



SPACE brings Internet Telescope to India

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SPACE is proud to bring the 'Internet Telescope' project for the first time in India in collaboration with IASC (International Astronomy Search Collaboration), USA. The Pilot test is being conducted through 16 participants on 16th and 17th July 2011. The school students were selected for this novel project where they monitor a 16" Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes located at the Ironwood North Observatory, USA. This is a privately-owned observatory located in Queen Creek, Arizona. The students remotely commanded a CCD camera on the telescope to take images of asteroids, comets, and deep sky objects. The deep sky objects include star clusters, galaxies, and nebulae.

The pilot project conducted at the SPACE office headquarters encouraged the schools running a Centre for Student Excellence in Astronomy and Space Sciences to avail this first exclusive opportunity. Two sessions were spread across two days where 16 students volunteered to monitor the telescope remotely in SPACE office. Schools running a Centre for Student Excellence for Astronomy and Space Sciences like Bal Bharati Public School, Pitampura; G.D. Goenka, Indraprastha World School, Paschim Vihar; Step by Step, Noida and Astronomica, the amateur astronomy wing of SPACE took part.

For the asteroids and comets, images were taken 1-hour apart then blinked to see the moving object against the fixed background stars. For the deep sky objects there were three images of each taken one with the red filter, one with the green filter, and one with the blue filter. The three images were combined into a color image of the deep sky objects. These students clicked fascinating pictures of M8 (Nebula), M13 (Globular Cluster), M51 (Colliding Galaxies), M101 (Spiral Galaxies), M16 (Eagle Nebula), M11 (Wild Duck Cluster) and asteroid PROKNE which was imaged in time intervals and showed movement of the asteroid.

The students who participated were thrilled to get this opportunity to be part of a international project and use hands on techniques to control a telescope in real time and understand how to identify a target, how to plan the exposures and how to analyse the data.

Patrick Miller, Director, IASC stated that Indian students are very enthusiastic to take part in astronomy and space science related activities.

This is a pilot test for Global Astronomy Month in April 2012, to be a part of Astronomers without Borders; an international project of repute. In April 2012 this project will be conducted with about 80 participants during Global Astronomy Month by SPACE.

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