

UNIVERSE

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NEWS FLASH: SECOND SATELLITE DISCOVERED ORBITING SEDNA!

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Observatories:

Wiruna 33° 01'S 149° 46'E
Crago 33° 33'S 150° 37'E
Kaputar 30° 17'S 150° 10'E

Comparison of Hubble Space Telescope images with those from the newly commenced Southern Near Earth Asteroid Survey has confirmed that the recently discovered planetoid Sedna has a second satellite.

Discovered only recently in what was thought to be a void between the Kuiper belt and the Oort Cloud, planetoid Sedna's orbit takes it from a minimum of 76AU from the sun at perihelion to 950AU at aphelion over an orbit taking 3,400 years.



Planetoid Sedna showing its two satellites as imaged by Dr Robert McZero and Garry Gordon using the 40" Schmidtspiegler at Siding Springs Observatory

It seems that the same star which deflected Sedna into it's present orbit from it's original position in the Kuiper Belt perhaps two billion years ago also perturbed a much smaller body, about 1km in diameter into an even more eccentric orbit.

Varying between 5AU at perihelion to 1104AU at aphelion, the moon has been provisionally named Dame Edna. The object was imaged at Siding Spring by Dr Robert McZero and Garry Gordon using the 40" Schmidtspiegler over two months which allowed orbital elements to be calculated with some precision.

First detected at mag 14, Dame Edna was only 6 million km from Earth but receding rapidly as it moved away from the Sun. In fact, its orbit could well take it through the tail of Comet LINEAR (C/2002 T7) on June 8, 2004, and interactions between the asteroid and the particles within the tail may well be detectable in large amateur telescopes.

Further observations may establish whether Dame Edna is actually in orbit around the first discovered moon of Sedna rather than the planetoid itself.

OIL FOUND ON MARS

Following close upon the announcement by NASA of the discovery of oil on Mars, comes the news of the discovery of oil by the Mars Rovers.

This discovery was so close to the surface, that oil was found seeping up around the drill bits while these vehicles were excavating for samples.

Planetary geologists theorise that this oil was not derived from decaying vegetation but was the product of interstellar clouds of hydrocarbons falling like rain on the surface of Mars from comets torn apart by Jupiter's gravitational field.



The Giant Oil Slick On Planet Mars

The US Government has responded quickly by giving a contract to the Halibut Corporation to develop ways and means of exploiting this oil and transporting it to Earth.

Preliminary studies suggest that an industrial grade particle accelerator should be located in the caldera of Olympus Mons and the oil be pumped from all over Mars to that location.

Once accelerated to escape velocity along a matrix of laser beams, the oil could be targeted at the Arizona Meteor Crater at times of close alignment and when wind velocity in the Winslow area was below 15km/hour to prevent any atmospheric dispersion.

Professor Rube Goldberg, of the Faculty of Interstellar Transportation, University of Roswell, contends that the quantity of oil so derived could make the US

self-sufficient for oil within five years.

He theorises that what were believed to be dust storms on Mars were actually fresh infalls of hydrocarbons raining on the planet, and that Percival Lowell's canals were really sightings of this hydrocarbon rain draining along channels until it soaked into the desert sands.

SHADOW TRANSITS ON JUPITER

Observers at Wiruna monitoring the triple shadow transit on Jupiter on 28 March, 2004, were startled by the sudden appearance of a fourth shadow.

On a rare night of 10/10 seeing, the ASNSW 17.5" Dobsonian was used with three stacked Barlows and a 4.8mm Nagler, yielding a magnification of over 2400x!

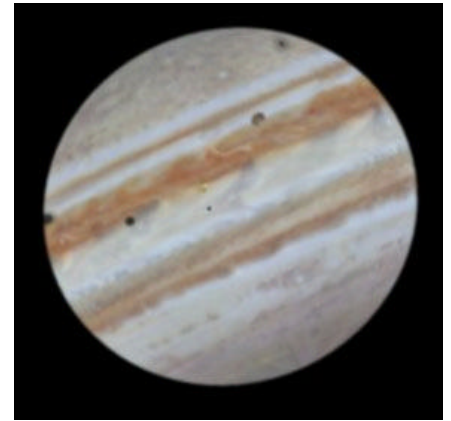
A small shadow only one tenth the diameter of Io's shadow was seen and was at first believed to be either an artefact of Jupiter's atmosphere or perhaps the shadow of one of Jupiter's smaller moons.

Initially, as the shadow was observed moving along the equatorial plane of Jupiter but at a faster rate than the planet's rotation, a satellite shadow was inferred.

However, after several minutes, observers were startled to see the shadow abruptly change course and move vertically to the south equatorial belt for about 20 percent of the planet's diameter, then reverse course once more and adopt its initial motion. Certainly no satellite has ever exhibited such behaviour, and it is reliably rumoured that serious consideration is being given to the shadow being that of some gigantic space vehicle of fictional "Death Star" proportions.

Alternately, Professor Manuela Vögtswagen, Head of the Department of Astral Physics at the University of Bürgerweldt has proposed a more scientific explanation that the shadow is caused by a small, hitherto undiscovered volcanic moon

squeezed between the gravitational fields of Io and Jupiter.



The Triple Shadow Transit On Jupiter

Being close to the latter, it has either so far escaped detection by being lost in Jupiter's glare or is a recently captured comet.

The motions then could be caused either by volcanic plumes, or by cometary jets acting like thruster-motors on a rocket and causing random and abrupt perturbations in the object's orbit.

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

In May 2005, the main lecture hall at the Prude Ranch in Texas will be the venue for the first performance of the re-discovered opera, *The Music Of The Spheres*, composed in 1792 by that prolific medieval composer, Anon.

The opera's first scheduled performance in the Rome Opera House was prohibited just prior to opening night, the ides of March, 1793, on the orders of Cardinal Vertu, Music Critic In Ordinary to the Roman Curia on the basis that anything based on the motions of heavenly bodies was essentially pornographic and that the involvement of Mars, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn was a pagan abomination.

