

Kirkwood Observatory Monthly Bulletin – March, 2009

Celebrate the International Year of Astronomy with
I-Universe!

This month:

- 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy
- Kirkwood Observatory Reopens March 25
- Public Lecture on March 24
- Observing Contest for High School Students
- Other IYA Events
- Follow us on twitter
- Hal Kibbey's Star Trak Column for This Month's Planet and Sky Events
- March Mission Madness Tournament
- Globe at Night star count from March 16-28
- Spring Equinox is March 20 at 7:44 a.m. EDT

Next month:

- Solar Telescope open on April 4
- Public Lecture on April 21

2009 is the International Year of Astronomy!

In celebration of the International Year of Astronomy, the IU Department of Astronomy is offering I-Universe, a series of events and activities, including public lectures, special open nights at Kirkwood Observatory, Solar Telescope Open Days, and other special events. For information about these events, visit <http://iya.astro.indiana.edu>.

KIRKWOOD OBSERVATORY REOPENS March 25

Kirkwood Observatory will reopen on March 25th, weather permitting. Join us for a new season of observing the night sky with the Kirkwood 12" refractor. This year, we will celebrate the International Year of Astronomy with special evenings at the Observatory. Please visit our schedule at http://www.astro.indiana.edu/kirk_sch.shtml, for a list of dates and times. For updated weather conditions and closings, please call the Kirkwood Observatory Hotline at (812) 855-7736.

If skies are clear on opening night, we should be able to view nearby star clusters, and later in the evening, find a bright yellow Saturn and its planet-sized moon Titan. Join us at the Observatory from 8:30-10:30pm.

Follow us on twitter at <http://twitter.com/iuastro>! Receive the most up-to-date opening/closing information for Kirkwood Observatory right on your phone or desktop by subscribing to our twitter feed.

Tours of Kirkwood Observatory are available for your class or educational group, either at night for use of the telescope or during the day for solar viewing. There is no charge. Send email to outreach@astro.indiana.edu to schedule a visit.

Public Lecture on March 24

"The Chemical Heritage of Star and Planet Formation"

Professor Thomas Hartquist, University of Leeds

7:30 PM in Fine Arts 015

Professor Hartquist is a Visiting Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study

Chemical reactions play a role in the evolution of interstellar gas clouds into stars and planets. Molecules cool the clouds, and induce them to collapse. Cooling also controls how effectively magnetic fields can slow the collapse. Evolving physical conditions form new molecules within clouds, and allow astrophysicists to track star and planet formation. Molecules observed by astrophysicists include water and numerous organic species, which become incorporated in comets, meteors, and planets. Some meteorites even contain amino acids of probable interstellar origin. The chemistry of star and planet formation created initial conditions on Earth that triggered the emergence of life!

Observing Contest for HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

In celebration of the International Year of Astronomy, the IU Department of Astronomy is offering high school students the opportunity to compete to use the WIYN 0.9-m telescope at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona for one night to make astronomical observations.

One night's observing time at the WIYN 0.9m telescope will be awarded to the winning student or student group to take pictures of their favorite night sky objects. The winning student(s) will visit the Remote Observing Center on the IU Bloomington campus to make their observations. IU Astronomy faculty or advanced students will help the winners to obtain and prepare the astronomical images. The resulting images will then be used for educational and/or scientific purposes to encourage student interest in astronomy.

The application deadline is April 1, 2009. For information about the contest or to enter, visit iya.astro.indiana.edu/contest.

International Year of Astronomy (IYA) events

For up-to-date information on IYA events at IU, check our I-Universe website at iya.astro.indiana.edu.

An additional public lecture is scheduled on April 21:

* Nobel laureate John Mather, known for his investigations of the cosmic microwave background radiation, a remnant radiation from the early universe shortly after the Big Bang, will visit IU as this year's Konopinski Lecturer, and will present a public lecture on April 21st.

For more information on the global scale of the IYA, check astronomy2009.us/.

Kirkwood Solar Telescope

The Solar Telescope at the Kirkwood Observatory will be open to the public on April 4th from 1-3pm. This event is weather permitting. Updated weather conditions and closings will be posted at the Kirkwood Observatory Hotline at (812) 855-7736, and at the Observatory webpage, http://www.astro.indiana.edu/kirk_sch.shtml.

Monthly openings of the facility are planned for the first Saturday of each monthly during our 2009 observing season.

March Mission Madness Tournament

Do you enjoy March Madness? Visit <http://www.nasa.gov/externalflash/missionmadness/bracket.html> to participate in NASA's spin on this annual sporting traditional, Mission Madness Tournament. Make your own bracket containing 64 of NASA's missions. You get to vote for your favorite mission to help it advance further into the tournament. This is a fun way to learn some NASA history and trivia. Voting starts on March 19th, so don't miss out!

Hal Kibbey's Star Trak column available online

To see what celestial events are in store for this month, check out the Hal Kibbey's Star Trak column at <http://www.astro.indiana.edu/startrak.shtml>.

Light Pollution

Education on light pollution is a major initiative for IYA. The fourth annual Globe at Night star count will run from March 16 to March 28 this year. This event is designed to educate the public about light pollution and emphasize that it is a growing concern. Please see <http://www.globe.gov/GaN/> for more information.

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