The Warren Astronomical Society Paper
P.O. Box 1505
Warren, Michigan 48090-1505
www.warrenastronomicalsociety.org

Volume 37, Number 7 //

2005 WAS OFFICERS // August, 2005

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Astro Chatter by Larry Kalinowski

Here's a view of Comet Temple 1 right after the impact. The fly-by probe took this picture from behind the comet. The comet shows an illuminated phase of a little less than 90 degrees, putting the Sun to the right in the picture. The plume still exists and probably will be visible for quite some time after the impact. The Deep Impact probe may have another comet to investigate. If funding comes through, comet 85P/Boethin will be the next comet scrutinized by its cameras. That'll be sometime in 2006.

How would you like to see three suns in the sky? It could happen, in some other planetary system. The discovery of a three star system with a large planet has astounded astronomers. The planet is slightly larger than Jupiter and it takes about three days to orbit the larger star. The planet is too close to its parent sun to have any life on it because of the extreme radiation. It was thought that such a three star system couldn't support planets because of the weird gravitational interaction. In this case, the other two stars are in a long elliptical orbit which keeps them far from the planet. Our theories concerning planetary formation are way out of touch with reality.

One of science fiction’s most beloved actors passed away recently. James Doohan, the chief engineer on the starship Enterprise, was lovingly known as “Scotty”. He was also the man that transported the Enterprise team down to
planet surfaces and other space ships. He was adept at getting the last amount of energy out of those Dilithium crystals that powered the ship. Every time someone says “beam me up Scotty”, his picture pops into my mind. He was 85 years old. A victim of Alzheimer’s disease.

Speakers for the month of August are Dave Workun and Steve Uitti. Dave will be talking about String Theory at the Cranbrook science museum meeting on August 1. Steve is talking about the Real Sky program at MCCC on August 18, in room 209, Bldg. B. Both meetings begin at 7:30 PM.

Thanks to Bob Berta and Dr. Phil, our software library now contains copies of the program Autostitch. It’s available on a floppy disk. The cost is one dollar for the floppy. This program automatically links together a series of digital pictures, no matter how sloppy you were when you took them. Use it on people pictures or astrophotos. The only prerequisite is all the pictures must have some overlap. They don’t even have to be in sequence. It covers 360 degrees horizontally and 90 degrees vertically. This demo version works only with jpg-formatted pictures. The full operating version is available at Autostitch.net.

Our officers are looking for a trailer to help transport the 22 inch Dobsonian to various sites around the state. Sites that we use in our Outreach program. The size should be 5X8 or 6X10 at the floorboard and it must be the type with a permanent roof, because it will also be used for storage. If you have something along those lines to donate or sell, contact Jim Shedlowski, our treasurer, at jimskeebros@cs.com.

Riyad Matti (our observatory chairman) announced that the public has been invited to visit our observatory during the Perseid meteor shower. So we’ll be holding an open house for the public on Saturday, August 13. We’ll be putting on the usual show with public talks and telescope viewing with member telescopes, as well as the club’s 12½ and 22-inch telescopes. The announcement is being made in the Metro-Parks publications. If you can help by bringing your own telescope to shorten the lines, it would be appreciated.

There’s a good chance that Daylight Savings Time will be extended this year. Instead of ending on the last Sunday in October, it may be changed to the last Sunday in November. Next year it’ll begin on the first Sunday of March. If you like DST, it’ll be a blessing, especially for golfers and outdoor types. If you don’t, you’ll have to bite your tongue.

The August computer group meeting is scheduled for August 25, (the fourth Thursday of the month) at Gary Gathen’s home in Pleasant Ridge. He lives at 21 Elm Park Rd., three blocks south of I-696 and about a half block west of Woodward Ave. Meeting will start at 8:00 PM. You can reach him at 248-543-3366, or me, at 586-776-9720 for any further information.

All photos are courtesy of SPACE.COM unless otherwise noted.

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THE SWAPSHOP
This column is for those who are interested in buying, trading or selling items. Call 586-776-9720 (cometman@mybluelight.com) If you want to put an item for sale or trade in this section of the WASP, the ad will run for six months. The month and year, the ad will be removed, is also shown.