Not until the only extant score was accidentally posted on the internet in 2003 by the Vatican Librarian, who had not bothered to read it and thought it was a record of 18th Century observations from Rome Observatory, did the wider world become aware of this work.



Musical Rehearsals In The Valley Of The Dobs At The Texas Star Party

Tastefully scored for flute, harpsichord and bass drum, the music has to be heard to be believed and has been rehearsed by the Fort Davis High School Marching Band for some months.

By May 2005 they expect to get it right.

The casting director attended the 2004 Texas Star Party to audition for the principal five singers and chorus of 19.

In fact, the Valley Of The Dobs was rumoured to be alive with the sounds of music during 2004 TSP as hopefuls rehearsed at their telescopes, some even using solid tube Dobsonians to amplify their voices.

ANCIENT OBSERVATORY

Exciting news has broken of the discovery of an ancient observatory site in Baghdad.

The discovery was made by the US Army corps of engineers who were searching for Saddam's legendary stock of photon torpedos.

Following on a tip from Sheikh Rattel én-Roul, the former regime's Chief Certified Creative Accountant, the army was excavating under the Hanging Gardens of Baghdad, where the former President used to hang his political opponents and close relatives.

In what was clearly an extensive armoury, the engineers uncovered stocks of weapons.

However, the commanding officer, General Jubilation T Cornpone IV

said that he seriously doubted that the fifty scythed chariots and the bones of numerous fully equipped war elephants, all dating to circa 650BC, were exactly what the Pentagon had in mind when it had paid out the five million dollars reward money.

He said however that the fact that these weapons contravened the provisions of the treaty of Damascus of 952BC as set out on the stela of Pharaoh Thutmoses I showed a long commitment by the country to weapons of mass destruction.

The most exciting find was in an adjacent building initially thought to contain brass shields and battle gongs but which turned out to be an observatory dating to 600BC.

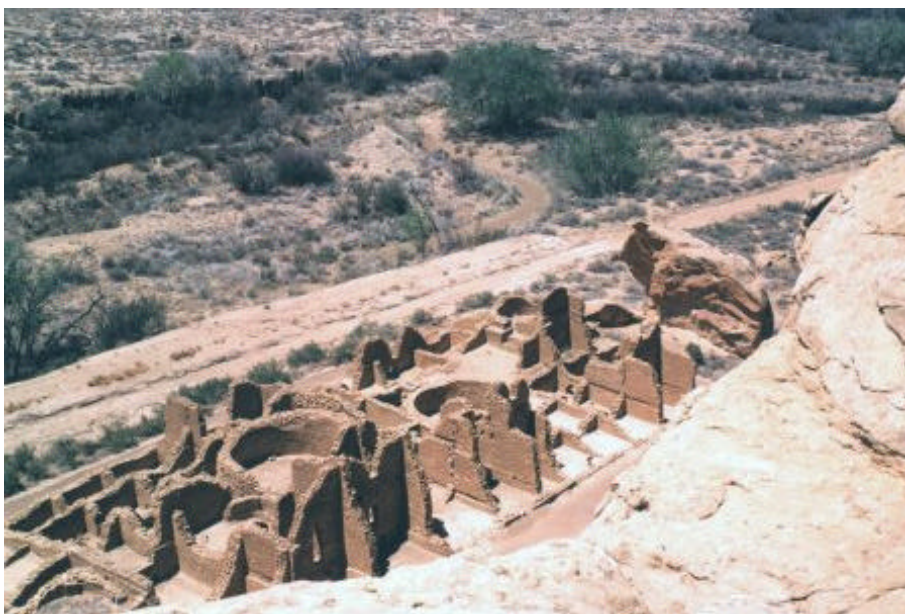
Closer examination showed that two at least of the brass objects were in fact parabolic reflectors one metre in diameter which showed traces of the parabolic surfaces being originally chemically silver plated.

Dehydrated quantities of Lebanon cedar were a mystery until the cuneiform inscriptions and bas-relief representations on a wall of the structure were deciphered and showed that the Babylonians had beaten Newton in the invention of the reflecting telescope by more than two thousand years.

A Babylonian engineer had looked at a curved brass gong through the bottom of a wine bottle made from Egyptian glass and accidentally discovered the secret of the Herschellian telescope. Subsequent experimentation, including silver plating for greater reflectivity and careful placement of King Nebuchadnezzar's battlefield shaving mirror resulted in the anticipation of the Newtonian telescope.

With a truss tube of Lebanon Cedar, and an alt-azimuth mount based on a horizontal water wheel, serious observations revealed the general nature of the moon, the discovery of the moons of Jupiter, the phases of Venus (Ishtar to the Babylonians) and the star-clouds in the Milky Way.

The project had been kept a state secret however owing to its perceived military nature - giving Babylon a competitive edge in astrological forecasting of military intent of the Egyptians, Hittites, Lydians and Ionians.



The Remains Of The Ancient Observatory Discovered Recently in Baghdad

Thus, the observatory was constructed at a military base at some distance from the city of Babylon, both for security reasons and to get away from the bright lights of Babylon's central business district.

Observations were carried out during the dry summer months when the telescopes could be safely left outdoors for extended periods, from the top of a nearby Ziggurat, while primitive Ramsden-type eyepieces of Egyptian glass set with bitumen in carefully moulded clay cylinders completed the scope. No finderscope was used but simply a sight tube as used on Babylonian ballista and similar torsion field artillery.

Thousands of clay tablets attest to serious observational work being carried out over ninety years, along with astrological forecasts, and these tablets are still being deciphered.

NEW TELESCOPE AND THEME PARK FOR MT STROMLO

Unsuccessful negotiations for the purchase of the Ilford Roadhouse have resulted in plans for the relocation of Mt Stromlo Observatory to Ilford being put on hold.

