

Title: The Caltech Optical Observatories

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Abstract

Caltech has a long and rich tradition in astronomy and astrophysics, especially in optical astronomy, where Caltech has developed and operated forefront observatories for many decades. This year - 2023 - marks the 75th anniversary of the 5-meter Hale Telescope at Palomar CA as well as the 30th anniversary of the Keck Observatory on Mauna Kea, HI. I will trace the history of the Palomar and Keck Observatories, review some key scientific accomplishments, describe current efforts to construct and deploy leading-edge instrumentation, and conclude with a few words on the next-generation observatory, the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project.

About the author:

Jonas Zmuidzinas is the Merle Kingsley Professor of Physics at Caltech and currently serves as the Director of the Caltech Optical Observatories. A native of Southern California, he received his B.S. in physics from Caltech in 1981 and his Ph.D. in physics from U.C. Berkeley in 1987. He has served on the Caltech faculty since 1990 and has also concurrently held positions at the Caltech/NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory including Chief Technologist. His father, Jonas Stasys Zmuidzinas, was born in Lithuania, as were his wife Vilia's parents, Adomas and Lina Mickeviciai.