

Saskatoon

Skies

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

Volume 29, Number 5

May 1998



May is the beginning of Noctilucent Cloud season. NLCs are visible from mid May through mid August. The photograph above was taken by the editor on June 20th, 1994 (15 sec on ASA 400 color print film with a 35 mm lens at f/3.5). NLCs are observed naked eye, so anyone can make valuable observations. NLCs are caused by meteoric dust being swept up by the earth. This dust is then illuminated by the sun all night, since the clouds are approximately 80 kilometers up! There will be a second round of NLC watching in November when the earth sweeps up dust from the Leonid meteor shower. NLCs have never been seen that late before, but there were very convincing sightings last November. Anyone who would like to observe these, contact Rick Huziak.

RASC Calendar Happenings

Date (1998)	Event	Contact	Telephone
May 1	RASC Garage Sale at Corman Park School	Darrell Chatfield	374-9278
May 11	General Meeting - Early due to Victoria Day!!	Erich Keser	373-4262
May 15	Jr Astronomers Meeting - Sandy Ferguson's - 7:30 pm	Sandy Ferguson	931-3184
May 22	Youth Group Meeting - Sandy Ferguson's - 8:00 pm	Sandy Ferguson	931-3184
May 22 or 23	Observing Session at Sleaford Observatory - 8:30 pm	Darrell Chatfield	374-9278
May 30	Jr Astronomers & Youth Group BBQ - Sleaford 6 pm	Sandy Ferguson	931-3184
Jun. 18 - 22	1998 General Assembly - Victoria	Rick Huziak	665-3392
Jul. 23 - 26	Sask. Summer Star Party at Cypress Hills	Erich Keser	374-4262
Aug. 14	"A Night Under the Prairie Stars" at Grasslands National Park - a writers workshop on astronomy	Rick Huziak	665-3392

Notice of the General Meeting of the Saskatoon Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

Conference Room, the National Hydrology Research Institute
Innovation Place
Monday, May 11, 1998 8:00 p.m.

The programs will be:

"How CCDs Have Revolutionized Amateur Astronomy" - Doug George, National President, RASC
"The Eclipse from Chichen Itza" - Winston Quan
and much more!

Members and friends are welcome. There is no admission.

Membership Update

Renewed:

Garry Brett, Box 1665, Biggar, SK, S0K 0M0, tel. (306) 948-5622, e-mail <gbrett@sk.sympatico.ca>

Saskatoon Centre

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Newsletter Editor - Richard Huziak
Copy, Collate, Stuff - Sandy Ferguson



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Saskatoon Skies is published monthly by the Saskatoon Centre of the RASC. Distribution is approximately 135 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. 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 UUEncoded or as attached .GIFs. Send e-mail submissions to the editor at huziak@SEDSystems.ca. Submitted materials can be returned upon request. A separate subscription to *Saskatoon Skies* is available for \$12.50 per year. Articles may be reprinted from *Saskatoon Skies* without expressed permission (except where otherwise stated), but source credit is requested. DEADLINE for submissions is the 1st of each month. *Saskatoon Skies* accepts commercial advertising. Please call the editor for rates. Members can advertise non-commercial items free of charge.

JR. ASTRONOMERS' AND YOUTH GROUP BBQ

SATURDAY, MAY 30TH, 1998 - 6:00 PM
SLEAFORD OBSERVATORY

So we had to cancel our April 25th BBQ. Astronomers never give up. Therefore, we're going for our BBQ and observing night again!

It will be dark later, so get your beauty sleep so you can stay up later! Dress warmly - it is still pretty cool after dark! Bring your BBQ fares for yourself and family and a few cookies of squares for the treat tray. We will supply the condiments, munchies and drinks. We also will supply paper plates, napkins, etc. Bring your own baseballs, bats and soccer balls. we have 3 acres to run around in!

CROSS YOUR FINGERS AND TOES FOR GOOD WEATHER!!

Ticket Sales Going Well for Raffle

Tickets for this fund-raiser are going better than expected, with excellent sales at the Astronomy Day display on May 2nd. Please help out with your own personal ticket sales. More ticket booklets or information can be obtained from Raffle Chair David Cornish (306) 242-7125, e-mail <david.cornish@sk.sympatico.ca>, or through the Centre address. The prizes are:

**A 6" f/8 Celestron Starhopper Dob.
A beautiful print of Comet Hale-Bopp.**

**A pair of Bushnell's new Legacy 7X50
Five of Terry Dickinson's great books.**

RASC National President Doug George will be gracing our Centre with a visit next Monday, and it is something of a tradition to take the President out for dinner. Since he liked Italian food when Sandy was on the Ottawa executive with him...and since most of the rest of us do too, you are welcome to join us for:

DINNER WITH DOUG

at the Taverna, on 21st Street, between 2nd and 3rd Ave. at about 5:45 PM. The food is good, even to a really fussy expert who lived in Italy for years (Kathleen), prices are reasonable, it is a place that welcomes children, and the service is reasonably prompt. They will have tables reserved for up to two dozen people in the name of the RASC, from 5:30- 7:45 PM, with me as the contact person. Info - Erich 374-4262.

