



PERTH OBSERVATORY
Department of Conservation and Land Management

Perth Observatory Volunteer Newsletter
May 1997
Editor: Nikola Angus

May sees the end of Night Tours for this season. The attendance for the end of April 1997 is a staggering 3804 well exceeding the previous attendance record of 2355 which was reached back in May 1995.

The overall response from the public has been overwhelming positive with the only problem being overcrowding in the VOF. This was alleviated by mounting a telescope on the outside pier. A long term solution will be with the acquisition of a new Meade 16" telescope and eventually new housing for the telescope.

Highlights for May

The main highlight for May has been the appearance of the Hale-Bopp comet in our north western horizon. Armed with Binoculars and a boot full of souvenirs, Perth Obs staff and volunteers headed to Radisson Observation City on Scarborough Beach from the 5th - 7th to show the general public one of the brightest and biggest comets to grace our skies.

Hale-Bopp's size has been estimated at around 40 kilometres at the nucleus with a tail spanning many millions of kilometres long some suggest even 100 million kilometres in length. Despite being over 190 million kilometres away the comet put on an impressive display with estimated 1100 people turning out to see the comet over the three nights. With Hale-Bopp sinking lower on our horizon we will get another opportunity to see it again in the early part of July in our eastern horizon prior to sunrise.

Archival Volunteers

Historical records archive project will hopefully be up and running within a couple of months. The project has been formally approved by CALM and the unions. The Government Astronomer apologises for the delay but the project is really complicated and has to be done properly so as not to waste resources - particularly volunteer's time. In the short term there are three mini projects concerning historical records that need attention:

1. Replacing the paper covers on the historical photographs (about 20 days work),
2. Constructing an INDEX for all the written work (about 20 days work),
and
3. Entering the old photographs into a database (probably 500 days work).

If any one is interested please call Government Astronomer.

Thank you

Thank you goes to Steve Ewing and Jacqui Milner for their work with Monday night Training nights. Their time has been greatly appreciated and beneficial to those who have attended. Depending on interest they will start again in September.

Observatory News

A meeting for Observatory staff and volunteers will be held in early June, more information will follow.

The acquisition of Meade 16" LX200 will replace the 11" in the VOF and will eventually be housed in its own dome - big enough to accommodate telescope and 15 people.

After some delays the resurfaced mirror for the Lowell 61cm should arrive back from the US by early next month.

First tours for the new season will be commencing on Sunday the 7th of September, more information on times as we draw closer.

Tom Smith - Astronomical Assistant is off on a meteorite gathering trek to China in June hopefully this journey will be more productive for the WA Museum, Natural History Museum in London and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Field Nights

Later in July Tom is off again to the Kimberleys on an Astro Field nights in collaboration with our National Park colleagues.

During the last school holidays a field night was conducted at Altone Park Public Library and was attended by 130 people thanks for the help of Vic Levis and Bob Taylor.

A field night was also conducted at Albany Festival by Tom and Peter Birch where 200 of the towns folk came out to see view the skies from Mt. Adelaide.

Your say

This will hopefully be the first of many newsletters for the volunteers of the Perth Observatory. To have any information considered for the June edition the deadline is 5th of June. Please telephone Nikola 9354 1932 or please leave message on answering machine with contact number and your call will be returned. Alternatively you can fax the observatory on 9293 8138 or email PERTHOBS@IINET.NET.AU with the attention made to "Volunteer Newsletter".

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SUPERNOVA 1997Z IN NGC 3261

R. Martin, A. Williams, and S. Woodings, Perth Observatory, report the discovery of a supernova (mag R about 15.5) from a CCD frame taken on Feb. 10.64 UT. SN 1997Z is located 58" east and 10" south of the center of NGC 3261 (R.A. = 10h29m.0, Decl. = -44°39', equinox 2000.0).

S. Benetti and M. Turatto, European Southern Observatory (ESO); and E. Cappellaro, Osservatorio di Padova, communicate: "Inspection of a reduced CCD spectrogram (range 380-800 nm, resolution 1.1 nm) obtained on Feb. 12.12 UT with the ESO/MPI 2.2-m telescope (+ EFOSC2) confirms SN 1997Z as a type-II supernova, about 100 days after explosion. In the spectrum, several lines with typical P-Cyg profiles are superimposed on a relatively red continuum. Most of the lines arise from H I, Na I, Fe II, and Sc II. The expansion velocities (in km/s) deduced from the minima of the strongest lines are 7200 (H-alpha), 6150 (Na I); 4800 (H-beta), and 3550 (Fe II). With the same instrument, we obtained the following magnitudes for the new object: B = 19.0, B-V = +1.4, and V-R = +1.3. The offsets from the galaxy nucleus are 55".1 east and 8".7 south."

V1333 AQUILAE

A. M. Levine, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and B. Thomas, Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), on behalf on the RXTE ASM team at GSFC and MIT; M. Garcia and P. Berlind, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory; and P. Callanan, University College Cork, report that the low-mass x-ray binary Aquila X-1 (= V1333 Aql) appears to be in a moderate-intensity outburst in quick-look results from the RXTE All Sky Monitor. Recent daily-average flux levels in the band 2-12 keV are as follows: Jan. 27, about 60 mCrab; 28, 120; 29, 190; 30, 260; Feb. 1, 310; 2-5, about 360. Observations of the optical counterpart V1333 Aql from the Whipple Observatory 1.2-m telescope on Feb. 6.543 UT yield V = 16.9. Observations at other wavelengths are encouraged.

COMET 46P/WIRTANEN

Total visual magnitude estimates: Jan. 3.09 UT, 12.6 (A. Hale, Cloudcroft, NM, 0.41-m reflector); Feb. 1.75, 11.8 (M. Meyer, Frauenstein, Germany, 0.25-m reflector); 4.09, 11.3 (R. Keen, Mt. Thorodin, CO, 0.32-m reflector); 6.74, 11.4 (K. Sarneczky, Raktanya, Hungary, 0.44-m reflector).

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