CONTENTS

News & Announcements ..............................2
Abstracts of 5 Accepted Papers ......................3
Title of 1 Submitted Paper ............................6
Title of 1 Other Paper ...............................6
Titles of 5 Conference Contributions .................6
Newsletter Information ..............................7
NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Carl Pilcher, Science Director for Exploration of the Solar System in NASA’s Office of Space Science, announces the first issue of the new Solar System Exploration newsletter. It is online at http://sse.jpl.nasa.gov/results/newsletter/newslet.html in PDF format. The newsletter will be published several times a year to keep the planetary science community informed about activities and plans at NASA Headquarters, and to facilitate dialog. They invite your feedback; you can e-mail comments and suggestions to cpilcher@hq.nasa.gov or Ronald.S.Saunders@jpl.nasa.gov

In case you missed it, the Scattered Disk Objects (SDOs) were recently moved from the TNO list to the Centaur list at the Minor Planet Center. This shift includes the following objects:


Since then, a number of new probable SDOs have been added to those lists as well. The object lists and plots on the Distant EKOs website (e.g., http://www.boulder.swri.edu/ekonews/objects/) have been modified to reflect this classification change. The orbital characteristics that define SDOs versus TNOs or Centaurs are not unambiguously established (there is clearly a grey area where there is some overlap), so the division used on the Distant EKOs webpages is not definitive.

There were 45 new TNO discoveries announced since the previous issue of the Distant EKOs Newsletter:


and 6 new Centaur/SDO discoveries:


Current number of TNOs: 270 (and Pluto & Charon)
Current number of Centaurs/SDOs: 42
PAPERS ACCEPTED TO JOURNALS

Visible and Infrared Photometry of Fourteen Kuiper Belt Objects

John K. Davies¹, Simon Green², Neil McBride², Erica Muzerall¹, David J. Tholen³, Robert J. Whiteley³, Michael J. Foster², and Jon K. Hillier²

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We present V−J colors of 14 Kuiper Belt objects using new infrared (J) data combined, in most cases, with simultaneous visible (V) data. We confirm the V−J vs absolute magnitude relation reported by Jewitt & Luu (1998) for the five objects in their dataset but demonstrate that the relationship does not hold for a larger sample. Kuiper Belt objects exhibit a wide range of V−J colors but there is no correlation with heliocentric distance or orbital class. The bi-modality seen in BVR colors by Tegler & Romanishin (1998) is not present in optical-infrared colors.

To appear in: Icarus
For preprints, contact j.davies@jach.hawaii.edu
or by anonymous ftp to ftp.jach.hawaii.edu/pub/ukirt/jkd/v-j/v-j.ps
or on the web at http://www.jach.hawaii.edu/JACpublic/UKIRT/public/research.html

Detection of Carbon Monoxide in (2060) Chiron

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2060 Chiron is among the small population of large, outer Solar System objects called Centaurs. Chiron's unusual, 51-year orbit ranges in distance from 8.5 to just over 19 AU, and exhibits an inclination to the ecliptic plane of $8.5^\circ$. Recent dynamical studies (Levison and Duncan 1994; Dones et al. 1996) show this orbit is unstable to giant-planet perturbations on timescales of $< 10^6$ years, indicating that it is a recent addition to the planetary region. This, along with its low-inclination orbit, and its size similarity to the newly-discovered population of 100–400 km diameter Kuiper Disk objects (Campins et al. 1994; Jewitt and Luu 1995), provides strong circumstantial evidence that Chiron is an escaped object from the Kuiper Disk. Chiron's present orbit subjects it to much more intense insolation than objects in the Kuiper Disk experience. That insolation generates surface activity, as revealed by a highly variable coma (Hartmann et al. 1989; Meech and Belton 1990; Bus et al. 1993). The source of Chiron's activity has been speculated on for many years (Stern 1989) but never observationally identified. We report here the detection of CO molecules in Chiron's coma, which are probably the sublimation agent generating Chiron's activity.