Meanwhile, some limited instrumentation will be placed on

Stromlo for teaching purposes, along with a theme park to generate revenue as the Insurance payout following the January, 2003 fires was less than expected and the Federal Government fully as stingy as expected.

The telescope is to be named the "Politician's Telescope" as it is cheap but promises much. Designed by Hawkesbury genius Richmond Windsor, the primary mirror, two metres in diameter, will be made from ten sheets of 10mm plate-glass laminated together with super glue.

To save costs of grinding and polishing, the blank will be slumped into a mould cheaply made by rotating a vat of cement at a speed suitable to produce a parabola of $f/4$ focal length, after which the cement mould will serve both as the mirror cell and to support the back of the mirror.

A simple Commodore-64 computer-controlled alt-azimuth mount, using a turntable modified from a surplus caravan park sized Hills Hoist, will be constructed along with a roll-off pre-fabricated steel garage to serve as housing.

Fitted with Argo Navis and Dick Smith's highest grade web cam, the telescope will be the most innovative instrument yet constructed in Australia.

This telescope will be used to instruct students from the Australian National University in the usual basics - space is big, the planets are round so the Earth must also be etc...

The adjacent theme park will cover a wide range of scientific disciplines so that the public can watch science at work.

Aspects of psychology will be addressed by operation SILAP - Search for Intelligent Life Amongst Political animals.

Budding Australian National University student politicians will be placed in a "Survivor" environment, with attractive groupies of all genders, strategically hidden wads of cash in plain brown envelopes stashed in locations found after interpreting subtle clues, and unlimited free booze.

The physics of hot air ballooning will be covered, with free rides to park attendees, costs being kept down by piping the hot air from the debating chamber of Federal Parliament.

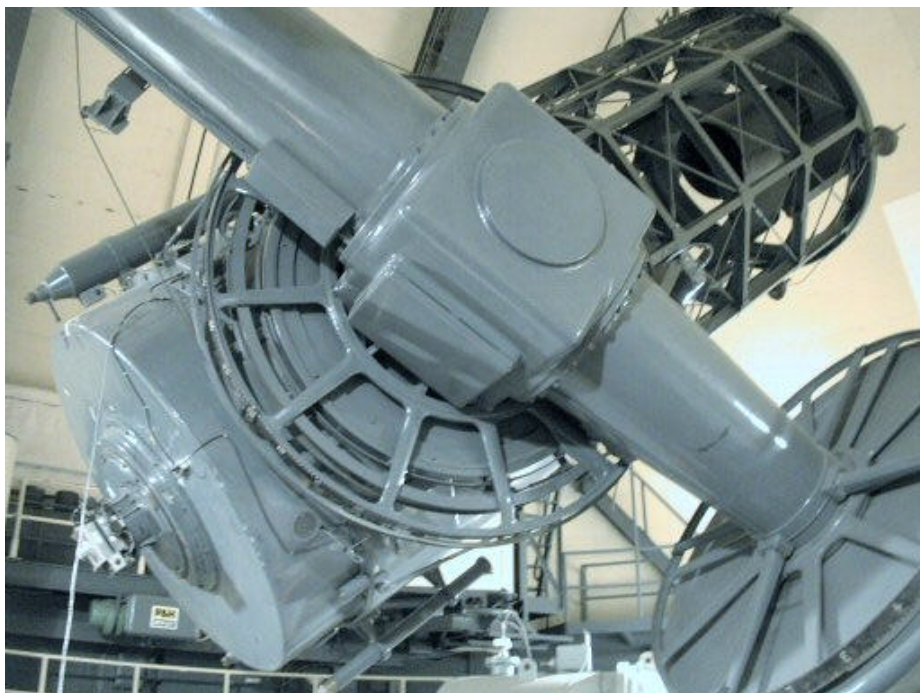
Mathematics is to be explored by constructing a state-of-the-art gambling casino, with equal numbers of loaded and unloaded dice, fixed and unfixed roulette wheels, marked and unmarked cards and of course superbly programmable poker machines.

This will not only test the skills of visitors in mathematically figuring out which games are crooked, but also earn revenue along the way.

NEMESIS STAR THEORY CONFIRMED

Dr Tom Cometence, of Southpark, Texas, visiting Professor of Saurian Prosthetics at the Fort Davis campus of the University of Texas has recently carried out research in Australia to vindicate the theory of the Nemesis star.

Informed readers will be aware of the theory that a Red or Brown



The New 2m $f/4$ "Politician's Telescope" for Mt Stromlo

Dwarf companion star to our Sun, which has an enormous and elongated orbit, causes periodic disturbances in the Oort Cloud every 30 million years or so and sends cometary bodies into the inner Solar System, some of which collide with planet Earth.

These impacts were responsible for the great Permian/Triassic mass extinction, several minor Jurassic extinctions and of course the Cretaceous mass extinction, followed by a further two minor extinctions.

The cyclical nature of such extinctions implies a periodic cause, with the result that a small, faint and hitherto undetected companion star to our Sun has become chief suspect.

However, though these events may be periodic, Dr Cometence contends that they may not be naturally occurring but instead carefully contrived by a long lived alien race as a VERY long term plan to genetically modify life on Earth.

The fact that crocodiles survived the extinction of similar creatures - the dinosaurs - he regards as highly suspicious. He said that crocodilian jaw structure changed overnight at the Cretaceous/Tertiary boundary resulting in a larger cranial cavity and brain size.

He theorises that thousands of crocodilian eggs were taken off planet just prior to the Cretaceous impact, genetically modified and after long term storage returned to Earth to fill the ecological niche vacated by the dinosaurs, who, after long experimentation during the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous were rejected and the slate wiped clean.

The Nemesis Star, he suggests, is brought in by a tractor beam when required to divert suitable comets Earthwards.

He said that this genetic manipulation suggests that the aliens were a saurian species, or at least compatible both with dinosaurs and crocodilians.

