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Saskatoon Skies

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



PUBLIC STAR NIGHT AT THE DINSMORE LIBRARY

As a warmup for Astronomy Day, Tenho Tuomi held a Public Star Night at the Wheatland Regional Library in Dinsmore on the evening of April 16. About 20 people came to look at the slide show, and to look at the Moon and Saturn through the 8 inch Newtonian set up in front of the library. It was partly cloudy but always enough gaps between clouds that everybody could see. Thanks to Rick Huziak for the loan of the slides and projector, and to Brian Burke from Dinsmore who helped to organize everything.

Photo by Tenho Tuomi



Saskatoon Centre

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

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MAKE A DATE – FOR ASTRONOMY!

MEMBERSHIP? IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO JOIN!

Regular: \$69.00 /year Youth: \$36.75 /year Lifetime: \$2100

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, electronic format)
- SkyNews Magazine (bimonthly)
- use of the Centre library

- rent the Centre's Telescopes
<http://homepage.usask.ca/ges125/rasc/telescopes.html>
- 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 email her at njensen@scs.sk.ca.

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

SASKATOON CENTRE'S MAIN OFFICERS:

President – Garry Stone, 857-4707

Secretary – Al Hartridge, 373-0034

Vice-President – Barb Wright, 249-1990

Treasurer – Norma Jensen, 244-7360

BOTTLE DRIVE & CANADIAN TIRE \$

by Darrell Chatfield



If you cannot make it to a meeting but would like to contribute, your Canadian Tire money please call me at 374-9278.

Newsletter Editors – Tenho Tuomi, Ken Maher **Copy & Collate**– Les & Ellen Dickson **Labels & Temps** – Mike Clancy **Web Posting** – Gord Sarty

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 <ttuomi@yourlink.ca>. Please send articles in “generic” formats with simple formatting.** 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.

RASC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 9	Astronomy Day , Lakeview Civic Centre	Jeff Swick	373-3902
May 10	Astronomy Day , Farmer's Market & Beaver Creek	Jeff Swick	373-3902
May 12	RASC Executive Meeting - 6:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
May 12	RASC General Meeting - 7:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
May 31	Observers Group – 9:30 pm., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
June 6	Observers Group – 9:30 pm., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Jun 16	RASC Executive Meeting - 6:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Jun 16	RASC General Meeting - 7:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Jun 27 - Jul 1	RASC General Assembly (Toronto)	http://www.rasc.ca/ga2008/index.shtml	
July 4	Observers Group – 9:30 pm., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
July 4-6	RASC Star-B-Q, Eccles Ranch Observatory , Caroline, AB	http://calgary.rasc.ca/starbq2008.htm	
Aug 2-10	Mt. Kobau Star Party , Osoyoos, BC	http://www.mksp.ca/index.html	
Aug 28-31	Saskatchewan Summer Star Party , Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park	Barb Wright	249-1990
Sep 2-7	Northern Prairie Starfest , Black Nugget Lake, Toffield, AB	http://www.edmontonrasc.com/nps.html	
Sep 15	RASC Executive Meeting - 6:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Sep 15	RASC General Meeting - 7:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Sep 25-28	Alberta Star Party , Starland Recreation Area Campground, Drumheller, AB	http://www.calgary.rasc.ca/asp2008.htm	

Minutes of the Executive Meeting, April 21, 2008 by Jim Young

1. Meeting called to order at 6:35 PM.
2. Moved by Les Dickson, seconded by Tenho Tuomi to adopt the minutes of March 17 as published. Carried
3. Les Dickson reported on the National Council meeting of March 30, 2008. The executive has sent a letter to the government to get a clarification on the changes to the charitable organization act, in regards to the issues of tax receipts. Scott Young resigned as president over the way the council and he were at odds over the issue. David Lane has stepped in as president until the National Council meeting this July.
4. Jeff Swick reported that Astronomy Day is on May 10. There will be a small Public Star Night on the 9th held at the Lakewood Center starting at 8:30 PM. On the 10th we will set up at the Farmers Market at 7:00 AM for the day, and Gastronomy will follow at Mano's on 8th St.
5. Moved by Jim Young, seconded by Ron Waldron that the centre donate to a maximum of 250 dollars to a group going to the Enviroform being held in Swift Current and to Richard Huziak going to a meeting at Cypress Hills on the Dark Sky Preserve. Carried
6. Adjourned at 7:14 PM.

