

Purrsonal Mewsings #59



Purrsonal Mewsings, formerly *Feline Journal* and *Feline Mewsings* is a personal/genzine I hope to publish every six weeks by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, PO Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 520-275-6511, Laurraine@mac.com, <http://www.weasner.com/>.

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#59

June 2017

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Art and Photo Credits

Cover photo—Hooded oriole at hummingbird feeder, taken by Mike Weasner
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Photos all taken by Mike Weasner
Illo p. 11 by Steve Stiles, p. 13 by Taral Wayne

Contributions of art, reviews, articles, fiction, letters, even poetry welcome.
Publication not guaranteed, but all submissions will be given due consideration.

[] if this box is checked, I need to hear from you if you wish to stay on my mailing list.

If you are reading this electronically and would prefer to receive a printed version, please let me know. Or vice versa.

* Editorial / Introduction

This issue is being rushed to print even though I started it back in April. It's been a busy time for me. In April I sang in the church choir on Easter, when we did a cantata. I've just sung a Broadway music programme with the community chorus. Now that the singing is over, I hope to have more time for other things, especially the reading of periodicals that have backed up over a year's worth.

* * *

* Local Outings

Holmes and Watson: This play by Jeffrey Hatcher is quite different from most Sherlock Holmes stories. Briefly we watch as Watson is called by a doctor to identify Holmes from among three men who claim to be Holmes. This story takes place after the Reichenbach Falls incident. One of the questions Watson asks each of the three is how he managed to survive the Falls, or exactly what happened there.

It's a cleverly done one-act play with excellent special effects. Yes, special effects now play a part in many stage plays. The ones in this one were so good that a couple of them elicited ovations from the audience.

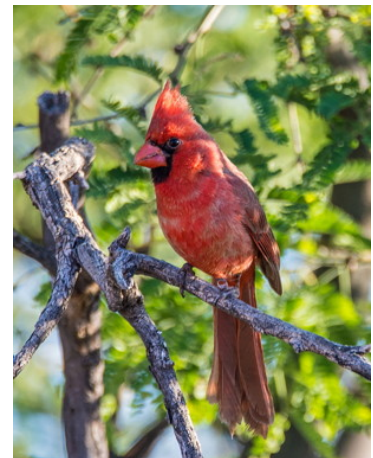
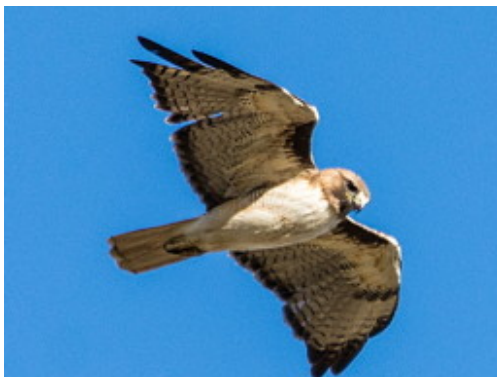
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* Kritter Korner

Mike managed to take a few very nice pictures of our wildlife. The first is a cardinal:

The second is a pyrrhuloxia, a cousin of the cardinal:

Third he caught a red-tailed hawk soaring overhead:



He also managed to take some photos of quail, including a male standing guard and a family of quail at one of our birdbaths:



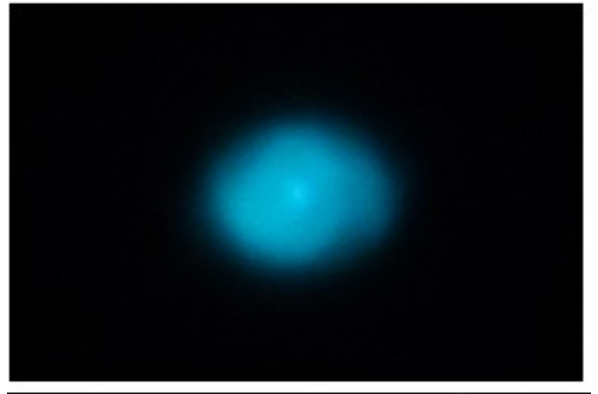
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* Astronomy

The highlight of this period for Mike was getting a six-minute segment on a Tucson PBS station called *Arizona Illustrated*. It's a half-hour show aired on Sundays. First they filmed him teaching a beginner class on astrophotography at Oracle State Park. Then they came to our house twice to take photos of him at his observatory and in his office. The segment highlighted his long-standing interest in astronomy. If you go to <http://www.weasner.com/co/Reports/2017/05/01/index.html> and click on the image at the bottom, you can see the show.