He came to Australia to examine crocodilian fossils laid down at Riversleigh over the past 15 million years to see if the pace of change has altered.

He is alarmed by the possibility that the unexpected success of egg eating mammals, and of course the human mammal has derailed this grand plan and that these aliens may decide to clear the board once more.

An allied line of research is being pursued by Kibbitzer Prize winning author Lucy McKilroy, who accompanied Dr Cometence to Australia.

She was gathering material for her new book titled: "Vice Presidents From Outer Space".

Lucy had noted the phenomena that most Vice Presidents since 1788 seem to have vanished without trace soon after leaving office - and in fact one or two while in office.

She avers that she has evidence that many had returned to their home planets after completing their missions on Earth, their principal mission being to starve the Near Earth Asteroid Survey of funds so as to facilitate Earth being attacked without much notice by rogue asteroids.

The historical record shows, she said, that no funds were allocated for a Near Earth Asteroid Survey from the Presidency of Washington to Nixon, while she suspects at least two Vice-Presidents to be androids with defective circuits or generators.

Lucy agrees with Dr Cometence that a Brown Dwarf is currently about one light year from Earth, somewhere in the vicinity between Earth and the LMC to limit chances of detection. She visited Australia to examine certain inscriptions carved in Coptic on a petrified fossil of *Wollemia Nobilis* (Wollemi Pine) concerning ancient legends about leaders from the stars whose mission is to usher in cycles of destruction on planet Earth.

Lucy's book will be launched on completion at a ceremony at the Roswell Bar and Grill, after which she and Dr Cometence will depart for a lecture tour of the Southwest, commencing at Pop's Restaurant, Fort Davis.

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY TO POWER WIRUNA

Monitoring of the pit toilets at Wiruna as part of the upgrade to enhance their dual function as Neutrino detectors has established that there is a significant increase in temperature as the thermometer touches the bottom.

The possibility of there being a biodegradable cause for this increase was discounted after consultation with Rand McNally Dip Ed, Dual Science and History Master at Ilford High School.

Mr McNally said that not only had this phenomenon been encountered in deep English coal mines and South African gold mines, but that temperature increasing with depth had been noted by miners in shafts on the Sofala gold fields in the 1850s and 1860s.

He said that contemporary newspaper accounts reported that many miners had elected to sleep at the bottom of their mine shafts during the cold winter months at both Sofala and Hill End, and that patrons at the Sofala pub had complained that kegs of beer brought up from the cellar were commonly too warm to quench a hard working miner's thirst.

It has been calculated that with increases of one degree Celsius for each metre of depth, burying the Wiruna bunk house to a depth of only 20 metres would make the bedrooms ten degrees warmer in winter. Driving a shaft to two hundred metres would heat water sufficiently to power a steam generator, while warm air from the generator's cooling system could be pumped to observing locations for dew zapping purposes.

Society chef Don Blanchomme is experimenting to determine if thermal steam could be utilised in cooking, and whether the South Pacific Star Party spit roast should be steamed instead.

Anybody finding a fresh road kill en route to Wiruna on new moon weekends is asked to collect and deposit same at the eat-in-kitchen for experimental purposes.

**HUMUNGOUS 40M TELESCOPE
FOR WIRUNA**

The drying out of the dam at Wiruna during the current drought has prompted Society snake handler Col McMickle to propose turning it into a giant, if non steerable, telescope.

Mr McMickle was inspired by the example of the giant radio dish in a natural depression at Arecibo, Puerto Rico, which relies on the Earth's rotation and axial tilt to bring a narrow but representative bandwidth past its focal point.

He computed that as the receding water had left a parabolic clay pan 40 metres in diameter, it was simply a matter of removing the various three-clawed yabbies left over from it's toxic period to make it ready for an inexpensive lining of aluminium foil.

The problem of mounting a secondary can be dispensed with simply by operating it in a Herschel mode, which has the advantage that dozens of strategically located pole mounted observers - or for that matter, CCD operators - could simultaneously use the big scope.

Such a telescope would be the largest single mirror telescope in the world and at the same time make Wiruna one of the top ten amateur society sites in Australia.

**ALIENS CONTROL THE
MIN MIN LIGHTS**

First reported as being seen over the graveyard near a bush pub just

east of the outback Queensland town of Boulia during the 19th century, the mysterious Min Min Lights have long puzzled travellers and scientists alike.

Appearing in the night as strange moving lights which brighten, fade, seem to approach and suddenly vanish, supernatural causes have long been suggested by drovers along the wallaby track.

However, UFO sleuth Barry Von Münchhausen took leave from his day job at Andamooka to travel to Boulia last year to thoroughly research this phenomenon, and he claims that there is alien intelligence at work. Barry contends that these lights are land based probes launched from UFO's to examine life on Earth, and said that they were commonly seen by patrons on their way home from Bush pubs at night.

He is not as yet certain whether this is because the aliens are precisely targeting country drinkers, or whether a certain blood alcohol level enhances the eye's ability to detect probes operating at wavelengths normally outside the human range.

He refers to naked eye sightings of the Horsehead Nebula and the Helix Nebula at South Pacific Star Parties by amateurs who had consumed not more than two bottles of Star Port.

Indeed, a reported sighting by a startled drinker one evening during a night running of the World Famous lizard races at Eulo during the 1980s may well have been the prime cause of him stumbling and accidentally killing the world-champion racing cockroach known as "Destructo".

What the alien's intentions are is not clear. They may well be friendly, and the failure of any apology being transmitted to operation SETI about Destructo's demise by the aliens may simply mean that they were unaware of this tragedy and of their contribution to it.

On the other hand, pursuing Queensland drivers down remote rural roads when they are in such a condition that they are fully

occupied with the task of staying ON the road without aliens adding to their problems, may hint at irresponsibility if not ill intent on the part of a nominally superior species.

The Australian Hotels Association has appealed for calm.