CORRECTION. Frank Boyle’s ad that appeared in the June edition of the WASP, had some errors. If you tried to connect with him and failed, please try the new info in this month’s ad.

FOR SALE. Meade Quasar, model DS-114-EC, with Autostar computer controller, tripod and three eyepieces, $300. Call Frank Boyle at 313-886-8851 or fboylelady@aol.com. (12-05).

WANTED. A covered trailer for transporting the club’s 22-inch Dobsonian telescope. We are looking for a 5X8 or 6X10 trailer with a roof. Contact Jim Shedlowski. His e-mail address is jimskeebros@cs.com. (12-05).

FOR SALE. Computer, Compact Presario, model 5204, 15 inch H.P. monitor, Compact Presario 5204 CPU, Pentium mid tower, 124 MB Ram, 350 MHz CPU, 2 Gigabyte hard drive, 2 speakers with headphone jack, Acer keyboard 6511Q, ECM-S3103 mouse, Windows 98
operating system, 56K modem, Floppy disk, 36X CD Rom, extra parallel port for printer or Zip drive, 10/100 MHz LAN Card. 54189-OEM 1650002 00005. $98.89. Mike Best, Cell phone #734-459-2378. StarMikeBest@comcast.net. (11-06).

FOR SALE. TeleDome, observing tent, made by Clear Night Products. Holds you, your telescope and a small table. Waterproof, black, large enough to hold a six-inch, f8 refractor or a 11-inch SCT. Six feet, four inches tall, with a seven-foot hexagonal base and a triangular opening in the roof, for observing. Entrance door and observer’s opening are both zippered for easy closing and opening. Unfolds like an umbrella, takes only one minute to erect. Includes metal stakes. $225. 586-757-4741 or rdwatt@comcast.net. (11-06).


FOR SALE. New HP ink cartridges for the HP600 series ink jet printers. Two black cartridges (HP51629A) and one color cartridge (HP51649A). Bought a new printer, can’t use them anymore. $10 each. They regularly run about $25 to $32 each.586-776-9720. Cometman@mybluelight.com. (11-05).

CLEARANCE AT THE BOCK’S. There’s three items listed that he’s put up for sale. He hasn’t said if he’d separate the item’s, so if you’re interested, contact him at dbock1@chartermi.net.

#1 – 12.5 in. Meade research grade OTA, with rotating rings, 2 in. focuser. Circa 1984. Asking $1100.00. (9-05).


#3 – 10 in. Meade SCT OTA. Asking $600.00, or with LX-200 mount, $1600.00. (9-05).

You must pick up items. These aren’t spring chickens. There’s a lot of observing time on this stuff.

Note from the President:

James Doohan has died. For those who didn’t know who he was, Mr. Doohan played Commander Montgomery Scott, chief engineer on the U.S.S. Starship Enterprise. Known as Scotty on the show, the role inspired the popular phrase “Beam me up, Scotty.” Born in 1920 in Vancouver, Doohan appeared in nearly 50 films along with his work in the original Star Trek series and subsequent Star Trek movies. His last Star Trek appearance was on a couple of episodes of Star Trek, The Next Generation in 1994, reprising his “Scotty” role. He also appeared in 1997 in the movie Star Trek: Generations. Doohan is the second cast original to die; the first was Deforest Kelley (Dr. Leonard “Bones” McCoy) who passed away in 1999.

Although the series was fraught with scientific inaccuracies, as are most of science fiction creations, it did as much as anything to bring space and astronomy to the public eye and generate interest in these subjects. Among the actors themselves, portrayal of the parts often sparked interest in the subject. In 1991, Patrick Stewart (Capt. Picard) and Brent Spiner (Data) traveled to Mexico to view the July 20th total solar eclipse; I understand that Stewart is now an Astronomy buff.

I can say with pride that I am a “trekkie” and can boast that I have seen every episode and movie. In fact, although I had to videotape several episodes, I never missed a first run of any of any of the series. When the first series came out, when there was no personal videotaping to speak of, I guided my schedule around the show while at the University of Arizona. If the show had gone on after I entered the army in late 1968, I would surely have been an AWOL. Well, maybe not.