Here are some nice photos he's taken. NGC6543 is nicknamed the Cat's Eye Nebula:

Here's a photo of Jupiter with two of its moons:



Below are photos of M58, M60 & NGC4647 together, and M61.



* * *

*** Reviews:** reviews without attribution are by the editor

The Mote in God's Eye, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

This is a novel of the far future when humans inhabit many planets. There is a section of the sky seen from some planets that looks like an eye. It's a black hole through which can be seen a blood-red sun. One day a ship is seen driven by photons that seems to originate from the direction of God's Eye. When an attempt is made to communicate with the craft, missiles are ejected from it; and the humans retaliate. A carcass of an alien being is found, and a mission is sent to the origination point of the ship.

Contact is made with an alien species. Information is exchanged, but other information is held back. There is lack of trust. The aliens seem to come in several different forms, and each form seems to have a specialized function. The contact scientists spend time on the alien planet. All is not as it seems.

I found the book generally quite interesting and fairly entertaining. The theme of the book can be applied to situations currently existing on Earth where some groups do not entirely trust others.

Some readers have difficulty with a book that emphasizes idea development over character development, though I found the character development to be adequate for me. It's not great literature, but it's good science fiction.

#

Scarlet, by Marissa Meyer

This is the second book in the "Lunar Chronicles". The first book is *Cinder*, which I reviewed last time. If the fairy tale inspiration of *Cinder* was "Cinderella", then I believe the one for *Scarlet* is "Little Red Riding Hood". There is a large group of wolf-like Lunars that were created by the Lunar queen by modifying people. Scarlet is the granddaughter of the woman who was one of the people who helped rescue Cinder when she was badly injured. In this book, Cinder is on the run. Scarlet is trying to find her grandmother, who has been kidnapped. Eventually the two characters meet.

The Lunar queen will do anything to take over the Earth. One step involves killing Cinder and anyone who gets in the way of her accomplishing this.

Since this is book two in a series, the story will continue.

#

All the Birds in the Sky, by Charlie Jane Anders

This is one of the nominees for the Hugo Award in the novel category. The book is a fantasy in which magic is pitted against science. Patricia and Laurence become friends in junior high. They both are different enough from the other students that they fall prey to bullying and ostracism. Eventually Patricia learns magic. Laurence continues his scientific interest as an adult. Years go by when they are not in contact with each other. Then the world is on the brink of disaster, and each faction has its own solution. While the characterizations are excellent, I found the ending somewhat of a letdown. It was very exciting reading until the end when the story became rather flat.

#

Journey to the Centre of the Earth, by Jules Verne

The sf book club that I belong to read this as its May selection. This was not my first reading. Years ago when I was in junior high or high school, I originally read a different edition of the book that was slightly edited for younger readers and illustrated. I have only vague memories of this first reading. Since then I've seen many movie versions of the book, all enhanced to make the story more interesting to the viewer. The book itself is more a character study than an adventure. Some editions of the book read by the book club members included extra material about the author. The relationship between the nephew and uncle in the novel reflects Verne's relationship with his father. The uncle in the novel is an obsessive-compulsive personality that leads the three main characters to go into the Earth. The nephew is dragged along only half willingly by the uncle. The nephew has frequent misgivings about the expedition. They both learn more about each other on the trip and are changed by the experience. The science in the book is now outdated, but Verne used the latest scientific teachings for his novel.