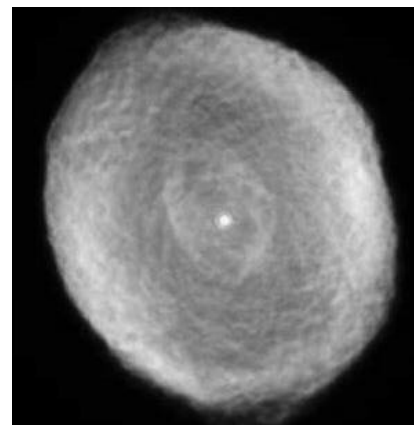
STRANGE METEOR FOUND

Irish born prospector Paddy Mellin made an amazing discovery while prospecting for gold in the Western Australian desert.

Paddy was using a state of the art Minelab SD-2200D metal detector capable of finding metallic objects of 20 grams and above as much as a metre below the surface.

Searching in an auriferous area which was largely untouched during the gold rush days of the 19th century for lack of water, as well as finding several small nuggets in the 10 to 20 gram bracket, he got a signal from a larger object at some depth.

What emerged was an apparently un-rusted object which seemed to be made of iron, but which had a regular shape, clearly some sort of artefact and 2.2 kilograms in weight.



**The 2.2kg Meteor - an alloy of Iron,
Nickel, Tungsten, Titanium, and
Carbon**

Spectroscopic analysis of a small sample extracted with some difficulty by the Western Australian Department of Mines indicated that the material was an alloy of Iron, Nickel, Tungsten, Titanium and graphite.

Carbon-dated to be approximately 7 million years old, JPL scientists cautiously consider that this may be part of, or lost from some alien space craft a considerably time ago and that it has perhaps been lost in space for millions of years before crashing to Earth.

The precise nature of the object and its function are yet to be determined, but a high-level committee of US and Australian scientists is currently understood to be engaged in study of its structure.

When the Prime Minister's office was asked to comment, it was reported that Mr Howard was alarmed but not alert.



The Limpia Crossing Convention Centre Near Fort Davis, Texas

WHERE HUBBLE WENT WRONG

This topic was addressed during the wide-ranging multi-discipline symposium sponsored by the University of Texas (Fort Davis Branch) and held in May 2004 at the Limpia Crossing Convention Centre, by Professor Rube Goldberg, Head of the Faculty of Astral Physics at the University of Roswell.

Professor Goldberg drew an even bigger audience than political scientist Dr Dallas Houston, whose address on "Invertebrate Congressmen Of The Twentieth Century" had been expected to be the main drawcard.

Professor Goldberg reminded his audience that all amateur Astronomers and even two professional astrologers have heard of the famous Hubble's constant.

American astronomer Edwin Hubble had, by 1925, demonstrated that many nebulae were galaxies beyond our own rather than artefacts of our galaxy.

By 1929 he had amassed evidence which made him conclude that the red shift in the spectrum of other galaxies was the product of recession, and that the further galaxies were away from us the faster they were receding.

This ultimately contributed to the now discredited Big Bang Theory. His law states that the recessional velocity of any galaxy is proportional to its distance.

This, however took the entirely illogical view that matter receding from a finite point following on the original Big Bang would move faster the further away it was from the epicentre, which considering how minute that finite point was, resulted in the absurd picture of galaxies defying the gravitational pull of each other.

This point is further highlighted by the fact of Halton Arp conclusively showing that massive objects such as quasars can actually attenuate light towards the red end of the spectrum by gravitational means alone.

Professor Goldberg was amazed that such an undoubted genius as Albert Einstein, having grasped the principle of gravitational lensing, utterly failed to take the next logical step of recognising that if gravity can bend light, it can also slow it down - or speed it up using the "Slingshot Effect".

He said that in consequence the distance scale of the universe is seriously flawed and that the Hubble

Constant was a very pretty, however totally unreliable tool.

The other great mistake inherent in this was the assumption that the time taken by light to travel from other galaxies was a true measure of distance, he said, rather than wondering if the inferred distance was a product of the way light behaved rather than an accurate measure.

Light is after all not travelling through "empty" space or even space with a low density of atoms, but really a thick soup of sub-atomic particles not apparent to us until they become atomic particles.

He contends that the force of light travelling through this sub-atomic soup serves to kick start many into some as yet only partly understood mating ritual after which they vindicate in part the "Steady State Theory" and are apparently created in our universe.

In this process, light loses energy and therefore velocity.

Alien civilizations not bedevilled by our dark age of science had either found a way to travel other than the way light does, or interstellar distances were not as great as imagined.

He considers that they may have found short cuts by devising means to travel through this sub-atomic sea rather than through our observable universe.

He said that numerous UFO sightings in and around Roswell attested to considerable traffic up there, while even a cursory examination of the guest registers of some of the more popular motels showed names such as Mr and Mrs Darth Vader, Buck Rogers, and Flash Gordon to mention just a few.

Aliens are obviously continually amongst us and making little secret of it, except, of course, to reactionary scientists with unprepared minds.

Then again, in Roswell they are among friends and comfortable about revealing themselves.

Visitations to planet Earth then are so well documented by utterly reliable sources that our professional Astronomers must sadly have got it all wrong.

Hubble is not entirely to blame, he said, and clearly deserves an "E" for effort, but later professionals eager to toe the party line and keep their tenure have much to answer for in slavishly following an old script without question.

The full transcript of Professor Goldberg's address is to be broadcast on Roswell Community Radio on all frequencies including the Hydrogen Alpha (for the benefit of the alien audience).

Meanwhile, the Professor has been invited to lecture to the Austin Astronomy Society on April 1, 2005.

PRODUCT REVIEW

The Aussie Observing Chair

Handcrafted out of Spotted Gum and Stringybark at the Ilford Furniture and Joinery works, this observing aid has quickly acquired a dedicated following amongst seasoned Australian amateurs.

