



# The High Desert Observer

The Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces

September, 2012

The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC) is dedicated to expanding public awareness and understanding of the wonders of the universe. ASLC holds frequent observing sessions and star parties and provides opportunities to work on Society and public educational projects. Members receive the *High Desert Observer*, our monthly newsletter, plus membership to the Astronomical League, which includes their quarterly publication, *Reflector*.

ASLC dues are \$30.00 per year (from January 1 to December 31), which includes electronic delivery of the HDO. Prorated dues are available for new members. Dues are payable to ASLC with an application form or note to: Treasurer ASLC, PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004

*ASLC members are entitled to a \$5.00 (per year) Sky and Telescope magazine discount.*

## ASLC Board of Directors, 2012

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Director Emeritus: Walter Haas

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Education: Rich Richins; [education@aslc-nm.org](mailto:education@aslc-nm.org)

Grants: Sidney Webb; [sidwebb@gmail.com](mailto:sidwebb@gmail.com)

Librarian: Brenner Fody;

Loaner Telescope: Ron Kramer; [ronjkramer@aol.com](mailto:ronjkramer@aol.com)

Membership: John McCullough; [Secretary@aslc-nm.org](mailto:Secretary@aslc-nm.org)

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- Tombaugh: Steve Shaffer; [Director1@aslc-nm.org](mailto:Director1@aslc-nm.org)

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## Table of Contents

- 2 A Note from the President
- 3 Outreach Activities Roundup
- 4 Calendar of Events
- 5 Meeting Minutes
- 8 Las Cruces Sun-News reprint of Lighting Ordinance article
- 9 Classifieds

## Next Meeting

Our September meeting will be held on Friday, September 28, in Room 77 at Doña Ana Community College, with the following schedule:

7:00 pm - 7:30 pm Show & Tell

7:30 pm - 8:00 pm Business Meeting

8:00 pm - 9:00 pm Guest Speaker & Presentation

This month's speaker is our very own Vice President, Tracy Stuart. He will be discussing "A Belated Blue Moon."

He will describe the differences between the various definitions of "Blue Moon" with his always-entertaining style.

## Editor's Note

Thank you all for the positive comments on the August HDO.

Each month will see improvements to its appearance and content. I am continually seeking articles, book reviews, new product reviews, photos (taken by our readers), cartoons and other tidbits which are appropriate.

If any of our readers have any criticism, constructive or critical, please address comments to my attention at [ronjkramer@aol.com](mailto:ronjkramer@aol.com).

Thank you.

Ron

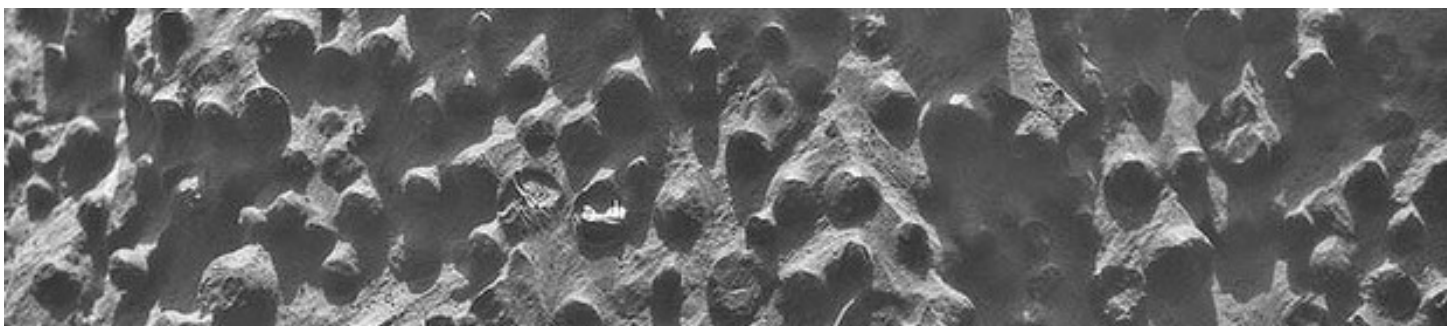
## A Note From the President, September, 2012

Finally! Orion is here. Of course you have to be awake at 1:00 in the morning to see it, but our old friend has returned. Cooler weather (the evenings are in the 50's) and clearer skies are also here. Jupiter, the Pleiades, Sirius, M31 and other wonderful objects are visible.