Minutes of the General Meeting, April 21, 2008 by Jim Young

- Presentation of the Movie Seeing in the Dark by Timothy Ferris.
1. Meeting Called to order 7:31 PM.
 2. Moved by Rick Huziak, seconded by Ron Waldron to adopt the minutes of the March 17th as published. Carried.
 3. Jeff Swick repeated his report on Astronomy day.
 4. Rick Huziak gave an outline of the presentations of the upcoming meetings being attended on the weekend.
 5. Les Dickson also repeated his report that was given at the executive meeting.
 6. Anyone interested in teaching a general interest Astronomy course to 9 to 14 year olds Sept. 16 to Nov. 25. 7:30 PM. at \$15:00/hour, Silverspring Community Association. Contact Tammy Beauregard at 955-2643 or Stan Shadick.
 7. Ken Maher is looking for anyone interested in helping with a Star Night to be held at the Prince Albert Relay for Life on May 30.
 8. Adjourned 9:27

MONDAY, MAY 12, 7:30 PM ROOM 175, U OF S

There will be an Executive Meeting at 6:30 pm.

Elevator 2010 Competition,
by Patrick Allen of the U of S
Space Design Team

"The Elevator: 2010 Competition is part of NASA's Centennial Challenges program, which is intended to stimulate innovation and competition in solar system exploration and ongoing NASA mission areas."



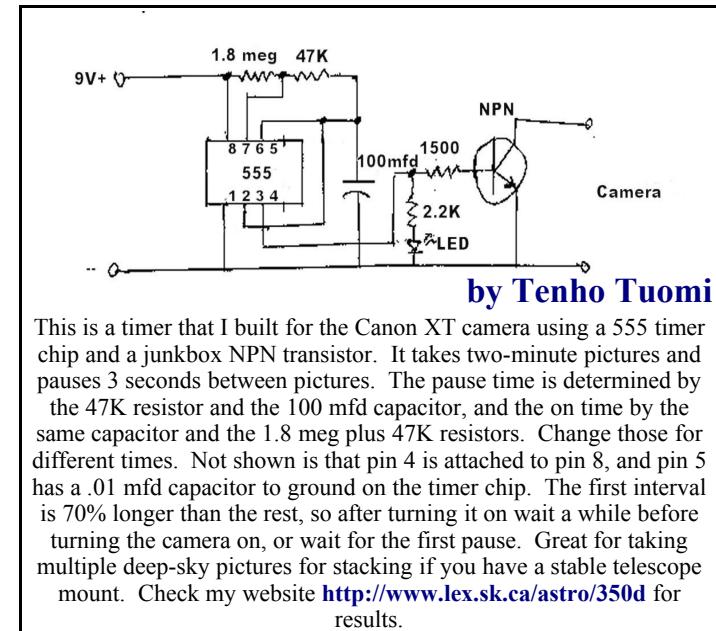
BOOKS FOR SALE

All items will be available at our next meeting or call 249-1119,
or email breeves@sasktel.net

Prices in bold indicate a new, reduced price!

Title	Author	#Avail	Price
RASC 2007	RASC	3	\$5.00
Skywatcher's 08	S. Shadick	2	\$12.00
Skywatcher's 07	S. Shadick	6	\$5.00
Skywatcher's 06	S. Shadick	1	\$2.00
Books			
The Backyard Astronomer's Guide	Dickinson & Dyer	2	\$40.00
The Beginner's Observer's Guide	L. Enright	3	\$19.00
Observer's Handbook 2006	RASC	5	\$5.00
Observer's Handbook 2005	RASC	1	\$2.00
Practical Astronomy	S. Dunlop	3	\$14.00
Summer Stargazing	T. Dickinson	5	\$18.00
Celestial Sampler	S. French	2	\$26.00
Firefly Astronomy Dictionary	Firefly	3	\$14.00
Firefly Planisphere	Firefly	1	\$19.00
Night Sky Atlas	R. Scagell	3	\$24.00
Stargazing with a Telescope	R. Scagell	2	\$14.00
Beautiful Universe	Sky & Telescope	1	\$12.00
There Once was a Sky Full of Stars	B. Crelin & A. Ziner	2	\$20.00
<Sale over>			
Space 50 Years and Counting	Sky & Telescope	2	\$13.00
The Moon Observer's Guide	P. Grego	4	\$14.00
Isabelle Williamson Lunar Observing Program	RASC	7	\$10.00
The Sun Observer's Guide	T. Spence	3	\$14.00
Moon Map (laminated)	Sky & Telescope	7	\$6.50
Field Map of the Moon	Sky & Telescope	8	\$12.50