The chair reclines low enough to allow the observer to comfortably view through an eyepiece with the eye a metre above the ground, but also can be racked high enough for a comfortably resting observer to use up to 25" f/5 Dobsonians at the zenith.

It has all the creature comforts – the kangaroo-skin upholstery is both padded and heated by thermostatically controlled heat rope powered by a bank of 12-volt batteries built into the base to double as ballast and to keep under control the centre of gravity.

Heated as well, are the six kangaroo pouches hanging from the armrest to form easy anti-dewing, and quick-access eyepiece storage.

Also powered is the semi-cherry picker rise and fall mechanism, the bar fridge strategically located next to the observer's elbow, the 4-speaker stereo system, and the variable-speed back massage function.

A thoughtful function is the split-second 180° emergency rotation to allow sighting of that bright fireball people behind you are yelling about, while the combination binocular holder & Argo Navis/guide combo allows you to point the chair at chosen locations at will.

Though fully equipped, optional extras include a bigger bar fridge to allow for chilling up to a dozen beer glasses, trailer mounted refrigerated keg for draft beer on tap, Tasmanian Tiger skin upholstery (very expensive), a and heated sleeping bag to catch a bit of sleep while waiting for better objects to rise or to get high enough to usefully view, and a defrost compartment which can house up to five eyepieces and four filters should the kangaroo pouches become saturated.

A superb product, our reviewer Richmond Windsor scores it at eleven out of ten.

At just \$999 at all good liquor stores, and weighing only 360kg, this

product will be talked about and seen at star parties for many years to come.

INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL UNION 2003 - AUSTRALIAN HIGHLIGHTS

All delegates seemed to enjoy the June 2003 meeting of the International Astronomical Association held at Australia's Darling Harbour Convention Centre in Sydney.

There were only a few minor problems.

One concerned a bus load of professional armchair cosmologists who travelled three hours west of the city to see the southern sky for the first time, took in the area from Scorpio to Carina and returned to their hotel complaining about the bad luck of getting so much persistent cloud on their one free night.

The more serious matter involved a diplomatic incident centred around a disgruntled group of US professionals who had been amateurs in their misspent youth and who sought refugee status in Australia on the grounds of Enron and like corporations infringing their civil liberties by trashing US skies with light pollution.

This brought an angry response from US ambassador Hank Gofer who said that Astronomers only had to visit his home town of Crowfeed Texas to be really kept in the dark.

He said that everyone on the town council from Mayor Hawgsbref to Honorary Dog Catcher, and Master Chef, Ying Chee were tireless in keeping the lights of Crowfeed turned down low from dusk til dawn, but did not appreciate Astronomer Ronald McDonald of the McDonald Observatory's response that this was because Crowfeed did not look very attractive in good light - or in any light.

The matter was quietly settled by granting dual citizenship to the group, and to Ambassador Gofer.

Apart from the usual papers on astral travel and alien colonoscopic interventions, some really good papers on cutting-edge research on dark matter, gamma-ray bursters, extra-Solar planets and adaptive optics were presented.

As I personally could not understand a word of them you will just have to wait until Sky and Telescope figures them out and publishes some summaries - If they ever figure them out.

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale: Compact 48" f/4 Dobsonian - Only 2 metres long when fully assembled, this awesome truss tube light bucket features a quality f/1 fourteen-wave army surplus searchlight mirror with two stacked barlows inserted in the optical train between the primary mirror and 7" secondary.

Aberrations inherent in the primary mirror are corrected by a modification of the costar corrector lens, as put into the Hubble Space Telescope to address a similar problem, being built into the focussing mount.

Truss poles are thermally inert finely turned kiln-dried mahogany while the fully adjustable 81-point suspension cell is crafted in stainless steel and bakelite.

Complete with 14" f/6 finderscope and a full range of RKE eyepieces, this telescope is a steal at only \$9,999.

Currently located and available for inspection in the private observatory of Mr Ivor Merino in the pristine skies on the summit of Mt Cook on New Zealand's South Island, this telescope will sell quickly. Mr Merino's postal address is GPO Box 69, Orcland NZ.

Optional accessories include a sheepskin observing suit, St Bernard dog with collar mounted keg of brandy and Mrs Merino - prices negotiable.

HORROSCOPES FOR JUNE

♈ Aries: All the other heavenly bodies are passing you by this month and the odd minor planet manages to get out of the Zodiac all together rather than pay you a visit. Could it be something you said, or has your best friend not told you something? A bit of self inspection called for here before you venture out into the world.

♉ Taurus: Not content with spending June in your sign, Venus transits the Sun for the first time in 123 years.

Taureans seeking romance should head north for that tropical holiday in the Sun as even if you are visually deficient in the good looks department, heatstroke and a few glasses of cool volatiles may well tip the object of your desire in your general direction. Enjoy.

♊ Gemini: Mercury in the ascending node near Pollux is your thrill of the month. If a pair of identical twins tickles your fancy send one a winged message, and if you get your face slapped, at least you know to try a different line on the other one.

♋ Cancer: Mars moves out of Gemini and into your sign this month. Comet NEAT has scuttled through on its way north, while minor planet Hebe gives the beehive (M44) a nudge.

You Cancers must be damn near as confused by all this as I am, but don't mess with neat beehives, and pass up that offer to feature in a survivor program set in a vacant palace in Baghdad and you may last until July - With luck.

♌ Leo: Noble, King of Beasts type folk, though most Leos I know tend to be mostly on the beast end of that spectrum. However, with Jupiter, King of the Gods in your sign perhaps your suppressed nobility will assert itself for a few weeks and you will be a social lion. Enjoy it while it lasts.

♍ Virgo: Nothing is happening with Virgo this month which is why many Virgos stay that way. The moon, however, will wander through your sign eventually this month so try to live a little - do strange things at midnight under a full moon while emptying a full bottle of booze. At worst, you will wake up with a hangover and the vague hope something exciting may have happened while you were liquored up - if only you could remember.