***** There will be NO Executive Meeting before the May 11th General Meeting *****

McCurdy and Paulson Visit the Saskatoon Centre

by Rick Huziak

The Centre was honored by the visit of Bruce McCurdy (Edmonton President) and Murray Paulson for the last general meeting. Bruce and Murray arrived the afternoon of the meeting and, due to work commitments, had to leave the very next day. In the mean time, we were treated to two excellent presentations at the General Meeting, and we took our time to hopefully impress them too! Bruce spoke on his 11 years of experience in touring at Edmonton's 'Deck Observatory' at the Space and Science Centre, filling us in on all of the trials and tribulations one comes across when dealing with the general public. Murray showed us impressive slides of the 1998 Caribbean total solar eclipse and other great astrophotos, plus a few meteorites from his extensive collection.

The first official Centre duty for Bruce and Murray was to take them for supper at the Great Buffet of China; an event that was well attended by about 16 Centre members and their families. Erich and I entertained these two for the other parts of their visit. Erich and I took them to the U of S Observatory, where Murray oogled over the meteorite display, which, due to current renovations, is temporarily not under glass! Both also enjoyed the 6" (originally 7") Cooke and Sons vintage refractor.

Later, I took them to SED's Radarsat tracking dish for an excellently presented tour, which involved watch an actual satellite pass, and a trip right to the top of the building to the level of the 11 meter dish.

The Centre speaker exchange program and the summer star parties are letting us get a chance to develop good friends between Centres. I will return the favor with Edmonton by speaking about variable stars at their June 8th meeting.

!!GARAGE SALE!!

DATE:

SAT., MAY 9th

PLACE:

CORMAN PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE, BEHIND CORMAN
PARK SCHOOL (SALE WILL BE IN ARENA IF WEATHER
POOR)

TIME:

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

PLEASE SAVE ALL YOUR DISCARDED TREASURERS FOR OUR TABLES. WE
WILL ALSO NEED A FEW VOLUNTEERS TO PRICE THINGS AND MIND TABLES.
CALL DARRELL CHATFIELD (374-9278) OR SANDY (931-3184) TO ARRANGE FOR
DELIVERY OR PICK UP OF ITEMS. LET'S MAKE THIS A REAL SUCCESS!!

ASTRONOMY DAY 1998

by Sandy Ferguson

May 2nd turned out to be a perfect day for our yearly Astronomy Day celebrations - so perfect that most of the people we expected to have visit our display area at the Mall at Circle & 8th decided to stay outdoors, rather than be indoors shopping and admiring our display!

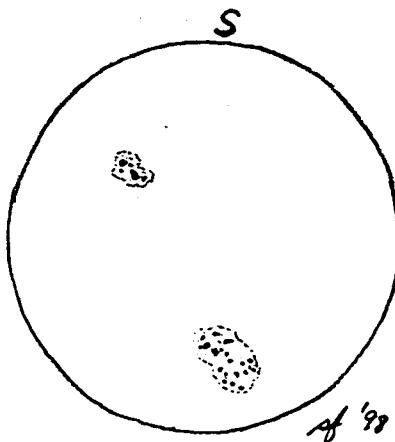
We set up our area outside *Smitty's*. We had the usual books, periodicals and other astronomical items for display and a number of telescopes for the public to examine. Bob Christie hung a photo of M31 (Andromeda Galaxy) down the mall on a store window, and everyone got to observe the galaxy through his Celestron 5. We sold a good bunch of raffle tickets and also ran a kids' "Find the Planets" contest, throughout the day (see the winners on page 13)..

Outside on the sidewalk we got a lot of interest in Rick Huziak's solar scope. The sun had a nice display of spots on its surface, for the first Astronomy Day in years - see the sketch I made below. The seeing was very good and I counted about 26 spots in a grouping in the lower latitudes (telescope view), with the penumbral areas clearly seen around the grouping. In the upper latitudes there was a group of large dark spots, again with the penumbral area clearly evident. As the afternoon past, we watched them gradually move across the face of the sun.

Following our stint at the Mall all day, about 15 hungry astronomers retired to the Canard Noir on Broadway Ave. for another Gastronomy Dinner and to gather strength for the starnight. Probably the highlight of the meal was the discovery of their Blueberry Grand Marnier Cheesecake Parfait dessert, which most of us ordered and which blew us all away in its artery-clogging magnificence!

In the evening, telescopes were set up at Beaver Creek for a public starnight. About 20 people turned up to look through the 'scopes and observe the moon and a large aurora. We packed up around 11:00 p.m., as the aurora made further observing difficult.