As many of you know, Astronomy has been my hobby since I was very young (around five years of age), and Star Trek came along when I was 20. I can safely say, however, it had a definite affect on how I viewed Astronomy and the possibilities of technological advancement through space exploration. My flip phone looks like a communicator from the series, and my PDA like the notepad. I understand that the
bridge of ships (especially military) are now patterned after the bridge of the U.S.S. Enterprise.

So, even though we can not presently have our atoms disassembled, sent to another room and reassembled in perfect order, here is to you, James Doohan, may the energy of your life and that which surrounded it, continue to spark the interest of people everywhere to the importance of science in general and astronomy in particular.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ken Bertin

BOARD MEETING, 7-11-05 by Bob Berta

Cranbrook Meeting started at 6:48

Members in attendance:

Ken Bertin, Norm Dillard, Bob Berta, Jim Shedlowsky,

Bob – minutes read and approved

Norm – Asked for change to Xmas dinner policy to ask attendees to dress upscale a bit.

Ken – Asked that we have policy that speakers must be done by 10:00…will give a 5 minute remaining signal to speaker.

Jim – Trailer report….recommend 5’x8’ or 6’x10’ maximum. Price range from $1800 - $2900 new. Ordered 30 calendars

Discussion on New observatory site.

Banner…will follow up with Marty.

7:15 adjourned board meeting.

WAS Meetings scheduled for 2005

Cranbrook Meetings – Every 1st Monday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Macomb Meetings – Every 2nd Thursday

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<td>November</td>
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<td>15 – Banquet</td>
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August 2005 Calendar

**Thursday, Aug 4** • 5:48 pm: The Moon is at apogee (252,669 miles from Earth); 1:05 pm: New Moon

**Sunday, Aug 7** • Midnight: The Moon passes 1.2° north of Venus

**Monday, Aug 8** • Noon: Neptune is at opposition

**Wednesday, Aug 10** • 4:00 am: the Moon passes 1.3° south of Jupiter

**Friday, Aug 12** • Perseid meteor shower peaks; 10:30 pm: First Quarter Moon

**Sunday, Aug 14** • 9:00 am: The moon passes 0.4° north of Antares

**Thursday, Aug 18** • 7:00 pm: The Moon passes 5° south of Neptune.

**Friday, Aug 19** • 1:36 am: The Moon is at perigee (222,074 miles fro Earth); 12 hrs later, Moon is Full

**Tuesday, Aug 23** • 7:00 pm: Mercury is at greatest elongation

**Thursday, Aug 25** • 3:00 am: The moon passes 6° south of Jupiter

**Friday, Aug 26** • 11:18 am: The moon passes 6° north of Mars

**Wednesday, Aug 31** • 10:35 pm: The Moon is at apogee (252,409 miles from Earth); 11:00 pm: Uranus is at opposition

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WAS Meetings scheduled for 2005

**Cranbrook Meetings – Every 1st Monday**

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**Orion New Items: 03 Filters 1.25" $ 89.99 2.00" $139.99**

**Orion 80 Express Refractor** $ 399.99

**Orion 150mm Mak OTA** $ 649.99

We sell at Orion catalog prices EVERYDAY...why shop anywhere else?
(Editor’s Note: Bob Berta, our club Secretary, submitted the following ‘Must Read’ article for publication. Rather than paraphrasing his intro I am including it as it was written to me. Enjoy!)

Cliff,
This is taken from the San Jose Mercury news and is in reference to a documentary movie that is coming out about John Dobson. He was one of the members of my old SF club and still very active...he still teaches telescope making and does sidewalk astronomy. This article was a compilation of many interviews...some of the information was taken in a on line interview Glennda did with me, fellow SF Amateur Astronomy club member and now project outreach head for Cassini Program...Jane Houston, and Bob Naeye (my friend now senior editor at S&T) and famous astronomer Alex Filippenko. As you can see from the article...John is a very "interesting" person...weird cosmology ideas but certainly influenced a lot of people to get involved in astronomy. Many of our members own Dobsonian style telescopes so this will be of interest to them.

