to Earth)	21 Star Party Isaac Newton Lecture 7:30 pm
22	23	24 Full Moon, will be the most distant and therefore the smallest of the year	25 Moon at Apogee	26	27	28 Star Party
29	30	31	Notes: *August 13 th , Triple Conjunction with the Moon, the planets Venus, Mars, and Saturn			