

Saskatoon Skies

The Newsletter of the Saskatoon Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

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September 2005



SSSP 2005, Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Saskatchewan

PHOTO BY GEORGE CHARPENTIER

Another August has come and gone, and with it, another very successful Saskatchewan Summer Star Party. This year was the second largest SSSP in our history, with 269 registered attendees. – Les Dickson

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Saskatoon Centre

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Membership? It's never too late to join!

Regular: \$65.00/year Youth: \$34.25/year Lifetime: \$1100

The Saskatoon Centre operates on a one-year revolving membership. You will be a member for the next 12 months no matter when in the year you join. If you do not want to join at this time, ask to get onto our FREE 3-month Temporary Membership list. You will receive regular mailings of our *Saskatoon Skies* newsletter and will be invited to participate in Centre activities. Members are encouraged to renew early to avoid disruption in publications. Renew through the membership coordinator, Mike Clancy, or renew through the National Office and let Mike know that you did!

Benefits of Membership in the Saskatoon Centre

- knowledgeable & friendly amateur astronomers
- use of the Sleaford Observatory
- use of the U of S Observatory (after training)
- *Saskatoon Skies* Newsletter
- **Observer's Handbook**
- **The Journal of the RASC** (bimonthly)
- **SkyNews Magazine** (bimonthly)
- use of the Centre library
- discounts to **Sky & Telescope Magazine***
- free, no-cost, no-obligation, 3-month temporary membership if you don't want to join right now!

* New subscription or renewal of **Sky & Telescope**? Send new info or renewal notice, plus credit card # to Norma Jensen, 128 - 4th Street East, Saskatoon, SK S7H 1H8, or fax 306-659-2170.

Saskatoon Centre's main officers:

President – Ron Waldron Secretary – Al Hartridge
 Vice-President – Garry Stone Treasurer – Norma Jensen



Light Pollution Abatement website at:
www.ras.sk.ca/lpc/lpc.htm

U OF S OBSERVATORY

The U of S Observatory is open to the general public every Saturday of the year. Admission is free. The observatory is located on campus, one block north of the Wiggins Avenue and College Drive entrance. On clear nights, visitors may look through the vintage 6-inch and tour several displays. Current events are recorded on the Astronomy Information Line at 966-6429.

Observatory Hours:

January-February	7:30-9:30 pm
March	8:30-10:30 pm
April	9:30-11:30 pm
May-July	10:00-11:30 pm
August	9:30-11:30 pm
September	8:30-10:30 pm
October-December	7:30-9:30 pm

About this Newsletter...

Newsletter Editors – *Tenho Tuomi, Linda Janzen*
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Saskatoon Skies is published monthly by the Saskatoon Centre of the RASC. Distribution is approximately 100 copies per issue. *Saskatoon Skies* welcomes unsolicited articles, sketches, photographs, cartoons, and other astronomy or space science articles. Articles can be sent by mail in any format to the Centre's mailbox. Submitted materials can be returned upon request. Submissions may also be sent by e-mail – preferred as **plain unformatted ASCII text files without line breaks**. Images sent by e-mail should be attached .JPGs (.GIFs also accepted). Send e-mail submissions to the editor at <tuomi@sasktel.net>. Please send articles in "generic" formats with simple formatting – one tab at the beginning of paragraphs, one space after commas and periods. A separate by-mail subscription to *Saskatoon Skies* is available for \$15.00 per year. *Saskatoon Skies* is also posted on our Saskatoon Centre homepage as a .pdf file and can be downloaded free-of-charge. Members may choose to receive the newsletter by regular mail or via the Internet. Articles may be reprinted from *Saskatoon Skies* without expressed permission (unless otherwise stated), but source credit is requested. **DEADLINE for submissions is the 26th of each month.** *Saskatoon Skies* accepts commercial advertising. Please call the editor for rates. Members can advertise non-commercial items free of charge.




Bottle Drive & Canadian Tire \$

by Darrell Chatfield

\$13.35 in Canadian Tire Money received from Jim Wood. Thank you very much. The total collected to date is \$65.60. Please bring your bottles and Canadian Tire Money to the General meetings. I will collect them after the meeting concludes. If you cannot make it to the meeting but would like to contribute, please call me at 374-9278.