♎ Libra: You Librans are as badly off as the Virgos this month but better balanced about it and not uptight about the fact that minor planets Fortuna and Kalliope are stuffing about in Ophiuchus, which does not even rate in the Zodiac. Pray hard and maybe a meteor or fireball, or if desperate, a well lit Boeing 747 may pass through your sign this month and give you an excuse to get out of bed in the mornings.

♏ Scorpio: SFA happening in Scorpio this month, though the big, spectacular brute quickly reaches the zenith on June evenings, thrills visiting northern amateurs, casts shadows and generally hogs the sky. With all that going for you Scorpions, you don't need anything else to enhance you, so thrill the common herd with your radiant presence and pity them a little, though not TOO openly.

♐ Ophiuchus: You poor bastards. The Sun, Moon and planets have been trundling through the spot the Sun was in at the time of your birth, but the old-time astrologers didn't give a damn. We do, and next year we may even give you a forecast.

♐ Sagittarius: Usually just sat on by superior Scorpions, at least you have minor planets Thisbe and Thetis in your sign in June. Thetis is rumoured to be the mother of Achilles so go see the movie "Troy", bask in reflected glory and whatever gender you are, pray for pectorals like Brad Pitt's.

♊ Capricorn: With Neptune, God of the Sea in your sign, this is a good month to go for that holiday on a cruise ship. If you can't make it this month, don't worry as that lazy planet will hang around your neighbourhood for years so you have lots of time to get with it.

♊ Aquarius: You noble, artistic, sensitive and utterly cool Aquarians have Uranus hanging about as a reminder that all good things come to an end.

In fact, on June 11, Uranus can't figure out which direction to go, but don't be fooled by this - pick a direction yourself and go for it as most directions seem to work for most Aquarians.

♊ Pisces: Normally all you crowd have going for you is the honour of being parked next to Aquarius.

However, you are due for a visit by Comet 88P Howell which will bring a rare thrill to your dull little lives so get your circulation moving and slip into the fast lane for a change and throw off that cold blooded fishy existence.

STAR PARTY PLANNED FOR CUNNAMULLA

Readers of Alternate Universe, and of course discriminating and sophisticated persons everywhere, are aware of the World Championship Lizard Races held at the Paroo racing track in August each year as part of the Eulo-Cunnamulla Festival of Opals.

While both towns share the opal component of the event, there has always been an element of envy amongst the citizens of Cunnamulla concerning Eulo's unique claim to fame.

Accordingly, the Civic fathers of Cunnamulla have proposed to run an annual star party in conjunction with the festival but centred on their fair town, which is bound to attract



The World-Famous Paroo Lizard Racing Track at Eulo

the attention of top gun amateurs world-wide.

Recognising that the festival is timed to take account of the circadian rhythms of Shingle Back Lizards and Bearded Dragons rather than the phases of the moon, the organisers have been persuaded that a full moon could act as a deterrent to unadventurous amateur Astronomers, so are taking steps to provide inducements and unique prizes.

Special campsites will be reserved at the campsite upwind of the pit toilets, while registration at the star party entitles each person to a free "hamburger-with-the-lot" daily at the Cunnamulla Burger Bar and Grill.

Door prizes include unlimited free beer for the duration of the festival for any registrant who discovers a comet, supernova, or grey alien while at Cunnamulla, Tektite-shaped kangaroo coprolites, the pick of the champion lizards from the Eulo races and the honour of having your portrait mounted in the position of your choice on Arno's Wall at Winton.

Inspiration for the star party came from resident amateur Ludwig Litehardt, whose 60mm observatory-mounted Tasco (in a customised corrugated iron water

tank) is the biggest telescope west of the Paroo River and has amazed stockmen, drovers, swaggies, Yowies and the odd visiting Yogi.

Ludwig's main claim to fame is almost discovering Comet Lee, as, had he been looking at Musca instead of Crux on the night before the discovery, and been using a 10" telescope while looking at Musca instead of Crux the honour would certainly have been his - Probably.

Details of dates and registration will be found on the festival's web site as soon as it is up and running.

Local webmaster Spud Murphy is upgrading his defunct 386 computer in July to expedite work on the graphics and other visuals.

EMMANUEL SNODGRASS MAKES IT TO T.S.P.

Achieving a lifelong ambition, Dunedoo's most famous son, Emmanuel Snodgrass made a superhuman effort to attend the May 2004 Texas Star Party.

Being short of cash ever since comet hunting has been monopolised by those damn satellites, he had to work his passage to San Diego by cargo ship

with his turbo-charged ride-on lawn mower as deck cargo.

Once ashore, and (for him) modestly flushed with a month's seaman's wages, he headed off by lawn mower to Fort Davis by the scenic route - Route 66, with some minor deviations.

This kept him away from the hustle of the interstates, while the few highway patrol guys who lurk along Route 66 are mostly looking for geriatric motorbike gangs trying hard to remember the way - Hell's Ancients and the like.

In any event, he kept a low profile and whenever he saw a squad car or got even a whiff of pork, he moved over to the verge of the road and was busily engaged in trimming the grass and looking very civic minded indeed.

He did not bother with the Grand Canyon, having seen plenty of soil erosion and wombat burrows around Dunedoo, but did see the Drugstore on the corner in Winslow Arizona, took a passing look at Meteor Crater but got put off by all the UFO Kisch, so much so that he bypassed Roswell altogether and headed past the Petrified Forest, the Painted Desert and the Very Large Array (VLA) down to El Paso.

There his problems started as though the highway patrol had been pussycats, those damn border patrols kept pulling him over and lifting the bonnet on his ride-on mower looking for (very small) illegal Mexicans.

Then after the uphill slog to the McDonald Observatory it was all downhill to Fort Davis where SLOB (Snake Lovers Overseas Brotherhood) had arranged accommodation on a mattress on the floor of the Rattlesnake Museum.

