

August 2004  
Volume 20, Number 8



# Martian Chronicles

Newsletter of the Museum Astronomical Resource Society

## Upcoming Events

### Newsletter Help:

All contributions to the next months Newsletter must be received by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the current month.

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### August 2004

#### Friday 08/13, Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the MOSI planetarium.  
Program: TBA

#### Wed/Thur 08/11&12 Perseid Meteor Shower

#### Saturday 08/14, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (call SPAC to confirm)

#### Saturday 08/28 MOSI/MARS Sky Watch

Sunset – 07:55 p.m. EDT

### September 2004

#### Friday 09/10, Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the MOSI planetarium.  
Program: TBA

#### Saturday 09/11 or 18, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (call SPAC to confirm date)

#### Friday 09/24, Fall Sky Watch, MOSI

From 08:00 to 10:00 pm  
Call (813) 987-8000 for reservations

#### Saturday 09/25 MOSI/MARS Sky Watch

Sunset – 07:22 p.m. EDT

**MOSI Sky Watch:** MOSI staff and M.A.R.S. volunteer observing sessions are normally held on the Saturday evening nearest the First Quarter Moon. Please come out and assist us at these events. Additional Sky Watch sessions will resume in the fall. Sky Watch sessions are held at MOSI. Call to check on any schedule changes. The Saunders Planetarium: 813-987-6360; MOSI Information Desk: 813-987-6012

**SPAC Star Parties:** Hosted by the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club (SPAC). Held on the Saturday evenings nearest the new moon, at Hickory Hill near Brooksville. For more information call the SPAC hotline: 813-792-0721

**Have You Checked the Calendar?:** Our online club calendar is now being updated with important dates related to club, astronomy, and space events. If you have a question about an upcoming event, be sure to check the calendar. Either go to the club website ([www.marsastro.org](http://www.marsastro.org)) and click on the "Online Club Calendar" link near the top of the page, or access the calendar directly by going to URL: <http://calsnet.com/marsastro>

## **Martian Happenings:**

### **July 09, 2004 Meeting Minutes** by Wade Holland

The July meeting of MARS Club took place on Friday July 9, 2004 at 7:40 p.m. with 16 people present.

Greg Shanos presented his pictures on the transit of Venus taken from Greece. The transit takes 122 years to happen then 8 years. One is in June another in December. The first recorded sighting was 1639 by Jeremiah Horrocks. In 1677 Sir Edmund Halley determined the Sun's distance. In 1769 Ben Franklin observed the transit. From the transit scientists discovered that Venus has an atmosphere and they determined the distance from the sun was 92,957,209 miles. The next transit will be in 2012.

Old business:

Whether or not we have a family membership for \$20 will be voted on next month.

New business:

It was suggested that we make an archive of old newsletters accessible on the website.

Start thinking about running for an office in January.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

### **Notice to All Members** from Frances Ferguson, President

Club members will vote during the August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting on whether or not to adopt the following change to our membership dues structure.

The M.A.R.S. Club will offer a Family Memberships for a cost of \$20.00. Family memberships will receive 2 votes in all club decisions. Everyone in the household will be eligible for all other club benefits. If passed, the new membership's fees will become effective September 2004 when the new membership year begins. If you wish to vote and will be unable to attend the meeting, you can send your vote to Frances Ferguson at [faferguson@sisna.com](mailto:faferguson@sisna.com)

### **Treasure's Report** by Mildred Simpson

The treasurer's report will be available at the August meeting.

### **2005 Astronomy Calendars Have Arrived!**

If you reserved a calendar, please bring \$6.00 to the August meeting and pick up your copy. The club needs to collect these funds in order to clear our bill with Astronomy Magazine for these calendars. Those that ordered a calendar and cannot make the meeting should contact Mildred Simpson and make appropriate arrangements. Excess copies will be sold on a first come first served basis.

August 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting Program:

"The Life Cycle of a Star"

Frances Ferguson will be presenting "The Life Cycle of a Star". This program will take a look at what happens to a star from birth to death.

## Martian Contributions:

### From the "Keeper of the Frog Scope" by Frances Ferguson, President

Thank you, Greg Shanos for sharing your experience of the "Transit of Venus" from an island off of Greece. I always enjoy hearing about your worldly travels.

While leaving M.O.S.I. after the July's meeting, I looked up and saw a bright object in the sky. I first thought, what star is that? Wait - there is not a bright star in that part of the sky. It must be a satellite. To be that bright it could be an indium flare. If it is an iridium flare it should be getting dimmer, but it is not. My last guess - it must be the International Space Station, because the Hubble Space

Telescope is not that bright. This is the second time I have looked up and seen the Space Station without looking for it. The transit seemed to take several minutes.

I am working on the August program "The Life Cycle of a Star". I hope to have a better understanding of what happens to the star from birth to death. If you would like to do a program please let Doug know.