2005 RASC Calendar of Events

DATE	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
Sept. 19	Executive Meeting – 6:30 pm, 175 Physics, U of S	Ron Waldron	832-9428
Sept. 19	General Meeting – 7:30 pm, 175 Physics, U of S – SSSP 2005 Revisited , by Les Dickson, et al; Forty-eight, and Still Chasing Julia! , by Rick Huziak	Ron Waldron	832-9428
Sept. 23	Prince Albert – Slide Show & Talk – 7:00-8:00 pm, location tba	Kathleen Houston	922-8836
Sept. 23	Prince Albert – Binocular Tour, Public Star Night – 8:30 pm, Prime Minister's Park	Kathleen Houston	922-8836
Sept. 30	Prince Albert – Stargazing – 8:30 pm, gravel pit	Kathleen Houston	922-8836
Sept. 30	Observer's Group Session – Sleaford Observatory at dusk (8:00 pm)	Bill Hydomako	384-4781
Oct. 17	Executive Meeting – 6:30 pm, 175 Physics, U of S	Ron Waldron	832-9428
Oct. 17	General Meeting – 7:30 pm, 175 Physics, U of S – Elections!	Ron Waldron	832-9428
Oct. 28	Observer's Group Session – Sleaford Observatory at dusk	Bill Hydomako	384-4781
Nov. 4	Observer's Group Session – Sleaford Observatory at dusk	Bill Hydomako	384-4781
Dec. 2	Observer's Group Session – Sleaford Observatory at dusk	Bill Hydomako	384-4781



Monday, Sept 19, 7:30 PM
Room 175 Physics, U of S

Presenting:

SSSP 2005 Revisited
A Potpourri of Photos by Members in Attendance
by Les Diskson and others

Forty-eight, and Still Chasing Julia!
A few nights after SSSP, the asteroid (89) Julia cast a shadow over the Sleaford Observatory. I managed to measure the size of this shadow, and seven of us from all over North America thus proceeded to define the shape of an asteroid! I'll tell you how we did it!
by Rick Huziak

Note: There will be an executive meeting at 6:30 p.m.

SKY BUYS & MIRROR CELLS

THE SASKATOON CENTRE'S SWAP AND SALE PAGE!

For Sale: One Concord 60 mm x 900 mm focal length refractor on an equatorial mount, complete with finder scope. One Tasco 60 mm refractor (about 700 mm focal length) on an alt/az mount. Both are in new condition. **Doug McMillan 382-0846.**

For Loan to Members:
Slide set for talks on general astronomy and light pollution. You can borrow this set any time you want to give a talk to your favourite group. **Contact Rick Huziak at 665-3392.**



BOOKS FOR SALE

by Bruce Brandell, Sales Coordinator

Some of the items are left from the Star Party. All will be available at our next meeting. Call 249-1119, or email <bruce_brandell@yahoo.com>

Title	Author	No. Avail.	Price Cdn\$
Calendars			
RASC 2006	RASC	15	\$14.00
Skywatcher's	Stan Shadick	12	\$18.00
Books			
The Backyard Astronomer's Guide	Dickinson & Dyer	3	\$45.00
Nightwatch	T. Dickinson	2	\$27.00
Night Sky Atlas	R. Scagell	3	\$27.00
The Moon Observer's Guide	P. Grego	3	\$13.00
The Sun Observer's Guide	P. Spence	2	\$13.00
Firefly Astronomy Dictionary	Firefly	3	\$13.00
Exploring the Sky by Day	T. Dickinson	2	\$ 9.00
Skyways – Astronomy Handbook for Teachers	M.L. Whitehorne	5	\$20.00

Title	Author	No. Avail.	Price Cdn\$
Books continued			
The Beginner's Observer's Guide	L. Enright	4	\$19.00
Astrophotography	G.N. Patterson	lots	\$ 5.00
Charts			
Milkyway Poster		1	\$25.00
The Moon Map		1	\$15.00
The Mars Map		1	\$15.00
Miscellaneous			
RASC Centennial Mug		6	\$ 8.00
RASC Stickers, blue or white		lots	\$ 1.00

**NEWS
FLASH**

Prince Albert Astro Group Finds DARK SKY SITE!

by Kathleen Houston Tel. 922-8836 e.b.a.@sasktel.net

drowns out a good percentage of the seeing)...but the rare clear sky all day and evening just demanded a star gazing night!

