

Galilean Nights Event ID: gn844

Number of telescopes: 3

Number of organisers: 5

Number of attendees: 600

Event photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/43481314@N08/>

Event Report:

On October 23rd, I conducted an Astronomy awareness event at the Corporation School, Jafferkanpet, Chennai. Around 30 students from the Primary section viewed the Moon and Jupiter with its Galilean moons through a 4-inch Orion refractor telescope. The children were thrilled at seeing the Moon and its craters up close. After the sky watch, we had an interactive session with the kids explaining about our Solar system and stars.

On Saturday, 24th October 2009, we celebrated Galilean Nights along with the students of Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya Gurukulam, Ulundurpet (215 kilometers from Chennai). I was accompanied by my fellow amateur astronomers from Chennai: Dr. Suresh Mohan, Renganathan V, Mr. Muralidhar, Balaji R, Balaji M and Sarrvesh S.

I started the evening 5pm to 6.30pm with a presentation on "A Journey to our Solar System and Beyond". With the help of a PowerPoint presentation, I explained to the students about our Solar system and the various celestial objects like Stars, Planets, Nebulae and the Hubble space telescope. Later we set up 2 telescopes and 1 Astronomical Binocular on the terrace of the school building. We pointed a 6-inch Newtonian reflector at the Moon, a 4-inch Orion refractor at the giant planet Jupiter and a 25x100 Binocular at the Andromeda Galaxy, Orion nebula, Pleiades Cluster.

The students queued up and waited patiently to view the celestial objects one-by-one. Balaji R. handled the refractor focused on Jupiter, Balaji M. handled the Reflector pointed Moon while I was helping the students observe the Andromeda Galaxy, Orion nebula, Pleiades Cluster with the Binocular. Sarrvesh and Mr. Muralidhar handled the questions that were asked by the students.

We were bombarded with questions ranging from 'What are Planets?' to 'What is the size of Sun?' We answered their questions patiently, but since the Moon was descending fast, we had to request the students to make way for their classmates. We promised to make another trip soon to have an interactive session with them to clarify the doubts and share more of our knowledge with them.

Around 600 students studying classes 6th to 12th enjoyed the beauty of the Moon, Jupiter and Andromeda galaxy in a span of 5 hours. But the last 50 or so students could not observe the Moon as it had disappeared behind a band of mist at around 11pm.

We were very excited at the enthusiasm displayed by the students, and their thirst for more information. It was a rewarding evening and it has inspired us to conduct more such events at Schools.