Bob Bert

Apostle to the star-struck shows itinerant life in film

'SIDEWALK ASTRONOMER' INSPIRES ADMIRATION AND IRRITATION
By Glennda Chui
Mercury News

John Dobson, legendary founder of the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers, is a beloved and controversial figure among people who gaze at the stars.

A former Vedantan monk who still lives in self-imposed poverty, he travels the world teaching people how to make cheap telescopes out of junk. For 40 years, he has brought astronomy to the people, dragging his "Dobsonian" telescopes from city streets to national parks.

Yet critics say he has used his fame as a platform to spread nonsense about science and the nature of the universe.

Both sides of Dobson are on display in a documentary, "Sidewalk Astronomer," that opened Friday in the Bay Area. And friends and fans are preparing to celebrate his 90th birthday with a party next month in San Francisco.

"I go to a lot of places. I live out of two bags that go on and off a plane," says Dobson, who spends just two months a year in his basement apartment in San Francisco.

"If we get the telescopes out to the public," he said, "then when you go to bed you feel you've done something useful."

Nearly 50 years ago, he started building telescopes out of things like porthole glass, cardboard tubes and old record albums, revolutionizing amateur astronomy and giving thousands of people their first direct look at the heavens.

With his white hair pulled back in a ponytail and often topped with a crocheted tam-o'-shanter, he depends on others to keep track of his schedule and get him from place to place. "I can't imagine that anyone has had a life like his," said Andrew Fraknoi, an award-winning astronomy educator at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills.

"In the old days we had itinerant songwriters and singers who would go around from community to community to bring the news and sing the songs. They would be a connecting force. That's how I see him, and it's wonderful to watch. He really is a roving ambassador for astronomy."

Lectures criticized

While no one denies Dobson has had an enormous impact, scientists say his lectures on cosmology are pure pseudoscience. He insists, for instance, that Einstein was wrong and the big bang never happened.

Alex Filippenko, an astronomer at the University of California-Berkeley, praises Dobson for his public outreach with telescopes, but threatened four years ago to resign from the California Academy of Sciences if it allowed Dobson to teach a cosmology class there.

"He's an interesting character and he's definitely a free thinker, but in science that's not enough," Filippenko said. "His views on cosmology are completely misguided, wrong and not based on observational or experimental evidence."

For his part, the first-time director who made the documentary "A Sidewalk Astronomer" said he thinks Dobson has a lot of courage to champion beliefs that are so far out of the mainstream.

"It would be a lot easier for John if he became sort of a senior member of the community based on his invention, his generosity with it and his sidewalk astronomy," said Jeffrey Fox Jacobs, who filmed 45 hours of footage while following Dobson.

"But no, he has to speak about a cosmology that goes against the established norm. I think John should be allowed his opinions and his feelings on the matter, given his contributions to all of us."
Dobson’s eclectic background includes no formal training in astronomy, physics or cosmology.

**MOVIE SHOWTIMES**

Where to see ‘Sidewalk Astronomer’ today (or)  
(http://ae.mercurynews.com/entertainment/ui/mercurynews/movie.html?id=369181&reviewId=null)

Born in Beijing, where his mother was a musician and his father taught zoology, he moved to San Francisco as a child, got a degree in chemistry from UC-Berkeley and worked in defense-related jobs.

**First telescope**

In 1944 he joined the Vedanta Monastery in San Francisco -- Vedanta is the philosophical basis of Hinduism -- and made his first telescope a dozen years later, prompted by a desire to see the universe. What later became known as the Dobsonian telescope is based on a mount that was around long before Dobson was born. It allows the scope to move up and down and right and left, like a cannon.

``He was looking for the simplest and least expensive way to build telescopes so you could have telescopes everyone could look through. It was really sort of a noble cause,’’ said Dennis di Cicco, a senior editor at Sky & Telescope magazine. The result was a scope that could be built much bigger for far less money, allowing people to look at fainter objects in the sky. A 20-inch telescope that would cost $20,000 on the market could be built for, say, $1,000.

