



April, 2009

-Regular Meeting-

Will be held on Wednesday, April 1 at the Carlisle Reservation Visitor's Center on Nickel-plate Diagonal Rd. in Carlisle Township.

-Board Meeting-

Will be held on Thursday, April 9 at Blue Sky Restaurant on Rt. 58 in Amherst. The meeting is always open to everyone.

-Programs on the Way-

April, 2009 - Niels Bohr on double stars.
May, 2009 - Leonard Susskind on extrasolar planets.
June, 2009 - Arthur Eddington on ancient astronomy.

-Nielsen Observatory-

Saturday, April 11 at Kitt Peak National Observatory - A Look at Leo.
Saturday, April 25 with the James Webb Space Telescope - Simply Saturn.

-Selling Points-

Got telescopes you don't use? Don't scrap your mount - sell the whole thing on here!

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Astronomical News Notes

- NASA got itself into a bit of a conundrum recently with its new addition to the ISS. To choose a name, they held an online vote in order to drum up interest in the long-forgotten space station, which included an option for write-ins. It turns out, however, that Stephen Colbert - of The Colbert Report and Daily Show fame - wanted to have his name on the new module, and asked his viewers to write him in. And they did, securing him the win by about 40,000 votes (I suppose this is second best to the Presidency?). In the end, NASA can do whatever it wants, though Rep. Chaka Fattah from Pennsylvania has called on the space agency to do the democratic thing and stick with Colbert.
- In more real astronomical news, a study involving two participants from the ESA and four cosmonauts in a partnership called Mars500 will test how the human mind and body hold up on a trip to the Red Planet. These six brave souls will be locked in a simulated spaceship situated in Moscow, and will deal with all the foreseeable events that might happen on a trip to Mars. They will deal with simulated emergencies and a 20 minute communications delay, as well as experience launch and a trip to the Martian surface. The study, which only lasts 105 days, will also test the effects that confinement in such an environment might have on bodily hormones and psychological well-being. It will be followed up on by a full simulation in late 2009, which will last 520 days.
- Also concerning Mars, NASA scientists working with MRO's HiRISE camera have found fresh craters on its surface at northern latitudes. Though this is no big deal, and to be expected, what surprised the astronomers looking at the pictures was what seemed to be a splash of snow around the craters' rims. In one case, a spectrograph could be taken of the substance, and lo and behold - it was ice. Though the ice shortly vaporized, the observation adds to the growing pile of evidence that Mars is not without water. And the ice's depth - one to two feet below the surface, according to Shane Byrne of the University of Arizona - bodes well not only for the search for possible Martian life, but for human astronauts also.