



Presidents Message – February, 2011

Two important press releases by NASA this past two weeks have made this a landmark period of discovery for Astronomy.

On January 26th NASA announced that the most distant galaxy ever discovered was detected in a Hubble Space Telescope Deep Field Image taken in 2010. The galaxy, given the inspiring name UDFj-39546284, is 13.2 Billion light years from Earth. This is an amazing look back into time. In fact, we are looking at a galaxy at a time "only" 500 Million years after the Big Bang. The young galaxy is less than 1% the size of our Milky Way galaxy. Hubble just continues to provide us with more and more science. To be able to look back to within 500 Million years of the Big bang is an exciting thing for researchers. The "soon to come online" large Earth based telescopes, with their adaptive optics, are expected to surpass even the capabilities of Hubble.

On February 2nd NASA announced the results of the Kepler Telescope's first year of its search for extra-solar planets. Kepler's 4 or 5 year mission is to simultaneously observe 150,000 stars in a 10 degree square in the constellation Cygnus. Kepler is running light curves on these stars, looking for the slightest dip in brightness that would signal the transit of a planet. From the first exo-planet discovered in 1995, until this new announcement, a total of 510 new planets had been discovered. This press release on February 2nd stated that Kepler has found an additional 1,235 extra-solar planets! Most impressive is that 68 of these new planets are Earth sized, and 54 of them are orbiting in habitable zones of their parent stars. We certainly are living in a time rich with scientific discoveries.

On another note, I figure it's time for a history topic program at our February membership meeting on Tuesday, the 15th. As you can see elsewhere in this newsletter, I will be giving the slideshow lecture "Gladiators, For the Glory of Rome. I believe you will enjoy this look into the culture of the Roman Empire!" **Mike Thomas**

January, 2011

January 2011 Meeting Minutes

- Observatory Director Robert Collier gave a report on the status of the patio extension project.
- Mike gave a briefing about our upcoming Messier Marathon scheduled for the first Saturday of March.
- The evening's program was a lecture on galactic Filaments & Dark Flow.

WNAS Officers

President
Mike Thomas
mnethomas@sbcglobal.net

Vice President
Robert Collier
collier@wnc.edu

Treasurer/Secretary
Brian Guerin
zapkgbg@msn.com

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

Webmaster
Doug George
doug_george@msn.com

Speaker info for the ***Tuesday, February 15, 2011 @ 7pm ***membership meeting:

"Gladiators, For the Glory of Rome"
Presented by Mike Thomas

Events Calendar

~ February 2011 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 New Moon Neil deGrasse Tyson, Ph.D. lecture at UNR	4	5 Dark Skies Star Party
6	7	8	9	10	11 Moon 1 st Quarter	12 Star Party
13	14	15 <i>WNAS Meeting 7pm JCDO</i>	16	17	18 Full Moon	19 Star Party
20	21	22	23	24 Moon Last Quarter	25	26 Star Party
27	28	Notes:				

~ March 2011 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 New Moon	5 Dark Skies Star Party
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 Star Party Moon 1 st Quarter
13	14	15 <i>WNAS Meeting 7pm JCDO</i>	16	17	18	19 Star Party Full Moon
20 Vernal Equinox occurs at 23:21 UTC	21	22	23	24	25	26 Star Party Moon Last Quarter
27	28	29	30	31	Notes:	