Thanks to all the hard-working gang that made the day a success: Al, Sharon and Graham Hartridge, Ellen and Les Dickson, Bob and Rose Marie Christie, Darrell Chatfield, David and Matthew Cornish, Scott Alexander, Jim and Barb Young, Rick and Amy Huziak, Brent Gratias, Kim Mysyk, Garry Brett, Barbara Ellis, Erich Keser and our newest Junior Astronomer, Tyler Cottenham, who came in from Yorkton for the festivities!



Drawing by Sandy Ferguson, May 2, 1998 at 13:30 hrs.
Sunspots larger in relation to sun
than actually observed!

The Deep Sky Observer - Two Ursa Galaxies and a Lyrid Variable

by Scott Alexander

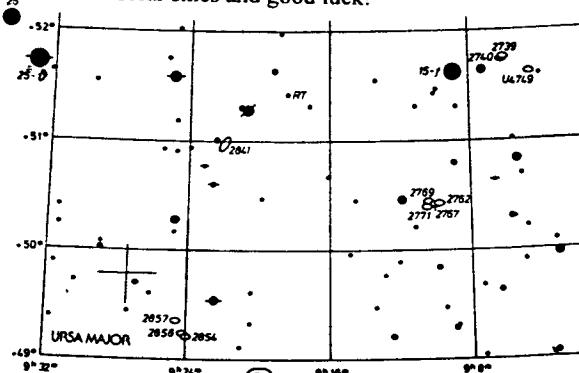
This month, I thought that I would take us straight into Bear Country - the GREAT BEAR, Ursa Major. I thought I would look at a Messier Object as well as some NGC objects that are in your *Observer's Handbook*. All of these objects are well worth looking at to sharpen your observing skills.

The first object to look at is M51, one of the finest galaxies in Ursa Major. It is located just below the handle of the Great Bear at RA 13h29.9m, Dec. +47d12m, next to the bright star Eta Ursa Majoris. It can be found on chart 76 of the *Uranometria 2000* sky atlas, or any other good atlas such as the *Peterson Field Guide to the Stars and Planets*, or any other good planetarium software. It is a wonderful face-on galaxy full of detail, plus it has a companion right next to it that it is drawing dust and gas from. Check how much detail you can see in M51 and its companion (NGC 5195) or in the bridge between them.

The next galaxy we can look for is another Ursa galaxy in the NGC list in your *Observer's Handbook* (page 231). NGC 2841 is on chart 44 of *Uranometria 2000*, in the lower left corner. It is a classic elongated spiral; very bright. It is a visually large galaxy (if galaxies millions of light years away can be considered large!) at the eyepiece. This galaxy has arms that show a lot of knots of dust and gas. Use moderate to high power to get a glimpse of these.

The last object to look for is variable star T Lyrae. It is a VERY red star with an irregular cycle of variability between magnitudes 7.8 and 9.6, though it's typically around 8.5. It is about 2 degrees southwest of Vega. For more information on this star and other very red stars, look on page 90 of the May 1998 issue of *Sky and Telescope*. T Lyrae is located at RA 18h32m30s Dec. 39d59.9m. This star is easily visible small telescopes.

Have fun with all of these objects. See you next month! Clear skies and good luck!



NGC 2841 is easy to locate 1.5 degrees E of Theta UMa. The chart is a portion of chart 44 from *Uranometria 2000*, copyright Willmann-Bell, Inc. 1987, 1988.

Observation of the Month

Terry Nelson's Independent Discovery!

by Rick Huziak

If you've every wanted to discover anything, you may want to rub Terry Nelson's tummy, or maybe hang his dried foot around your neck. As we were observing at the Sleaford Observatory one April evening, Terry decided he would try to find M40, that wimpy double star in Ursa Major. Since the field was near the zenith, Terry got a bit confused over directions, and soon stumbled on a fuzzy galaxy with a bright star in it. Terry excitedly called me over to check out the field, although it was clearly not M40. I was surprised where Terry's telescope was pointing, a full 20 degrees away from M40, but I took a look anyway to see if I could identify this curious fuzzball. I was astonished at what I saw! Terry has stumbled completely accidentally in NGC 3877 and supernova 1998S! It was an amazing feat to stumble on the only supernova (at the time) visible in smaller telescopes! There are hundreds of other faint fuzzies in the area he could have come upon! If we'd been observing a few weeks earlier, he may have been the discoverer!

From the President

by Erich Keser

Help Wanted! Pay Astronomical! Learn valuable skills! Please call us before we call you! What a turnout! What a meeting! On Monday, May 20th, half of our membership came out to hear Edmontonians Bruce McCurdy and Murray Paulson, and our own Don MacKinnon at our General Meeting. We were also treated to Murray's incredible meteorite collection, which includes 3 pieces of Mars and one of the asteroid Vesta, and a beautiful Pallasite.

There was also lovely display of the prizes - MPS's Celestron 6" f/8 Starhopper, Glenn Scrimshaw's beautiful comet print, Bushnell's Legacy binoculars and five of Terence Dickinson's books, as our great new astronomy draw was also launched. Please contact David Cornish immediately to order or buy tickets. They're going fast! Winston Quan had already sold eight when Sandy and I ran into him, the afternoon of the next day and Yannis Pahatouraglou sold three sets of three at the Physics machine shop as I looked on....and Kirt Headley already needed another book (he'd sold his three!) by Thursday of that week. Do call quickly to make sure that you and your associates get a chance at the best raffle ever: only the 2250 well-priced tickets for \$1537 worth of items...all of them highly desirable.

Al Hartridge also signed up volunteers for his pet project: Bingos. Although most of us had decided that we did not want to do MONTHLY bingos, Al has organized the possibility of limiting our involvement to 5 or 6 a year. This may be doable. If enough of us are willing to brave the smoky atmosphere (this is NOT for those with a smoke allergy or potential health problems), we could raise thousands of much needed dollars for our thriving Junior Astronomers program, for our Library and for other worthwhile projects, as well as our new Sleaford site. Please call Al Hartridge at 373-0034 for further information.

The Saskatchewan Summer Star Party Committee finally found a chance to meet on Tuesday, April 28th, to find out that over fifty people -far more than last year - are already registered, and also that at least four of our newer members are eager to help coordinate the event. "Stargazer" Steve Dodson has agreed to donate one of his well-designed telescope kits for young astronomers there to assemble. We now have a whole weekend of exciting activities. Please do come if you can, and register as soon as possible. It'll be a blast. Call Rick at 665-3392 if you can help for a few hours. Many hands make light work!

The University Physics department and Bill Hydomako are refurbishing a nice old 6" equatorially mounted Newtonian I kept tripping over in our library, so there will soon be yet another telescope (in addition to our 12.5" club Dobsonian, Eetook and our C-8, at Sleaford. Also, during the coming weeks, Rick and Bill will be inspecting the Rystrom dome, preparatory to improving and moving it out to our new site. Please stay tuned for announcements by the Site Committee...YOU may be able to help.

At our May 11th meeting (and join us at Taverna for dinner before it!) National President Doug George will present stunning images and practical advice related to a subject on which he is a great expert: how the CCD has revolutionized amateur and professional astronomy. I will also be bringing you up to date on my weekend trip to the Winnipeg Centre. See you there.

Minutes of the April General Meeting

National Hydrology Research Institute
8:00 p.m. April 20, 1998

1. Meeting called to order at 8:05 pm.
2. Ed Kennedy: talked about the importance of preservation of observations made by members ~~including~~ slides, photos, journals, Centre executive and general meeting minutes, awards and recognitions ~~and~~ library items.
3. Program:
 - 11 years of Public Education on the Edmonton Deck - Bruce McCurdy, President of the ~~Edmonton~~ Centre.
 - The Great Caribbean Solar Eclipse - Murray Paulson, Past President of the Edmonton Centre.
 - How *Not* to Photograph an Eclipse - Don McKinnon.
 - A Second Supernova for Small Telescopes - Rick Huziak
4. Fundraising Report -
 - Dave Cornish talked about the raffle and distributed books of tickets for members to sell. An ~~entire~~ display of the raffle prizes was set up for members to look at.
 - Al Hartridge talked about bingos and gathered names of volunteers to work the bingos. If we ~~are able to~~ obtain a licence bingos will start in the fall. We hope to be able to do six bingos a year. This ~~would be~~ a 6:00 pm. to 12:00 am. shift once every second month. There will be further canvassing ~~for more~~ volunteers.
 - Motion: A motion was made by Erich Keser and seconded by Rick Huziak to allocate \$250.00 to the fundraising coffers. Carried.
5. Membership: Welcome to new members Gary Brett and Tyler Cottenie.
6. National Business: More talk about the Victoria GA, who is going, the display and presentation.
7. SSSP98: Nearly fifty registrations so far.
8. New Business:
 - Library: we need more keys for members to make access easier for members.
 - Bottle Drive: this is going relatively well, see Darrell or Al.
 - Garage Sale at South Corman Park School Saturday May 9th 9:00 am. to 2:00 pm. Let's have ~~a good~~ turn out.
9. Important Announcements:
 - The Big Astro Raffle is starting
 - Colonsay Public Star Party next Friday.
 - Junior and Youth BBQ and Star Night at Sleaford next Saturday.
 - SSSP Registrations - See Les and Ellen Dickson.
 - Astronomy Day - Saturday May 2 at Circle Park Mall.
 - Garage Sale - Saturday May 9 at South Corman Park School.
10. Meeting at 11:00 pm.

