



M-STAR



<http://mstar-astronomy.tripod.com>

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Founded in 1982

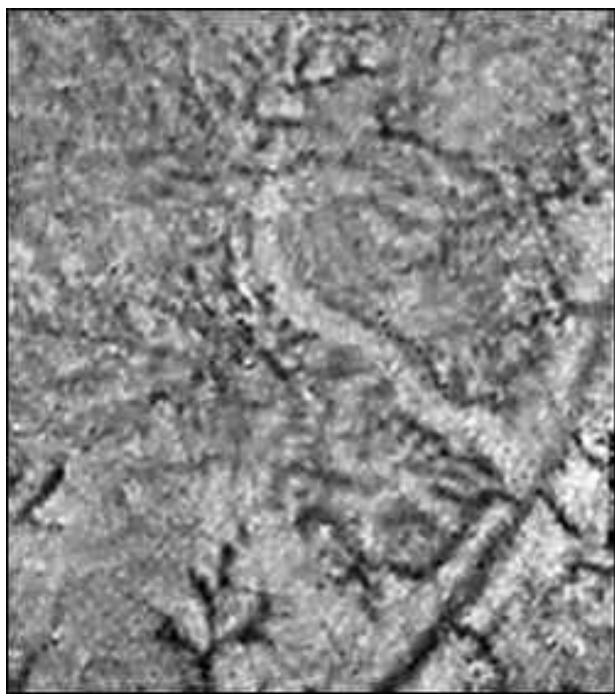
McSwain Outing Cancelled

Although the McSwain School viewing scheduled for Friday Feb. 4th was cancelled, I wanted to take the opportunity here to thank the M-STAR members who volunteered to come out and share their love of astronomy with the kids.

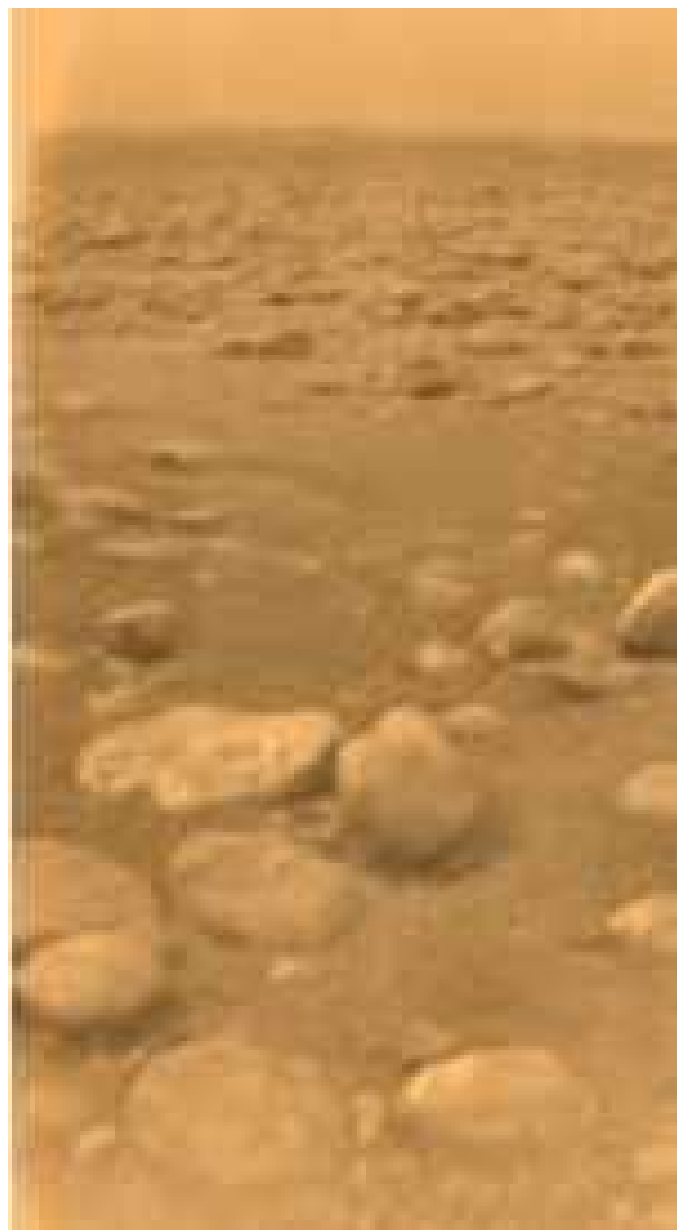
The outing was arranged to cap off a series of classes put together by M-Star members Gary Walker and Michael Ryan for a McSwain GATE class. While the week leading up to the viewing date abounded with clear skies. Friday afternoon, the clouds and haze built up to the point where the sky was completely obscured by 6:30 pm and the event was cancelled at the last minute.

