



**November, 2008**

**-Regular Meeting-**

Will be held on Wednesday, November 5 at 7 p.m. at the Carlisle Visitor's Center. This month's presentation will be Telescopes 101 with John Reising.

**-Board Meeting-**

Will be held on Thursday, November 13 at Blue Sky Restaurant on Rt. 58 in Amherst. The meeting is always open to everyone.

**-Programs on the Way-**

December, 2008 - Holiday Dinner  
January, 2009 - Dave Lengyel will do a video presentation

**Dates are open from here out, volunteers are welcome!**

**-Nielsen Observatory-**

Friday, November 21 from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. - Nielsen Observatory: Winter constellations

**-Selling Points-**

**For sale:** Celestron CPC 1100 XLT GoTo Schmidt Cassegrain-

-Optical design: 11" Schmidt-Cassegrain

-Focal length: 2800mm, f/10

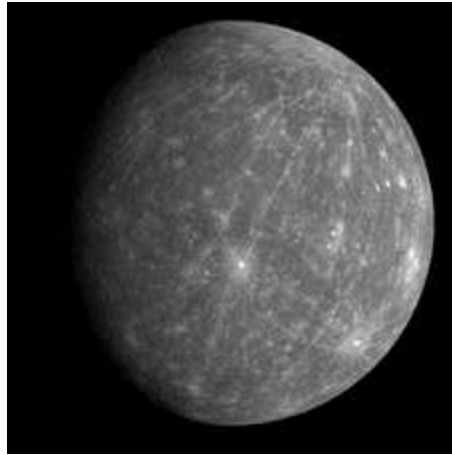
-Finder scope: 50mm, with quick-release bracket

-Mount: Altazimuth, dual fork arms

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## Astro-News

### November, 2008



*Above - an image of Mercury as taken by NASA's MESSENGER probe on October 6, 2008 after its second flyby.*

**October 29** - NASA's MESSENGER probe has now mapped over 95% of Mercury's surface. Since Mariner 10's final flyby in 1975, no spacecraft had ventured to the solar system's innermost planet. That changed in early 2008 after MESSENGER's first flyby. Aside from mapping more of its surface, MESSENGER has taken measurements of Mercury's atmosphere and magnetic field. Interestingly, images of the planet have shown that its surface is more cratered than that of the moon or Mars.

**October 27** - Scientists have discovered a triple ring system (two asteroid belts and one belt of ice and dust) around the ninth closest star to our Sun. Epsilon Eridani is a star located about 10.5 light years from us, but is only about 850 million years old. Scientists working on the discovery claim that this system gives us the chance to look back at how our own solar system formed. One striking similarity between the two is the innermost asteroid belt, which seems to contain about the same mass as ours and is located in the same spot. Another belt was discovered about as far as Uranus is from the Sun. One inference scientists are making from the discovery is that there are more unseen planets in the system. They theorize that a similar process is going on there as what goes on in the complex systems of rings and moons around planets here, such as Jupiter and Saturn.

**November 1** - NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope has found a new way to look for pulsars - light beams scientists believe come from the collapsed cores of massive stars. While pulsars are normally detected in x-ray or radio wavelengths, one has been confirmed found in the gamma-ray part of the spectrum. This gives astronomers a much more wide-ranging tool for finding such stars, as they believe that the beams from gamma-ray pulsars are much wider than those of radio and x-ray. The find came after the Fermi telescope checked out several gamma-ray sources found in the disk of the Milky Way. Thus far, only one - CTA 1, a gamma-ray source at the center of a supernova remnant - has been confirmed, with a period of 0.317 second. More are likely to follow.

**October 31** - We all thought that the idea of life on the Moon died with Apollo; we were wrong. Recently, at Europlanet's Planetary Science Congress, the idea was brought up again, but in a different light. The theory, presented by Joop Houtkooper, follows somewhat similar lines as the search for water on the moon. The idea is that since craters at the Moon's poles are sometimes perpetually in shadow, life transported there from meteor/asteroid impacts on Earth or Mars could be preserved, though it would most likely be dead. Think back to ALH 84001, when scientists thought they discovered life on a meteorite found in Antarctica. The same concept

applies here.