It looks like another asteroid (or comet) hit Jupiter. This photograph, taken on September 11 by a Dallas amateur astronomer shows the impact. There was no evidence of any residue from the impact (as there was when comet Shoemaker-Levy was sucked up by our celestial vacuum cleaner in 1994).

In addition, another old friend, the Mars Rover, Opportunity is still at work since landing on Mars in 2004. A recent image shows more "blueberries" on Mars' surface. These spherules, about 3mm in diameter are similar, yet different from the original objects discovered earlier in the Rover mission.



The Las Cruces City Council recently voted on a new Lighting Ordinance, which passed unanimously. This Ordinance includes mandatory penalties for non-compliant lighting. It impacts business, residential and city-owned properties as well as educational institutions (with the exclusion of NMSU, which is being addressed separately). The grandfathering laws have been rewritten and there is a list of specific definitions, which will avoid any misunderstanding of terms. A copy of the Las Cruces Sun News article is on page 9 of this edition of the *HDO*.

I am very proud of the fact that the ASLC was instrumental in presenting our views to the City Council on these provisions. Recognizing it took some 30 years for light pollution in Las Cruces to reach its present level, it could take another 30 years to get it back to where it was. However, this new Ordinance will help insure that light pollution will not further increase. I would like to thank all ASLC members who participated in City Council meetings during the past two years which informed the local government of our requirements and requests for improvement.

As we have learned, *demands* for improvements will generally fall upon deaf ears; however *suggestions* are listened to and acted upon. I will be writing individual letters to Mayor Miyagishima and the City Council members, thanking them for taking our suggestions under advisement and making the correct choice in passing the new legislation. I would be great if all ASLC members would follow suit with their own letters.

This may not be 100% of what we want, but it is a great start. I envision that over time, further meetings with the City Council, when updated lighting ordinances are considered will bear fruit.

I also have an agreement with Codes Enforcement that if any ASLC member discovers a non-compliant light or lighting fixture, it should be reported to me (ronjkramer@aol.com) and I will send periodical compilations to Codes. Two officers have been assigned to nighttime duty looking for such non-compliant lighting. They are charged with enforcing the laws set forth in this new Ordinance.

We're making plans for the 2012 Holiday Party, to be held at Las Cruces Airport, EAA Hanger. Proposed date is Saturday, December 1, starting at 5:30 pm. As usual, it will be a "pot luck" dinner, with everyone bringing something to eat. We will discuss this at the September 28 meeting, but mark your calendars. We will need some volunteers for decorations, gift-exchange, entertainment, etc.

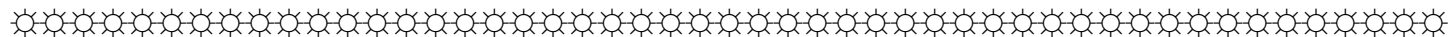
Ann McPhee still has lots of apparel for sale, including hats, t-shirts (short- and long-sleeved), hoodies and denim shirts. Please talk to her at the next meeting if you're interested in purchasing this gear. You can also contact her via email (email addresses are on the first page of the *HDO*).

There are plenty of items available from the Ken Kile estate. Adapters of all sizes, cables and hardware for larger Meade telescopes, as well as a fully equipped 10" LX200. Walter Haas is selling the 12.5" long focal length primary from his telescope. Please see our new *CLASSIFIEDS* section for further details.

Our next meeting will be on September 28. We will be accepting nominees for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director-at-Large (2). Please consider about running for office.

One final note: we have established an ASLC Library. Many of the books in the Library were donated by Walter Haas and Judy Kile. Additional books will be added over time. New member, Brenner Fody has volunteered to become our Librarian, and is working on a policy to enable ASLC members to check out books. Further details will be forthcoming.

Ron J. Kramer



## **Outreach Activities Roundup**

By Jerry McMahan

### **Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, Friday, August 24, 2012**

Two years ago, when we had a star party at the park, we nearly froze with 20 degree temperatures. Last year I got stuck in sand dunes and Chuck had to come and rescue me. This year it was warm and I did not get stuck anywhere. True, it was on the same night as the club meeting and we had to wait out clouds from time to time, but it did go well otherwise.

The reason the park officials wanted it that particular night was that they had a number of people from the media present and wanted to promote New Mexico clear skies to them. Did I mention the clouds? We did get a good view of the first quarter Moon, during cloud breaks, and Saturn was still high enough to view for most of the session. Other objects included Albireo, M13 and the ring.

Rich Richins brought his 16 inch Dobsonian, Chuck Sterling had his 10 inch Schmidt Cassegrain and I had the 5 inch Maksutov.

### **Moongaze, Saturday August 25, 2012**

I could hear thunder just before leaving home and we did have thin clouds though out the observing session, but we still had good looks at the Moon and Saturn.

Steve Shaffer had his small Dobsonian, Chuck Sterling had the 10 inch and I bought the usual Maksutov. New member, 12 year old Brenner Fody, brought his telescope and Kyle Josefy brought a 6 inch Newtonian that he picked up for \$22 at a garage sale. Steve helped him with the operation of the telescope. He is a potential member of the club. Also present was Robert Brinks who has attended several meetings and is usually at the Moongaze.

The thin clouds eliminated the possibility of seeing most deep sky objects, but Chuck was able to get the open cluster M7 and even the Double Double in Lyra. We did not get rained on, so it did go pretty well again.

**Calendar of Events: September / October 2012 (Mountain Time - 24 hr. clock)**

Sep	18	08:45	Moon near Saturn
	19	14:36	Moon near Mars
	21	19:30	BRIGHT BEGINNINGS STAR PARTY
	22	08:49	Autumnal Equinox
	22	13:41	First Quarter Moon
	22	19:00	HUECO TANKS STATE PARKS STAR PARTY
	28	19:00	ASLC MONTHLY MEETING
	29	00:35	Uranus at Opposition
	29	21:19	Full Moon
Oct	01	04:58	Mercury near Spica
	01		Venus at maximum western elongation
	04	18:43	Moon at Apogee
	05	14:50	Moon near Jupiter
	08	01:33	Last Quarter Moon
	12	13:10	Moon near Venus
	15	06:02	New Moon
	16	19:02	Moon at Perigee
	16	19:43	Moon near Mercury
	18	07:06	Moon near Mars
	20		ASTRONOMY DAY (Mayfield High School)
	20	14:05	Mars near Antares
	20	22:08	Orionids Meteor Shower
	21	21:32	First Quarter Moon
	26	19:00	ASLC MONTHLY MEETING (Elections)
	29	12:50	Full Moon

Be sure to visit our web site for the latest updates: [www.aslc-nm.org](http://www.aslc-nm.org)

**Events**

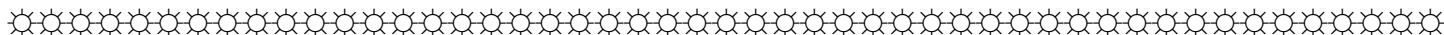
ASLC hosts deep-sky viewing and imaging at our dark sky location in Upham. We also have public in-town observing sessions at both the International Delights Cafe (1245 El Paseo) and at Tombaugh Observatory (on the NMSU Campus). All sessions begin at dusk.

We frequently offer solar observing at the Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. For further information please visit our website at [www.aslc-nm.org](http://www.aslc-nm.org).

**Outreach**

Outreach is a very important part of ASLC. We are always looking for more volunteers to help us educate the public. Even if you do not have a portable telescope to bring to the events, please consider attending our public outreach programs to help answer questions, share knowledge and point out constellations in the sky.





## Minutes, August 2012 ASLC Meeting

### Show & Tell:

David Anderson introduced this month's session of "Show and Tell". David started by presenting astronomy software that is available for free on the Internet. The first application was Stellarium, a planetarium program. Stellarium has many useful features. Another planetarium program is Carte du Ciel that has an artificial horizon feature, meridian flip, etc. Stellarium needs another program, Stellarium Scope, to drive a telescope. John Kutney described an article in *Sky & Telescope* about attempting to determine star separation in binary systems and collecting empirical data.

### Call to Order:

Ron Kramer, President, Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC), called the business meeting to order at 7:30 pm., 24 August 2012, Room 77, Dona Ana Community College, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

### President's Comments:

Ron Kramer, President, welcomed the group, noting that a number of the regular members were holding a star party at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park (MVBSP). Tonight's meeting was again preceded by an excellent "Show and Tell" session organized by David Anderson. Ron thanked David and noted again that presentations for "Show & Tell" don't have to be highly technical to be informative. Almost anything is "fair game" for a topic. Ron asked that attendees be sure to sign the attendance rosters at the rear of the room. Ron welcomed visitors to tonight's meeting: Terry and Ben D'Errico were visiting Vincent and Frances Dovydaits from New Hampshire. Ben likes nebulae and stellar clusters. Merideth and Brennan Hildreth were visiting a meeting for the first time. Merideth is the sustainability manager for Las Cruces. New member Joseph Clower was attending his first meeting as a member. He will be attending classes at New Mexico State University (NMSU) this fall.

Ron reported that the Society had received a nice thank you from the Chihuahua Desert Nature Park (CDNP) for the recent star party, even though the event was rained out.

### Secretary's Report:

The Secretary, John McCullough, reported that the minutes for the July 2012 meeting were submitted for publication in the August issue of the Society newsletter, the *High Desert Observer (HDO)*, the first issue with a new editor. Ron Kramer, the new editor, interjected that articles and other submissions are always needed and appreciated. Tracy Stuart moved that the minutes from the July general meeting be accepted as submitted; Brent Emanuel seconded. The motion passed by acclamation. There was not an additional Secretary's report.

### Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer, Trish Conley, provided a report on the status of the Society's accounts. She noted that International Dark-sky Association (IDA) dues of \$50 had been paid. Account balances had a slight surplus for the month. There was not an additional Treasurer's report.

### Committee Reports:

#### Apparel Committee:

Ann McPhee, Committee Chairman, was not present. She has informed Ron Kramer that she will resign effective the end of 2012, therefore, a new chair will be required.

#### Fund-Raising and Grants:

Sidney Webb, new Chairman, is working on a grant application to the New Mexico Space Consortium for up to \$5000 to support the

Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) observatory. Any other ideas for fund-raising efforts are welcome.

### **Loaner Telescope Program:**

Ron Kramer continues to act as Committee Chairman. He reported the program is doing well with the ETX90 telescope on loan for three months and Sid Webb has the 12" Dobsonian. The 10" Dob is still being maintained and needs an aluminum plate 4"x4"x0.125" to mount a new focuser, which is also needed. Members may contact Ron if they have questions about the loaner policy, including how to donate equipment to the program.

### **Membership:**

John McCullough, Committee Chairman, reported that membership for the year is up with the addition of fourteen new members. However, it was noted that more participation is needed from the current membership. David Anderson pointed out that the primary focus of the Society is outreach and public education. He noted this can be difficult at first but benefits both the public and the Society. It was announced there will be a Moon Gaze at International Delights Café (IDC) on 25 August. Tombaugh Observatory open houses will resume with the start of classes at NMSU.

### **Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) Observatory Committee:**

Ron Kramer, Committee Chairman, reported on the construction of the observatory at LDSP, Exit 19 from Interstate 25. The State of New Mexico Parks Department is ready to write purchase orders. The Society has a 16" Meade telescope ready to install. Ground breaking is expected sometime in August with first light expected by the end of this year. Ron hopes to have a slate of dignitaries for both occasions.

### **Tombaugh Observatory:**

Steve Shaffer, Committee Chairman, reported the NMSU Astronomy Department open house schedule is due out in August in conjunction with the start of the fall semester. He is still working maintenance, primarily water leak, issues with the University. The telescope and Grubb mount remain in good shape.

### **Outreach Committee:**

Chuck Sterling, Outreach Coordinator, and Jerry McMahan, his backup, were both supporting the MVBSP star party.

### **Publicity:**

Daniel Giron, Committee Chairman, has been getting announcements in several local media outlets. He is considering purchasing ad space in some of the print outlets. He plans to work closely with Tracy Stuart to advertise Astronomy Day 2012 and the 2012 Renaissance Arts Faire activities. He also wants to extensively publicize the LDSP observatory groundbreaking and "first light" events.

### **Society Website:**

Steve Barks, web master, was present but had nothing new to report.

There were no additional committee or officer reports.

### **Old Business:**

1. State-wide Star Party - Ron is waiting on response from TAAS (The Albuquerque Astronomy Society) president. Refer to the August *HDO* for details.
2. Astronomy Gear Swap & Auction – This will be a working equipment auction; Ron is doing maintenance on the smaller telescopes in the Society possession. This will be the topic of a future monthly meeting.

There was no additional old business discussed.

## **New Business:**

1. 2013 Officer Elections – Elections will be held at the October meeting and all positions are open. The Board of Directors is looking for new members to run. A Nominating Committee will find nominees and announce a slate of candidates at the September meeting. The committee will consist of Daniel Giron, Fred Pilcher, and Tracy Stuart.
2. Astronomy Day 2012 – This event will take place on 20 October. Tracy Stuart will chair the planning committee for this event and is looking for a site, possibly the Field of Dreams complex/Mayfield High School (Amy Carpenter contact?). There will be brief talks in addition to viewing, possibly including Astronomy graduate students from NMSU. Contact Tracy if you can help with this event.
3. Renaissance ArtsFaire 2012 – This event will take place 03-04 November at Young Park. Tracy Stuart will also chair the organizing committee for this event. Contact him if you can support this event. He will have ten complimentary passes for the weekend.
4. Walter Haas Library - Walter is having to move out of his house and has donated his astronomy and science library to the Society. Since a call for a volunteer to be Society Librarian has gone unfilled, the books, a great reference resource, are offered for sale from \$1 to \$5. There are also items from the Ken Kile estate available including historical reports and newsletters.
5. Blue Moon - A second full moon will occur in August on the 31<sup>st</sup>. There will not be another “blue moon” until 2015.

There was no additional new business for discussion.

## **Announcements:**

### **Items for Sale:**

No items were announced for sale.

### **Announcements:**

There were no announcements made.

### **Recognitions/Achievements:**

There were no recognitions or achievements announced at tonight’s meeting.

Vince Dovydaitis offered a motion to adjourn and Steve Barkes seconded. The motion passed by acclamation and the business portion of the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm

## **Presentation:**

This month’s presentation was made by Dr. Rene Walterbos, PhD., professor in the Astronomy Department at New Mexico State University (NMSU). Dr. Walterbos concentrates on the interstellar medium (ISM), stellar populations, star formation and galaxy morphology. He is also the NMSU representative on the Astrophysical Research Sloan Digital Sky Survey Advisory Council, serves as the NMSU member representative for the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), and for AURA as member of the Solar Observatory Council. His topic was the Andromeda Galaxy, M31, a popular target for amateurs, and a personal favorite of his. Dr. Walterbos discussed much of the current research regarding Andromeda, including the stellar connection between the Andromeda and Milky Way galaxies and their inevitable collision (in a few billion years).

This presentation was not recorded for rebroadcast on the Internet. Other meeting presentations can be accessed on the web at <http://www.aics-research.com/lectures/aslcnm/>.

The August meeting of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces concluded at 9:15 pm.

-Respectfully submitted by John McCullough, ASLC Secretary

## **Council turns on lighting ordinance update**

### **Businesses, residents get 6 months to switch to new outdoor standards**

By Todd G. Dickson, Las Cruces Bulletin

Flying insects will swarm a porch light at night, but the “BUG” and “NITs” in the new outdoor lighting ordinance have more to do with controlling the porch light than the insect pest. Before the Las Cruces City Council’s unanimous vote for a new outdoor lighting ordinance Monday, Sept. 4, building inspector Barry Cole said the city has been seeking to update its 2000 standards since a national model lighting ordinance was released in 2010. Cole said the standards in the national model gave officials new methods for setting limits on outdoor lighting. Putting limits on outdoor lighting can be complicated, Cole said. For example, glare is more obvious from lights on a building by itself than a building that is surrounded by other lit structures.

Cole said the problem of light trespass also subjective. People also have differing opinions on what should be done to protect the night sky, he said, noting that New Mexico’s communities aren’t as close to each other cities in the Midwest and East. Many use lighting for security, Cole said, but architecture and landscaping around something such as an ATM machine also plays a role. For others, especially those who work at night, employee safety requires there be enough light to work or perform a task without injury, Cole said.

Despite the efforts to create national standards, Cole said each state has different standards. In Texas, state law limits light by lumens per acre, he said. A local task force settled on using new standards referred to as BUG, which measures Back light, Up light and Glare, rather than just measuring lumens and requiring fixtures to control light cut-off. Cut-off standards are still in the new ordinance, but only for expensive lighting systems, he said.

As the task force worked on these issues, digital billboards arrived on the scene, further complicating the considerations, because the existing ordinance didn’t address them. Digital billboards are addressed in the new ordinance, but instead of measuring light from near the billboard, its brightness will be assessed at the light source using a measurement called NIT, he said. Besides billboards, Cole said the new ordinance addresses residential lighting, latitude in commercial design and allows special permits for things that don’t exactly fit the law and don’t require upgrades of current lighting until there is a new lighting treatment, he said. Homes will be allowed one fixture that shines at 1,800 lumens and an unlimited number of other fixtures at half or a quarter of the brightness limits. Security lights are allowed, but they will not be permitted to be on all night.