#

Ghostbusters

This is one of the movies nominated for this year's Hugo Awards in the Long Dramatic Presentation category. I'm afraid I found it tedious to watch. Unlike the original *Ghostbusters*, the main characters are women. Aside from a few interesting scenes, the first two-thirds of the movie dragged. The end was more exciting but I thought rather overdone.

#

Arrival

This is another of the movies nominated for this year's Hugo Awards in the Long Dramatic Presentation category. This movie will enter my short list of excellent films; the other two are *2001* and *Cloud Atlas*. These three films leaves one thinking. I puzzled over *2001* for a long time and watched it numerous times. I've only seen *Cloud Atlas* once, but it's definitely on my short list of movies to watch again soon. *Arrival* is also one I want to watch again, possibly before I have to return it to the library.

It starts somewhat similarly to a few other movies. Several alien objects arrive on Earth in twelve places. No one can understand how the specific locations were chosen or whether the locations are random. When humans finally enter the craft, they start trying to communicate. The main character is a linguist, who is included in the mission to communicate with the aliens in the craft in Montana. Other people on the committee include a physicist. This description doesn't sound very exciting, but I was transfixed watching their attempts to communicate.

The movie is based on the novella "Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang, which I don't believe I've read. It was nominated for various awards back in 1999 and 2000.

#

Celestial Sleuth, by Donald W. Olson

Sky & Telescope magazine has published several articles since 1987 on "celestial sleuthing" of famous events and paintings. A recent article mentioned this book, and I was intrigued enough by the articles I've read to buy the book. The book covers more "projects", as the author describes them, than have been published in the magazine.

The book is subtitled "Using Astronomy to Solve Mysteries in Art, History, and Literature".

So what is "celestial sleuthing"? A paragraph at the beginning of Chapter 1 describes its purpose in the form of questions regarding a famous painting of a stagecoach accident on a snowy road in southeastern France done in 1829 by J.M.W. Turner:

The sky above the mountain includes the Moon and several bright stars or planets. On what date did this stagecoach accident occur? Did Turner paint the Moon in the appropriate lunar phase for that date? Can we identify the celestial bodies near the Moon? Are they stars or planets? Can we verify that Turner's painting gives an accurate portrayal of the celestial scene?

For each of the projects, the author takes you through the necessary research, the onsite investigations, the measurements taken and analyzed, and the astronomical conditions needed to answer the questions posed. The projects read somewhat like a detective novel; the author and his students travel around the world to get to the scene, contacting local residents, taking measurements at the scene, and checking past records. For many of the projects, calculating positions of various objects in the sky for the site under investigation provide excellent, but not necessarily complete, data to determine dates and specific locations. Diaries, letters, newspaper reports, meteorological observations, and, in some cases, very detailed analysis of astronomical objects (i.e., lunar libration conditions) are often used. Each project spans just a few pages, but each captures a story and comes to a specific conclusion.

As you might expect in a "detective yarn", some of the investigations resulted in interesting twists that yielded new insights into what occurred in the past. And sometimes the results from the projects have been cited to correct the historical record of the painting or event.

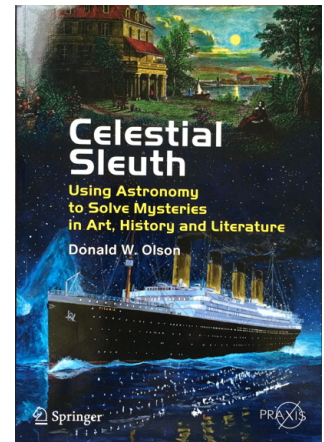
I was thoroughly fascinated by the first two parts of the book, many with on-scene reports by the author and his students. The first half of Part III was somewhat "dry" (to me), whereas the second half was more exciting (probably due to the subject matter).

