



### Presidents Message – April, 2013

The following was taken from an NASA article on the website "Space News":

"While missions to celestial bodies such like Mars or the Moon may sound more exciting than a mission to an asteroid, scientists say we have much to learn from these irregularly-shaped rocks that roll through our solar system. Here are 5 reasons why we should care about asteroids.

**1. They Hold Secrets of Solar System's Origins:** The materials in asteroids represent the building blocks of the planets. Because of the position of the asteroid belt, between the rocky inner planets and the gas giants of the outer solar system, the materials found there may hold clues as to why the planets are so diverse today.

**2. They Can Shed Light on Life's Beginnings:** Scientists do not fully understand how the first life forms arose on Earth from non-living organic matter, and asteroids may help us learn more about this puzzle. Today these asteroids have a more primitive chemical composition than Earth has. They are more similar to the conditions that existed in the solar system's younger years. By studying them, we may learn about how life arose on our own planet.

**3. We Could Mine Asteroid Metal:** There is a keen interest in going to the Asteroid Belt. They could be sources of valuable metals. To investigate the feasibility of such operations, we need to know more about asteroid composition and the technical aspects of traveling to them.

**4. They May Threaten Life on Earth:** Because some asteroids orbit around the sun in paths shaped like elongated ovals, they cross Earth's orbit every so often. Sometimes, they come very close to Earth. In January, asteroid 2010 AL30, which has a diameter of 36 feet, passed within about 80,000 miles of Earth. More worrisome is the prediction that in 2036 asteroid Apophis will come within 18,300 miles of Earth. Apophis is larger than two football fields. While that's not big enough to destroy the Earth, it could cause significant regional (read continental) damage if it hit our planet.

**5. Astronauts May Visit Asteroids:** In April 2010, President Barack Obama announced the goal of visiting an asteroid by 2025. In an panel discussion at that time, it was suggested that one goal might be sending humans to purposely nudge an asteroid to change its trajectory. Such a feat would show that humanity could deflect a space rock if one threatened to crash into the planet." 65 Million-years ago the dinosaurs knew nothing about asteroids, like the big rock that ruined their day. Perhaps if the dinosaurs had space suits that fit, they could have done something to prevent that event.

Well, we have that opportunity, and I hope we take advantage of it.

Mike Thomas.

#### **March 2013 Meeting Minutes**

- WNAS vice-president Robert Collier brought the group up to date on the preparations being made for the Observatory's 10th Anniversary celebration in May.
- Red Sumner and Robert explained the "Recon" project goals and training schedule.
- Mike gave the slide-show lecture "History of Astronomy".

#### **WNAS Officers**

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Monthly Membership Meeting 7:00PM, Tuesday, April 16, 2013


**Exo-Planet Search: "Project Prometheus"... the first steps.**

A lecture by Physics Student Sean Alto

~ April 2013 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Moon Last Qtr 	4	5	6 Star Party Dark Skies
7	8	9	10 New Moon 	11	12	13 Star Party Dark Skies
14 Conjunction of the Moon and Jupiter.	15	16 WNAS Meeting 7pm JCDO	17	18 Moon 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr 	19	20 Star Party
21 Lyrids Meteor Shower	22 Lyrids Meteor Shower	23	24	25 Full Moon 	26	27 Star Party
28 Saturn at Opposition closest approach to Earth	29	30	Notes:			

~ May 2013 ~

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			1	2 Moon Last Qtr 	3	4 Star Party
5	6	7	8	9	10 New Moon 	11 Star Party Dark Skies
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 Star Part Moon 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr 
19	20	21 WNAS Meeting 7pm JCDO	22	23	24	25 Star Party Full Moon 
26	27	28 Conjunction of Venus and Jupiter	29	30	31	Notes: