The May Sky

For Your Eyes Only:

Saturn rises well before sunset in June and is therefore about 30^{O} above the eastern horizon at dusk. This summer it shares the sky with the bright star Spica. Spica is easily found by following the arc of the handle of the Big Dipper to Arcturus, ("follow the arc to Arcturus"), and continuing a similar angular distance to Spica. This summer it can be forgiven if you mistake Saturn for Spica. They are nearly the same brightness with a small advantage going to Saturn. We think of stars as being permanent, but stars also have a lifespan determined by their masses. Spica is actually a double star that appears to us as a single star, each star much more massive and much brighter than the Sun. Even though both stars have more fuel at their disposals, they will rip through all of it in few dozen million years. Between Spica and Saturn, the planet wins the longevity race. Long after the stars of Spica make their celestial exit, Saturn will be still gracing our night skies.

May's Annular Solar Eclipse

The bad news is that you won't see much from Lexington on May 20th. The Sun sets *just* as the Moon takes the smallest bite from the solar disk, should you have a view down to the theoretical horizon. The good news for North American observers is that the farther west you are, the more you can see. The eclipse begins in Eastern China and Japan. Can't make this one? There are two total eclipses in Kentucky in the next 12 years. There is (barely) a lunar eclipse visible from Kentucky at sunrise on June 4th. (Printable version.)

The Sun's bright surface will not be completely covered by the Moon, and even though the Sun may look dimmer when near the horizon, invisible radiation from the Sun can and will permanently damage your eyes. Homemade filters can also transmit harmful, yet invisible, wavelengths and are not generally safe. See: Safe Eclipse Viewing at Sky & Telescope's website.

You can find an all-sky finder chart for this month at our web site:

https://pa.as.uky.edu/observatory

UK MacAdam

STUDENT OBSERVATORY

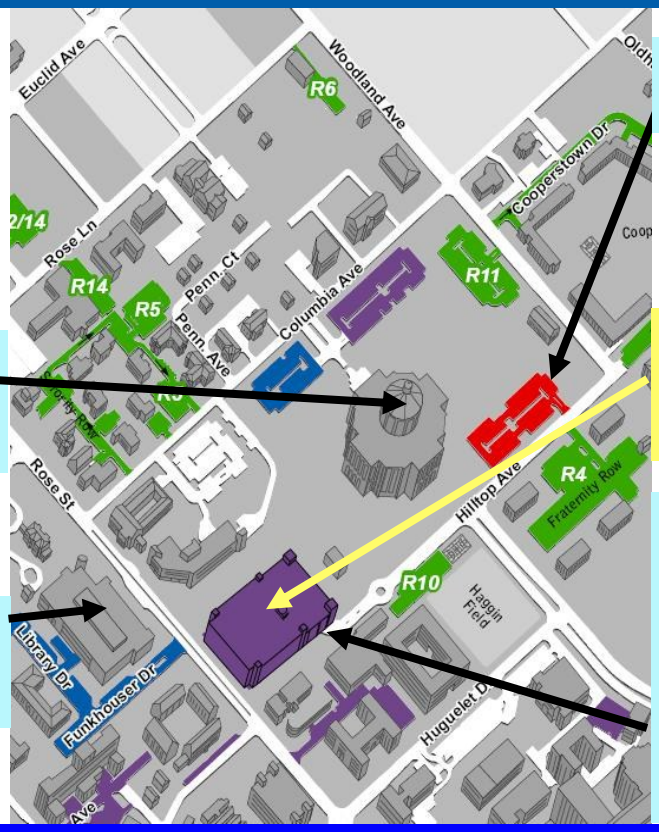
UK's MacAdam Student Observatory, designed and built in 2007, was officially opened in 2008. The Observatory is located atop Parking Structure #2 between the W.T. Young Library and the Chemistry-Physics Building, and its dome houses a high-quality 20-inch reflecting telescope plus a variety of state-of-the-art optical instruments. The Observatory is dedicated to serving UK students as well as astronomy enthusiasts of every age and experience level throughout Kentucky.

Are you interested in informal talks on astronomy and astrophysics? Are you curious about telescope design and operation? Would you care to take a look through the eyepiece?

The Department of Physics & Astronomy in UK's College of Arts & Sciences welcomes you! Join us to experience the excitement of stargazing through a powerful telescope. An up-to-date calendar of events can be found on our website:

https://pa.as.uky.edu/observatory

How to find the MacAdam Student Observatory



Monthly Meetings

The MSO hosts monthly public-observing sessions, each with a kick-off 40 minute presentation in the Chemistry-Physics Building. The presentations will take place even on cloudy nights. If the sky is clear, the observatory will open after the talk! Can't make the SkyTalk? Then come after!

Next month:

Aaron Morris—University of Kentucky

June 14, 2012 - 8 PM - Chem-Phys Room 155

Denizens of the Galactic Zoo

Kentucky SkyTalk

Artist's impression of the star Beta Pictoris and its companion.
European Southern Observatories

Kyle McCarthy—University of Kentucky

Thursday - May 10, 2012 8PM

Chemistry-Physics Building Room 155

Finding Alien Planets Around Nearby Stars

Discovering planets around stars other than our sun is the product of 15 years of hard work and clever ideas. Currently there are over 750 detected planets around nearly 440 stars, where most of these stars are in our own solar neighborhood. This talk will describe the four primary methods astronomers use to find these extra-solar planets (a.k.a. "exoplanets") and highlight interesting systems along the way.

Tonight's *Kentucky SkyTalk* is part of an ongoing series. These are presented by the UK Department of Physics and Astronomy, and the MacAdam Student Observatory. Held every 2nd Thursday of the month, they are always free and open to the public.