Title	Author	#Avail	Price
Books			
Lunar 100 Card	Sky & Telescope	1	\$10.00
Mars Observer's Guide	N. Bone	2	\$14.00
Deep Sky Observer's Guide	N. Bone	1	\$14.00
Stars	Zim, Baker & Chartrand	1	\$10.00
Exploring the Night Sky	T. Dickinson	11	\$9.50
Exploring the Sky by Day	T. Dickinson	10	\$9.50
Patterns in the Sky	K. Hewitt-White	4	\$16.00
Pocket Sky Atlas	R. Sinnott	2	\$24.50
Binocular Highlights	G. Seronik	2	\$20.00
Night Sky Star Wheel	Sky Publishing	1	\$15.00
S&T Star Wheel	Sky & Telescope	1	\$19.00
Messier Card (not laminated)	Sky & Telescope	9	\$5.00
Deep-Sky Wonders	W. Houston	2	\$24.50
The Messier Objects	S.J. O'Meara	1	\$39.00
Scientific American Book of the Cosmos	D.H. Levy	1	\$48.00
Skyways – Astronomy Handbook for Teachers	M.L. Whitehorne	1	\$16.00
Saskatoon's Stone	Mysyk & Kulyk	10	\$3.00
On the Moon	P. Moore	2	\$27.00
On Mars	P. Moore	1	\$25.00
Seeing in the Dark <New Book!>	T. Ferris	2	\$17.00
Miscellaneous			
RASC Centennial Mug		2	\$5.00
RASC Stickers, blue or white		lots	\$1.00
SSSP 2001 Pin (Summer Triangle)		13	\$2.00
SSSP 2002 Pin (Comet)		24	\$2.00
SSSP 2006 Pin (10)		46	\$4.00
SSSP 2007 Pin (DSP)		35	\$5.00



Editor's Corner

by Tenho Tuomi

Once again I would like to thank the team that puts out the Saskatoon Skies newsletter monthly. Only some of us have official titles in the team, like Ken Maher and myself as co-editors. However the newsletter

would not get published without help from others like Les and Ellen Dickson who look after the printing and mailing, Mike Clancy who looks after the mailing list and labels, Gordon Sarty who posts the online newsletter on our web site, my wife Velma who does the proofreading, and of course all of you who supply the articles and pictures for the newsletters.

I am happy to announce that Christine Kulyk who has experience as an editor has agreed to help us out as well. To get her acquainted with producing the newsletter, I have asked her to gather and sort the articles for the June newsletter. Send articles to her for next month. Whatever you send to me, I will forward to her as well. She will be



looking for articles and pictures from Astronomy Day in particular. You can reach her at,

clkulyk@sasktel.net
306-374-0811 (fax & voice)
217 East Place Apt. 17, Saskatoon SK S7J 3L9

More pictures from the Dinsmore Library, taken by Brian Burke of Dinsmore.



Messier Marathon at the Tuomi Observatory

by Tenho Tuomi

Messier Marathon for the Saskatoon Centre was announced for Sleaford for Saturday, April 5, but the forecast did not look good for that night so I decided to jump the gun and do my Marathon on Friday night from my own observatory

The Marathon started out slowly. The clouds did not start clearing until 9:30 PM. By that time M74, M77, and M79 had set, and M33 and M93 were still in the clouds. M31 could be seen but not well enough to find M32 and M110.

The sky did clear completely and I picked up 26 Messiers in little over an hour, mostly with the 80mm handheld. Then using the 8-inch scope I combed through the galaxies in Leo, Ursa Major, Virgo and Coma Berenices. After working on Herschel 400 objects, the Messier galaxies seemed so large, and mixed with so many smaller galaxies which I had not noticed before. By 1 AM I had found 64 Messiers and there seemed to be nothing more to find, so I set the timer and went to sleep for a while.

The morning shift started at 2:15 AM with M39 which I had missed earlier, and an attack on the Ophiucus globulars. By 3 AM the clouds started to come back, and the horizon was starting to get very hazy. The low Sagittarius objects looked more like Herschel 400 galaxies. The last object I picked up was M62 at 4:15 AM, after it had risen far enough out of the murk. At the end I was still left with M15 and M30, and 10 objects in Scorpius, Sagittarius, and Aquarius. Circumpolar M31 never did get high enough out of the horizon haziness to go back after M32 and M110.

Most of the time the Limiting Visual Magnitude was about 5, which is about as good as I have seen it all winter. However the horizon was never really clear. The lowest object that I found was M22 at an altitude of 7 degrees.

