



For Immediate Release

January 24, 2010

Media Contact: Vincent Recinto
'Imiloa Astronomy Center
808-969-9714
vrecinto@imiloahawaii.org

Take a Stroll in Our Local Milky Way Neighborhood
Maunakea Skies Topic for February

Hilo, Hawai'i - Take a in-depth look at our local Milky Way Galaxy's neighborhood with guest speaker Dr. Andy Adamson, associate director of United Kingdom Infrared Telescope (UKIRT) at 'Imiloa Astronomy Center's popular, monthly "Maunakea Skies" evening planetarium program on Saturday, February 20 at 7 p.m.

Before Dr. Adamson's presentation, "Maunakea Skies" host Inge Heyer from the Joint Astronomy Centre will provide observational highlights of the winter night-time skies over Hawai'i, pointing out prominent constellations and stars one can see during this time of year.

The monthly program is presented in 'Imiloa Astronomy Center's 120-seat planetarium. Admission is \$5 for 'Imiloa members and \$8 for non-members. Pre-purchase tickets at the 'Imiloa front desk or by phone at (808) 969-9704; Visa and MasterCard accepted.

Regular visitors to 'Imiloa's planetarium are familiar with the ability to "fly out" through the local Universe, starting within the Solar System, passing the earliest space probes and then into the void before reaching the nearest stars. This is just the start of a potentially immense journey, taking the audience past the very local neighborhood tens of light years away and out into the rest of the Milky Way Galaxy. Beyond that, the journey enters extragalactic space and the rest of the Universe.

How do we know how far away even the most local stars are? Distances measured in miles become incredibly unwieldy due to the large numbers of zeros needed; therefore astronomers use measurements of light years and parsecs. These are no ordinary distances.

Dr. Adamson's talk will show how these distances, which take us to nearby galaxies and beyond, are measured. He will give a recent example: the measurement of the distance to a recently-discovered, very cool and very faint brown dwarf.

Andy Adamson is currently associate director UKIRT. Born in the United Kingdom, Dr. Adamson was a lecturer and computer systems manager at the University of Central Lancashire in the northwest of the United Kingdom for ten years, before arriving on the Big Island in 1998. His research focuses on interstellar dust particles – the microscopic motes of silicate and (hydro) carbons which pervade the space between the stars and obscure much of the local Universe from our sight. These grains also take a leading role in the life cycle of the stars themselves, assisting the formation process and re-forming and driving the “winds” from stars near the end of their life spans.

The monthly “Maunakea Skies” planetarium presentations are held on the third Saturday of each month, and replaces the Center's previous “Directors' Lecture Series” held for the International Year of Astronomy in 2009. The format begins with the traditional tour of the night sky featuring stars, constellations and planets visible with the unaided eye. Following this a special guest presenter from one of the Maunakea observatories will share the latest research in astronomy using the true 3D stereo planetarium technology to “fly out” and explore these discoveries. Imagine traveling to planets, zipping through star clusters and nebulae, and exploring galaxies far beyond our own.

Opened in 2006, 'Imiloa Astronomy Center celebrates both Hawaiian culture and Maunakea astronomy. Through its exhibits and program, 'Imiloa strives to share inspiring examples of science and culture together advancing knowledge, understanding and opportunity. The Center is a part of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i is located at 600 'Imiloa Place in Hilo, off Komohana and Nowelo Streets at the UH-Hilo Science and Technology Park. For more information, go to www.imiloahawaii.org, or call (808) 969-9703.



Figure 1 Dr. Andy Adamson, associate director of United Kingdom Infrared Telescope

###