



News from The Society- for Astronomical Sciences

Vol. 4, Number 2

2006 Symposium: Joint meeting with CBA plus wider variety of Workshops meets with success



A variety of workshops ran concurrently in the morning and afternoon of the Tuesday before the start of the SAS Symposium. On the left side, Tony Vanmunster demonstrates the features of his period analysis software PerAnso. The right hand picture shows registration activities during the first day of the Symposium. Below, Dr. Don Yeomans of JPL delivered the Keynote address: Finding Near-Earth Objects before they find us.

The 2006 SAS Symposium is now history and by all counts was one of our most successful on several levels. We had a new record as far as the number of registered participants this year with a 119 tally. This was also the first time we had a joint meeting with another group, the CBA. The feedback from SAS and CBA members was very positive such that we are exploring avenues for another joint meeting in the future. Besides the core SAS meeting, this was the second year we had workshops held prior to the Symposium.

In fact we had several levels of workshops, both in the morning and afternoon. The Essentials workshop by Jerry Foote had a total registered attendance of 40. The MPO PhotoRed by Brian Warner had 38 registered participants while the workshop by Tony Vanmunster, who demonstrated his period determination software PerAnSo, had 31 people registered.

The Symposium got underway with Rick Fienberg

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Committee:

- Lee Snyder – Co-Chairman
- Robert Stephens – Co-Chairman
- Robert Gill – Audio Visual Webmaster
- Dave Kenyon – Program Co-Chairman
- Dale Mais – Program Co-Chairman, Newsletter editor
- Brian Warner – Program Co-Chairman
- Jerry Foote – Program Co-Chairman

Advisors:

- Arne Henden
- Dirk Terrell
- Alan Harris



*News from The Society
for Astronomical
Sciences*

The 2006 SAS Symposium Group photo taken at Northwoods Resort at the pool. A record 119 registered participants participated in this years symposium.



Dr Joe Patterson of Columbia University and the guiding light of the Center for Backyard Astrophysics delivers his overview on the CBA and cataclysmic variables. There were several presentations by CBA members who came from all over the world to participate in this years SAS Symposium. On the right, Rick Fienberg of Sky and Telescope delivers the opening talk on Pro-Am Collaboration: A New Paradigm



Your Participation Wanted!

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Membership Information

Membership in your new Society for Astronomical Sciences (SAS).

As was pointed out with the last issue, it was felt that a modest membership fee would greatly help SAS to produce a better product for its members. This fee will be \$25.00 per year. What will this membership fee provide? Well for one thing it WILL NOT go to any committee members as part of their efforts within SAS. We volunteer our time for The Society.

Members will receive a discount for the registration fee each year for the Symposium at Big Bear. It will assure you that you will get a copy of the published proceedings each year, even if you do not at-

tend the Symposium. It will help defray costs in bringing in outside speakers (professionals) to the symposium.

Membership is annual and runs from July to June of the following year. To become a member, send \$25 to: Society for Astronomical Sciences, 8300 Utica Avenue, Suite 105, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730. You may also join online at the registration page of the web site. Membership dues are tax deductible.

We currently have 82 members with many renewals due in by June 1.

The SAS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

As I have mentioned in previous Newsletters, we need your participation in the Newsletter. We don't want this to become a one person or just a couple person show. If you have an article which can cover a variety of topics, please put it together for a future Newsletter. Work in progress is always welcome. In addition, we have started a "letters to the Editor" section where we would like to add 2-3 letters from the members/participants. We had no letters to incorporate into this Newsletter edition. Constructive comments are always welcome as we are always looking for ways to improve not only the quality of the Newsletter but also the quality of the Symposium. We want the SAS to become a year around organization not just a once a year group.

delivering a talk on on ProAm collaboration followed by talks by Hopkins, Lucas, Mais/Stencel and Watson on various aspects of photometry of variable stars. The afternoon session was for the most part dedicated to talks by CBA members and cataclysmic variables.

Thursday got underway with topics such as exoplanet searching, eclipsing binaries and after the break radar imaging of asteroids by Lance Benner. The afternoon session focused on asteroid work, culminating in Kaasalainen's talk on amateur participation in asteroid shape modeling. Finishing out the 2 day sessions were talks by Snyder (eclipsing binary orbits), Kaye (imaging in IR and Wharton/Hoot (imaging for solar sail orbit determination.