If you have enjoyed reading some of the author's celestial sleuthing articles in *Sky & Telescope* magazine over the years, you will enjoy this book, which includes more details and more photographs. If you missed some of the articles, this book will fill in the gaps. If you have never read the articles in *S&T* and you want to go along on scientific investigations into the past, you will want this book. It is almost like "time travel" in that you get to visit far off places at different historical times. I found the book an enjoyable and educational read.—reprinted from a longer version originally published on http://www.weasner.com/co/Reviews/2014/Celestial_Sleuth/index.html by Mike Weasner.

#

***The Lost Constellations*, by John C. Barentine**

I became acquainted with the author, Dr. Barentine, through his work at the International Dark-Sky Association after I started the pursuit of the IDA "International Dark Sky Park" designation for Oracle State Park in early 2014. When I learned that he



had written this book I knew I had to get it.

The first section of the book, "Part I: Toward The Modern Night Sky", provides a short (~30 pages) discussion of what the constellations are and how their patterns were perceived, defined, and used over the past several thousand years, leading up to our current official 88 constellations.

The subtitle for "The Lost Constellations" is "A History of Obsolete, Extinct, or Forgotten Star Lore", which is an accurate description of what is included in the book's main section, "Part II: The Lost Constellations" (~430 pages). Twenty-seven "lost constellations" are covered in this section, from "Anser" to "Turdus Solitarius/Noctua". For each constellation there is explanatory text on its origin and history, iconography, and disappearance, along with detailed black and white historical illustrations.

In describing the historical perspective of each constellation, the book quotes short passages from antiquity, some dating more than 2000 years ago, with most being from the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s, as astronomy was gaining respectability. These passages add background and drama to the creation and disappearance of the constellations. Along the way, you will learn some history of, for example, humans, literature, sailing (constellation Argo Navis), cats (constellation Felis), and electricity (constellation Machina Electrica). (Did you know that an astronomer by the name of William Gilbert (1544-1603) coined the term "electricity"? I didn't until I read the book.)

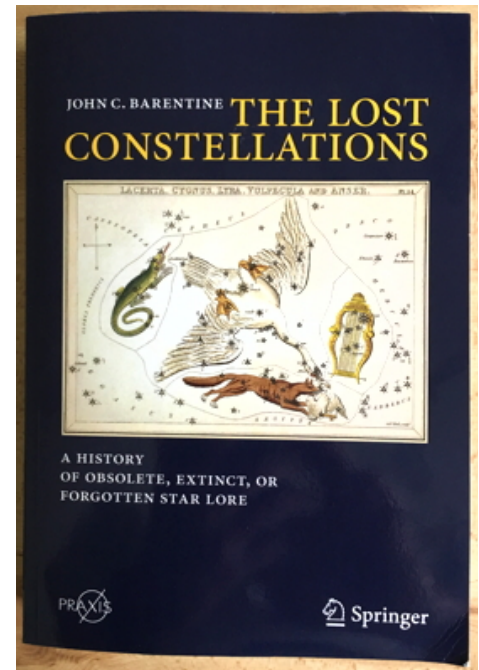
"Part III: Conclusion" (4 pages) wraps up the book by briefly recounting the history and purpose of constellations. It then draws some conclusions about the "lost constellations".

The book ends with a list of the current official 88 constellations and an extensive bibliography.

You can learn more about the book and Dr. Barentine at the web site "The Lost Constellations (<http://www.lostconstellations.com>)". The web site shows the complete Table of Contents and some example illustrations from the book.

This book is not a dry technical read. As the author states in the Preface, the book is a "very human story that transcends astronomy itself, somewhere at the confluence of history, mythology, folklore, exploration, and psychology." You will learn a lot from the book, but you will also be entertained by the background stories for each of the "lost constellations". If you want to learn more, there are extensive footnotes on many pages and a thorough bibliography at the end of the book. There are just a few typos and one reference to "color" on a B&W figure, but they do not detract from the book.

As the author discusses in the Preface, the book is the result of several decades of interest in the night sky during which he collected a considerable amount of information on constellations, both current and past. The author notes that a prior work (Richard Hinckley Allen's "Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning", 1899) is the definitive written work on the history of the constellations. I predict that "The Lost Constellations" will



rightfully take its place alongside Allen's book as the updated definitive work.