Prince Albert Astro Group update and fall kick off!

Since Astronomy Day April 16, 2005, Prince Albert hasn't been the same. There is a growing group of interested astronomers, whose enthusiasm sparkles in spite of the spring, early summer lousy weather. We have been meeting every 2nd Friday of the month for our public star night at Prime Minister's Park. May 13th was terrific with a clear sky and wonderful group of 12 to 15 people, including some enthusiastic high school students. The sky was good enough even by city standards for Ken to give a tour of some deep space objects. We've dubbed Ken, the Rick of the North! His knowledge impresses me. As well, Ken just bought himself a 6" dob, which we have yet to see in action.

The May 10th weather offering was rather dismal, but a good showing of new members, while Ken was in Edmonton. Our developing core group came, as well as 5 new people. I was amazed at the showing in spite of the foreboding, thick clouds. We exchanged stories about the night sky and I yakked for an hour. Judy Kidney brought her 8" dob, and I my 6" to all of these events.

We took a break this summer, and will kick off the fall season with a slide show September 23rd, 7-8pm (location to be determined), and public viewing starting at 8h30, at Prime Minister Park. Friday September 30th, we will be out at the gravel pit site. Call me if you are interested, so we can organize getting out to Kathleen's favorite gravel pit!

Clear skies!



My fascination with the P.A. gravel has grown! I am delighted to announce a fabulous partnership that has developed with Ruscon Scales, out at the gravel pit west of town, for dark sky astronomy viewing. Friday August 12th, Ken, my daughter Maraël and I met with temporary member Della Hayden, and scales owner Rick Ruzzkowski out at the pit. Della knew Rick, and she introduced us. Rick welcomes the idea of sharing the facility with astronomers. He gave us the grand tour and his vivacious personality made it clear he enjoys people and is also interested in stargazing. Soon we will acquire a key, which will allow us to turn off the local light, and have the ability to go out as a group, when the conditions are good. Ken or Kathleen is the contact people at this time.

Maraël and I checked out the site, in spite of a near full moon, on August 21st. The moon rise was superb, and views to the south, east and north excellent. I somehow found 4 new messiers! I would normally just have stayed home (the moon

RASC-SASKATOON RAFFLE

We are raising money to build the next observatory at the Sleaford site – the dome and control room for the 16" research-grade telescope. We need about \$18,000 in total. The Saskatoon Centre is holding a raffle to help raise these funds. Tickets are \$3 each or 2 for \$5. A book of ten would cost \$25. **Buy tickets**, or better yet, **get tickets to sell** from Darrell Chatfield (ph. 374-9278). Please return the booklet and money by about September 9, 2005.

You could win:



- a Daytek PD-900 Portable DVD Player
- a Canon A510 Digital Camera
- a Glen Scrimshaw 16x20 framed print



Glen Scrimshaw
CANADIAN ARTIST

The draw will be made at the first fall General Meeting of the Saskatoon Centre, September 19, 2005.

Raffle licence: R05-0094. Prizes may not be exactly as illustrated.

In Praise of Saskatchewan Skies

by Ron Waldron

Well, it's been quite a summer. I have spent much of it travelling – first to Nova Scotia, then to Estevan in the coal belt area of Saskatchewan and finally to Cypress Hills for the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party. In my travels I have come to appreciate even more the opportunities we as amateur astronomers are given here in the “Land of Living Skies”.

While in Nova Scotia, I managed to contact an executive member of the Halifax Centre. We made arrangements to get together on a clear night and visit their observatory site and view through their 16-inch telescope. Well, as luck would have it – only two out of 18 days were clear and on both of those, I was out and about travelling. The other sixteen days were cloudy, foggy, or raining – typical coastal climatic conditions. While travelling, I couldn't help but notice the difficulty that rolling hills and trees play in obscuring a clear view of much of the sky and in particular, any areas near the horizon. Adding to those viewing difficulties was the high humidity. I am sure that had we managed to view on one of those two clear evenings – humidity in the form of dew would have played havoc with our plans. My conclusion – it is difficult and challenging to be an amateur astronomer in Nova Scotia.

