

Weekly Newsletter

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Physics & Astronomy

FROM THE HOD (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ROGER REEVES)

Just a short note this week from me as there has been little happening.

Remember that tomorrow afternoon (Friday) is graduation for the Science students. At 10am we are hosting a morning tea for graduates and families with all members of the dept welcome to join in.

Many of us have seen the recent articles in The Press and the latest Chronicle about the plans to seek UN Heritage status for the dark night sky around the Mackenzie Basin. Maintaining the quality of the Tekapo environment for astronomy research has been an ongoing concern for the Department for many years. This latest effort with assistance from Earth and Sky Limited and the MacKenzie District Council, is very welcome and hopefully leads to further protection of the environment.

NEXT SEMINAR: - 11:00AM, FRIDAY 4 MAY

Professor Pál Ormos,

Institute of Biophysics, Biological Research Centre, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Szeged, Hungary

Optically driven micromachines for biotechnology

View abstract at: <http://www.phys.canterbury.ac.nz/seminars/2007/Ormos%20%20May%2007.pdf>

2007 AURORA SCHOOL (Karen Pollard)

The 2007 AURORA astronomy school was held last week 16-20 April 2007. We had 23 very keen and promising students attending the School, mostly year 13 but some year 12.

We spent Monday and Tuesday morning at the University, with seminars and laboratories on astronomical topics. We then went down to Mt John for the practical part of the School. We had a brilliant first part of the night on Tuesday, with crisp clear skies until some fog rolled in around midnight.

The students were able to observe directly through the 0.6m OC telescope and we took CCD images of interesting astronomical objects using the 1.0m telescope. We also had a tour of the 1.8m MOA telescope. On Wednesday we had a sightseeing tour beside the canals to Lake Pukaki and a (clear!) view of Mt Cook. We then went and visited the DOC Black Stilt Captive breeding programme in Twizel, which was very interesting. Wednesday night was cloudy but Alan Gilmore gave us a great talk on "Hunting Asteroids" which prompted a lot of questions, and some nervousness about 2029! On Thursday we returned to campus, and had most of Friday for more astronomy lectures and laboratories. The students appeared to have a great time and were asking lots of questions about the lectures, about studying and about research in general. I hope we'll see some of them back in future years.

Thanks to all those staff and students who helped out with lectures, laboratories, administration, entertainment, running around ...etc, etc, that goes with organizing 23 teenagers to be at the right place at the right time! Special thanks to Joan Gladwyn from Science Outreach who helped with all the logistics and administration, to those people who gave a great variety of lectures to the students (John Hearnshaw, Michael Albrow, Jack Baggaley, David Wiltshire, Pauline Harris, Dharam Ahluwalia-Khalilova and Jenni Adams) and to the astronomy students whose help was invaluable: Robyn Woollands, Liz Worley, Hana Schumacher, Mita Gopal, Veronica Miller, Michele Bannister and Jeffrey Simpson.

NEWS FROM MIKE REID

I am back in Hong Kong after a two-week break in Thailand. A sometimes exciting and sometimes relaxing trip. Exciting included a bus trip to Kanchanaburi (site of the Thailand-Burma railway, among other things) and a road trip up to Nong Khai and an excursion by leaky boat across the Mekong to Vientiane. April is New Year (Songkran), which involves everyone getting extremely wet. Great fun as long as you're dressed for it! More relaxing was some quiet time at the end in a Wat in Bangkok, visiting some of the monks that I have met when they visited Christchurch. Now back at work with Chang-Kui Duan and Peter Tanner.



Mike and the Mekong. Laos in the background.

UPDATE ON FORMER EXCHANGE STUDENT – MICHAEL KERLER

(Roger Reeves)

Michael Kerler (PGDipSci, 2006) travelled from Christchurch to Thailand after completing his courses last year. He spent two months assisting in an orphanage while there and writes that it was a truly unique experience. Now back in Konstanz, Germany, he continues to work on his degree in physics.



THIS WEEK'S QUIZ

Who is the baby? Answer in next week's newsletter.



APRIL 2007 SCHOLARSHIPS – WEB SITE

View General Scholarships at:-

<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/scholarships/resources/currentnoticeboard.shtml>

College of Science Scholarship

<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/scholarships/noticeboard/april2007sci.shtml>

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