If you are interested in the history of astronomy or want to learn more about the night sky, *The Lost Constellations* is well worth reading.—reprinted from a longer version published at http://www.weasner.com/co/Reviews/2015/Lost_Constellations/index.html written by Mike Weasner.

#

Uncharted Constellations, by John C. Barentine

Uncharted Constellations is a companion book to the author's *The Lost Constellations*, which is reviewed above.

The subtitle for *Uncharted Constellations* is "Asterisms, Single-Source and Rebrands", which describes the types of "constellations" included in the book. "Part I: Celestial Odds And Ends" (24 pages) has a discussion of what constellations are and how their patterns were perceived, defined, and used over the past several thousand years, leading up to our current official 88 constellations. Fourteen "uncharted constellations" are covered in "Part II: The Lost Constellations" (122 pages). There are three appendices (54 pages).

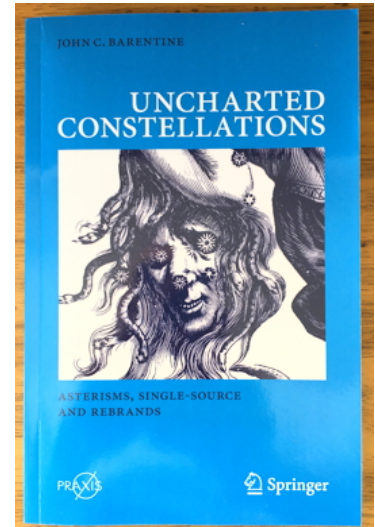
For each "constellation" discussed in Part II, there is explanatory text on its origin and history, and, where appropriate, iconography and disappearance. There are detailed black and white historical illustrations.

Each chapter is short and easy to read. The author includes notes that add to the context of each "constellation".

Appendix B discusses "The Constellations of John Hill" and includes in its entirety his original descriptions of 15 "constellations" that were submitted for consideration in 1754. Dr. Barentine's book is likely the only source of these descriptions available since they were originally published in 1754 in the book "Urania". As with all the constellations covered in both *The Lost Constellations* and *Uncharted Constellations*, none of Mr. Hill's constellations were officially recognized by the astronomical community. That is probably a good thing. Imagine the reaction you would get if you were to point out "The Leech" constellation as defined by Mr. Hill to your friends!

The Uncharted Constellations by Dr. Barentine is an excellent companion volume to his earlier *The Lost Constellations*. Dr. Barentine deserves our appreciation for doing the extensive research that was required and for bringing together in one resource (the two books) important aspects of astronomy from centuries past, along with the historical context that resulted in these "constellations".—reprinted from a longer version published at http://www.weasner.com/co/Reviews/2016/Uncharted_Constellations/index.html written by Mike Weasner.

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Eclipse Bulletin: Total Solar Eclipse of 2017 August 21, by Fred Espenak and Jay Anderson

This *Eclipse Bulletin* written by "Mr. Eclipse" Fred Espenak and meteorologist Jay Anderson contains a lot of useful information for this year's Total Solar Eclipse. This

description from the Preface provides a brief synopsis of the book's contents:

It contains tables presenting the umbral shadow path coordinates, a physical ephemeris of the umbra, local circumstances on the central line, topocentric data and path corrections due to the lunar limb profile, and mapping coordinates for the zones of grazing eclipse. High-resolution maps plot the total eclipse path across the USA. They show hundreds of cities and towns in the path, the location of major roads and highways, and the duration of totality with distance from the central line.

Local circumstance tables for more than 1000 cities within the USA provide times of each phase of the eclipse, along with the eclipse magnitude and duration. Additional tables cover the eclipse circumstances for cities in Canada, Mexico, and Central and South America, as well as Western Europe and North Africa. An exhaustive climatological investigation identifies locations along the eclipse path where the highest probability of favourable weather may be found. Finally, a site inspection report highlights interesting locations along the eclipse track from Oregon to South Carolina.

