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rce Museum of Arts & Science

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March 2013

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, March 6 – 7:30 PM

Meet Comet Pan-STARRS!

Presentation by Rick Bria

Discovered in June 2011, this comet is on its first trip from the Oort Cloud to the inner solar system, and is due to pass by the sun inside the orbit of Mercury during March. Like a lot of other astronomers, Rick has been studying and photographing it, and we're all hoping it will become a spectacular naked-eye object. So come and learn all about it! (And come to the Observatory on March 12 to see it.) Rick will also introduce us to Comet ISON which is due in December. Hope to see many of you there!

Bowman Observatory Public Nights (Weather Permitting)

March 12 & 26 – 8-10 PM

April 9 & 23 – 8-10 PM

May 14 & 28 – 9-11 PM



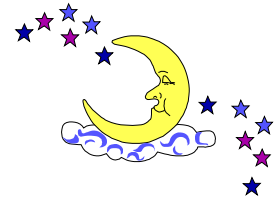
News Notes

Astronomy Day was quite successful, though attendance was down due to snowstorm "Nemo" which undoubtedly kept some people at home digging out. Starlab was great as always and we had our usual displays of telescopes, posters, books, etc., and astronomical crafts in the workshop. Many thanks to ASG members Bill Bambrick, Rick Bria, Barbara Dahm, and Joe Masi, Steve the Dirtmeister, and the Bruce Museum staff and volunteers for all your help!

--Anne Burns, President

Lunacy

February	1	Moon passes <i>Spica</i>
	2	Moon passes Saturn
	4	<i>Last Quarter</i>
	5	Moon at perigee (229,881 miles from Earth)
	6	Moon passes Pluto
	10	Moon passes Mercury and Neptune
	11	<i>New Moon</i> passes Venus
	12	Moon passes Mars and Neptune
	13	Moon passes Uranus
	17	Moon passes Jupiter
	18	Moon at apogee (251,327 miles from Earth)
	19	<i>First Quarter</i>
	27	Full Moon – “Worm Moon” – the first after the Equinox, determines the beginning of Passover (sunset on March 26) and Easter (Sunday, March 31)
	28	Moon passes <i>Spica</i>
	29	Moon passes Saturn
	30	Moon at perigee (228,356 miles from Earth)



News of the Worlds

Since **Mars** is pretty much lost in the evening twilight, **Jupiter** (mag.-2.3) has the evening sky to itself, until **Saturn** (mag.0.3) rises around 10:30 PM, progressing to 9:30 by month's end.

All the other planets are either behind the sun or in the early-morning sky.

Venus and **Uranus** both pass behind the sun, reaching superior conjunction on March 28. However, they are moving in opposite directions. Next month Venus moves to the evening sky, while Uranus appears in the morning, where it joins **Neptune** (mag.8).

Mercury leaves the evening sky, reaching *inferior conjunction* (passing between Earth and Sun – sorry, no transit this time) on March 4, pops up in the morning sky on the 6th, when it has a conjunction with Venus, and reaches greatest elongation (28° west of the Sun) on March 31. It never gets very high but it's quite bright (mag.0.2) so you may be able to spot it about 30 minutes before sunrise.

This is a good time of year to try to view the **Zodiacal Light**, which is the effect of the Sun illuminating dust-mote sized meteoroids along the ecliptic right after sunset. As this cone-shaped glow is quite subtle, you may need a dark-sky location to see it.

The **Vernal Equinox** occurs at 7:02 AM on March 20. In the ancient European calendar, the Equinox was the feast of the goddess of spring, *Ostara*, the origin of the English name of the Christian feast of Easter. (See below for more.)

Happy Spring!

Mark your Calendar:

Sunday, April 21
Stargazing in the Meadow – Greenwich Land Trust
More next issue!

Ostara



Ostara (or Austro, Eostre, or Eastre) was a Teutonic goddess of spring. Little is known about her except one reference: St. Bede the Venerable, writing in England in the 7th century, says that the word “Easter” is derived from her name, because among the Anglo-Saxon people the month of April was called “Eostra.” Since, in German, *Ost* means “east,” she may also have been the goddess of dawn (cf. Eos in Greek, Aurora in Latin).

Legend says that one winter, having found a wounded bird, Ostara changed it into a hare so it would survive the winter. However, the hare was still a bird at heart, because in the spring, it started laying eggs! This may be the origin of the “Easter Bunny.” The story may have started due to the fact that hares make sleeping-nests on the ground, which resemble birds’ nests.

In Germany, children make nests on the ground for the Easter Hare to lay eggs in.