Published in: Solar System Research (Astronomicheskii Vestnik), 33, 187 (1999)
For preprints, contact alan@boulder.swri.edu
or on the web at http://www.boulder.swri.edu/~alan/papers/chiron_co.ps
The Formation of Uranus and Neptune in the Jupiter-Saturn Region of the Solar System

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Planets are believed to have formed through the accumulation of a large number of small bodies. In the case of the gas-giant planets Jupiter and Saturn, they accreted a significant amount of gas directly from the protosolar nebula after accumulating solid cores of about 5–15 Earth masses. Such models, however, have been unable to produce the smaller ice giants Uranus and Neptune at their present locations, because in that region of the Solar System the small planetary bodies will have been more widely spaced, and less tightly bound gravitationally to the Sun. When applied to the current Jupiter-Saturn zone, a recent theory predicts that, in addition to the solid cores of Jupiter and Saturn, two or three other solid bodies of comparable mass are likely to have formed. Here we report the results of model calculations that demonstrate that such cores will have been gravitationally scattered outwards as Jupiter, and perhaps Saturn, accreted nebular gas. The orbits of these cores then evolve into orbits that resemble those of Uranus and Neptune, as a result of gravitational interactions with the small bodies in the outer disk of the protosolar nebula.

Published in: Nature, 402, 635 (1999 December 9)
For preprints, contact duncan@astro.queensu.ca
or on the web at http://www.astro.queensu.ca/~thommes/402635A0.pdf

Pluto's Non-isothermal Surface

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We report on repeated far-infrared photometric observations of the Pluto-Charon system conducted in 1997 with the Infrared Space Observatory (ISO). These observations have led to the first detection of the system at 150 and 200 \textmu m and to the first clear detection of its thermal lightcurve at 60 \textmu m (and more marginally at 100 \textmu m). They definitely prove that Pluto's surface is not isothermal. The thermal lightcurve is, as expected, roughly anticorrelated with the visible lightcurve, but not exactly. The data are fit by physical models including Charon and three separate units on Pluto, respectively dominated by (1) N\textsubscript{2} ice, (2) CH\textsubscript{4} ice, and (3) tholins. These models are constructed in accordance with information from visible imaging and lightcurve, visible spectroscopy and infrared spectroscopy, considerations on the thermal balance of N\textsubscript{2} and CH\textsubscript{4}, and include a thermophysical description of subsurface conduction and infrared beaming. Charon's contribution, which cannot be separated from Pluto's in the observations, is assumed to be independent of longitude and equivalent to that of a \textasciitilde52 K body. The main implications are that Pluto's surface in units 2 and 3 has a thermal inertia \Gamma = (1.5–10)\times10\textsuperscript{4} erg cm\textsuperscript{−2} s\textsuperscript{−1/2} K\textsuperscript{−1}, comparable to that of other icy satellites, and relatively high bolometric emissivities (not lower than 0.5 and most likely 0.8–1). Diurnal temperature variations must be significant, with maximum dayside temperatures in the
range 54–63 K. The value of thermal inertia may be indicative of porosity in the top centimeters of Pluto’s surface. The observations further confirm that the far-IR brightness temperatures, though somewhat smaller than indicated by IRAS, are higher than in the millimeter/submillimeter range. Extending the models to longer wavelengths suggests that a low radio emissivity, as opposed to a mixing of temperatures or a subsurface sounding effect, is the correct explanation. Finally, in spite of large error bars, the 150 µm fluxes indicated by ISO seem unexpectedly high given the spectral properties of ices in the far-IR. These, and the expected lightcurves of the Pluto-Charon system at $\lambda = 15$–60 µm should be priority measurements for SIRTF.

To appear in: Icarus

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**Nereid Has Complex Large-Amplitude Photometric Variability (Due to Chaotic Rotation)**

