

Focal Point



The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

May & June 2004

The Milwaukee View of the Transit of Venus

On the morning of June 8, the planet Venus will transit the Sun for the first time since 1882. Although most of the transit will take place before sunrise in the Milwaukee area, we will be able to see the final hour of the event.

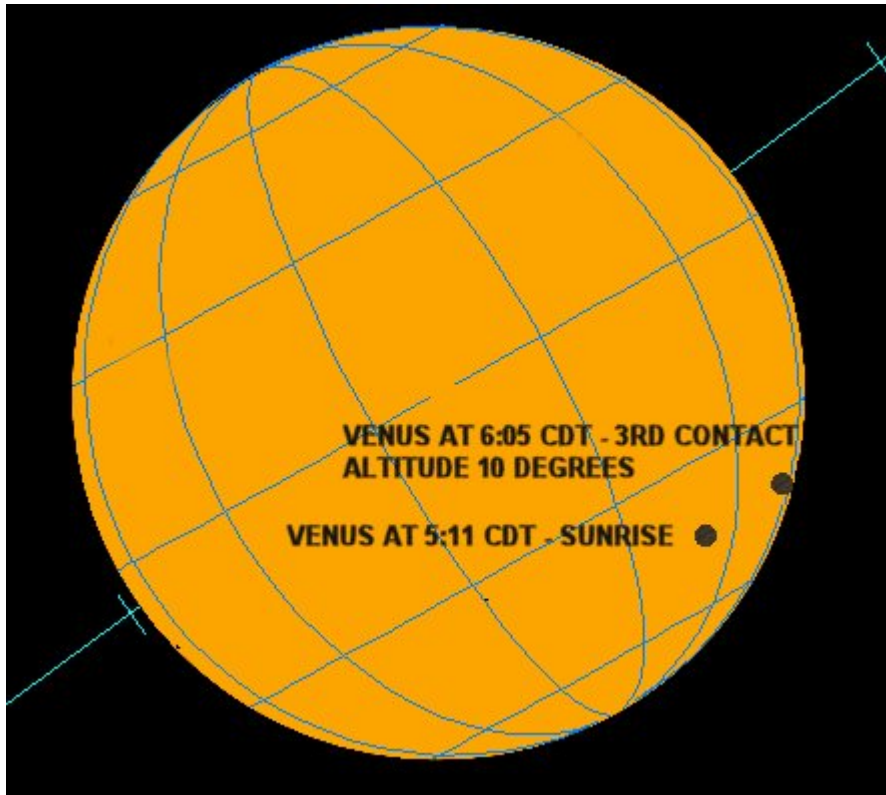
Venus will first start to cross the face of the Sun at 20 minutes after midnight our time (well placed for observers in Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa). The local Sunrise will be at about 5:11 AM CDT. The diagram on page 2 shows the position of Venus at Sunrise and at the time of 3rd contact (the diagram shows the zenith up). The final contact will occur at 6:25 CDT, 11 degrees above the horizon. Venus will probably become difficult to see well before the 4th contact. One exception will be anyone with a Hydrogen Alpha filter. With such a filter it may be possible to see the planet against a prominence or inner corona.

Remember that, although the UV absorption is very high at sunrise, the Sun is dangerously bright. **USE PROPER FILTRATION OR EYEPIECE PROJECTION TO PROTECT YOUR EYESIGHT.**

For observers in the Milwaukee area, you will want to be set up before sunrise. The best location will probably be at the lakefront. Not only is there an excellent horizon, but also, the water tends to be thermally stable and the seeing will be better than at a site looking over land. The only problem may be possible clouds over the lake. Check out the weather before making your final sight selection. The Sun will rise at an azimuth of 57 degrees from North. Make sure you have a clear line of sight.

The critical times are: sunrise 5:11, 3rd contact 6:05, 4th contact 6:25 (all CDT). The whole event will be over in time for most of you to get to work on time.

The next Venus transit, in 2012, will favor the Pacific and Asia. From here, we may catch the beginning, right before sundown. After that, there will not be another Venus transit until well into the 22nd century. That's long after the next total solar eclipse visible at the MAS observatory on Sept 14, 2099 (something for the young folks to look forward to).