I ended up with 91 Messiers in the Marathon, beating my previous best score of 58 in 2003, but it would have been more fun to have done it with others.

Stargazing for the Whole Family

by Ron Waldron

In October of 2007, I was asked by Rick Huziak to attend a meeting of the executive of the Queen Elizabeth School Community Association. At that meeting, they described their desire to have as one of their community offerings in the new year, an astronomy course. They went on to say that instead of parents dropping the children off for the course that they would like it to be a family affair. I listened patiently and with some surprise. Astronomy for the whole family - this was a unique concept - planning learning and activities for a multi-age group. I must admit, however, that as they spoke I kept thinking to myself - this has my name on it - this is something that I can do.

As I was representing the RASC at the meeting, it was only fair that I come back to the group and share their request. This, I did at the November meeting. After explaining the uniqueness of their request, I waited a polite three or four minutes while members looked at each other and tossed around can we do this and if so, who? Then as planned, I stepped forward and said that I would like to try. Thus, Astronomy for the whole family was born.

I spent most of December planning the course which was to be nine weeks in duration. I must admit, planning was not a chore, I enjoyed every minute of it. I decided that the lessons would be on Wednesday evenings at Queen Elizabeth School beginning in January of 2008. I further decided that each one hour lesson would be followed by 20 minutes of viewing through my telescope, weather permitting. The actual advertising "blurb" sent out to the community looked like this:

Stargazing for the Whole Family

Have you ever been awestruck looking at the stars from a dark location? Have you ever wished you could identify constellations and gaze at the moon and planets through a telescope? Well now you can.

Join educator and amateur astronomer Ron Waldron as he takes you on an instructional tour of our universe. Included in the course are constellation identification, viewing through a variety of telescopes, a trip into STARLAB, the portable planetarium and stargazing related activities for you and younger members of your family.

This course is sponsored by the Saskatoon Centre, of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada and is intended for interested adults and families. Owning a telescope is not required.

The outline I prepared for each of the nine weeks looked like this:

Week One "Introduction to the Basics of Astronomy and the Wonders of Stargazing"

Week Two

"Viewing Equipment" - Naked Eye, Binoculars and Telescopes

Week Three

"Constellations" - A Trip into the STARLAB Planetarium

Week Four

"The Moon and Lunar Eclipses"

Week Five

"The Sun and Solar Eclipses"

Week Six

"The Planets" - Part One (Inner Planets)

Week Seven

"The Planets" - Part Two (Outer Planets)

Week Eight

"Comets, Meteors, and Aurora"

Week Nine

"A Primer on Light Pollution" - What Is It and What Can We Do About It?

Week Ten

"A Dark Sky Field Trip to Brightwater Environmental Centre"

I even planned the week four lesson to occur the week prior to the total lunar eclipse that occurred in February. Then I invited them all to the "special event" I had arranged for them at the U of S observatory the next week when classes were postponed because of the students' mid-winter break. Most of them came as the weather was clear on the evening of the eclipse.

I'll never forget the first class - 25 people arrived representing 8 families. This was great but the real surprise was the age of their kids. These were young enthusiastic families whose kids were all in the age 8-11 year old category. I knew from the outset that some of my plans would have to change. The first change was the trimming down of my PowerPoint presentations to make room for 20 minutes of activity. Then I added "special projects" which were really nothing more than activity sheets related to the lesson topic which were to be taken home and returned the next week for a prize. The prizes were for the kids and were mostly little items I purchased from the dollar store.

Some of the activities we did during the course included - Making a Star Wheel, a Scale Model of the Solar System, and Pinhole Constellations (thanks to Kathleen Houston).

I had a lot of fun planning "special events" for them during the course. Let's see - I arranged for a lunar eclipse, three iridium flashes, and the most special of all, a fly-over of the International Space Station just for them. They got used to my sense of humour in arranging these "special" events.

All-in-all it was a very positive experience - they did a course evaluation and the comments were very complimentary. The only constructive criticism by one attendee was that the course was too long - something I agree with and have passed on to the executive should they wish to offer this again.

Thanks to Jeff Swick, Rick Huziak, and Kathleen Houston for assisting me on certain evenings of the course. As a footnote to this article, members may wish to know we have already received a second request for an astronomy course by another community association in the city. Could this "snowball" on us and if it does, what other members would like the opportunity to be the presenter?