Here in Saskatchewan we are blessed with a dry climate, a relatively flat landscape and a sky that more often than not allows us to see clearly from horizon to horizon. Dew still can play havoc with our viewing plans, but it tends to hold off until very early in the morning. Admittedly, northern lights can and has put a damper on things, but in reality, it offers a welcome break from the rigors of serious viewing.

While in Estevan during the August long weekend for a family reunion on my wife's side, I took my telescope. Conditions could not have been better. Perfect views of the sun by day (properly filtered of course) followed by outstanding near dark sky views of the sky at night. All there were more than willing to peer through the telescope as it offered a great diversion from the visiting and reminiscing taking place at the reunion. My only regret was that I did not have our newly acquired green laser pointer to assist me in pointing out constellations to those that showed an interest in learning.

Finally, SSSP 2005 was another huge success both weather wise and program wise. It became clear to me that the 250 plus attendees this year were coming because of the skies we can offer. This was my third consecutive SSSP for a total of 9 evenings viewing from that location. I have only experienced



one cloudy evening out of nine, which attests to the high probability for clear skies.

“You don't know what you've got till it's gone” – a phrase made famous by singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell in the song Big Yellow Taxi sums up my feeling about astronomical viewing in Saskatchewan. We should be proud of the clarity of skies we have here, of its vastness from horizon to horizon, and of its ever-changing nature. We certainly can be

proud of our province's decision to place the slogan “land of living skies” on our license plates.

Finally, the Western Development Museums across the province are currently undergoing major reconstruction. I was asked along with other teachers to work on lesson plans and discovery boxes for students visiting the newly opened areas. The area I chose was Saskatchewan weather – an area dealt with at the grade 3 and 4 level. The final part of my contribution was a Web Quest for students entitled “Land of Living Skies”. I am pleased to announce that it was accepted and has been published on the web for students and teachers to experience worldwide at:

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/webquests/landofthelivingskieswq/index.htm>

Next time you are observing the night sky either from home or from a dark site – remember the opportunity you have been given – an opportunity that for many is either challenging or is denied either because of physical geography or light pollution. We are very fortunate to be amateur astronomers in the province of Saskatchewan.



2005 SSSP: Chairman's Preliminary Report

August 28, 2005

by Les Dickson

Another August has come and gone, and with it, another very successful Saskatchewan Summer Star Party. This year was the second largest SSSP in our history, with 269 registered attendees. I know there will be a few personal reports on SSSP in this issue of the newsletter, and maybe more in the months to come, so for this issue, I want to give a listing of our speakers, Astrophoto Contest winners, major door prize winners, and acknowledge and thank the many volunteers and others that contributed to our success.

Our special guest was Ivan Semeniuk, journalist and formally with Discovery Channel and now the U.S. Bureau Chief for "New Scientist" magazine. He gave a great talk and was a very gracious guest. Other speakers included Alan Dyer, Paul Campbell, Dennis Fell, Ken Metcalfe, Norm Willey, Doug Hube, Larry Dye, Irena Mawhinney and Rick Huziak. Rick Huziak, Vance Petriew, Bob Kink and Darcy Kozoriz organized the National Light Pollution Abatement Award which was given to representatives of the Canadian, Alberta and Saskatchewan government. Our thanks to them all.



The Astrophoto Contest winners were as follows: **Prime Focus – Solar System:** 1st Dennis Fell (Edmonton), 2nd Dennis Fell (Edmonton); **Prime Focus – Deep Sky:** 1st Sam Ferris (Regina); **Piggyback:** 1st Dennis Fell (Edmonton), Lucas Cornisiewicz (Medicine Hat); **Tripod:** Lucas Cornisiewicz (Medicine Hat), Wade Selvig (Shaunavon).

The winners of our major door prizes were as follows: **"Introduction to Astronomy"** (book) – Joan Hube (Edmonton); **"Nightwatch"** (book) – Susan Yeo (Calgary); **Bridge Scrimshaw print** – Rob Baron (Vermillion); **Lighthouse Scrimshaw print** – Kelly Ostermann (Calahoo); **8 mm eyepiece** – Jeff Vollmer (Loreburn); **12 x 80 Antares finder** – Roy Adams (Sherwood Park); **Starry Night** (software) – Tyrone Klassen (St. Paul); **Table Runner** – Judy Judkins (Medicine Hat); **12 x 60 binoculars** – Andreas Buchwaldt (unknown); **ALP filter** – Chris Martin (Saskatoon).