Library News:

The Theory of Everything: The Origin and Fate of the Universe – by Stephen W. Hawking-2002. Stephen Hawking is considered the savant in understanding the universe. He popularizes cosmological astronomy books like A Brief History of Time and makes them accessible for the public. Hawking is a Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University as he holds Newton's chair. Seven lectures tell everything about the universe according to Stephen Hawking.

Many of the books in the MAS library are not technical or specialized but popular accounts or essays by writers with designs on informing the general public. If you want a different outlook, look for those books by subject category.

Please give any suggestions to improve the MAS Library, in writing, to:

Scott Laskowski, MAS Librarian
4015 W. Grange Avenue
Greenfield, WI 53221

LOWELL OBSERVATORY'S 2nd ANNUAL STAR PARTY

The Lowell Observatory Star Party II unfolds from June 17-20 at the Observatory's Mars Hill campus with observing at nearby Arizona Snowbowl. Highlights include observing on the 24" Clark Telescope, tours of the U.S. Naval Observatory and Lowell Observatory's Anderson Mesa dark sky research site, special talks by astronomers, an astronomy marketplace, and Lowell's spectacular multimedia show.

Kenneth Herkenhoff from USGS will present "Mars Rovers," with the latest from Spirit and Opportunity, by a U.S. Geological Survey scientist directly involved. Talks by Lowell astronomers will include: "Recent Comets," hear about two 2004 comets by expert David Schleicher; "Killer Asteroids," by Brian Skiff, an update on the productive Lowell Observatory Near-Earth Asteroid Search; "Our Variable Sun," an introduction to the seething world behind our Sun's steady light by Jeffrey Hall; and "Big Stars in Small Galaxies," by Deidre Hunter, with current research on effects of massive stars on dwarf galaxies. Project manager Thomas Sebring will present "The Discovery Channel Telescope at Lowell Observatory," a behind-the-scenes look at building the new 4.3-meter, \$30,000,000 versatile instrument.

Detailed information is available at <http://kraken.lowell.edu>. Mark your calendar, and please consider attending the event.

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MAS Officers / Staff

President: Scott Jamieson (262) 896-0119
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Gerry Samolyk (414) 529-9051
Assistant Observatory Director:
Paul Borchardt (262) 781-0169
Focal Point: Jerry Bialozynski (262) 895-7461

Upcoming MAS Events:

May 14 - Open House at the Observatory

MAS Membership is open to anyone interested in Astronomy who wishes to enrich their knowledge of the Universe.

Yearly Membership Dues:

Individual \$34/yr, Family \$40, Non-resident (individual \$22, Family \$40), Student (under 18) \$16. For more information, contact Membership Chairman, Carlos Garces, 16430 Melody Drive, New Berlin, WI. 53151.
Phone: (262) 786-2623 Email : cgarces@wi.rr.com

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

The "Focal Point" is published bi-monthly (Jan, March, May, July, Sept, Nov). Articles, Announcements, Graphics, Photos, Swap/Sale Ads etc. should be **submitted at least 10 days** prior to the first of the month (of the pending issue). Article inputs are preferred via email in a Text or Word compatible format. Submit Focal Point inputs to:

Saturday Night Key Holder

May

1 Brian Ganiere (414) 961-8745
8 Carlos Garces (262) 786-2623
15 Henry Gerner (414) 774-9194
22 Chris Hesseltine (414) 482-4515
29 Vern Hoag (262) 548-9130

June

5 Tim Hoff (262) 662-2212
12 Scott Jamieson (262) 896-0119
19 Lee Keith (414) 425-2331
26 Dan Koehler (262) 662-2987

July

3 Scott Laskowski (414) 421-3517

Loaner Telescopes (available to members for local use)

Lee Keith (Franklin) (414) 425-2331 8" Dob reflector
Scott Jamieson (Waukesha) (262) 896-0119 8" Dob reflector
Paul Borchardt (MAS site) (262) 781-0169 6" Dob reflector
Chris Weber (New Berlin) (262) 789-7128 8" Dob reflector

MAS Observatory (262) 542-9071

MAS Web Page: www.milwaukeeastro.org

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ADDRESS CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

*Next **Board & General meetings of the MAS** will be held on **May 21**. The Board will meet at 7:00 PM, the General Meeting will be at 8:00 PM at **the Observatory**.*