Perhaps we can arrange for a viewing later in the spring when the weather is a bit more predictable. ~GW

Huygens lands on Titan



Huygens imaged a bright, linear feature scientists think may be ice extruded through a rift and onto the surface. Several short, stubby, dark channels are also visible. Their shape is more consistent with liquid methane "springs," rather than rain. *ESA / NASA / JPL / University of Arizona*



Icy pebbles are strewn across the landscape in this color image of Titan's surface. The two large objects just below the middle of the image are about 6 inches (15 centimeters, at left) and 1.6 inches (4 cm, center) across, respectively. They lie about 33 inches (85 cm) from Huygens. *ESA/NASA/JPL/University of Arizona*

SKY & TELESCOPE's WEEKLY NEWS BULLETINS



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Welcome to S&T's Weekly News Bulletins. Images, the full text of stories abridged here, and other enhancements are available on our Web site, SkyandTelescope.com, at the URLs provided below. Clear skies!

FLY ME TO THE MOONS

As NASA's Cassini spacecraft continues its looping orbit around Saturn's moons, astronomers are receiving a flood of new, close-up shots of the ringed planet's satellites. In mid-January Cassini captured images of two of Saturn's closest and most intriguing neighbors: Mimas and Enceladus.

Mimas, made famous by its eerie similarity to the Death Star from Star Wars, is seen against a beautiful blue Saturn in this image shot from 1.4 million kilometers (870,000 miles) away....

http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1461_1.asp

A FLURRY OF EXOPLANET DISCOVERIES

Discoveries of extrasolar planets are coming so fast and furious that even the planet hunters themselves can barely keep up. The current tally stands at around 150 known planets, though the exact number depends on what objects one chooses to call "planets." This week, astronomers announced several important new findings at a conference in Aspen, Colorado.

The discoveries include an object with such a low mass -- just one-fifth the mass of Pluto (roughly 0.0004 Earth mass) -- that it can hardly be considered a "planet...."

http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1460_1.asp

HUBBLE TAKES A HIT

The rumors that circulated in late January were true: The Bush Administration's proposed budget for fiscal year 2006 includes no money to service the Hubble Space Telescope. Outgoing NASA administrator Sean O'Keefe said as much at a NASA press briefing on February 7th, the day President George W. Bush delivered his latest spending plan to Congress. Without another round of repairs and upgrades, Hubble is projected to die in orbit in 2007 or 2008....

http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1459_1.asp

COMET MACHHOLZ

By now the comet is starting to fade a little as it moves farther from Earth, and the return of the Moon to the evening sky will make the comet harder to spot. Machholz is circumpolar during February, March, and April even as it dims from magnitude 4 or 5 to 9. It will remain a binocular object at least through February and visible in a telescope at least through May.

http://SkyandTelescope.com/observing/objects/comets/article_1396_1.asp

AN ECLIPSING BINARY IN THE TRAPEZIUM

Every 65 days one of the four Trapezium stars in the Orion Nebula is in eclipse; observers in Europe and eastern North America will have the best view of the next event on the 15th.

