

# Sky & Telescope's News Bulletin -- Jun 11

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\* \* \* SKY & TELESCOPE's WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN - June 11, 2004 \* \* \*

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Welcome to S&T's Weekly News Bulletin. Images, the full text of stories abridged here, and other enhancements are available on our Web site, [SkyandTelescope.com](http://SkyandTelescope.com), at the URLs provided below. (If the links don't work, just manually type the URLs into your Web browser.) Clear skies!

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## VENUS HAS ITS DAY IN THE SUN

People all over the world watched Venus pass in front of the Sun on Tuesday -- a much-awaited event that hasn't occurred since December 6, 1882. The entire 6.4-hour transit was visible from Europe, the Middle East, and most of Africa and Asia. Most of the rest of the world saw a partial transit, with sunrise or sunset interrupting the view.

In Florence, Italy, SKY & TELESCOPE editor-in-chief Rick Fienberg watched the beginning of the transit with a SKY & TELESCOPE/TravelQuest International tour. He reported, along with many others, that the enigmatic "black-drop effect" -- which plagued astronomers' efforts to time the transit in centuries past -- was not prominent this time around....

> [http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article\\_1276\\_1.asp](http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1276_1.asp)

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## OPPORTUNITY ENTERS ENDURANCE CRATER

After spending a month driving around the rim of the 130-meter-wide Endurance Crater, NASA's Opportunity rover rolled cautiously down its slope on Wednesday.

Mission scientists are eager to examine the interior of Endurance because

deeper, older layers of rock are exposed inside. "As we approached it, it became more and more exciting," says mission scientist Ray Arvidson (Washington University in St. Louis). "There's a section of this relatively bright evaporitic rock and then it's sitting on an older section of what appears to be basaltic sandstone that's also crossbedded...."

> [http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article\\_1279\\_1.asp](http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1279_1.asp)

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#### WHERE WAS THE BLACK DROP?

As reports on the Venus transit come in from around the world, the burning question in the observational community surrounds the "black drop": Why did some people see it while others did not? Did it happen at all?

The black-drop effect is seen when a dark patch appears to connect Venus with the dark sky past the edge of the Sun, sometimes giving Venus a teardrop shape. It was widely observed and commented on in the 18th and 19th centuries. Yet most observers didn't report seeing a black drop this time. Of those who did, most saw something much less pronounced than the effect observed in the past — so much less pronounced that they hesitated to call it a black drop at all....

> [http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article\\_1277\\_1.asp](http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1277_1.asp)

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#### NEARBY REMNANT OF A GAMMA-RAY BURST?

Midway between the stars Delta and Zeta in the constellation Aquila, 35,000 light-years from us around the curve of the Milky Way, lurks the remnant of a titanic gamma-ray burst that exploded a few thousand years ago — right in our own galaxy. At least that's the speculative claim of Jonathan W. Keohane, an astronomer from the Spitzer Science Center at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. In a poster presentation at the American Astronomical Society meeting in Denver, Keohane argues that the well-known supernova remnant W49B is actually the remains of a gamma-ray burst. But other astronomers say it's much too early to tell....

> [http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article\\_1275\\_1.asp](http://SkyandTelescope.com/news/article_1275_1.asp)

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#### HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS WEEK'S SKY

\* Jupiter (magnitude -2.0, between the feet of Leo) shines in the west-southwest during evening — the brightest point of light in the sky. Jupiter sets around 12:30 a.m. daylight saving time.

\* Dawn challenge for Wednesday, June 16th: no more than 30 minutes before sunrise Wednesday morning, scan with binoculars just above the east-northeast horizon for the hairline waning crescent Moon with Venus — itself a tiny

hairline crescent! -- glimmering below it.

\* New Moon, Thursday, June 17th.

For details, see This Week's Sky at a Glance and Planet Roundup:

> <http://SkyandTelescope.com/observing/ataglance/>

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NEW COOL STUFF FOR SKY WATCHERS (Advertisement)

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