The 1998 General Assembly in Victoria

by Bill Almond, Victoria Centre President and GA Planning Chairman

Greetings to all fellow RASCals:

Are you ready for this year's RASC Annual General Meeting? Now's the time to give it some serious thought, after all, who would want to pass up a chance to visit Victoria, the city voted by many of the world's top magazines as the best place to visit in Canada? Surely you wouldn't want to miss out?

Have you yet looked over the registration forms that were mailed out to Centre secretaries a couple of weeks ago? Dig out your copy, make your choices and mail it in ASAP. If you don't have one handy you can find an electronic form on our website at <http://victoria.tc.ca/~rasc/ga98/>.

You'll notice that we've been able to hold down fees to a very reasonable level, due mostly to our choice of venue, which is the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific. Pearson College is located on the southmost tip of Vancouver Island, some 29 km southwest of Victoria. Its rural setting offers a unique opportunity to "get away from it all" in beautiful wooded surroundings. Everything needed for a GA is to be found on campus. There's no traipsing around from complex to complex, instead, this compact college has everything within arm's reach and is situated on the water's edge in the sheltered Pedder Bay Inlet.

The Planning Committee has worked hard and long to make this GA one to remember. We've garnered an impressive list of speakers. The Helen Sawyer Hogg lecture is being given by the DAO's own Dr. David Crampton, the leader of the team that designed the CFHT's spectacular adaptive optics bonnette and other related instruments. Another invited speaker, one we're very proud to have address us, is Dr. Geoffrey Marcy, from Berkeley, who has pioneered the use of precision radial velocities to discover extra solar planets! An article featuring Geoff appears in the March issue of Sky & Tel. Other speakers include our own Jack Newton, who will talk about the secrets of good astrophotography. David Balam (UVic) will talk about deep space tracking technology of near earth objects. On Sunday, at the Banquet and Awards, the RASC's outgoing president, Doug George, will address us on Adventures in Astronomy. Saturday is Papers day, considered by many to be the most interesting day of all, while Friday and Sunday will feature the national council meetings and the general meeting.

How about fun? That's not been forgotten. We've lined up some interesting tours, including Jack Newton's home and observatory on a mountain top and the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, which is growing by leaps and bounds. On any night you can use the splendid Pearson observatory, with its 25-inch Newtonian, a 20-inch, CCDs and computers. What more could you want! Friday night is when you enjoy the Wine & Cheese Party, the Murphy Slide Show, the Song Contest, and the Outrageous Alice, of Winter Star Party fame! On Saturday there's a Salmon or Steak Feast, the group photo and pyramid. On Sunday, we wrap it all up with a Banquet and the Awards ceremony. Monday? Sorry, you have to go home.

So, now you should reserve those important dates: Thursday, June 18 to Monday, June 22 to enjoy all that we've laid out for you. However, there are a few things to consider. Firstly, Pearson is located in a rural area and if you do not have a vehicle there is no nearby accommodation for you to live in off campus. We strongly suggest that you take advantage of the fine lodging provided on campus. Secondly, we have arranged with a nearby serviced RV trailer park to accommodate anyone arriving with an RV. Thirdly, we are setting up a car shuttle service to take delegates to the nearest bus stop and shopping. Oh, yes, don't forget your camera!

The Victoria Centre is looking forward to having you come over to share our beautiful island with us, and we're hoping you will enjoy the '98 GA and take home some fond memories.

See you soon!

Watching Iridium Flares

by Rick Huziak

On March 9th, I observed a wonderful flare from the Iridium 44 satellite as predicted by the excellent Satellite Visibility Home Page at:

<http://www.satellite.eu.org/sat/vsohp/iridium.html>

I encourage everyone to check out this site and observe a few flares for themselves. They are very interesting. The flare occurred right on schedule, at 19:46:40 CST, just 8 degrees SE of Polaris. Although the sky was only still loosing the last glimmers of twilight, this enormous -7 magnitude flare was spectacular! It appeared almost out of nowhere, and within about 2 seconds had gone from invisibility to -7 (like an aircraft landing light). In a few seconds it had faded to -1 mag., then about 3 or 4 seconds later, had faded back to invisibility.

All in all, it looked very much like a brilliant, head-on fireball; as bright as most 'typical' fireballs, and in the time it was visible it moved no more than a degree or so. This observation goes somewhat to explain a rash of head-on fireballs that have been reported to me and my fellow MIAC fireball investigators recently. With more than 50 Iridiums up there, will we begin an era of chasing spurious fireball reports?

Luckily, or somewhat unluckily, depending on how you look at it, each flash can be precisely predicted, and will only occur in an approximately 5 km radius of the observer due to the specific angles of reflection involved with the satellite solar panels. This also means, that when a short fireball is reported, especially if it appears to be a head-on fireball, we may have to accurately position the observer and immediately check to see if an Iridium flash was the culprit, unless an independent longer-path side view of the 'fireball' confirms that it was natural! I hope not!