<http://SkyandTelescope.com/observing/objects/variablestars>

ASTEROID 2004 MN4: A REALLY NEAR MISS

If you plan to be alive on April 13, 2029, you can look forward to an asteroid-watching party across three continents like nothing the world has ever seen.

The near-Earth asteroid 2004 MN4 made headlines for a couple of days last December when astronomers estimated that it had a 1-in-38 chance of hitting Earth in 2029. The threat quickly passed when old images were found that pinned down the asteroid's orbit well enough to guarantee that it will miss our planet. Now, extremely precise radar observations made on January 27th, 29th, and 30th have refined its orbit even further. The asteroid is still certain to miss Earth, but it will be a squeaker indeed -- and the event will present a once-in-a-millennium naked-eye asteroid show....

http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1458_1.asp

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produced and edited by Gary W.
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Telescope Innovations

I've made a new dew shield for my telescope and I thought I would share it with the club. If you like, please try this with your own telescope if applicable and if you have questions please contact me.

Dew Shield

I have a 10" Meade Schmidt-Newtonian that has a front corrector plate that often fogs up. I looked around for dew shields and they ranged from \$30 to \$70 depending on the material. I decided to make my own.

I found a large 12" cardboard tube at Lowes called a "Quick-Tube". It is used for concrete moldings. It is lined with a nice smooth wax layer and on my scope it slides right over my optical tube with ease but snug enough that I don't even have to lock it down. I lined the inside with black felt to cut down on stray light bouncing off the inside of the tube and it prevents moisture buildup from dripping down the inside of the tube. I had some spray adhesive already that I used to glue it down. I also spray painted the outside white to match my telescope so it looked nice. The tube came 4' long but I cut the end off for my dew shield at 16" so I can get two more out of it in the future. It overlaps the end of my telescope about 4" so it sticks out from the end of my telescope about 1'. I noticed that Lowes had other size tubes at 8" and 10". I'm not sure but they probably come larger and smaller at 2" intervals. The prices vary depending on the size.

If you plan on trying this I recommend that you first spray paint the outside if you choose to paint your tube and then glue the felt. Be careful that when you glue the felt the added thickness doesn't make the dew shield too small to fit over the end of your telescope. On my dew shield my felt is only 12" wide not the full 16" because it won't fit otherwise. Also, I purposely glued my felt so that it stuck out past the end of the dew shield and then using scissors trimmed it back even. It is much too difficult to try and glue the edge of the felt right up to the edge of the dew shield.

Quick-Tube = \$8.00
Felt = \$2.00
Spray Adhesive = \$ 5.00
Paint (optional) = \$5.00
Total = \$15 - \$20

Thanks,

Eric Holland
M-Star Webmaster



Quik Tube

Join M-STAR and See the UNIVERSE

Membership terms are on an annual calendar from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31

Mail to: M-STAR Treasurer, 1136 N. Stratford Ave Atwater, CA 95301

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone # _____

e-mail _____

Main Astronomical Interests: _____

Membership Plan:

New _____ Renewal _____

Family/Individual (\$15) _____

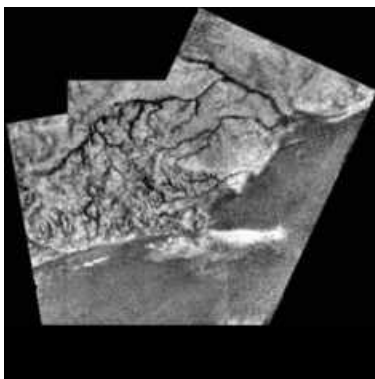
Student, over 18 (\$10) _____

Youth, under 18 (\$5) _____



M-STAR CLUB NEWSLETTER

1812 N. Quinley Ave
Merced, CA 95340



This three-frame mosaic of Huygens images reveals unprecedented detail of a 330-foot (100 meter) icy ridge. Liquid methane washes organic particulates off the highlands and into a multitude of small channels. The channels merge into a larger one, which spills into a now-dry lake. *ESA / NASA / JPL / University of Arizona*