Because it is difficult to measure light trespass, limits are being put on equipment, he said. Lighting for commercial buildings will be based on different BUG ratings, according to different standards of zoning. City staff recommended a phase-in period to provide time to educate the public and businesses. The council agreed, allowing people and businesses to choose either the old or new ordinance until March 2013.

Councillor Greg Smith said he was concerned about unintended consequences and that the council should be willing to return to the issue if those occur. Smith said he also was concerned about the new ordinance’s impact on the building industry, which is accustomed to doing things a certain way. Mayor Pro Tem Sharon Thomas said she was originally worried the BUG measuring system is too complex, but she was comforted by Cole telling her that BUG is becoming a more national standard used by manufacturers and construction companies. Councillor Olga Pedroza noted that some have complained about the “flashing” and “motion” of digital billboards, but Cole said these concerns would have to be addressed in the city’s sign ordinance.

Oscar Andrade, owner and chief executive officer of Pic Quik Stores, said he has been involved in the lighting issue since the beginning because new lighting systems for his stores now cost more than \$200,000 under existing standards. “Many of my stores have fixtures in compliance with national dark sky standards ... but they don’t have BUG ratings,” he said. “I’d love to remodel some of my older stores, but I couldn’t afford to meet all the new requirements.”

Councillor Nathan Small said the issue is technically complicated, so officials need to make sure there is a strong technical guidance to get contractors and residents through the transition.



## Classifieds

The following items are on a "first-come, first-served" basis, to all readers of the ASLC's *High Desert Observer*. If you are interested in a particular item, please contact the individual listed next to the item. In some cases the ASLC is assisting the seller, so you can contact the ASLC member.

All items are sold "as is" unless otherwise warranted by the seller. It is suggested that the buyer inspect and evaluate the item prior to purchasing. Items are non-refundable and non-returnable, unless prior agreement is made between the seller and the buyer.

***If you have an item to sell, please contact ronjkramer@aol.com***

**1. ASLC and ALPO founder, Walter Haas, is selling his telescope, a 12.5-inch Newtonian.** If you are interested, please call him directly at 575-522-0763. Please note that the mount is attached to a concrete pier, and could be difficult to move. The price is for the OTA and accessories. \$780.00

***The following materials (except for the LX200) will be brought to the September meeting for examination and purchase:***

**2. Ken Kile estate.** Please contact Ron Kramer (ronjkramer@aol.com) if you're interested in any of the following. There are adapters, cables and other accessories for larger Meade scopes.

Celestial Seeker, Illuminated Constellation Finder; \$5.00  
Meade, 10" LX200 with Autoguide, dew remover, field tripod, dolly, solar filter, etc.; \$2250.00  
Meade, #1244 Electric Focuser for ETX-90 and ETX-105, new in box; \$20.00  
Meade, Variable Projection 1.25" Camera Adapter, in original box, \$35.00  
Meade, Basic 1.25" Camera Adapter, in original box, \$20.00  
Meade, Variable Polarizing System, 1.25"; \$25.00  
Meade, #647 Flip-Mirror System, 1.25"/2"; \$110.00  
Meade, T-Mount, Pentax K; \$10.00  
Orion, 1.25" Extension Tube, in original box; \$10.00  
ScopeTronix, MaxView DSLR 1.25" Camera Adapter; \$70.00  
ScopeTronix, MaxView DSLR 2" Camera Adapter; \$125.00

**3. The following items are part of an anonymous donation.** Prices are negotiable. Please contact Ron Kramer (ronjkramer@aol.com) if interested. Our Society gets 100% of the proceeds from this material:

Argus 40 camera, uses 620 film, 75 mm lens with case, built in August, 1953; \$5.00  
Canon, Canonet 28, 35mm film camera; \$5.00  
Capital TK-79 Light Meter, with carrying case; \$5.00  
PRO mini-flash; \$2.00  
Soligor, 400mm f5.6 telephoto lens, for Pentax (needs good cleaning); \$15.00

**ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of Las Cruces**  
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ASLC - Sharing the Universe  
With our Community  
for Over 60 Years