Is Film Exposure Once Again a Concern in Airports?

by Joseph O'Neil <joneil@multiboard.com> reprinted from the RASCLIST

For all you astrophotographers who travel to dark skies by air, better read this. I heard about it a week ago, but only now have a web site & press release. From <http://www.pima.com>, Photo industry warns fliers: "Don't check your film with your luggage".

NEW YORK, March 13 The Photographic and Imaging Manufacturers Association has a warning for travelers: if you check your bags before you board an airplane, keep your undeveloped film with you.

The warning was sparked by the recent introduction of new baggage-scanning technology expected to enter service at airports worldwide. The new equipment now in limited use but expanding uses a combination of x-rays and computed tomography (CAT scan) to detect suspicious packages.

If the equipment 'sees' anything that it's been programmed to examine closely, it turns on a high-powered scan, says Tom Dufficy, PIMA executive vice president. This more-powerful inspection can cause unwanted streaks and fogging which could ruin your pictures.

Dufficy points out that the problem applies to unprocessed film whether or not it's been through a camera. He warns that the damage will not be visible until the pictures come back from a photosinisher.

We applaud the FAA for making the skies safer for air travelers, Dufficy said. We just want to make sure that travelers understand this new guideline: Don't check undeveloped film with your luggage.

Dufficy offers these simple tips:

- Don't put unprocessed film in checked baggage.
- Your film and cameras should be placed in your carry-on luggage.

- The vast majority of x-ray equipment used for hand-carried baggage examination uses a level of x-rays that is safe for most film even in multiple scans.
- If you are traveling with a high-speed film (400 and higher) and expect to go through several x-ray examinations, you can request a hand search. FAA regulations in the U.S. provide for a hand search if requested.
- If you can't carry your film, use a cargo handler to ship film.
- Require that they certify your films will not be subject to X-rays.

The Photographic and Imaging Manufacturers Association represents 55 imaging companies including most film and camera makers.

The Sleaford Page by Rick Huziak

The Sleaford Observatory continues to be a popular observing site. Despite it's much greater distance, the visitation rate is about the same as that of the Rystrom Observatory, with visits so far on 43 separate nights involving more than 120 people, since the power came in late October (not including several U of S labs at the site)! This is most likely cause is simply the excellent skies. We have had several reports of easily visible Zodiacal Lights both in the morning and evening, and Al Hartridge has taken several astrophotos from the sight which show no indication of sky for in exposures that often last 75 minutes or more!

A word of warning about getting there, though. Erich and I often take Meridian Road instead of Colonsay Road in order to save about 5 kilometers of traveling. Either you can do a one mile jog-to-the-east at the 2 mile point on Meridian to keep on good roads, or you can just go straight for the last 2 miles on the tertiary road, which Erich and I prefer to do.

A few Sundays ago, I learned a very valuable lesson about this road, and other tertiary roads in Saskatchewan - they are made of mostly MUD with only the occasional gravel particle every 100 meters or so! That weekend, the Colonsay area received a soaking rain, and although it hadn't rained for a full day, the road was pure muck. I got stuck like I've never been stuck before! The 4-inch thick mud bed wrapped around my tires and completely filled my wheel wells. It was too late before I realized what was happening. To get unstuck, I had to use my window scraper to unplug wheel wells every 20 meters of travel, until I managed to struggle the 1/2 kilometer I had driven down this quagmire. I took me 15 or so cleaning stops and almost an hour to get off the mud road! When I told Bob Christie about my endeavor, he suggested they called this a tertiary road because it must have been built in the Tertiary Geological Period! **AVOID THIS ROAD IN ANY QUESTIONABLE WEATHER!**

WSEN, Western Space Education Network (the Canadian Space Resource Centre for the Canadian Space Agency in the Prairie Region) needs volunteers for various activities from clerical to model rocket launching. If there is anyone interested contact me at 374-1395

Sherry Neufeld, Resource Administrative Assistant, WSEN

*The Messier & Finest NGC Club***MESSIER CLUB**

Certified at 110 Objects:

Rick Huziak, Gord Sarty, Scott Alexander

Sandy Ferguson (applying)	110
Dale Jeffrey (applying)	110
Darrell Chatfield (applying)	110
Bob Christie	94
Wade Selvig	57
Erich Keser	51
Stan Noble	28
Brian Friesen	15
Les & Ellen Dickson	still more than Terry!
Terry Nelson	11

FINEST NGC CLUB

Richard Huziak (applying)	110
Scott Alexander	beginning

Join the Messier and Finest NGC Club!

