nightwatch
Newsletter of the Pomona Valley Amateur Astronomers

The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once. ***Albert Einstein***

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Volume 46 Number 12 ***nightwatch*** **December 2026**

President's Message

Come one come all to the annual PVAA Holiday Party!

We will gather at the IHOP on Euclid Avenue in Upland at 6:00 PM Saturday, December 5. Come join us for door prizes, good food, good conversation, and great company. It's always a fun opportunity to catch up and get better acquainted with your fellow PVAA members.

This is an extra special occasion as it is our 30th annual PVAA Holiday Party! The first one was held in 1997 at the Baptist Church on 8th Street in Upland.

Mark your calendars so you don't miss the PVAA Annual Holiday Party, Saturday, December 5, at 6:00 PM!

See you there.

Ron Hoekwater

PVAA Officers and Board

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President (acting) …..... Ron Hoekwater
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A Giraffe with a Long Tail

New moon for November was Sunday, the 8th. We were at the dark site for three nights starting on the 5th. Weather was clear for all three nights and while it was cold, it wasn't as cold as it has been in the past. The last time we were out was in June, so about 5 months since our last trip. Various reasons prevented us from going earlier, so we were really looking forward to being out under the stars.

TARGET

The target for this month is of a type I don't shoot very often, a dark nebula. LDN 1295 is located in Cassiopeia. While I normally present images with North up, this month the image is presented with North to the left for two reasons. First, to properly balance the telescope in all axes, the camera end of the image train needed to be rotated. I usually don't bother with the third axis balance but decided to see if it was worth the slight extra effort. The second reason was to present the nebula in a way that helps clarify its name – the Giraffe Nebula. Hopefully, the name is obvious from the image, however, I'm wondering if it shouldn't be the Squirrel Nebula due to the bushy "tail" that seems to be present.

The distance to the nebula seems to be difficult to determine, but it is reported to be about 3,200 light years away. Some estimates place it as near as 410 light years, though. At the greater distance, it is estimated to be about 10 light years across. It consists of dense dust that blocks the light from further stars resulting in a dark, starless nebula. The dense clouds also block the light from stars that are forming within the clouds.

The Giraffe is surrounded by some brighter, reflection nebulae catalogued together as LBN 603. These are seen as the grayish clouds in the image. There are also a few small galaxies in the distance, but they are hard to spot.



IMAGING AND PROCESSING

This is an LRGB image constructed from 3-minute exposures through Astrodon E-series filters. The number of luminance, red, green, and blue frames was 249, 79, 80, and 75, respectively. Total exposure time was 24h, 9m and the individual frames were calibrated with 15 dark and 15 flat frames. The frames were taken from Bortle 4 skies with a StellarVue SVX90T f/6 telescope equipped with a field flattener, Optec autofocuser, ZWO 31mm filter wheel, and ZWO ASI294MM Pro camera on a Paramount MYT mount.

Processing was done entirely in PixInsight. Stacking and preprocessing were done using the *WBPP* script and frames with FWHM greater than 3.3 were culled resulting in the above number of frames. While the stars in the stacked L, R, G, and B frames appeared round, the frames were first treated with *BlurXterminator* (*BlurX*) with "correct only" settings to ensure the stars were round. The R, G, and B frames were combined to create the original RGB image using the *ChannelCombination* tool. Both the luminance and the RGB frames were treated with the *SpectrophotometerFluxCalibration* tool followed by *MultiscaleGradientCorrection* to remove a slight gradient in the frames. The RGB frame was then color corrected using *SpectrophotometricColorCalibration*. At this point, my normal workflow would have me run *BlurX* again to sharpen the stars and non-stellar regions, but when I did that and finished the processing, I found the stars were over sharpened and I didn't like the result. So instead, I started by removing the stars from the luminance and RGB frames with *StarXterminator*. The luminance stars were discarded. At this point, noise reduction with *NoiseXterminator* was done on the starless images to reduce, but not eliminate, the noise in the background. While the starless luminance, starless RGB, and RGB stars were all stretched to different extents, stretching was done with the *GeneralizedHyperbolicStretch* (*GHS*)process. Generalized hyperbolic stretching was used for the starless images, arcsinh stretching was used for the stars. Additionally, color saturation in the color frames was adjusted using *GHS*. I would combine the starless images and then add the stars using *ImageBlend* to check whether further stretching was needed. Once I was satisfied with the combined image, I used *Curves* to make final contrast adjustments.