### Perseid Meteor Shower as quoted from article by Dr. Tony Phillips, NASA

"...observers in North America can see the "traditional Perseid peak" caused by the older dust from Swift-Tuttle. "Expect 40 to 60 meteors per hour, some of them bright," says Cooke.

The best time to look for these "traditional Perseids" is during the hours before dawn on Thursday, August 12th. Set your alarm for 2 o'clock in the morning; go outside; lie down on a sleeping bag with your toes pointed northeast. You'll soon see meteors racing along the Milky Way...."

..."Can't wake up at 2 a.m.?"

Try looking around 9 or 10 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 11th when Perseus is hanging low in the eastern sky. You won't see many meteors then, but the ones you do see could be memorable. Shooting stars that emerge from the horizon and streak horizontally through the atmosphere are called "Earthgrazers." Slow and colorful Earthgrazers are a good target for city dwellers, because they are so bright...."

### Solutions for July Challenge

**Fun Links – Please Contribute!**

[http://www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/watchtheskies/25jun\\_perseids2004.html](http://www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/watchtheskies/25jun_perseids2004.html)  
Complete article on Perseids

<http://www.savethehubble.org>  
Petition to save the Hubble

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/calendar/>  
Calendar of space related events

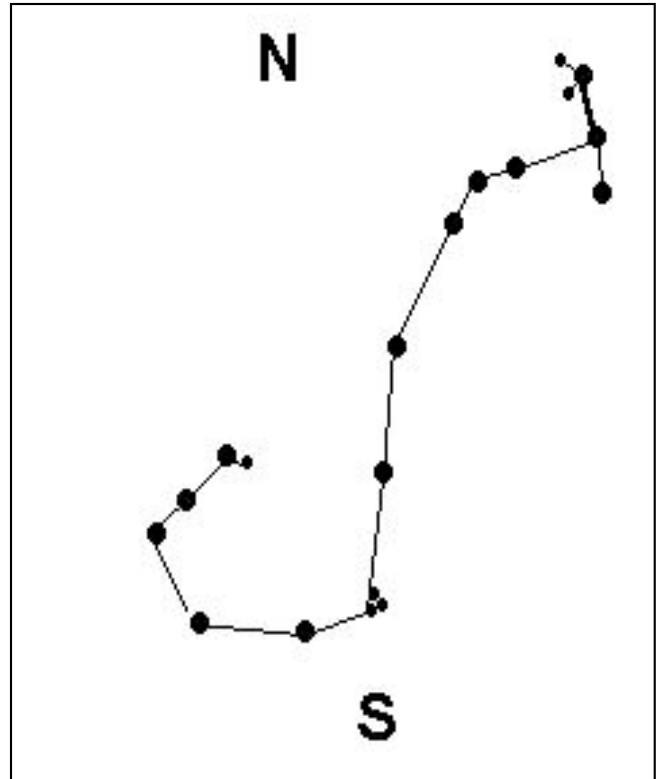
[http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS\\_OneDay.html](http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.html)  
Complete sun and moon data for one day

M	O	O	N			L		P	H	O	B	O	S	
A				V		E				A			M	
R		A		E	U	R	O	P	A		I	O	A	
S	U	N		G		A		C		K			R	
		T		A	L	G	O	L		O	O		I	
		A				O		M		N	A	S	A	
L	Y	R	A			M		E		U				
A		E		G		C	A	S	T	O			G	
C		S		A	U	R	O	R	A		R		L	
E				L		S		L	I	B	R	A	E	
R				I		M		L		I			N	
T				P	L	U	T	O		Y		T	I	T
I		M		E		S		R		S		R		
D	E	I	M	O	S			B	I	G	B	A	N	G
		R						D		A			O	
A						P	L	A	N	E	T		C	

## Constellation of the Month – Scorpius by Craig MacDougal

### Scorpius

I have waited for this month to roll around with great anticipation. That's because I get to tell you about my favorite constellation in the whole sky: SCORPIUS (SKOR-pe-us), the scorpion. Why is it my favorite? Because it really looks like a scorpion! Go outside at 9:30 PM and face south. A little to the right of due south, and not quite half way up the sky you should see a bright reddish (or orange) star twinkling madly at you. This is the brightest star of Scorpius: ANTARES (an-TAIR-eez). Off to the right a couple of finger widths are three stars that form a sort of vertical line. The middle one can be thought of as the head of the scorpion, the other two, the start of the scorpion's two claws. Head back through Antares and the stars form a graceful curve downward toward the horizon and then back up again to form the curving tail. There are even two stars relatively close together that represent the stinger that the scorpion uses with great effect. Be advised that Scorpius is a BIG constellation. It covers more sky than you can cover with your hand stretched as wide as it can. (Unless you can grip an inflated basketball with one hand; then Scorpius is about as big as your hand.) The mythology of Scorpius however, is even skimpier than the mythology of Orion. You may remember that the most agreed upon part of Orion's story is that he was done in by a scorpion. Well, here he is! This collection of stars has been depicted as a scorpion for over 5000 years, going back to the Sumerians. Of course not everybody saw a scorpion in these stars. For example, many cultures of the islands of the south Pacific (where fishing is a way of life) saw this as a giant fish hook in the sky. Because the center of our galaxy lies a little above, and to the left of the tail of Scorpius, there are lots of things to see with binoculars. To the left and above the "stinger" are two open star clusters. These are collections of a few hundred stars apiece that easily show themselves to the binocular viewer.



