

The May 7 Mercury Transit

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On May 7, 2003, the planet Mercury passed in front of the Sun. This transit, that occurs approximately once every 7 years, was visible from Europe, Africa and Asia and lasted more than five hours. European observers were particularly at their advantage to follow the event as the Sun was relatively high in the sky during the entire transit. And, luckily, the weather did cooperate over most of Europe.

On this occasion, ESO, in collaboration with the European Association for Astronomy Education (EAAE), the Institut de Mécanique Céleste et de Calcul des Éphémérides (IMCCE) and the Observatoire de Paris in France, set up a comprehensive web site which provided detailed information about the

event itself and also a lot of useful background information, including special sheets for students and teachers in no less than 12 languages. In addition, a live webcast was held with live images and a running commentary. Images obtained at observatories in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy and Spain were shown.

Astronomers at ESO weren't of course going to miss this opportunity and several telescopes were set-up. In particular, a Meade LX200 equipped with a solar filter, a Barlow lens and a Nikon D-100 camera was used as a "webcam" to provide live images on the web.

The event was very successful as shown by the load on the ESO website which reached an all-time record of

about 10,000 hits per minute! Many visitors therefore needed a little patience to see the images. On May 7, the ESO website experienced a total of about 3.5 million hits and about 50 Gigabytes of data, mostly images, were delivered. The great majority of these were from the "Mercury Transit" pages.

The May 7 transit of Mercury was a fine "prelude" to the much more rare event next year when, on June 8, 2004, the planet Venus will pass in front of the Sun. On this occasion, ESO plans to launch, with its educational partners, a major public programme that will allow all interested persons to participate actively.

More information can be found on <http://www.eso.org/outreach/eduoff/vt-2004/>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ESO Fellowship Programme 2003/2004

The European Southern Observatory awards several postdoctoral fellowships to provide young scientists opportunities and facilities to enhance their research programmes. Its goal is to bring them into close contact with the instruments, activities, and people at one of the world's foremost observatories. For more information about ESO's astronomical research activities please consult <http://www.eso.org/science/>

Fellows have ample opportunities for scientific collaborations. A list of the ESO staff and fellows, and their research interest can be found at <http://www.eso.org/science/sci-pers.html> and <http://www.sc.eso.org/santiago/science/person.html>. The ESO Headquarters in Munich, Germany host the Space Telescope European Coordinating Facility and are situated in the immediate neighbourhood of the Max-Planck-Institutes for Astrophysics and for Extraterrestrial Physics and are only a few kilometers away from the Observatory of the Ludwig-Maximilian University. In Chile, fellows have the opportunity to collaborate with the rapidly expanding Chilean astronomical community in a growing partnership between ESO and the host country's academic community.

In **Garching**, fellows spend beside their personal research up to 25% of their time on support or development activities of their choice in the area of e.g. instrumentation, user support, archive, VLT, ALMA, public relations or science operations at the Paranal Observatory. Fellowships in Garching start with an initial contract of one year followed by a two-year extension.

In **Chile**, the fellowships are granted for one year initially with an extension of three additional years. During the first three years, the fellows are assigned to either the Paranal or La Silla operations groups. They support the astronomers in charge of operational tasks at a level of 50% of their time (split into 80 nights per year on the mountain and 35 days per year at the Santiago Office). During the fourth year there is no functional work and several options are provided. The fellow may be hosted by a Chilean institution and will thus be eligible to apply for Chilean observing time on all telescopes in Chile. The other options are to spend the fourth year either at ESO's Astronomy Center in Santiago, Chile, or the ESO Headquarters in Garching, or any institute of astronomy/astrophysics in an ESO member state.

We offer an attractive remuneration package including a competitive salary (tax-free), comprehensive social benefits, and provide financial support in relocating families. Furthermore, an expatriation allowance as well as some other allowances may be added. The Outline of the Terms of Service for Fellows at <http://www.eso.org/gen-fac/adm/pers/fellows.html> provides some more details on employment conditions/benefits.

Candidates will be notified of the results of the selection process in December 2003/January 2004. Fellowships begin between April and October of the year in which they are awarded. Selected fellows can join ESO only after having completed their doctorate.

The closing date for applications is October 15, 2003.

Please apply by:

- filling the form available at <http://www.eso.org/gen-fac/adm/pers/forms/fellow03-form.pdf>
- and attaching to your application:
 - a Curriculum Vitae including a publication list (the latter split into refereed and non-refereed articles, please)
 - a summary of the current and thesis work (max. 1 page)
 - an outline of the research plans if you came to ESO (specify which facilities you foresee to use, whose interest might overlap with yours and what is your motivation to come to ESO (max. 2 pages)
 - an outline of your technical/observational experience (max 1 page)
 - three letters of reference from persons familiar with your scientific work.

All documents should be typed and in English.

The application material has to be addressed to:

European Southern Observatory
Fellowship Programme
Karl-Schwarzschild-Str. 2, 85748 Garching bei München, Germany
vacancy@eso.org

Contact person: Angelika Beller, Tel. +49 89 320 06-553, Fax +49 89 320 06-490, e-mail: abeller@eso.org

All material, including the recommendation letters, must reach ESO by the deadline (October 15); applications arriving after the deadline or incomplete applications will not be considered!