I hope you enjoy the safari. Looking forward to December when there are two weekends in a row that are suitable for imaging. Hopefully both will be clear!

Ron Ugolick

https://www.astrobin.com/users/ruccdu/

Upcoming Celestial Events

December 2026

PST = UTC – 8 hrs
PST = PDT – 1 hr
PDT = UTC – 7 hrs
PDT = PST + 1 hr

events visible in southern CA highlighted in yellow

Date	Day	LA Time	Event	Direction	Altitude (deg)	Moon Phase/ Illumination
Nov 24	Tue	3:45 am vis 5:30 pm – 5:45 am	Moon-M45 close approach sep = 0.91°	ENE-S-WNW	13-80-12	FM 100 %
Nov 24	Tue	6:53 am visible all night	Full Moon	ENE-S-WNW	5-80-5	FM 100 %
Nov 28	Sat	4:10 pm vis 10:32 pm – 5:38 am	Moon-M44 close approach sep = 7.4'	E-S-W	15-75-64	Waning Gibbous 70 %
☆ Nov 29-30	Sun-Mon	vis 11:48 pm – 5:41 am	Moon-Jupiter-Mars-Regulus close within a circle 5.2° across	E-S-SSW	10-67-65	Waning Gibbous 58 %
Dec 8	Tue	4:52 pm not visible	New Moon	-------	-------	NM 0 %
Dec 13-14	Sun-Mon	vis 10:00 pm – 6:00 am	Geminid meteor shower peaks 150/hr	E	------	Waxing Crescent 21 %
Dec 21	Mon	2:04 pm vis 5:29 pm – 3:42 am	Moon-M45 close approach sep = 1.0°	E-S-W	35-80-12	Waxing Gibbous 94 %
Dec 23	Wed	5:28 pm vis all night	Full Moon	ENE-S-WNW	5-82-5	FM 100 %
Dec 26	Sat	1:00 am vis 8:10 pm – 6:15 am	Moon passes in front of M44	SE	10-68-35	Waning Gibbous 90 %
Dec 27	Sun	8:25 am vis 9:28 pm – 6:40 am	Moon-Jupiter close approach sep = 1.38°	E-S-W	7-69-41	Waning Gibbous 78 %

Lunation No. 1285

Lunatio No. 1286

☆ Rare event: only 7 comparable gatherings since 1900

M44 is the Beehive open cluster M45 is the Pleiades open cluster

Calendar of Events

Date	LA Time	Event	Location
Nov 21		BepiColombo: Mercury orbit insertion	Mercury
Nov 24	6:53 am	Full Moon	
Nov 25		First detailed image of Dimorphos by Hera	Didymos asteroid system
Nov 26		Thanksgiving Day	
Dec 2	6:00 pm	Board Meeting	IHOP in Upland
Dec 4	7:00 pm	Public Night Program	Gordon D. Crowell Observatory
Dec 5	6:00 pm	PVAA Christmas Party	IHOP in Upland
Dec 8	4:52 pm	New Moon	
Dec 19	2:00 pm	Star-gazing party	Griffith Observatory
Dec 21	12:50 pm	Winter Solstice -- 1st Day of Winter; shortest day	
Dec 23	5:28 pm	Full Moon	
Dec 25		Christmas Day	
Jan 1		New Year Day 2027	
Jan 7	12:24 pm	New Moon	
Jan 9		Star Party	GMARS
Jan 13	6:00 pm	Board Meeting	IHOP in Upland
Jan 15	8:59 pm	Deadline for sending your name to Titan	
Jan 22	7:30 pm	General Meeting & Full Moon	B-460 Shanahan @ Harvey Mudd College