Current age estimates of these clusters indicate that the stars in them are quite a bit younger than our solar system. In fact Earth was pretty much done forming when these stars started to shine. As Walter Scott Houston of *Sky & Telescope* put it: "I can go out in my yard, and pick up rocks that are older than most open clusters." Sweep your binoculars all around this constellation, and you will run across many more wonders of the universe. It's too boring for me to try to tell you about them. Go out "cruising" around Scorpius, and get the thrill of finding them

Wade Holland is looking for sponsors and donations for his **Eagle Project** for Troop 84, Boys Scouts of America. The project entails designing and constructing a pergola in the prayer garden of the Hillsborough United Methodist Church on Harney Road where Troop 84 meets every Monday night at 7:30 p.m. Please make checks payable to: Wade Holland, 228 Willowick Avenue, Temple Terrace, Florida 33617. The notebook and Scout Workbook are available for review. The notebook includes drawings, "before" photographs and an ongoing record of the time spent on the project. Wade is now busy trying to obtain sponsors. The project was approved July 11, 2004 by his unit and on July 13, 2004 by Council.

## Newsletter of the Museum Astronomical Resource Society

*Martian Chronicles* is published monthly by the Museum Astronomical Resource Society (also known as the MARS Astronomy Club) to provide club news and other items of interest to its members. MARS is sponsored by the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI), Tampa, Florida. Annual club membership dues are \$15.00, which may be paid to any officer at club-sponsored events or mailed to the **CLUB MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL ADDRESS** listed below. Make checks payable to Mildred Simpson, our club treasurer. Newsletters are available to nonmembers by requesting a complimentary trial issue. Please send all inquiries, comments and newsletter contributions to the address below. The deadline for submitted contributions is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. Contributions may be delayed in publication due to available space.

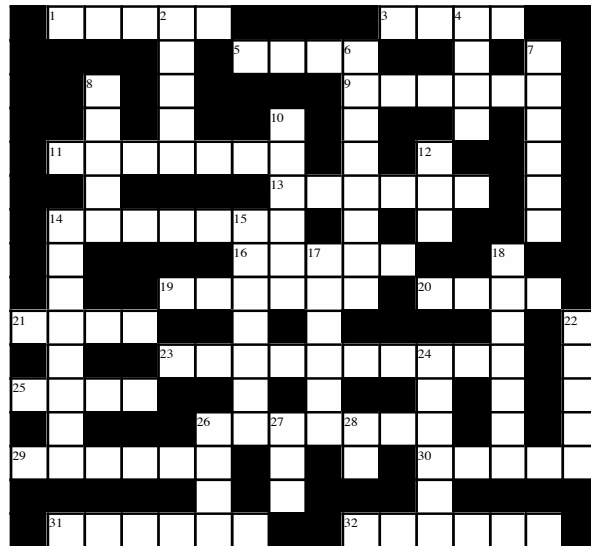
We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.marsastro.org](http://www.marsastro.org)

**Membership/Renewal**  
M.A.R.S.  
C/O Mildred Simpson  
1522 West River Lane  
Tampa, FL 33603

## Martian Challenges By Steve Dixon



### ACROSS

- 1 Constellation : The dragon  
3 Fourth largest asteroid  
5 Gigantic star in Cetus  
9 Powerful celestial radio source  
11 Eighth planet from the sun  
13 Brightest star in the sky  
14 Alternative name for Alpha Scorpii  
16 Constellation : The whale  
19 Second largest asteroid  
20 Earth's nearest neighbour  
21 The constellation in which Canopus is located  
23 Polish Astronomer, Nicolaus ...  
25 First man to orbit the earth - ... Gagarin  
26 Swedish astronomer who defined the centigrade scale  
29 Formulator of the laws of planetary movement  
30 Lunar 'seas'  
31 Immense star system  
32 The star Alpha Geminorum

### DOWN

- 2 Heavenly body having a tail  
4 Initials of the American space authority  
6 Constellation : The water carrier  
7 Seventh planet from the sun  
8 First American to orbit the earth - John ...  
10 Performed the first accurate measurement of the distance to a star  
12 Hub of the solar system  
14 Diameter of primary lens or mirror of a telescope  
15 The obscuring of one celestial body by another  
17 Constellation : The bull  
18 Another name for Sirius (3,4)  
22 The nearest star - ... Centauri  
24 The entire Universe  
26 Constellation : The southern cross  
27 Constellation : The lion  
28 Satellite of Jupiter discovered by Galileo

### About Our Organization...

President – Frances Ferguson, 813-238-8299, [faferguson@sisna.com](mailto:faferguson@sisna.com)  
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