



The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR'S CORNER

"I can feel spring in the air," my neighbour called out to me as I was walking to my car. As I stopped and turned toward him, I noticed that he had his telescope out on the driveway.

"What are you up to?" I said. "Is that the new telescope you got for Christmas?"

"Yep," he replied. "I thought I would practise with it before heading down to the States to see the eclipse."

I could see that he had a solar filter over the front of the telescope, so I thought there was nothing to be concerned about. He has shown an interest in astronomy and has joined me several times when I've been observing in my backyard. "What part of the States are you headed for?" I asked.

"Well, we're starting off at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina and then going to Tennessee or Missouri because they say that's where the best viewing will be. I'm trying to decide whether to go to Nashville or Kansas City. You know, I like country music, but I've heard there is supposed to be some kind of huge science event in Kansas City. That ought to be good for the kids."

"Have you made your hotel reservations yet? I've heard lots of people...." I didn't even get to finish my sentence as I watched my neighbour knock over his telescope and race off toward his house. I opened my car door, and just as I climbed in, I could hear him yelling, "Honey, we need to...."

—David Garner, Editor

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2017 GA Organizing Committee

CONTACT US

We invite all Centres to contribute articles about their latest activities. Have you had any public star parties, award ceremonies, special events or observatory activities? Photos are welcome. Please send articles and pictures to newsletter@rasc.ca.



PACMAN NEBULA This 5.5-hour image was taken using a Tele Vue NP127is telescope and a QSI 583wsg camera.
—Dan Meek, Calgary Centre

PULL OUT NEWSLETTER TO VIEW SKYNEWS STAR CHART



BOARD NEWS

The Board of Directors continues to fulminate over the Strategic Plan and is making definite headway, filtering the important items to the top. Of course, some items are more important than others, and they will receive a greater push from all sides. Tentatively, we have Membership Retention, Sustainable Growth and Publications at the forefront of our discussion at this writing.

On a different note, at the Society office, with the help of Renata Koziol, Julia Neeser, Randy Attwood and Randall Rosenfeld, a “History Wall” has

been created with images from the Society’s past, as well as covers of publications, hung in a prominent location just inside the office front entrance. They have done a great job choosing and framing the images along with *Observer’s Handbook* covers from past and recent editions, the *Observer’s Calendar*, *Journal* covers and new and old publications.

—James Edgar, Past President, RASC

Our new hallway gallery, above left. Above right: Some of the framed memorabilia includes covers from various

RASC publications and images from the archives: Rev. N. Green, Rev. M.W. Burke-Gaffney, Dr. H. Hogg, Prof. R.J. Lockhart; a display put on by RASC London Centre in 1952; RASC GA 1966 participants examining the fine model of the Algonquin Radio Observatory, photo by Franklin Loehde; P.M. Millman, R.J. Northcott and the Hon. R.D. Jorgenson; star party, 1900s; Stellafane, August 1948, Mr. A.V. Whipple’s prize-winning telescope; F. de Kinder, the two judges, Mr. and Mrs. Whipple; A.F. Miller’s 4-inch refractor (manufactured by Wray & Co., London) in Boyd Brydon’s observatory.

EXPLORE THE MOON: A new RASC observing program for beginners

This observing program (with certificate) bridges the gap between the introductory **Explore the Universe Observing Program** and the more challenging **Isabel Williamson Lunar Observing Program**. It is ideal for beginning observers who are just learning about telescopes and binoculars by providing a hands-on observing experience on an easy object—the Moon. The telescope program is based on the 94 lunar features listed and charted in the *RASC Observer’s Handbook*, originally selected by Roy Bishop, who was the *Handbook* editor for 19 years. There is also a binocular program consisting of a reduced set of 40 features. **Explore the Moon** was field-tested in 2012–2015 by several beginning observers in the RASC Halifax Centre, some of whom went on to complete other RASC observing programs. At this time, only English versions are available; we hope to offer both telescope and binocular programs in French in due course.

WHY OBSERVE THE MOON?

This may seem like a funny question. Many amateur astronomers, however, shun the Moon. It is true that moonlight interferes with the enjoyment of observing and photographing the “faint fuzzies,” which are deep-sky objects. A better option is to remain calm and observe the Moon on those nights when it dominates the sky. Here’s a list of benefits of lunar observing, particularly for beginning observers:

- The Moon is easy to find!
- You can observe from home, even in the city—no need to travel to a dark-sky site.
- The Moon is bright, offering plenty of detail, even in small telescopes or binoculars.
- Observing the Moon is ideal for learning how to operate your telescope or binoculars.
- Finding the principal features is not hard, so you can learn *observing skills*.
- The Moon is our nearest celestial neighbour.

See www.rasc.ca/observing/explore-the-moon-observing-certificate for more information.

—Dave Chapman, RASC, Halifax Centre



WHERE IS THE SCIENCE?