**A career inspiration**

Jane Houston Jones credits Dobson with her current career at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena.

``I had never looked through a telescope in my life before I met John Dobson in 1987'' while living in Marin County, she said. Jones went on to join astronomy clubs and switched from banking to a job in public outreach for the Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn.

``I would not have had the passion to write and to enthuse others if I hadn't bumped into him,’’ she said.

At Dobson's Aug. 27 birthday party at the Randall Museum in San Francisco, organizer Kenneth Frank of Tiburon hopes to take a big group photo called ``Valley of the Dobs.''

``That's where all the people who have been in his classes for 30 or 40 years bring their telescopes, and we have a forest of telescopes behind this little guy with a ponytail and a bunch of astrogeeks,’’ he said, ``and it will be really cool.''

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(Editors note: Mike Best, a member of the WAS, is offering the below listed classes. He gives astronomy lectures at libraries, parks and rec. facilities throughout the state and Canada. He also gives adult education astronomy lecture and sky show at Vollbrecht Planetarium in Southfield. You can read his extensive bio. on his WEB page at: http://www.the-endless.org/starmikebest/index.html)

His ad follows.)

Southfield's newly renovated Vollbrecht Planetarium will hold a free Open House to the public Sunday, Oct. 2, 2005  2-5 p.m. with 15-minute-shows at 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00, and 4:30. This will allow us the opportunity to promote both our public 8-week series beginning that week at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 6., as well as our Elementary School shows for 4th and 7th graders.

**A 1-day, 6-hour seminar at Vollbrecht Planetarium.**

What: "Operating and Managing a Planetarium"  
Where: Vollbrecht Planetarium at Adler Elem., Southfield  
When: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (includes a one-hour lunch break)  
Saturday, November 19, 2005.

Cost: $50 with a maximum of 10; minimum of 8 persons  

Why: this is a very unique, life-long skill that allows women and men of any age the ability to supplement their income just about anywhere in the world. It is especially useful for seniors who find it difficult to compete in the part-time job market.

(Editors note: I asked mike what type of projectors were covered. He responded with the following):

We only cover Spitz A2 and 3 (very similar) but no computer/digital.

I plan on 1/4 of the time on machine operation and 3/4 on what astronomical knowledge they must have/should have/and it would be nice to have. And, lots of " manage and run planetaria.

I will offer each of them the opportunity to give a private show for family and friends ($5 per and a $75 minimum).
Please emphasize: there is more to learning how to turn off room lights and turning on a star ball. They can learn that at a half dozen other places that I believe are cleverly trying to get volunteers and gopher work done.

I have a list of 70 (so far) topics to cover, some of which are publicity, relationships to school boards, city council, and avoiding Creation/Big Bang confrontation.

Many of those 71 items are "homework assignments" they'll never turn in but need to be familiar enough with to answer questions and explain: Coordinate systems, retrograde motion, birth-life-death of stars, white dwarf, neutron and magnetar, quark, Black Holes, historical astronomy, & Early planetaria. Learn at least 25 constellations (to begin with) and add to that list constantly along with the season they are in, and the bright star(s). You get the idea.

Regards,

Mike

(Editor's note: If interested you can reach Mike at one of the contacts on his web site.)

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SPECIAL NOTICE

As noted at the WAS 7/11/05 board meeting, the club is looking for a trailer to transport our big DOB. The Trailer should be from 5' X 8' to 6' X 10' Max. Please contact a member of the board should you spot such a gem. Fixer Uppers are desirable as long as they are not in a “not reproparable” condition or a “too expensive to repair” condition.

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ANOTHER SPECIAL NOTICE

Claudia Voit of Cranbrook is seeking quality astro-photos of the moon. She wrote the following to Ken, our President:

"I'm wondering if you can pass this e-mail to any of the competent astro-photographers in the Warren group (or the Ford group) I tried sending the message to Doug and Clay, but the message was returned."

"We're producing a program on the lunar phases (and phases of Venus) and need some very good photos of the moon at various phases. We would, of course, give credit to the astro-photographer, and the program may be run nationally at some of the other planetariums. The photos need to be as high resolution as possible."