This star party could not function without the hard work and dedication of everyone involved. Below I have listed the many people who have given so much this year. Except where indicated, the people listed below are associated with the Saskatoon Centre. If I have missed anyone or a job you might have done – sorry, but your contributions are still greatly appreciated.



• Bruce Brandell – book and pin sales, swap table • Brent Burlingham – Wapiti Room, gate security • George Charpentier – photography, flags, standards • Darrell Chatfield – door prizes, signs, banners, gate security, tent city tear-down, red flags • Bob Christie – Meadows • Les Dickson – Chairman, Wapiti Room, hotel liaison, guest liaison, park liaison, programming, handouts, tent city tear-down • Ellen Dickson – book and pin sales, BBQ, gate security, astrophoto contest awards • Alan Dyer (Calgary) – guest liaison and transportation • Al Hartridge – astrophoto contest, grocery shopping, concession sales, pin design • Sharon Hartridge – grocery shopping, BBQ, concession sales, first aid • Graham Hartridge – grocery shopping, concession sales, pin design • Rick Huziak – National Light Pollution Abatement Award, Meadows, tent city, gate security, red flags, handouts, Binocular Star Walk • Bill Hydomako – registration • Marianne Hydomako – registration • Linda Janzen – handouts • Norma Jensen – co-treasurer • Eleanor Knight – gate security • Darcy Kozoriz (Regina) – National Light Pollution Abatement Award, shirt logo design, shirts, public star night • Chris Martin – BBQ, gate security, guest transportation, gofer • Vance Petriew (Regina) – National Light Pollution Abatement



Award, Regina Centre volunteer coordinator, public star night • Gary Stone – BBQ, gate security • Myrna Stone – registration, BBQ • Steve Szuta (Regina) – shirts, public star night • Tenho Tuomi – BBQ,

gate security • Velma Tuomi – BBQ • Ron Waldron – Master of Ceremonies, gofer • Barb Wright – BBQ, co-treasurer

We want to thank the fine people at the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, especially Park Manager Brad Mason and Park Supervisor Rick Goett, for their help and cooperation during what were sometimes trying and confusing times. Thanks to the staff of the Cypress Park Resort Inn, especially Special Events Co-ordinator Fiona Udal and her staff for helping us so much over the weekend.

Finally, thanks to all those people who attended this year's SSSP, for whom we do all this work. We look forward to seeing all 269 of you next year!

– PHOTOS BY GEORGE CHARPENTIER



RASC National Light Pollution Abatement Award Presented at the SSSP

by Richard Huziak

The RASC National Light Pollution Abatement Award was presented at the SSSP this year to representatives of the three Parks Agencies that created the Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve (CHIPP DSP): Saskatchewan Parks, Alberta Community Development and Parks Canada Agency. These agencies are the ones that are creating Canada's, and maybe the world's, largest dark-sky preserve at a signing ceremony on September 28, 2004. The award was announced at the RASC General Assembly in Kelowna earlier this year, but it made most sense to do the actual presentation at the Cypress Hills Inter-provincial Park.

Getting everything prepared for this award was a major undertaking. Vance Petriew (Regina), Bob King (Calgary), Roland Dechesne (Calgary), Rob Dyck (National LPA Committee), Peter Jedicke (National President) and I were all involved in planning this presentation over the last 8 months. However, the task of inviting park and government dignitaries eventually worked out after hundreds of emails, and we believe we had good representation from everyone involved. On the other side, much of the planning was aided by the parks agencies themselves, in the form of lending us government aides to chase down information we needed.

The presentation was designed to honour those who have worked so hard to date, and to keep the DSP in the news. The entire DSP project is on-going, and work will continue by this team (both RASC and the agencies' representatives) to continue to specify the DSP rules of operation and to then introduce these rules and management practices to all provincial parks in Saskatchewan and Alberta. News of this presentation spread quickly within government circles during the planning phases, and there was only great excitement and no dissention. "Green" policies are very popular politically, and it was very encouraging to see how much interest and knowledge already existed in several government departments. Several government webpages were created or updated to help promote the DSP initiative or to announce the award proudly.