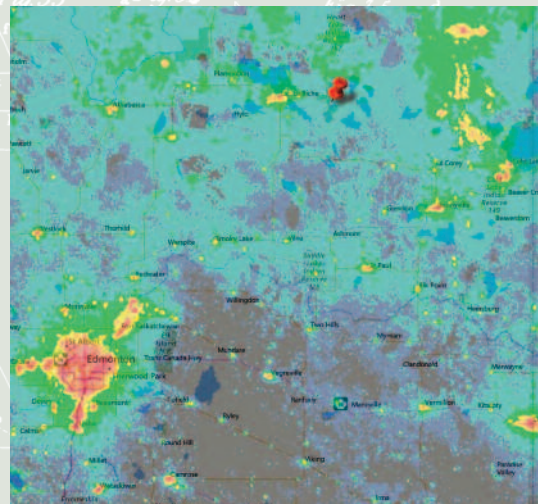
Enjoyment of astronomy is a mix of many things for the average member of the RASC. You could say that it's a combination of looking at the wonders of the universe, showing others the amazing things that we can see out there, learning about new discoveries and participating in new discoveries.

In Calgary, we do public nights and outreach, hosting events almost every week during the busiest times, sometimes several on the same night. We have an active observing group, a youth group and a new-observers group to encourage observing activities for members. Many members do astrophotography and night-sky photography and produce some very impressive results. Lastly, we have a handful of members who do astronomical research.

We seem to be doing everything we can to be an active and vibrant Centre. But are we missing something? Do we make enough of an effort to encourage and support this in our Centre? How can we do more to support our members in the pursuit of astronomical discoveries?

Some ideas to help with the promotion of the pursuit of research opportunities for members could be to allow time at our monthly meetings for members to showcase the projects they are working on. This could take the form of five-minute presentations after the main speaker. We would encourage these presentations from a wider group of members. We could cultivate opportunities for scientific investigation that might be available to members and inform and encourage interested members to sign up for them; develop projects that could be undertaken by groups of members; and develop mentorship opportunities to team up members with other astronomers in the Centre, at universities or from across the Society. Lastly, we could recognize scientific achievements of members, with awards granted annually. These are some of the ideas that we are moving forward with at the Calgary Centre. We would be interested to hear from other Centres that are interested in this.

—Roger Nelson, Calgary Centre



NEW DARK-SKY PRESERVE

In November 2016, the RASC National Council voted to designate Alberta's Lakeland Provincial Park and Recreation Area a Dark-Sky Preserve. This was followed by the confirmation of our Board of Directors.

Covering 57,870 hectares, Lakeland Provincial Park is 200 kilometres northeast of Edmonton and includes Helena and Pinehurst Lakes. It is the fifth Dark-Sky Preserve in Alberta. It is on the southwest corner of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, so there is not expected to be much urban development nearby.

There are five observing sites within the park and surveyed light fixtures at four locations—three of these are privately owned and operate with a generator, and the fourth is a Ranger Station, so they are turned off until needed. The owners will be required to change the luminaires to be compliant when their leases are renewed.

Please welcome Lakeland to our suite of Canadian Dark-Sky Preserves.

—Robert Dick, RASC-LPAC



A SPIRAL GALAXY AND MORE This 6-hour wide-field image of NGC7331 and Stephan's Quintet (lower left) was captured using a Ceravolo 300mm astrograph modified to f/4.9 on a Paramount ME mount and a Moravian G4-16000 CCD camera.

—Brian McGaffney, Kingston Centre



RASC NEWSLETTER

2017 RASC OTTAWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY, JUNE 29 TO JULY 3



The RASC Ottawa Centre is pleased to offer an outstanding lineup of activities for delegates and spouses taking part in the 2017 General Assembly, and we look forward to seeing you here in Ottawa. Is there really any other place to be than the nation's capital on our 150th birthday?

The following schedule of activities and more information can be found at ottawa.rasc.ca/content/2017-general-assembly-ottawa.

SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 29

- ★ 3:00 p.m.: Residence check-in and GA registrations desk open
- ★ Evening: Hospitality suite open

FRIDAY, JUNE 30

- ★ Welcome
- ★ Keynote Address: Ken Hewitt-White
- ★ National Council Meeting (concurrent all day)
- ★ Algonquin Radio Observatory: Brendan Quine
- ★ Moving Clusters: Glenn LeDrew
- ★ Astronomy Workshop
- ★ Downtown in the Afternoon: Tours
- ★ BBQ on Campus
- ★ Evening Star Party & Diefenbunker Tour

SATURDAY, JULY 1: CANADA 150 DAY!

- ★ Meteor Workshop: Pierre Martin
- ★ The Solar System, a Geological Perspective on Current Controversies: Simon Hanmer
- ★ Moon Sketching (lunchtime group activity)
- ★ Ruth Northcott Lecture and Reception with Dr. Eric Steinbring
- ★ Public Outreach Event

SATURDAY, JULY 1 (continued)

- ★ Starry Night: Documentary video with Charles Ennis
- ★ Panel Discussion
- ★ CANADA DAY Celebrations on Parliament Hill
- ★ Quiet Canada Day on Campus with Carmen Rush

SUNDAY, JULY 2

- ★ Annual General Meeting/ Spouses' Tour (concurrent)
- ★ Speakers Corner
- ★ Talk TBD: Carmen Rush
- ★ Talk TBD: Rick Wagner
- ★ Astro-Desserts, Recipes for Astronomy-Themed Goodies: Kelly Jordan
- ★ August 21, 2017, Solar Eclipse: Alan Scott
- ★ History of Predicting Solar Eclipses: Ron Macnaughton
- ★ Group Photo and RASC Awards Banquet with Speaker Dr. Nadine Manset

MONDAY, JULY 3

- ★ 11:00 a.m.: Residence checkout
- ★ Holleford Crater Tour with Chuck O'Dale

—Brian McCullough and Tim Cole, 2017 GA Organizing Committee

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