Sincerely,

Claudia Voit

Please contact a board member for more info & submission.

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UPDATED SPEAKER LIST FOR 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>DAVE WORKUN</td>
<td>STRING THEORY</td>
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<td>8/18/2005</td>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td>STEVE UITTI</td>
<td>REAL SKY</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/12/2005</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>PHIL MARTIN</td>
<td>IMPROVING ASTRO PHOTOS W/PHOTOSHOP 7</td>
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<td>9/15/2005</td>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td>LARRY KALINOWSKI</td>
<td>THE BACKWARD TELESCOPE</td>
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<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>DALE PARTIN</td>
<td>MEASURING DIST. TO THE SUN, THE ANCIENT WAY</td>
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<td>10/20/2005</td>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td>DAVE BAILEY</td>
<td>ATMOSPHERES, DEEP AND SHALLOW PART II</td>
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<td>11/7/2005</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>KEN BERTIN</td>
<td>HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY</td>
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<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td>ALAN KAPLAN RICHARD</td>
<td>STELLAR EVOLUTION</td>
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Newest Weather Sentry Takes Up Watch

by Patrick L. Barry

Today, we've become accustomed to seeing images of the Earth's swirling atmosphere from space every night on the evening news.

Before 1960, no one had ever seen such images.

The first-ever weather satellite was launched that year, kicking off a long line of weather satellites that have kept a continuous watch on our planet's fickle atmosphere—45 years and counting! The high-quality, extended weather forecasts that these satellites make possible have become an indispensable part of our modern society, helping commercial aircraft, recreational boaters, and even military operations avoid unnecessary risk from hazardous weather.

But satellites don't last forever. Parts wear out, radiation takes its toll, and atmospheric drag slowly pulls the satellite out of orbit. Many weather satellites have a design life of only 2 years, though often they can last 5 or 10 years, or more. A steady schedule of new satellite launches is needed to keep the weather report on the news each night.

In May 2005, NASA successfully launched the latest in this long line of weather satellites. Dubbed NOAA-N at launch and renamed NOAA-18 once it reached orbit, this satellite will take over for the older satellite NOAA-16, which was launched in September 2000.

"NOAA always keeps at least two satellites in low-Earth orbit, circling the poles 14 times each day," explains Wilfred E. Mazur, Polar Satellite Acquisition Manager, NOAA/NESDIS. “As Earth rotates, these satellites end up covering Earth’s entire surface each day. In fact, with two satellites in orbit, NOAA covers each spot on the Earth four times each day, twice during the day and twice at night,” Mazur says.

By orbiting close to Earth (NOAA-18 is only 870 km above the ground), these “low-Earth orbit” satellites provide a detailed view of the weather. The other type of weather satellite, “geosynchronous,” orbits much farther out at 35,786 km. At that altitude, geosynchronous satellites can keep a constant watch on whole continents, but without the kind of detail that NOAA-18 can provide.

In particular, low-Earth orbiting satellites have the ability to use microwave radiometers to measure temperature and moisture in the atmosphere—two key measurements used for weather prediction that, for technical reasons, cannot be sensed by distant geosynchronous satellites.

With NOAA-18 successfully placed in orbit, the 45-year legacy of high-tech weather forecasts that we're accustomed to will go on.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

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**NOAA-18, the newest in a long line of weather and environmental satellites, launched May 20, 2005.**

**One final note:**

Thanks to Space Place partner Tom Larson of the San Bernardino Valley Amateur Astronomers for the notice of this upcoming show:

Discovery Channel Explores Deep Impact

The Discovery Channel is bringing its unique perspective to NASA's Deep Impact mission. **The show premieres on Sunday, July 31 at 10 p.m. EDT/PDT.**

The Discovery Channel's digital animation depicts comets hitting planets as well as scenes from the Deep Impact mission.

The mission, which successfully crashed into Comet Tempel 1 at 1:52 a.m. EDT July 4, is the subject of a two-hour documentary, "Comet Collision!"

The show will use state-of-the-art digital imaging to recreate the craft's journey, ending with NASA footage from the impact itself.