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We report on 224 photometric measurements of Nereid, a small outer satellite of Neptune with a 360-day orbit of high eccentricity (0.751). Our photometry covers 64 nights from 1987 to 1997 and is primarily in the $V$-band, although we also have 20 measurements in the $U$, $B$, $R$, and $I$ bands. (1) Nereid displays large-amplitude brightness variations with a total amplitude of 1.83 magnitude on time scales ranging from a few hours to roughly a year. (2) During the 12 days of the Voyager encounter with Neptune, Nereid did not display any short-term variations, however large-amplitude long-term variations could easily be hidden by the large phase effects and the short duration of observation. (3) Nereid’s variability is caused by high contrast albedo features, i.e. a dark hemisphere, along with rotational modulation. (4) The character of the brightness variations changed around 1991 from fast and large-amplitude to comparatively slow and low-amplitude. This demonstrates that the direction and magnitude of Nereid’s rotational angular momentum vector is changing on time scales comparable to its orbital period. (5) Large changes in the magnitude and direction of Nereid’s angular momentum vector are predicted to arise from chaotic rotation during every periapse passage provided that Nereid is more than $\sim 1\%$ nonspherical and is spinning slowly. The match between prediction and observation could be taken as strong evidence for chaotic rotation of Nereid. However, the intranight variability cannot be readily explained by chaotic rotation. (6) The colors of Nereid are $U - V = 0.84 \pm 0.05$, $B - V = 0.71 \pm 0.04$, $V - R = 0.44 \pm 0.03$, $V - I = 0.72 \pm 0.05$, and $V - K = 1.6$, indicating a nearly flat reflectance spectrum from 0.36 to 2.2 µm. We identify asteroids, inner satellites, and centaurs with similar spectra. (7) Nereid is likely either an inner moon of Neptune kicked to its current orbit or a captured Kuiper Belt object or Centaur, with the latter possibility being strongly preferred.

To appear in: Icarus

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Failed Oort Clouds and Planetary Migration
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Published in: The Encyclopaedia of Astronomy and Astrophysics
For preprints, contact joel@boulder.swri.edu
or by anonymous ftp to ftp.boulder.swri.edu/pub/joel/chiron_enc.ps.gz
or on the web at http://www.boulder.swri.edu/~joel/papers.html

CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Below is the list of the few Kuiper Belt-related papers I gleaned from the program for the 196th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society (2000 June 4-8, Rochester, NY, USA):

- Session 4. Young Stars and Their Environments, poster session, Mon, June 5
  - 2MASS-IRAS Newly Discovered Exozodiacal Vega-type Dust
    S.B. Fajardo-Acosta, C.A. Beichman, and R.M. Cutri
- Session 12. Amateur-Professional Collaboration in Astronomy, 10:00, Mon, June 5
  - Pinning Down the Orbits of Transneptunian Objects
    B.G. Marsden and W.B. Offutt
    (abstract #12.01, http://www.aas.org/publications/baas/v32n2/aas196/121.htm)
- Session 36. Exploring Dust and the ISM with SIRTF, 8:30, Wed, June 7
  - Dust Distribution in Zodiacal Clouds
    S.F. Dermott
  - Circumstellar Debris Disks and SIRTF
    D.E. Backman
- Session 52. Ground Based Instrumentations, poster session, Thu, June 8
  - A Near Infrared Integral-Field Spectrograph for the Keck Adaptive Optics System
    M. Barczys, J.E. Larkin, A. Quirrenbach, and J.R. Graham
    (abstract #52.06, http://www.aas.org/publications/baas/v32n2/aas196/258.htm)
The *Distant EKOs* Newsletter is dedicated to provide researchers with easy and rapid access to current work regarding the Kuiper belt (observational and theoretical studies), directly related objects (e.g., Pluto, Centaurs), and other areas of study when explicitly applied to the Kuiper belt.

We accept submissions for the following sections:
* Abstracts of accepted papers
* Titles of submitted (but not yet accepted) papers and conference articles
* Thesis abstracts
* Short articles, announcements, or editorials
* Status reports of on-going programs
* Requests for collaboration or observing coordination
* Table of contents/outlines of books
* Announcements for conferences
* Job advertisements
* General news items deemed of interest to the Kuiper belt community

A \TeX{} template for submissions is appended to each issue of the newsletter, and is sent out regularly to the e-mail distribution list. Please use that template, and send your submission to:

\texttt{ekonews@boulder.swri.edu}

The *Distant EKOs* Newsletter is available on the World Wide Web at:

\url{http://www.boulder.swri.edu/ekonews}

Recent and back issues of the Newsletter are archived there in various formats. The web pages also contain other related information and links.

* *Distant EKOs* is not a refereed publication, but is a tool for furthering communication among people interested in Kuiper belt research. Publication or listing of an article in the Newsletter or the web page does not constitute an endorsement of the article’s results or imply validity of its contents. When referencing an article, please reference the original source; *Distant EKOs* is not a substitute for peer-reviewed journals.

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\texttt{ekonews@boulder.swri.edu}