Astronomy Day 2008

by Jeff Swick

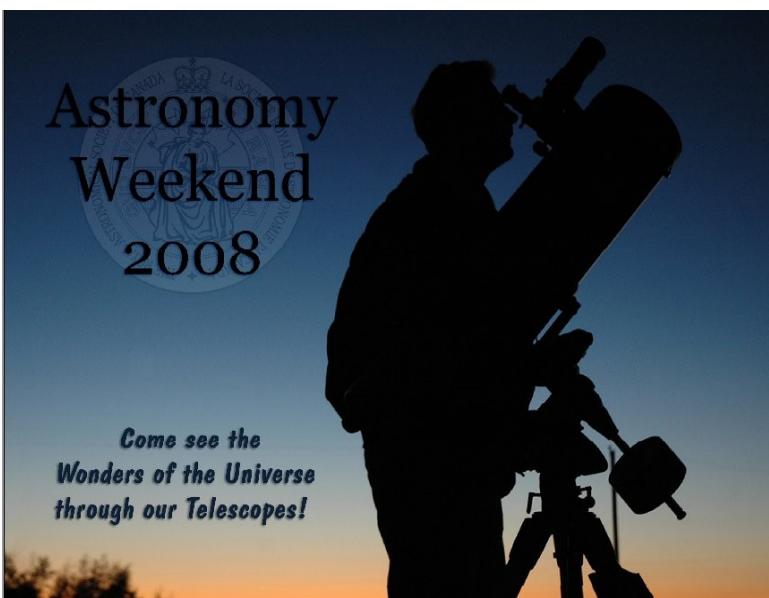
Our center will be hosting several events in and around the city on the 9th and 10th of May as we join with hundreds of other astronomy clubs across North America for a weekend of bringing astronomy to the people

To kick off the weekend we will be at the Lakewood Civic Center Friday evening starting at 8:30 due to the later sunset. (Note that I said at 9:00 in error at the GM).

All our members are encouraged to come out and set up your scopes for a couple of hours of sidewalk astronomy. The civic center for those of you who haven't been there contains a swimming pool, a couple of gyms and of course a library. A very busy place and we've had lots of fun there the last few years. The fact that one can just drive up and unload your gear on the spot is just the bee's knees.

Bright and early Saturday morning we'll be at the new Farmers Market with several displays and information on our annual Star Party, our efforts in public awareness of light

pollution, book sales and of course on the benefits of membership in the R.A.S.C. Hopefully the weather will co-operate and we can also do some solar observing. If you would like to help out please contact Barb Wright who is the Site Captain for the venue.



Check your email or log in to our center's Yahoo Group for information on Saturday evening's Gastronomy event. Ellen will be booking tables at a local eatery.

We'll be closing out the weekend at Beaver Creek Conservation area. Ron Waldron will be giving a slide presentation and talk around 8:00 followed by viewing through the scopes.

co-operates we can see upwards to a couple of hundred people.

This weekend will be a great time to show your friends, neighbors, family and co-workers why you walk around yawning all morning....see you all there.

International Year of Astronomy - 2009

The following is taken from information provided on the RASC website.

International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009), named by the UN (UNESCO), will be a celebration of astronomy and its contributions to society. The goal is to stimulate worldwide interest, especially among young people, in astronomy and science under the central theme "The Universe, Yours to Discover". More than 90 countries are already involved, with at least 140 expected. RASC is part of the Canadian partnership of organizations participating in IYA activities. RASC has identified the following as activities which fit our organization.

1) The Galileo moment, broadened from the international goal, will include any organized event that will provide personal discoveries in astronomy, through telescopes and binoculars, star parties, school visits, public lectures, planetarium shows, etc.

2) Student astronomy kit, a kit of assemble-and-decorate yourself items enabling youngsters to observe and record astronomical experiences. At the international level, IYA is hoping to design and provide an inexpensive telescope kit at approximately \$1 each.

3) Dark sky preserves and reserves across Canada - to promote and help create places within Canada where people can enjoy the simple pleasure of seeing the stars.

Additional ideas proposed include: activities promoting awareness of Canada's Aboriginal people's astronomical lore and traditions, planetarium and science centre productions, arts and entertainment to convey the beauty and excitement of astronomy, highlight Canadian astronomers and research, dark-sky events where communities are encouraged for one night to voluntarily turn off lights - competitions between towns, satellite-based before and after images - light pollution education - public observing nights, sidewalk certificate program - a booklet of simple astronomical observations for the public to receive a certificate upon completion

For more information about IYA see the following web sites:

<http://www.rasc.ca/education/iya>
<http://www.astronomy2009.org/>

Saskatchewan Summer Star Party - 2008

by Rick Huziak

Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye'all!

