



Presidents Message – September 2013

Some of our fellow Society members have been working with a group that is involved in a large astronomy endeavor called '**Project Recon**'. It has been mentioned briefly during a couple of our monthly meetings, but unless you are involved, it may be a mystery to you.

At this month's membership meeting on Tuesday, September 17th, the evening's program will focus on 'Recon'. WNAS Member Jim Bean will give a presentation which will explain what this is all about, and show how data is collected. He may be joined by other WNAS members who are also involved.

Here are snippets that I've taken from the project's website, which is "tnorecon.net."

Project Recon: Recruiting citizen scientists to explore the outer solar system

Many objects orbit the sun out past Neptune, called trans-Neptunian objects (TNOs). These frozen bodies were formed at the same time as the rest of our solar system, making them close to four and a half billion years old. Determining the sizes of these objects will help us better understand their formation and composition, and could tell us a great deal about the origins of our solar system.

One population of these objects is called the Kuiper Belt. To measure the size of a Kuiper Belt Object (KBO) we will use the shadow it casts on Earth as the KBO moves in front of a distant star – an event called an occultation. We have proposed to determine the sizes of cold classical KBOs using the occultation method because these objects have been particularly difficult to measure using other techniques.

Communities across the Western United States can help us out! Each community that lies within our network will receive a telescope and video camera system. During predicted occultations, every observation site will focus on a specific star in the night sky. As the KBO moves in front of the star, observers within the path of the KBO shadow will witness the star disappear and then reappear a few seconds later. Making precise measurements of the event from different, nearby locations on Earth, we can determine the size of the object.

The project consists of a linked network of 40 telescope sites across the western United States.
(Note: Carson City is one of those sites) Each community participating in RECON will gather a team of 2-6 members.

Interesting, isn't it? I believe that it is important for our members to have an understanding about what is going on at the observatory, including outreach programs. Such awareness builds a sense of pride in an organization like ours. After all, we are part of the same team. Supporting the observatory is the mission of the society. Educating ourselves about efforts like Project Recon, promotes the solidarity of the team. This holds for everyone, from the newest member, to the Observatory Board of Directors. For example, the Board knows that they cannot make enlightened policy decisions without participating in WNAS meetings, and working side-by-side with the membership. Well, I'll get off my soapbox now. Suffice to say, make a point of learning what's going on, it is your observatory!

Mike Thomas

WNAS Officers

President Mike Thomas, mnethomas@sbcglobal.net
Vice President Robert Collier, collier@wnc.edu
Newsletter Editor James Bean, chsdarkmatter@sbcglobal.net
Webmaster Doug George, doug_george@msn.com

August 2013 Meeting Minutes





- Elon Musk's proposed 'Hyperloop' transport system was discussed.
- Al Kramer, of the 'County Fiscal Officers Association of Nevada' gave us \$200 donation.
- Mike gave the slide show lecture, "The Texas Rangers".

Monthly Membership Meeting 7:00PM, Tuesday, September 17, 2013

"Project RECON"

**Overview and Technical Familiarization
Presented by Jim Bean**

~ September 2013 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5 New Moon 	6	7 Star Party Dark Skies
8 *Conjunction of the Moon and Venus. The Moon will pass within about a 1/2 degree from the planet Venus in the early evening sky	9	10	11	12 Moon 1 st Qtr 	13	14 Star Party
15	16	17 JCDO WNAS Meeting 7pm	18	19 Full Moon 	20	21 Star Party
22 Autumnal Equinox occurs at 20:44 UTC	23	24	25	26	27 Moon Last Qtr 	28 Star Party
29	30	*Also on September 8: Conjunction of Venus and Saturn. The two planets will be about 3 degrees of each other in the early evening sky				

~ October 2013 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 Uranus at Opposition. The blue-green planet will be at its closest approach to Earth	4	5 New Moon  Dark Skies Star Party
6	7 Draconids Meteor Shower	8 Draconids Meteor Shower	9 Mercury at Greatest Eastern Elongation. Mercury will be at its furthest angle from the Sun	10	11 Moon 1 st Qtr 	12 Star Party
13	14	15	16	17	18 Full Moon 	19 Star Party
20	21 Orionids Meteor Shower	22 Orionids Meteor Shower	23	24	25	26 Moon Last Qtr  Star Party
27	28	29	30	31		