There are three versions of this book available from Astropixels Publishing: a standard black and white edition (\$20; reviewed here), deluxe colour edition (\$35), and a digital edition (\$30; PDF).

In section 1.5, "Description of the Umbral Path", there is an excellent word description covering several land areas shown in the accompanying multi-state maps.

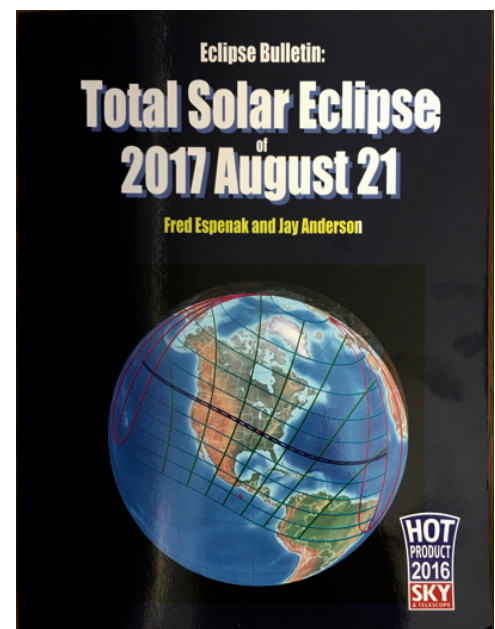
Section 2 "Local Circumstances for the Eclipse", and section 3, "Detailed Maps of the Umbral Path" (showing cities, towns, and major roadways), will provide you with accurate planning information for the eclipse and can be used if weather conditions dictate a change in your plan on the day of the eclipse.

Section 4, "Observing and Photographing the Eclipse", begins with an excellent discussion of proper and safe filters for viewing the partial phases of the eclipse. Heed this information to protect your eyes and equipment. It then moves on to tips and techniques for photographing the eclipse. There is a table of exposure settings to be used as starting points for your eclipse photography.

While the previous sections relied on precise math and science for the eclipse data presented, Section 5, "Climatology along the Umbral Path", uses historical weather data and patterns to make educated guesses on Eclipse Day weather. This was done in 2015—talk about a long range weather forecast! There is a good description of terrain effects on local weather for many places along the Path of Totality.

Section 6, "A Travelogue along the Umbral Path", is your guide to some specific scenic and important locations along the path of totality. If you haven't picked out your observing location yet, this chapter will be useful. But keep in mind that thousands (millions, in some cases) of other people will be staking out their locations too.

Section 7, "Eclipse Resources"; "Bibliography"; and "Eclipse Marketplace" wrap up



this excellent book. The web sites, books, and companies listed will expand and enhance your planning and ultimate enjoyment of the Total Solar Eclipse of 2017 August 21.

If you haven't yet started planning for the total solar eclipse of 2017 August 21, this book is a must-have item. If you know where you will be on 21 August, the book will still be useful on Eclipse Day in case your local weather conditions make it necessary to change your plans at the last minute. For everyone this book provides lots of very helpful information to ensure you will be thrilled by viewing and photographing a total solar eclipse.—reprinted from a longer version published at http://www.weasner.com/co/Reviews/2017/Total_Solar_Eclipse_book/index.html written by Mike Weasner.

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*** StippleAPA**

StippleAPA is an amateur press association. An APA is like a group pen pal. Each distribution includes a fanzine from each member, who usually writes about his or her interests and life and makes comments on the previous issues of the other members. If you're interested in joining, please let me know and I can get you in touch with the person who runs it.

Here I am trying to finish this at the last minute again despite having started the zine right after I finished the previous issue.

MAILING COMMENTS ON STIPPLE-APA #309

Jeanne Mealey (Quirky Bits): So sorry to hear you're unemployed again.

If you need better dental insurance, check with AARP. Here in Arizona, we have excellent insurance through them.

Sorry to hear you need hearing aids.

Mike has been creating annual astronomical montages for a few years. I think it's an excellent way of showing people what he's been up to.

