



Presidents Message – November, 2012

Time flies, and we are already on the cusp of the Holiday Season. Eleanor and I were in a shopping mall a couple weeks ago and saw several shops putting up Christmas decorations, three weeks before Thanksgiving! What is up with that? I don't want to be assaulted by Christmas shopping advertising almost a month before Thanksgiving. Let me enjoy family and over eating, before they do that. Alright, I've vented.

Astronomy always seems to generate news, as discoveries keep coming 'fast and furious'. Recently an exo-planet was discovered in the Alpha Centauri system. This planet orbits the closest star to our Sun, at a distance of roughly 4 light years from Earth. The search for new planets orbiting other stars has been exciting, and may lead to some amazing discoveries as technology improves and we become more able to investigate these objects.

This week the Institute of Planetology and Astrophysics of Grenoble, France, announced that their astronomers have discovered a potential "rogue" alien planet wandering alone, just 100 light-years from Earth. Which may suggest that such starless worlds may be extremely common across the galaxy? In the press release they said, "If this little object is a planet that has been ejected from its native system, it conjures up the striking image of orphaned worlds drifting in the emptiness of space."

The team detected the object, named CFBDSIR2149, by its infrared signature using the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope. It is likely a gas giant planet four to seven times more massive than Jupiter. The planet cruises 'solo' in space relatively close to Earth. It would most likely have an average temperature of around 800 degrees Fahrenheit, which is about the surface temperature of Venus.

This discovery is not as surprising as you might think. In the last year astronomers have found a number of orphan worlds, so many that some scientists think parent-less planets are the rule rather than the exception.

In 2011 an investigation of 'orphan planet studies' estimated that these objects outnumber 'normal' planets by at least 50% throughout the Milky Way Galaxy. If that's the case, the galaxy would contain billions of orphan planets. Things like this are what make Astronomy a continual wonderment.

Also, the upcoming membership meeting, Tuesday, will have a different evening program. Instead of a lecture, we will have a special movie night. See the announcement below.

Please remember that Professor Collier teaches a class in the Observatory on Tuesday evenings until 6:45 PM. So we cannot enter the building for our Tuesday night meeting until his class is dismissed. Lastly, **there will not be a WNAS monthly meeting in December**. Our 'third Tuesday' meeting schedule falls into the sphere of holiday activities, and the time is better spent with family.

Mike Thomas.

Oct., 2012

October 2012 Meeting Minutes

- The idea of having a WNAS float in the 2013 Nevada Day parade was brought forward.
- Fund raising proposals were discussed.
- Thomas Herring, PhD, gave his "Expanding Universe-Noble Prize" lecture.

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Monthly Membership Meeting 7:00PM, Tuesday, November 20, 2012

Movie Night at the Observatory, featuring:

"Voyage to the Prehistoric Planet"

Starring Basil Rathbone and Faith Domergue.

It is 2020, the Moon has been colonized, and the first men land on Venus.

Fresh popcorn will be provided, bring your own beverage.

Events Calendar

~ November 2012 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
11/23 Total Solar Eclipse: The path of totality will only be visible in parts of extreme northern Australia and the southern Pacific Ocean 11/28 Penumbral Lunar Eclipse: The eclipse will be visible throughout most of Europe, eastern Africa, Asia, Australia, the Pacific Ocean, and North America				1	2	3 Star Party Open House
4	5	6	7 Moon Last Qtr 	8	9	10 Dark Skies Star Party Lecture @ 6:30pm
11	12	13 New Moon 	14	15	16	17 Dark Skies Star Party Open House Leonid meteors
18 Leonid meteors	19	 20 <i>WNAS Meeting</i> 7pm JCDO Moon 1 st Qtr	21	22	23 Total Solar Eclipse	24 Star Party Lecture @ 6:30pm
25	26	27 Conjunction of Venus & Saturn	28 Full Moon 	29	30	Notes:

~ December 2012 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Open House Star Party
2	3 *Jupiter at Opposition	4	5	6 Moon Last Qtr 	7	8 Open House Star Party
9	10	11	12	13 New Moon  Geminid meteors	14 Geminid meteors	15 Dark Skies Open House Star Party
16	17	18 <i>WNAS Meeting Cancelled</i>	19	20 Moon 1 st Qtr 	21 <i>Winter solstice</i> (11:12 UTC)	22 Open House Star Party
23	24	25	26	27	28 Full Moon 	29 Open House Star Party
30	31	Notes: *The giant planet will be at its closest approach to Earth and its face will be fully illuminated by the Sun. This is the best time to view and photograph Jupiter and its moons.				