Recent coverage of the CHIPP DSP in magazines and on websites has stirred up great interest in the idea of dark-sky preservation. Our original project intent was to have only the Cypress Hills as a DSP, but this quickly changed to province-wide interest, and now we have had inquiries from both a regional park, and from Parks Canada National Parks. As time goes on, interest in the preservation of the skies continues to grow, and I am amazed each time I meet with the Parks staff as to how much further they have moved forward, and how much more awareness they have. But the presentation also had an effect the other way. The government DSP committee members do not always realize how much this initiative is appreciated from our level. I assured them all that they would be overwhelmed by the crowd's appreciation. Sure enough, the crowd did not disappoint us, and gave the award recipients a long standing ovation. What astronomer would not appreciate an accessible Dark Sky Preserve and likely more to come?



Back Row (L-R): Rick Goett, CHIPP Sask Park Supervisor; Keith Bocking, Heritage Appreciation Team Leader, Alberta Community Development; David Rohatensky, Fort Walsh National Historic Site Manager; Aaron Domes, Visitor Services Officer, Alberta Community Development; Vance Petriew, RASC – Regina Centre; Melody Nagel-Hisey, CHIPP Naturalist
Front Row (L-R): Brad Mason, CHIPP Sask Park Manager; David Phillips, Assistant Deputy Minister, Saskatchewan Environment; Cheryl Penny, Superintendent South Sask Field Unit, Parks Canada Agency; Rosemary Jones, Planning Team Leader, Alberta Community Development; Richard Huziak, RASC – Saskatoon Centre — PHOTO BY DARCY KOZORIZ

With this in mind, the award ceremony was pretty emotional on both sides of the fence, involving a few tears of joy by the nine Parks personnel, who decided that preserving the night time sky must be a priority. Quite frankly, everyone was pretty choked up by the ovation and reception. A surprising turn was that Brad Mason & Rick Goett, our favourite CHIPP Managers, turned around and presented awards to Vance Petriew, and Bob King, and I, who were the main RASC negotiators for the DSP. When I looked through my teary eyes, I could see that Vance was crying, too. The relationship between the Parks and our group has become much more than just a negotiation. It is a true family team.

We also got some press coverage of the event – not as much as we wanted, but enough anyway. I did a CBC Radio interview which ran on Thurs and Friday mornings, and both local newspapers covered the event. Strangely, or maybe not, the national newspapers seemed to be quite disinterested, in spite of a quote in our release by the National Environment Minister, Stephane Dion. Oh well! No one died at the presentation, so I guess it isn't good enough to be national news! No sour grapes here, though. There will be many more successes and announcements before the dark-sky movement has run its course!

For more pictures of the event, see our Saskatchewan Light Pollution webpage at: <http://www.ras.sk.ca/lpc/dsp/dsp.htm>

The Alberta Community Development also placed a great webpage up at: http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/enjoying_alberta/parks/featured/cypresshills/awards.asp

And make sure you tell everyone you see about the CHIPP DSP and why it is so important. Success of the DSP team will depend on how much public awareness and demand for responsible nighttime lighting that common citizens want.

The Planets This Month, September 2005

by Murray D. Paulson, Edmonton Centre

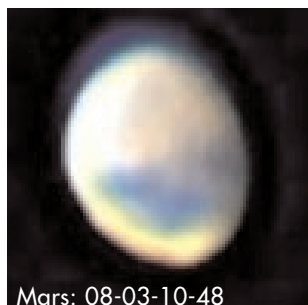
It sure is nice to have a dark evening sky again, but I was getting used to the warmth of summer and observing without gloves. At the Mt. Kobau Star party, I got my first glimpses of the planet Mars, and took a few images with a web cam. Glorious what you can do with a bit of technology! At the time Mars was just under 12 arc seconds and the polar cap was obvious. Following the star party I was able to witness the close appulse of a 3 day old moon and Venus. Lovely in the



sunset colors over Osoyoos. As luck would have it, Uranus was well placed near a 4th magnitude star in Aquarius and I managed to see it naked eye. No luck with comet crashes, but I did attend at the Science center observatory with Bruce McCurdy, Alister Ling and Arnold Rivera for the very close appulse of Mercury and Venus on June 27th. Very cool to see the small disk of Venus and half disk of Mercury in the same high power field of view. The day started off with dismal prospects of seeing anything but the underside of the ever present clouds.