Our Easter cantata for the church went relatively well with only a couple of minor glitches. We also just finished the spring concert of Broadway music with the community

chorus. That went quite well, though personally I had a few problems hitting the right notes. Whether because of allergy problems or something else, I seem to have lost my high notes; so I was singing second soprano. Since I switched halfway through the rehearsal period, I didn't know the part as well I should have.

Brands of shoes I've had luck with include Dansko, Naturalizer, Clarks, Merrell, Crocs, New Balance, and Hotter. Other brands recommended to me are Birkenstock, Ecco, Mephisto, Patagonia, and Skypro.

Nicole Bourgoin (A Fool's Errand):

There is a LEED certification programme for residences, at one time administered by National Association of Home Builders Green Building Program. At one time our architect was trying to get that for our house, but he seemed to drop the ball and we don't know what happened. The programme seems to have started in late 2009.

Lucy Schmeidler

(Don't Ask #1): Your name is vaguely familiar to me. It's possible I heard your name from one of my NYC contacts. Anyway, welcome to StippleAPA.

Javelina, also known as collared peccary, can grow as large as 4.3 feet in length and weigh as much as 88 lb.

Michael Kingsley (Delicious with Sauerkraut #1): Welcome to StippleAPA.

Erik Biever (Dognitive Dissonance):

Conversations with passengers are definitely as distracting to a driver as a phone conversation in my experience. I only talk on the phone while driving a car when it's totally hands free.

Joyce Maetta Odum (Dog Cart and Cat Reel):

I became interested in mythology in ninth grade when my English teacher included a mythology book as part of our curriculum. It was a great mythology book, too; I wish I had the title and author. Along with the text were photos of Greek and Roman pottery adorned with pictures depicting gods and goddesses. We went on a field trip to a museum in



Boston where we saw similar pottery.

Your church sounds huge in comparison to the one where I sing and most other churches I have attended. The Oracle Union Church seats 75.

S. H. Rayne (The Year That Never Wasn't, Part 1): What a trying year you had. I hope 2017 has been better for you.

Cy Chauvin (Amazons & Swallows Forever #54): The bird feeder station photo was taken before there was any food in the feeders. After they were filled, the birds lost no time in finding it.

Fool's Illusion was sent to me by the author for review.

I believe Guy Consolmagno is the Vatican astronomer; he was named Director of the Vatican Observatory shortly after he spoke in Spokane. I did not see him at the worldcon in Spokane due to schedule conflicts, but Mike attended his sessions.

Bill Thomasson (Musings from the Gathering Dusk #8): There are "selfie sticks" that hold smartphones and allow one to take selfies from a distance.

See you all in six weeks.

Marge Sehnert (Mamma's Mutterings): So sorry you lost photos from your phone.

Dale Cozort (Space Bats & Butterflies): I have never, to the best of my recollection, run into prejudice against people who work with their hands.

I preferred the first version of your story. The second seemed too impersonal; there were no characters I could identify with.

*** Letters to the Editor**

The text of letters received will be in brown. My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses and will be in black. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and the like. Deadline for next issue is 29 June 2017.

Tom Feller, Nashville, TN

11 April 2017

Thanks for the space pictures. Anita and I are taking a course called "Astronomy Sampler" offered by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Vanderbilt. The first class was on eclipses in general but especially the upcoming solar eclipse in August that will be visible in the continental U.S. from coast to coast. The largest city from within which the total eclipse will be visible just happens to be Nashville. If the weather cooperates and we do not attend an eclipse party somewhere, we will be able to see it from our own backyard. Speaking of our backyard, our second session was one on more interesting astronomical sights we could see the evening of our class from our home with binoculars or a small telescope, weather permitting.

*** Closing Remarks**

Deadline for next issue will be 29 June 2017. We're expecting a visit from family, and there may be a report with photos next issue. We will also have attended Westercon in Phoenix, but I may not have time to write a report for the next issue

Laurraïne

25 May 2017

