

Meeting of the Eagle Valley Astronomical Society

When: Thursday, June 14, 2012, 7:30-9:00 PM
Free and open to the public; no reservation required.

Where: Walking Mountains Science Center,
318 Walking Mountains Lane (off Buck Creek Road), Avon, Colorado
Note the new signs directing visitors to the Science Center.

Contact: Lara Carlson, Community Programs Director
Walking Mountains Science Center, [970-827-9725](tel:970-827-9725), ex. 129, or
John W. Briggs, HUT Observatory, john.w.briggs@gmail.com,
[970-328-6228](tel:970-328-6228) or cell [970-343-0618](tel:970-343-0618).

Meeting Topics:

Preliminary Reports of Annular Eclipse and Transit of Venus and Tests of Homemade Rockets



June Meeting Description

Eagle Valley Astronomical Society will gather Thursday evening, June 14, starting at 7:30 PM at the Walking Mountains Science Center near the base of Bush Creek Road in Avon. In follow-up of last month's meeting, Mr. Dale Versteegen, Adult Program Coordinator for Walking Mountains, will lead a session of test flights of rockets built according to his demonstration last month. **Bring your rocket and plan to fly it!** We shall see which rocket flies highest!

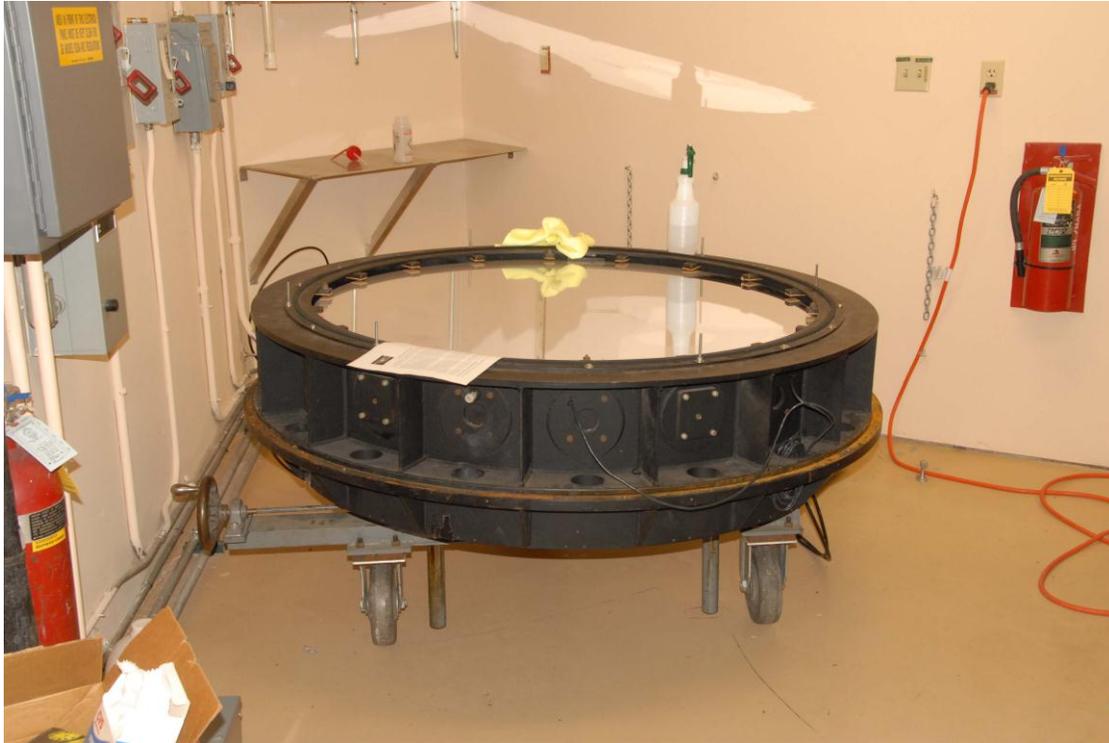
Also, local astronomer John Briggs has just returned from a long trip to California's Mount Wilson Observatory and Table Mountain Observatory, where among other activities, he made a video recording of the June 5 Transit of Venus. John will show this video and well as describe briefly the fun activities of a three-day conference he ran at Mount Wilson in association with the rare ToFV event. The photo above shows the historic, 15-foot-long, 13-inch-aperture Rutherford refracting telescope that, among other historic instruments, John prepared in Eagle and transported to Mount Wilson for the Transit of Venus. The Rutherford was built in 1868 and remains one of the most historic telescopes in the country. We are now able to use it set up horizontally as the photo shows, fed by a modern two-mirror device called a heliostat (the large white device on the right). The heliostat can capture light from the Sun, Moon, planet, or other moving celestial object. The light beam is then reflected into the stationary telescope. In the setup at Mount Wilson shown above, the Rutherford was creating a white-light image of the Sun, with Venus in transit, on a screen under the canopy. A different telescope and video system was used to make the film that will be shown at the meeting.

Earlier, John visited the site of the Very Large Array radio telescope in New Mexico to make a video recording of the May 20 annular eclipse of the Sun. That effort was in fact a "test run" for the Transit of Venus. At our June 13 meeting, John will also share video results of the annular eclipse.

Local Astronomy News

Although it is premature, we cannot resist reporting that Eagle's HUT Observatory has applied to acquire a very large, surplus telescope from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. The instrument is a Newtonian reflector with a 49 ½-inch diameter primary mirror, operating at f/6.5. In other words, as assembled in operation, the telescope tube is about 26 feet long, and if successfully remounted and rehoused, the instrument would be one of the largest privately operated telescopes in the world! We hope to hear the results of the application in a matter of days. The opportunity came up only very recently and suddenly. If the proposal proves successful, the project to refurbish and house the telescope for operation will be some years in the making.

The 49 ½-inch-diameter mirror, made of fused quartz, weighs 1,063 pounds and is carried in a steel cell that bolts to the back of a huge, open-frame, steel telescope tube.



John Briggs examined and photographed the mirror and cell assembly, shown above, at JPL's Table Mountain Observatory in Wrightwood, California, only a few days ago. An earlier trip to California allowed examination of the telescope tube parts. We are hopeful regarding the proposal and shall be eager to report more news as soon as possible.

A Note on the Future.

Repeating from previous announcements, we hope that additional astronomers in the Eagle Valley area and beyond will hear about our meetings and join us, normally on the second Thursday of every month at Walking Mountains Science Center in Avon, Colorado. Note that astronomy clubs like ours always welcome folks, young and old, who are experienced or just starting an interest. The purpose of our organization is to share and encourage interest! If you're already involved with astronomy, you can especially help. We look forward to having more telescopes set up at meetings, additional speakers, more loaner telescopes, weekend star parties, and field trips. One of many active clubs setting an excellent example here in Colorado is the Denver Astronomical Society. It meets regularly at the historic and magnificent Chamberlin Observatory of the University of Denver: <http://www.denverastro.org/>. Another organization of interest is the Front Range Astronomy Club, an email-based group that connects members of individual astronomical societies in the Colorado region.

Walking Mountains Science Center: <http://www.walkingmountains.org/>

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