As Emmanuel had the best private collection of Tiger Snakes, Death Adders and Copperheads in Dunedoo, sacking out amongst a bunch of woosy Rattlesnakes by comparison held no terrors for him.

There was the minor problem that he had not actually got around to registering for the TSP, but the recent rains had greened up Fort Davis a little so he was able to find a few blades of grass and mow himself past Checkpoint Charlie into the Prude Ranch each day, mightily impressing Wyatt Earp with his diligence.

But then he WAS noticed. In the vendor's hall, Crazy Bob lusted mightily after his Dunedoo cornsack T-Shirt, while in the Valley of the Dobs his binocular Telrads with triple stacked Barlows mounted on the retractable observing chair at the back of his mower stood out even amongst the 25" and 36" Dobs.

Barbara Wilson was a little sceptical when she was told that he was going to try to observe all the objects on Larry Mitchell's advanced observing list with such a modest instrument, but Emmanuel had been munching raw carrots all the way from LA to improve his night vision and had cleverly mounted a UHC filter on one Telrad and an OIII on the other.

Warming up with a Messier Marathon, glimpses of Charon and a couple of Palomar Globulars, he was soon in top form.

Mitchell's list was a breeze to such an experienced and imaginative observer, so much so that after a few slugs of Tequila he actually tried for the Hubble Deep Field, a big ask even for Emmanuel.

He was surprised that with all the interest being currently shown in binoviewers, his was the only binocular Telrad at the TSP but he figured that Crazy Bob was certain to quickly pick up on that marketing opportunity and that the 2005 TSP would be swarming with them.

Emmanuel had to leave half way through the week and well before the prize giving, which was no problem really, as he had not actually registered for the TSP.

It seems that with there being few lawn mowers around Fort Davis, the Director of Homeland Security had got a garbled report about a weapon of grass destruction in town and a platoon of Marines had plucked him out from amongst the rattlesnakes and spirited him off to a free holiday in that military Club Med in Cuba.

Emmanuel is excited and hopes to meet one of those cute army girls there who is into B&D.

COMMERCIAL

My name is Umbopo Znakeoyale and I am the last surviving son of the assassinated former Nigerian Minister of Education, whose toilet bowl was rigged with an anti-tank mine by the new President and his supporters.

He always said they would get him in the end.

As I have no love for the new regime, I wish to punish them and move offshore the stock of sixteen million Naglers, of all focal lengths, that my father had imported to facilitate science teaching in Nigerian schools.

I am looking for a worthy person who knows how to treat good optics, and could use a few Naglers in his eyepiece box, to receive and store these eyepieces on my behalf prior to sale at next year's Texas Star Party, and offer a commission of 1,600,000 Naglers to that kind person.

I made this offer to Crazy Bob but he said for some reason that he was not that crazy.

As I do not dare to use the internet, would interested parties please write to me care of the Post Office, Lagos, enclosing ten blank cheques signed with their usual signature as a mark of good faith, and I will get back to them just as soon as I can.

Texan oil millionaires are especially invited to apply.

<u>COMMITTEE</u>			<u>HOW TO GET TO MEETINGS</u>
President:	Mike Err	6876 1812	Meetings are held in the ATNF Headquarters building, located in the CSIRO Department of Radiophysics complex on the corner of Pembroke Road and Vimiera Roads, Marsfield. If arriving by car, please dim your headlights, turn right through the main gate, then immediately right past the main office entrance, proceeding about 50 metres to a small car park area. Adjacent to this is the "West Door", which is our entrance. It is advisable to park your car in this area, and walk up the stairs to the Meeting Hall, as it can sometimes be a little difficult to hear the speaker if you are sitting downstairs.
Vice President:	Joe Crunchy	6636 3878	
Vice President:	Don Blanchomme	6642 1574	
Treasurer:	Adrian Listened	6572 1568	
Secretary:	Nadia Dugahole	6743 3831	
Editor:	Janet Listened	6572 1568	
Education:	Ted Luminary	6858 1484	
Technical:	Homer Simpson	6686 8633	
Librarian:	Richard Heggster	6789 0123	All meetings start at 8pm sharp. The doors will be opened at 7.45, 7.55 and 8.10pm. If you arrive after 8.10pm, knock loudly on the door to attract the attention of the attendant, who works in the adjacent office. There may be a short delay before answering, and this is normal, however if, after 5 minutes, you are still waiting, try prying the doors open using a crowbar or similar, and if this is ineffective, the glass doors should shatter upon impact with a hard sharp blow with that same crowbar
<u>SECTION LEADERS</u>			
Crago (Bowen):	Adrian Listened	6572 1568	
Wiruna (Ilford):	Joe Crunchy	6636 3878	
Astrophotography	Joe Crunchy	6636 3878	
Deep-Sky:	Scotch Muesli	6344 7754	
Solar System:	Greg Burnt	6743 3660	
Telescope Making	Don Blanchomme	6642 1574	
Variable Stars:	Ted Luminary	6858 1484	
Double Stars:	Richard Jawookie	6871 3019	
Public Officer:	Richard Jawookie	6558 8523	
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SOCIETY DIARY

- June 8th Transit of Venus** All members who observed the last Transit of Venus will be treated by the Society to a four course free dinner at Doyles famous Harbourside seafood restaurant, with free champagne provided.
Venue: As far West as possible
- June 11th & 12th Last Quarter Moon** Special observing evening for those members who forgot all about the Transit of Venus.
Venue: Crago Observatory, Bowen Mountain, NSW
- June 14th Queens Birthday Public Holiday** Royal Celebrations and Observing Session for the Monarchists
Venue: Crago Observatory and Wiruna
- June 18th - 19th New Moon** Strange winter solstice rites around the fire in the eat-in-kitchen. Many spirits will be communed with.
Venue: Eastern (lower) Observing Field, Wiruna, Ilford NSW

DISCLAIMER

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