

The W.A.S.P. newsletter

May 2005



The Warren Astronomical Society Paper

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2005 WAS OFFICERS

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The WASP (Warren Astronomical Society Paper) is the official monthly publication of the Society. Each new issue of the WASP is mailed to each member and/or available online www.boonhill.net/was. Requests by other Astronomy clubs to receive the WASP, and all other correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Cliff Jones, email: cliffordj@ameritech.net

Articles for inclusion in the WASP are strongly encouraged and should be submitted to the editor on or before the first of each month. Any format of submission is accepted, however the easiest forms for this editor to use are plain text files. Most popular graphics formats are acceptable. Materials can be submitted either in printed form in person or via US Mail, or preferably, electronically via direct modem connection or email to the editor.

Disclaimer: The articles presented herein represent the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily the opinions of the WAS or the editor. The WASP reserves the right to deny publication of any submission.



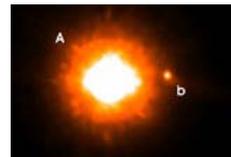
Astro Chatter

by Larry Kalinowski

Astronomy Day turned out very well at Stargate Observatory. There were about 35 members present with 25 or more telescopes. Another 30 scouts attended some lectures given by our members. Needless to say, it got a little crowded for awhile. The sky wasn't 100 percent cooperative but it did clear up for about an hour and a half soon after twilight ended. The 22 inch was rolled out for the crowd. Bugs and dew were almost nil, making observing quite a pleasure. Some of the participants even took the time to do some serious astronomy, like the new double star group.



Named GQ Lupi, it promises to open a new era in planetary discovery. The picture shows the star and the planet in the same frame. The planet orbits the star about every 1200 years.



This places it far enough away from the parent star to show more separation between the bodies than other photos have shown, making it easier to photograph. It has about twice the mass of Jupiter and orbits at about one hundred times the distance of Earth, from our Sun.



Looks like NASA has had its first fender bender in space. The DART satellite, which was supposed to be an automated docking satellite, ran out of fuel. It wasn't able to control itself when it approached another test satellite and evidently hit the satellite it was supposed to dock at. Ground control has established that the test satellite has been moved into a higher orbit because of the added push. The

The first extrasolar planet ever confirmed by more than two telescopes was revealed to the public. The planet orbits a star in the constellation Lupus.



STARS OVER CLARKSTON

Presented By



Clarkston Community Band

"Making Friends and Music"
Vince Chrisman, Director

With the

WARREN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Ken Bertin, President



And

Independence Township Parks and Recreation

Michael Turk, Director

June 11, 2005 6:00 P.M.
Concert starts at 7:00 P.M.

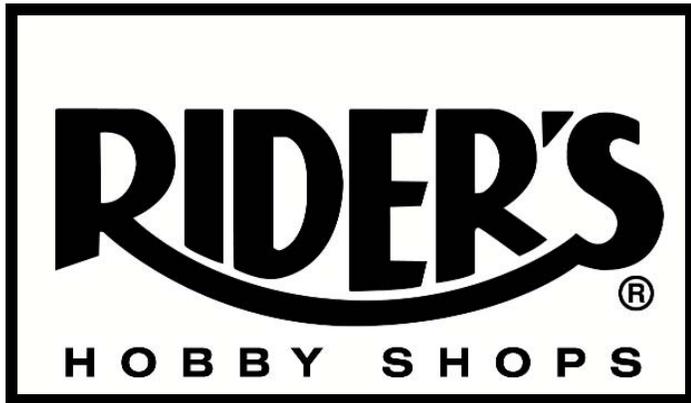
FREE ADMISSION

Family Fun – Bring a picnic

Clintonwood Park
6000 Clarkston Road
Clarkston, Michigan 48348

- Band performing music of the stars & space
- Telescope viewing – solar, planetary and deep space
- Astronomy Talks