Last month left off with a morning apparition of **Mercury**, so this means it will be closing in on the sun until the September 17th superior conjunction. At this time Mercury will pass behind and 1.3 degrees above the sun.

Venus has sat low in the west all summer, and it won't get any better this fall. We start off the month with Venus shining at magnitude -4.0 and it shows a 16" gibbous disk. Venus sets an hour after the sun in the WSW, but the poor inclination of the ecliptic makes it a tough if you don't have a clear west horizon. By early October, it sets 1/2 hr after sunset, so you better use



binoculars to chase it down. As per usual for these inner planets, they are better seen in the daytime.

If you haven't seen it yet, **Mars** is now well on its way back into our night sky. By mid September it has expanded to a 15.73" gibbous disk and shines at magnitude -1.3. At this time Mars rises just after 9:30 pm. By early October the disk of Mars will have expanded to 19.08" and now the red planet is the brightest thing in the night

sky shining at magnitude -1.9. It will be up there shining with the harvest moon and it rises just before 8 pm. Note the South polar cap and the slightly gibbous phase. In early to mid September Syrtus major will dominate the visible hemisphere of Mars. By October the Mare Cimmerium side of the planet show up in the late evening sky. This is the nearly blank side of the planet. You will see the polar cap in the south of Mars with the dusky Mare region draped from the polar regions at a shallow angle to near the equator. Give yourself lots of time to glimpse these low contrast regions and you will be rewarded. As we go into Thanksgiving we glimpse Solus Lacus, the "eye" of Mars. By this time, Mars will sit much higher in the evening sky, affording an earlier evening viewing. If you wait till 3:41 am, you will see Mars culminate at 53 degrees above the horizon. Very cool indeed.

Jupiter sets before Venus, and is more or less lost in the twilight glare for the month of September, heading for its late October date with the sun. If you can find it in the twilight, it shines at magnitude -1.6 and will show you a 31.26" disk.

Saturn is up for the early risers, or the late night observers. It rises at 3:00 am and will show you a 17" disk and shines at magnitude 0.3. Saturn spends the second week of September passing below the Beehive or M44. By early October, it rises just after 1:00 am, and will show a 17.7" disk. In the eyepiece you will immediately note how much the rings have turned down. They are now at an inclination of 17.8 degrees. If you are up late observing Mars, give Saturn a shot. It is always a treat for the eyes.

Next month I will discuss Mars in more detail, so enjoy the red planet and clear skies.

Activities Co-ordinator Report

by Jeff Swick

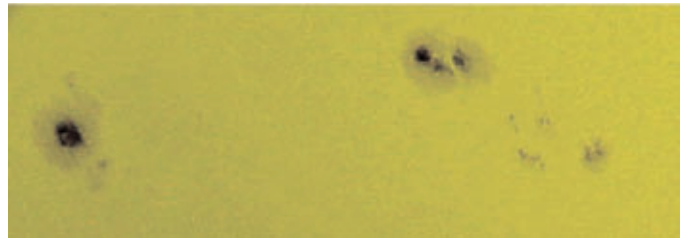
Welcome back everyone from the summer break. I know we have some new members so welcome to them as well.

I thought summer was supposed to be a time of taking it easy and that's certainly what I set out to do except that this turned out to be the busiest summer I've had in years...even got a granddaughter out of the deal.

As of this writing in mid August I'm looking into another public star night at the Lakewood Civic center as the location worked so well for us last year.

Over the summer a number of members have expressed interest in the Isabel Williamson Lunar Certificate. The information can be viewed at the following URL <http://www.rasc.ca/observing/moon.html>. Give it some thought and we can speak briefly at the meeting to ascertain whether to move forward with a club order or whether to use the PDF.

I've been spending some time this summer with solar observing utilizing the Badder Film our club purchased last spring. Here's a photo I took with the addition of a yellow filter.



I would encourage members also to sign up to the observing group message board by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rascstoon/>. Note this list is not open to the public. You will have to sign up and will be approved. The approval is simply a formality and enables me to be sure that spammers don't join to harvest and sell our email addresses. Bill also uses this list to communicate observing group activities so be there or be square.

That's it for this report; I'm looking forward to seeing you all at the meeting. That's the one bit of observing these damn clouds can't spoil.