Observe all 110 Messier and FNGC objects and
earn your **CERTIFICATE!**

Now that many of us have complete our Messier Certificates, we've added the Finest NGC list to our program. The list can be found in the Observer's Handbook. Each month I'll be posting updates. E-mail in you new numbers! If your name is not on this list and your observing the Messiers or FNGCs, let me know & I'll add you! I will soon be adding the Herschel 400 stats to the observing list for the advanced observers.

******* Dues *******

Membership runs from Oct. 1 to Sep. 30.
Please send payment to the Centre mailbox.

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Observatory Hours*

During May , the U of S Observatory will be open to the public on Saturday evenings from 9:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. During June & July, the hours will be 10:00 p.m. - 11:30 p.m. The observatory is located on campus one block north of the Wiggins Avenue entrance off of College Drive. Visitors may view a variety of objects through the 6" telescope. Admission is free. Group tours of the observatory can be booked for Friday evenings. For further information, phone the recorded Astronomy Information Line at 966-6429. ☎

**ASTRONOMY DAY
"FIND THE PLANETS CONTEST
WINNERS"**

(Prizes are Glow-in-the-Dark Stars)

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The Observers Report for the March 30th Session

by Darrell Chatfield

After feeling much better from my cold, I was determined to try and see my last Messier object. The window of opportunity was narrow. To see M83 at this time, you must stay up late, have no moon present, and, or course, have a clear southern sky. This was possibly the last chance I might have of viewing this elusive object. This may be the last month also for viewing M83.

Everything had to work right!!! I drove out to Sleaford at 10 pm and was greeted by our good friend Rick Huziak. He as observing galaxies - probably his 2000th. I got set up with my Meade 10 inch scope, and was soon ready. The star charts told me where to look in Hydra for my object. While I was checking the chart, the sky decided to put on a great display of aurora behind my back. Rick shouted something that rhymed with "mitt" and I knew something was wrong. The aurora started in a gentle arc directly north and then started to move southward. After dying down somewhat, we both resumed our searches. The time was now around 12:30 am. I knew that I was looking in the right area for M83, but now the shelter belt trees were on the way. What next? Well, I will tell you 'what next' - MORE AURORA! This turned out to be the best and the brightest display I had ever seen in my life. To the northwest was this huge display shaped like a giant letter C lying on it's side. It was beautiful. It lasted for about 20 minutes, after which it dissipated. Then overhead there were more northern lights, flaming back and forth. All of this illuminated the ground around us for the duration.

It was time for serious observing when everything had finally settled down. By now it was around 1 am. The section of Hydra I needed to see had moved to a bare spot above the trees. I slowly searched the area and rechecked the charts. There were 3 ninth magnitude stars as guideposts, so I swept the area for the next half hour. And then I saw it, or so I thought! I put the 'object' near the edge of the field and then back to the center. 'Yes, yes, that's it', I exclaimed. After I danced and howled a bit, I called Rick over to verify my find. He agreed it was M83. I drew my picture and made my notes at 1:25 am. Being so low in the sky did not afford a great view. Despite this, I could see a bright core, with some arm structure. After all, this is a face-on spiral of magnitude 10.1. This galaxy has been home to a few notable supernovae in the past few decades.

Speaking of supernovae, Rick showed me the new one, SN 1998S in NGC 3877 in Ursa Major. The rest of the evening was spent looking at the planetary NGC 4361 in Corvus, and at various other objects. My evening ended at 3 am. Rick and I left a half hour later, both feeling a lot had been accomplished, even with the auroral display lasting roughly from 10:30 pm until 2:00 am.

I don't want to forget that Erich Keser had been out from 12 am to 5 am observing, trying to see more Messiers for his certificate. I had to mention that here, because I don't know how to insert things in previous paragraphs with my new fancy computer yet! I know there is a 'cut and paste' tab in this blessed machine, but my version would be to get out the scissors and glue and..... Well, hope to see you all soon..

