

Melbourne Astronomical Society

Meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 8 p.m.,
room 140 in the Olin Physical Sciences Bldg., F.I.T.

The Melbourne Astronomical Society is a newly formed group whose goals are to foster awareness of, interest in, and education about astronomy in the Melbourne area.

Whether you are new to Astronomy or have had a long-term interest in this fascinating subject, you'll find many others of like mind in this group.

Your particular interest might be in

- looking at stars and planets at Star Parties near and far
- looking out into the galaxies
- beginning astronomy
- binocular observing
- building your own telescope
- solar viewing (with appropriate eye protection)
- astrophotography
- learning about different telescopes
- learn more about FIT's SARA telescope near Tucson (but viewable from FIT in Melbourne)

Come to the meeting to get advice, give advice, share your viewing experiences. We'll all learn together and have fun doing it. Join us at our

UPCOMING MEETING
Thursday, 9 March, 8 p.m.

At this meeting, Peter Scheuter will bring an Ocean Optics spectrometer on which you can measure spectral response of your filters.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kicking Off a New Opportunity

Time for the Melbourne Astronomical Society to leave space dock. As we do so, let me introduce myself.

I moved into the area in the Summer of 2001, from Boynton Beach Florida. I am currently in the employ of Harris Corporation, as an RF systems engineer. I am married, 2 kids, one grandchild. I have enjoyed astronomy since the comet Levy-Shoemaker collision with Jupiter in 1994. I was the president of the Astronomical Society of the Palm Beaches (ASPB), and served for five years as a director there. The ASPB is affiliated with the South Florida Science Museum, and sponsors the observatory and observing sessions there, so I have experience with a club running along with a public institution. In addition to astronomy, I enjoy sailing, and flying. I have a hard time keeping my feet on the ground!!

Where do we go from here?

At our February meeting I heard lots of varying interests. Some are interested in equipment, some are interested in imaging, some are interested in astrophysics (at least until they complete their courses). Everyone enjoys observing under the stars, and the most enjoyable way to do it is with good company. Sounds to me like a lot of variety, and interesting fodder for good relationships within the club.

What can we do in the near term? It appears that we have a large inventory of telescopes, ranging in size from a 25-inch reflector of some sort, a quantity of 16-inch Meade Newtonians, a bunch of Schmidt Cassagrains, and in the near future, a new 32-inch RC telescope that will be installed on campus. It would be interesting to refurbish the older scopes as a club project, for use at public viewing sessions at the soccer field. Refurbishing these scopes, along with some Optics 101 discussions, are also a great way to develop interest in the hobby. Another enjoyable activity is to share it with people. Public viewing sessions provide opportunities to expand the club, especially when they are special sessions along with an event, such as a lunar or solar eclipse. Does anyone have any connections with the local or school papers?? We will need to get the word out I also look forward to hooking up with the Brevard Astronomical Society....

Finally, there are lots of speakers out there — some of us already know Jack Parker, Hal Povenmire, and Mike Palermi, who provide excellent talks. Guest speakers at meetings help keep things going.

See you at the meeting on 9 March.
--- Art Ahrens

Brief Notes

The following notes call your attention to articles of interest in recent or current issues of astronomy magazines.

The Moon is about to be farther north and farther south than at any time since 1987 — “a major standstill.” The next major standstill won’t occur until 2025.
—*Astronomy*, April 2006

Spectacular displays from comets grazing too close to the sun.
—*Astronomy*, March 2006

Starter scopes on a budget are tested and reviewed. Though the prices are given in British pounds, the testing process is of interest.

This issue includes a beginner’s guide to stargazing.

—*Sky at Night*, February 2006

The process of building a long-focus Newtonian telescope mated to a Dobsonian mount is described, with ample illustrations of this compact, easy-to assemble scope.

Can you be in Turkey by the end of the month? It’s a good site for viewing the total solar eclipse on 29 March. Partial eclipse viewing available in Europe.

—*Sky & Telescope*, March 2006

Reviews of two new astronomical binoculars and of *Starry Night Pro Plus*, planetarium software from Imagenova Canada.

The issue includes a chart of variable stars for April.

—*Sky & Telescope*, April 2006

Share information with the group.

What’s your favorite astronomy-related website?

What techniques and equipment do you use for your astrophotography?

What techniques are you using for solar photography.

Visit our website:
www.mlbastro.org

Upcoming meetings:

9 March
13 April
11 May