SSSP 2005 Observations

by Clayton Rolfe

It is as if we died and went to heaven!! Instead we watched the heavens the weekend of August 4th to the 7th. The 2005 Saskatchewan Summer Star Party in Cypress Hills was absolutely magnificent. We had beautiful 30-degree days with fantastically clear wonderful nights!! Whether you were camping at the meadows or staying at the Cypress Hills resort there were plenty of family activities and informative presentations for everyone. On Saturday afternoon there was a special presentation, "The National Light Abatement Award" was presented. Saturday night featured a banquet and many door prizes and fun for all. The night skies Friday and Saturday were the highlight for us. This was our second star party and we will always return again as the people are friendly and helpful and are happy to share ideas with you. This year we were all treated to a special aurora borealis show which separated the sky with a band across the middle, it was spectacular!! The Cypress Hills skies always show us such a fantastic view of the milky way and many other special stars viewing thrills that keep bringing us back...clear skies to everyone!!!



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Les Dickson	99
Mike Clancy	Up! 99
Brent Burlingham	Up! 97
Brent Gratias	96
Mike Oosterlaken	93
Lorne Jensen	89
Margo Miller	New! 77
Wade Selvig	75
Ken Maher	73
Garry Stone	57
Kathleen Houston	53
Ellen Dickson	Up! 29
Brian Friesen	15
Barb Young	6

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Scott Alexander	97
Larry Scott	61
Bill Hydomako	55
Sandy Ferguson	23
Mike Oosterlaken	20
Mike Clancy	4
George Charpentier	4

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Certified at 35 Objects:

M. Stephens, T. Tuomi, M. Clancy, R. Huziak

Brent Gratias	36
Ken Maher	36
Mike Oosterlaken	32
Anna Clancy	24

EXPLORE the UNIVERSE

Certified for Certificate:

M. Clancy, T. Tuomi

HERSCHEL 400 CLUB

Certified at 400 Objects:

D. Jeffrey, R. Huziak, D. Chatfield

Gord Sarty	251
Tenho Tuomi	Up! 220
Scott Alexander	117
Mike Oosterlaken	68
Sandy Ferguson	18

HERSCHEL 400-II CLUB

Certified at 400 Objects:

Darrell Chatfield	247
Richard Huziak	211

The Messier & Finest NGC lists can be found in the *Observer's Handbook*. The Explore the Universe list is available on the National web site. The Herschel 400 list is available at the web site listed below. The Binocular List will be available at each general meeting or can be mailed out on request to distant members.

On-line Messier List – For those who'd like an electronic Messier list (with DSS images), check out:

<http://www.seds.org/billa/dssm/messier.html>

On-line Finest NGC List – For those who'd like an electronic FNGC list, check out the Edmonton Centre's version at:

<http://www.edmontonrasc.com/catalog.html>

On-line Herschel 400 List – For those who'd like an electronic Herschel 400 list, check out the official site at:

<http://www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/herschel/hers400.html>



RASC Observing Group Notes

by Bill Hydomako
Observing Group Coordinator

In the month of August we had the biggest observing session for this year with 265 people attending, namely the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party. There was no observing group scheduled around the new moon at the end of Aug as I was attending the Alberta Star Party. Observing Group for Sept is set for Friday Sept 30 with Saturday Oct. 1 as a backup date. Start time will be around 8:00 p.m. Other observing group dates are Friday Oct. 28, Friday Nov. 4 and Friday Dec. 2.

Clear Skies!

Newsletters from Other Centres...

Here are the newsletters that have been received during the past month.

- Aug-Sep/05 • **Scope** (Toronto Centre) – "Hunting Herschels", "Galileo's Starry Night", "GA Report"
- July-Aug/05 • **The StarSeeker** (Calgary Centre) – "Alberta Star Party", "New Solar System Object Discovered"
- June/05 • **Stardust** (Edmonton Centre) – "GA 2005 – Okanagan Centre", "George Moores' Astronomy Workshop"
- **The StarSeeker** (Calgary Centre) – "Calgary RASC Star-BQ", "Entabeni Transit Authority Pt 3"
- **Scope** (Toronto Centre) – "Open House & Awards Picnic", "2005 Eclipse Trip Details"