Following dinner and door prizes, we were all treated to an outstanding keynote address by Don Yeomans of JPL



Above: Wide angle view of the opening of the 2006 SAS Symposium. The joint meeting filled the conference room to near capacity



We thank our 2006 Sponsors whose support makes our meeting possible:

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Robert Stephens

Symposium Report

Below are extracts from emails sent out during the 2006 Symposium breaks (thanks to the hotspot in the resort lobby that extended into the meeting rooms). Despite the availability of an internet connection, I paid rapt attention to all of the speakers and their fascinating subjects (that's my story and I'm sticking to it).

Monday, May 22: I traveled up the mountain in mid afternoon in the midst of a late season storm. The visibility on Highway 18 averaged 25 feet. Fortunately, having lived in these mountains for seven years I was still able to drive the roads like a local, using those little dots to let me know when I was getting too close to the cliff. Arriving at the Northwoods Resort in Big Bear, I met some of the early arrivers to the Symposium on Telescope Science. This year we held the symposium in conjunction with the Center for Backyard Astrophysics (CBA), a small but active group of amateur observers from around the world that specializes in watching catastrophic variables. That evening we meet Grant Christie and Jennie McCormick, CBA members from New Zealand. Although Grant has traveled a lot, this was Jeannie's first trip further from home than Australia. She was astounded by her trip to La La Land and had plenty of questions. Other regulars showed up and several bottles of wine and scotch were consumed.

Tuesday, May 23: This was the day for technical workshops. Tonny Vanmunster, a CBA member from the Netherlands gave a workshop on using photometry software. Also Jerry Foote of the SAS and CBA gave a workshop on the basics of data acquisition. Finally, Brian Warner gave two workshops on transforming observations to the standard color system. That evening, Mikko Kassalainen from Finland arrived and we talked shop about his asteroid shape modeling program. Some of the most important information is gained between the presentations.

Later we ended up with the Kiwi's and heard them argue about their local New Zealand politicians. Nothing changes the world round.

Wednesday, May 24: This was the day the regular sessions started. In the morning we heard a talk from Rick Fienberg of Sky & Telescope on the future of pro-am collaborations. In Rick's opinion, it is brighter than ever. We also heard some interesting talks on the upcoming eclipse of 3rd magnitude Epsilon Aurigae, which goes into eclipse once every 29 years. The eclipse lasts two years and will start in 2009.

The afternoon had the CBA sessions. Speakers from around the world described their programs chasing catastrophic variables. Many of these amateur astronomers also participated in other programs such as transit searches, supernova searches, and looking for microlensing events. It is simply amazing what an amateur astronomer with modest equipment can do. A typical setup for these international amateur astronomers is a 10 to 14-inch Meade telescope equipped with a small CCD camera.

Thursday, May 25, 2006: At the opening of this session, Rick Fienberg of Sky & Telescope grabbed the microphone to test a new idea. He wants participants in the room to help write a book promoting amateur science. People in the room were highly enthusiastic. Next we heard

presentations on how amateurs can mine online databases to model extrasolar planetary systems. An article on this will appear in an upcoming issue of Sky & Telescope. Afterwards, Grant Christie of New Zealand told us how he uses a 14-inch telescope to use microlensing to find planets 20,000 light years way.

The rest of the day was mostly "The Revenge of the Asteroids." Several talks had a rock in space theme. The most important of which was given by Mikko Kassalainen on the future of asteroid shape and pole modeling. He has developed a system where a single lightcurve combined with 100 random data points over 10 years is sufficient to model the size, shape and rotational axis of any asteroid. The random data points will be generated by the new Pan-STARRS survey going on-line in Hawaii next year. This survey will scan the entire sky every few nights generating terabytes of information of asteroids, supernova, and anything else in its sights. After a few years of operations, any amateur with (then) off the shelf software will be able to generate their own models. Pan-STARRS will be followed by the just announced LSST 8.5-meter survey telescope which, if all goes well, is scheduled to go online in 2010.

Three days, three workshops, 24 talks, and numerous meals, social hours and get togethers with the pros left us all exhausted. Time to go down the road to the RTMC Astronomy Expo!



Discussions abound during breaks in the sessions