

The International Year of Astronomy 2009—in general and personally

By Janelle Burgardt

Each year, an area of science is chosen for promotion by the U.N. and the international science community. In 2009, the topic is astronomy, commemorating the 400th anniversary of Galileo first turning his telescope to the sky. Here's the official-ese"

"The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is supported by eleven Cornerstone projects. These are global programs of activities centered on specific themes and are some of the projects that will help to achieve IYA2009's main goals; whether it is the support and promotion of women in astronomy, the preservation of dark-sky sites around the world or educating and explaining the workings of the Universe to millions, the eleven Cornerstones will be key elements in the success of IYA2009."

The cornerstone projects, along with their websites, appear at the end of this article. I'm going to highlight the ones of most obvious interest to observers.

100 Hours of Astronomy

"This is a 100-hour, round-the-clock, round-the-globe event that includes live webcasts from research observatories, public observing events and other activities around the world."

The idea is that, for 100 hours April 2-5 there will be someone, somewhere on earth who is looking through a telescope.

NEKAAL EVENT: April 4 at Farpoint Observatory

The Portal to the Universe

"The Portal to the Universe (PTTU) seeks to provide a global, one-stop portal for online astronomy content. PTTU will have the latest stuff first. The Portal is scheduled to launch April 1, 2009 to coincide with the 100 Hours of Astronomy Cornerstone."

It's a pretty ambitious effort, but any information about astronomy is worth a look. And, it'd be nice to have the basic reference stuff in one place—if that's what it is. It's worth checking into.

From Earth to the Universe

This is the "ooh-aah pictures" place. It has images of all sort of space objects, with a new one each day. Also has neat astronomical desktop images for your computer.

Dark Skies Awareness

"Its goal is to raise the level of public knowledge about adverse impacts of excess artificial lighting on local environments and help more people appreciate the ongoing loss of a dark night sky for much of the world's population. "

LIGHT POLLUTION—astronomers hate it! But it also wastes energy and money, has detrimental impact on animals, including humans, and often *lessens* security.

Cosmic Diary

"The Cosmic Diary is not just about astronomy. It's more about what it is like to be an astronomer. The Cosmic Diary aims to put a human face on astronomy: professional scientists will blog in text and images about their lives, families, friends, hobbies and interests, as well as their work, their latest research findings and the challenges that face them."

This is a blog by astronomers from around the world, written from where they're working, and not always in English! Considering some of the inane, unintelligent, rant-filled exhibitions of human drivel that call themselves "weblogs", this takes some getting used to. Drop in on occasion, and see what you find.

The Galileoscope

"The IYA2009 program wants to share this observational and personal experience with as many people as possible across the world. It is collaborating with the US IYA2009 National Node to develop a simple, accessible, easy-to-assemble and easy-to-use telescope that can be distributed by the millions."

Interesting idea. Most of us have access to equipment this good or better, but for areas without that access, it opens the universe in a way that wouldn't be possible otherwise. PRICE: \$15

Cornerstone Project:

100 Hours of Astronomy

www.100hoursofastronomy.org

The Galileoscope

www.galileoscope.org

Cosmic Diary

www.cosmicdiary.org

The Portal to the Universe

Scheduled to launch April 1, 2009 to coincide with the 100 Hours of Astronomy.

Dark Skies Awareness

www.darkskiesawareness.org

Universe Awareness

www.unawe.org

From Earth to the Universe

www.fromearthtotheuniverse.org

Developing Astronomy Globally

www.developingastronomy.org/