



# Newsletter

“Astrophotography on a Budget”

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## Mark “Rockets” the Counter!

EAAS Member Mark Stronge set the hit counter rocketing on September 2nd. when he submitted an image he took at our MarsWatch Star Party on August 27th! Against stiff competition his image



(shown below) was accepted for the NASA Astronomy Picture of the Day site and in a month our “hits” have doubled.

We are now more than double our last year’s figure of 3500 and are hopeful of hitting the 10,000 mark by the year’s end if not more! The same image is on a Russian equivalent site, so very well done to Mark!

## Active Sun.

Over the past week or so the Sun has been very active with a spot group crossing. Designated AR 464, it measured roughly 15 Earth diameters from end to end, and was visible to the unaided eye. Unfortunately, there doesn’t seem to have been any major flare activity associated with 464, so auroral levels remain fairly low at present.



Below is a lovely image of the group taken by James Adamson from Co. Mayo. Hopefully we will get a few more of these big groups before we reach the minimum. As I have said so often, and

make no apologies for saying it again, the Sun is dangerous even when low in the sky, NEVER take the chance of looking at it without the proper precautions. Always use a safe filter, (see above right) not the one’s that screw into the eyepiece, these can splinter and you will end up with an eye full of glass! Be careful and treat it with the respect it deserves. Come and hear all about our nearest ‘Star’ for beginners at the next meeting when Philip Baxter will be giving a talk on the subject. Other upcoming meetings include the next IAA meeting in Lecture Room 5 Stranmillis on October 8th at 7.30pm. The speaker will be Dr Ian Morrison from Jodrell Bank Observatory, and his subject is TBA.



On October 26th. Armagh Observatory have planned another one of their very popular events in Co with the Armagh NHPS. The event starts at 6pm and ends about 10pm and is called “Time Event”. The speakers are Professor John Barrow FRS U of C, on “Time: A Guide for Travellers”, Professor Iggy McGovern, TCD on “Time, Chime and Rhyme” and Mr Malachi O’Doherty, Fortnight Magazine, on “The Personal Experience of Time”. There will be an interval with light refreshments. The event is by ticket only and is scheduled to be held in St. Patrick’s Trian, but due to the numbers this venue could be changed, watch the emails for details! Tickets can be booked from Aileen at the Observatory on 028-3752-2928 or [ambn@arm.ac.uk](mailto:ambn@arm.ac.uk) As mentioned above, our next meeting is on Monday November 3rd in the school at 8pm. sharp! It is our first Beginners Night of the season, and as well as having Philip’s talk, hopefully it will also be clear, so bring a telescope.

## ***The Planets in October.***

*After a long dry spell without many spots the Sun has been very active recently, (see over).*

*Mercury is now in the morning sky but is quite difficult, try to find it by using Jupiter as a pointer at the beginning of the month. It rapidly draws in towards the Sun and will be even more difficult by mid month with conjunction on October 25th.*

*Venus is in the evening twilight and difficult, but by month's end it will be about 20 degrees from the Sun but still sets at dusk. Try to get a nice photo of it with it's reflection in a lake, and send in your results.*

*Mars still dominates the evening sky at magnitude -1 being visible low in the south east just after sunset. Although it is now moving away from the Earth you can still see many details even in a modest telescope. It is moving northwards along the ecliptic in Aquarius and is steadily getting higher in the sky as it transits the meridian. The South Polar Cap (SPC), is now shrinking with the approach of "Southern" summer, and for those of you who have been following its progress, it will be interesting to watch the changes. Even if you can't photograph Mars try to make drawings and send them in.*

*Jupiter is in the morning sky and beginning to get higher as dawn breaks. As always, it is well getting up early to observe as the atmosphere on Jupiter is ever changing, and it will be interesting to see if there is any significant change in the colour of the Great Red Spot (GRS). Don't forget about the moons, each one is as big as our own Moon, watch for the transits and occultation's of these.*

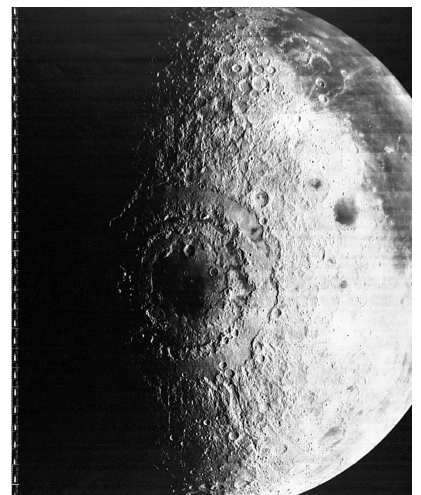
*Saturn is now in Gemini and makes that constellation look very odd! By about 1am BST it is about 20 degrees up in the North East and is observable even at this altitude. By the time dawn lightens it is more than 60 degrees altitude. It is worth making the effort to get up early to observe as the rings are awesome being wide open and boosting the planet's brightness to -0.1. See how many satellites of Saturn you can spot during an observation, and see if you can beat my tally of 5!*

*Uranus and Neptune are still in the evening sky. Uranus is in Aquarius and only a short distance from Mars, about 4 degrees. In any reasonable telescope it appears as a tiny turquoise disk and it's amazing to think that when Herschel saw it he thought it was a comet as it did not occur to him that another planet could exist! Neptune is in Capricornus and again any reasonable telescope will show it as a tiny disk.*

*Pluto is still in the evening sky but is now too low for easy observing.*

*There are two Meteor showers this month, the Orionid's and later the Taurid's. The Orionid's will be hampered a bit by the waning moon, however, the later stages won't be affected too badly. Orionid's are debris from Comet Halley, and are usually swift and leave short-lived trains. You might see about a dozen in an hour's observing. The Taurid's rise to a broad peak in early November and are the debris of Comet 2/P Encke, which is becoming visible in the late evening sky, (see separate chart) although it is still around 10th magnitude. This shower occasionally sports spectacular fireballs, and won't be troubled too much from moonlight.*

*When the Moon is out of the way autumn is also a good time to watch for the Zodiacal Light. It will be visible as a faint cone of light rising from the ecliptic just before dawn. You will need a totally dark sky and a good clear horizon to spot it. Terry Moseley and I have watched for it for years and we haven't had success yet, as far as I know!*



*Something for the Lunar observers to watch for. For a few days over the next few months, libration brings into view one of the Moon's most interesting features known as the Oriental Basin. It is an impact basin more than 900 km wide but can only*

*be seen when libration is just right, as it is on the Moon's far side. The best time's this month are from the 16th - 21st. First look for the dark floored crater Grimaldi and come over to the limb towards the 7-o'clock point and you will see the Cordillera and Rook Mountains, look further onto the limb for the dark Mare Orientale itself. It is a challenge for those members with big telescopes and Digital or CCD equipment. Send in any images or drawings to either the Webmaster or myself.*

*This image of the Mare Orientale was taken by the Lunar Orbiter spacecraft in 1965, and shows a view we can never see from the Earth. Dark floored Grimaldi is towards the right of the image.*

*Courtesy NASA.*

*Till next month, good observing!*

*John.*