For more info: clarkstonband@hotmail.com



30991 Five Mile Rd., Livonia, MI 48154
(734) 425-9720 – Ask for John or Dan



UPDATED SPEAKER LIST FOR 2005

5/2/2005	MONDAY	BOB BERTA	ASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY
5/19/2005	THURSDAY	DENNIS SCHMALZEL	IMAGING WITH NEW DSI CAMERA
6/6/2005	MONDAY	ALAN ROTHENBERG	THE LONG NIGHT OF SELENOGRAPH
6/16/2005	THURSDAY	RIYAD MATTI	PRACTICAL AMATEUR ASTRONOMY
7/11/2005	MONDAY	MARTY KUNZ	LOOKING TO THE CENTER OF THE MILKY WAY
7/21/2005	THURSDAY	DAVE D'ONOFRIO	ASTRONOMY IN 3D
8/1/2005	MONDAY	DAVE WORKUN	STRING THEORY
8/18/2005	THURSDAY	STEVE UITTI	REAL SKY
9/12/2005	MONDAY	PHIL MARTIN	IMPROVING ASTRO PHOTOS W/PHOTOSHOP 7
9/15/2005	THURSDAY	LARRY KALINOWSKI	THE BACKWARD TELESCOPE
10/3/2005	MONDAY	DALE PARTIN	MEASURING DIST. TO THE SUN, THE ANCIENT WAY
10/20/2005	THURSDAY	DAVE BAILEY	ATMOSPHERES, DEEP AND SHALLOW PART II
11/7/2005	MONDAY	KEN BERTIN	HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY
11/17/2005	THURSDAY	ALAN KAPLAN RICHARD	STELLAR EVOLUTION
12/5/2005	MONDAY	SZUMANSKI	T.B.D.
12/15/2005	THURSDAY		AWARDS BANQUET



Utterly Alien

By Dr. Tony Phillips

There's a planet in our solar system so cold that in winter its nitrogen atmosphere freezes and falls to the ground. The empty sky becomes

perfectly clear, jet-black even at noontime. You can see thousands of stars. Not one twinkles.

The brightest star in the sky is the Sun, so distant and tiny you could eclipse it with the head of a pin. There's a moon, too, so *big* you couldn't blot it out with your entire hand. Together, moonlight and sunshine cast a twilight glow across the icy landscape revealing . . . what? Twisted spires, craggy mountains, frozen volcanoes?

No one knows, because no one has ever been to Pluto.

"Pluto is an alien world," says Alan Stern of the Southwest Research Institute in Colorado. "It's the only planet never visited or photographed by NASA space probes."

That's about to change. A robot-ship called New Horizons is scheduled to blast off for Pluto in January 2006. It's a long journey: More than 6 billion kilometers (about 3.7 billion miles). New Horizons won't arrive until 2015.

"I hope we get there before the atmosphere collapses," says Stern, the mission's principal investigator. Winter is coming, and while it's warm enough now for Pluto's air to float, it won't be for long. Imagine seeing a planet's atmosphere collapse. New Horizons might!

"This is a flyby mission," notes Stern. "Slowing the spacecraft down to *orbit* Pluto would burn more fuel than we can carry." New Horizons will glide past the planet furiously snapping pictures. "Our best images will resolve features the size of a house," Stern says.

The cameras will also target Pluto's moon, Charon. Charon is more than half the size of Pluto, and the two circle one another only 19,200 kilometers (12,000 miles) apart. (For comparison, the Moon is 382,400 kilometers [239,000 miles] from Earth.) No wonder some astronomers call the pair a "double planet."

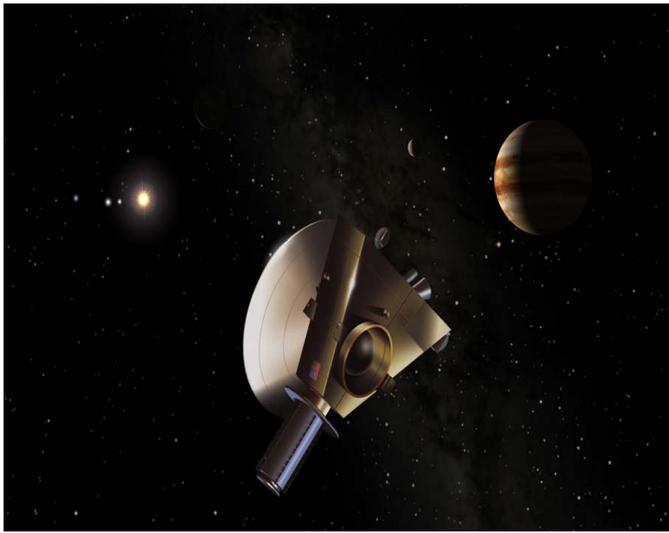
Researchers believe that Pluto and Charon were created billions of years ago by some terrific impact, which split a bigger planet into two smaller ones. This idea is supported by the fact that Pluto and Charon spin on their sides like sibling worlds knocked askew.

Yet there are some curious differences: Pluto is bright; Charon is darker. Pluto is covered with frozen nitrogen; Charon by frozen water. Pluto has an atmosphere; Charon might not. "These are things we plan to investigate," says Stern.

Two worlds. So alike, yet so different. So utterly alien. Stay tuned for New Horizons.

Find out more about the New Horizons mission at pluto.jhuapl.edu/. Kids can learn amazing facts about Pluto at spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/pluto.

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



New Horizons spacecraft will get a gravity assist from Jupiter on its long journey to Pluto-Charon. Credit: Southwest Research Institute (Dan Durda)/Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (Ken Moscati).