Minutes of the April Executive Meeting

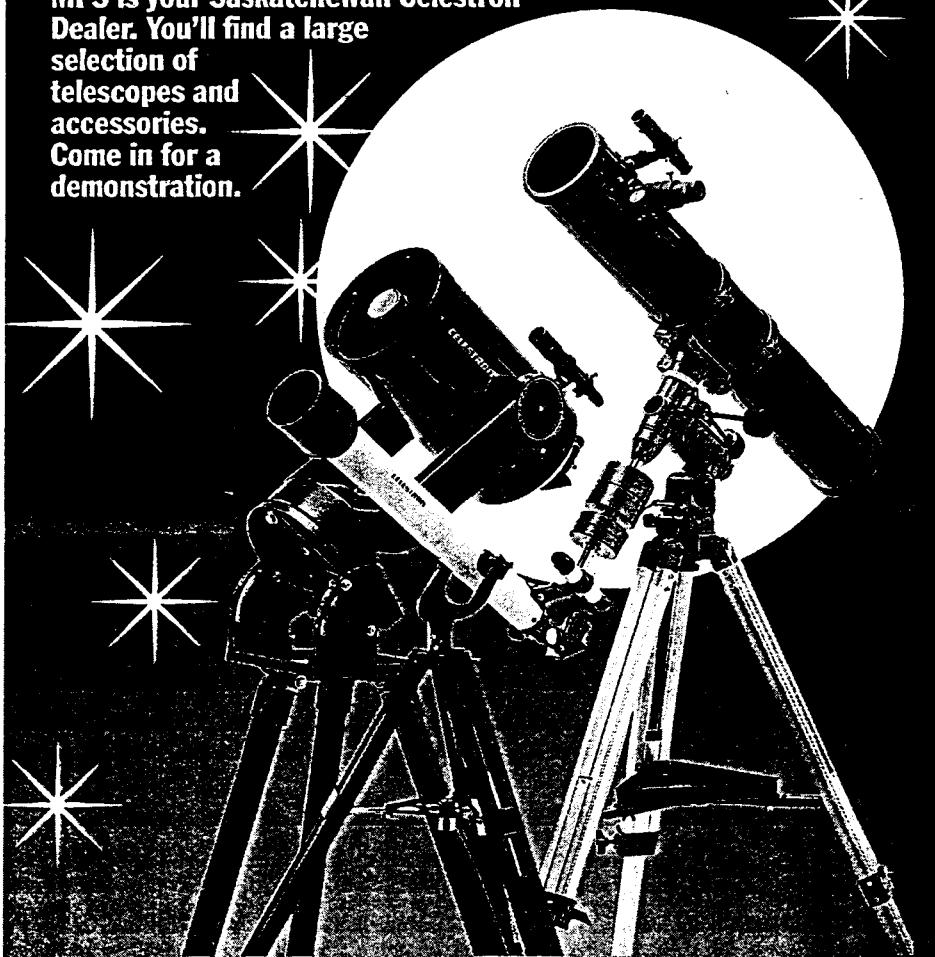
Monday, April 13, 1998
at Sandy Ferguson's, 238 Main Street E., Saskatoon

Present: Bob Christie, Sandy Ferguson, Brian Friesen, Rick Huziak, Erich Keser, Merlyn Melby, Kim Mysyk, David Cornish, Scott Alexander

1. Meeting called to order 7:35 p.m.
2. **Executive minutes** for March 16th adopted as published. Moved and carried.
3. **Membership** - Moved, voted and carried that we give Garry Brett a Centre membership, & a free registration for him and his family for SSSP98 in recognition of the work he has done for the raffle.
4. **Fund Raising Committee** -
 - Moved, voted and carried that the composition of the committee be Terry Nelson (chair), David Cornish, Darrell Chatfield and Sandy Ferguson.
 - Moved voted and carried that a budget of \$250 be allocated to the committee (on loan) to pay for raffle ticket printing and administration.
 - The garage sale at Corman Park is proceeding well. Tax receipts may be given for items donated.
5. **Meeting Times** -
 - Proposed by Erich Keser that the executive meetings be held on a separate day from the general meetings.
 - Moved by Brian Friesen and seconded by Rick Huziak that the meetings be changed so that the executive meeting begins at 7 pm and ends at 7:45 pm, and that the general meeting follows the same evening at 8 pm, with presentations first and business last. Voted and carried. It was generally agreed to try this strategy until the fall meetings and to review this issue then if need be.
6. **Meeting Presentations** -
 - Motion by E. Keser that a STAP grant be applied for to pay expenses for Paulson and McCurdy - voted and carried. Erich and Rick will billet Murray and Bruce.
 - Motion by E. Keser that the expenses of D. George be paid for while he is in town for the May 11th meeting - voted and carried. Future speakers may include Michael Bietenholz and Roland Deschesnes.
7. **Sleaford Starnight** (April 24th) - preparations are going well. The principal has requested 3 presentations to classes.
8. **Saskatchewan Summer Starparty** - a meeting is necessary - set at April 28th at Sandy's place.
9. **Observing Sessions** - plans are being thought of for a 'major' OG group session. A backup coordinator was discussed, but was found to be unnecessary.
10. **National Business** - Publications Committee - no progress has been made. GA - Gord Sarty cannot attend. Erich Keser will be going and will approach G. Sarty to be appointed as alternate.
11. **Other Business:**
 - Photocopier needs servicing - B. Friesen will see if WBM will do. Library - E. Keser will see if the University will give us extra keys to make access easier.
 - **Astronomy Day** - BCCA has advertised the public starnight in their newsletter.
 - **Junior Astronomers** - Motion by S. Ferguson to allot \$30 for kids snacks for the Junior Astronomers outing of April 25th. - voted and carried.
12. Motion for adjournment 10:01 pm. Carried

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