Time to organize your summer's end and plan to attend the best darn star party in Saskatchewan! SSSP 2008 is ready to take your money, and in return, we'll throw you a humdinger of a great star party, if we do say so ourselves! The star party is held on the first new moon weekend in August (after the long weekend), so this year, the dates are Aug 28 - 31! Yep - it's end of the summer, and back to school for some, so what better reason do you need than a great fill of 7th mag naked eye stars from the Cypress Hills Dark Sky Preserve? Come early and stay late!

The star party is held at the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, 20 km S of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. Everyone is welcome - we cater to the entire family, from seasoned observers to newbies, and we don't forget about the spouse and kids! And the best news! Park admission, SSSP fees, banquet - everything is at the SAME price as last year except for our wonderful souvenir pin, which took a whopping \$2 hike! (Check out Kathleen's eyepoppin' great design on the webpage!)



Register early, and decide NOW if you are coming. Much of the cabin and condo accommodation is already booked, but there are lots of hotel rooms available. But we also have tonnes of camping space - about 4 dozen powered sites (mostly rush on arrival - see our webpage for details) and sites for hundreds of tenters!



All Photos By Tenho Tuomi

Our Fr. Luke Kemble Keynote Speaker is Alan Whitman. This will be Alan's first trip to the SSSP. He has an excuse for not attending sooner - he was an organizer for the generally concurrent and truly wonderful Mt. Kobau Star Party in BC, but he has this year off and can grace us with his tales of "Dark Sky Observing with the Unaided Eye". We have other talks by Alan Dyer - "The Amazing Sky", Scott Young, and others! All of our popular activities are back - solar observing,

swap table, wienie roast, Friday presentations, Saturday under-the-stars clinics, photo contest, on-site astro vendors, 10-year awards, door prizes and much more! Come and have a blast!



we celebrated our 1000th individual who has attended! Join your 285 closest friends at SSSP'08!

And remember - in 2009, the SSSP proudly celebrates the International Year of Astronomy by hosting the 2009 RASC General Assembly in the same location! Come this year and get the jump!

Everyone welcome!

SSSP Home Page:

<http://homepage.usask.ca/~ges125/rasc/starparty.html>

SSSP'08 Details:

<http://homepage.usask.ca/~ges125/rasc/sssp2008.html>

Straight to registration:

http://homepage.usask.ca/~ges125/rasc/sssp08_online_reg.pdf

Just print it off, send it in with your cheque. (Sorry - no credit cards - those buggers charge way too much in fees!) :-)

Rick Huziak and Kathleen Houston
- your 2008 SSSP Registrars!

The Planets This Month, May 2008

by Murray D. Paulson, Edmonton Centre

We come into this month with a grand evening **Mercury** apparition. It will be at maximum elongation by publication time, May 13th, so will still present a good observing opportunity over the second week or so of the month. On the 13th, Mercury will show an 8" 37% illuminated disk in the eyepiece and shines at magnitude 0.4. It sets at 11:50 p.m., 2 hours and 20 minutes after the sun, albeit in deep twilight. Dichotomy, or the 50% phase, actually occurs on May 8th, and the discrepancy with respect to the greatest eastern elongation is due to its rather elliptical orbit. Over the rest of the month, Mercury heads back to its inferior conjunction with the sun on June 7th.

The spring's morning apparition of **Venus** has been rather poor, and about to come to its end. On June 8th, exactly half way between Venus transits, Venus passes behind the sun on its way to the evening sky. On the far side of the sun, Venus's apparent motion is much slower than on our side of the sun. This occultation of Venus takes 45 hours and 14 minutes, but don't expect to see any of it! If you are interested in following Venus on its approach, Venus will be 7 degrees west of the sun on May 13 and shines at magnitude -3.8. In the eyepiece you will see Venus's 9.7" full disk. Venus moves about 1 degree every 3 1/2 days. As usual, Venus is west of the sun, so be very careful not to allow the sun to drift into your eyepiece!

Mars has now moved into the constellation of Cancer and shines at magnitude 1.3. It is now dimmer than Aldebaran, but worth a gaze in binoculars or a scope. In the eyepiece Mars is a 5.5" gibbous disk. With good seeing, you may see the polar cap and some surface markings. It now is only slightly larger than Mercury at superior conjunction or Uranus. We are set for a good photo op with Mars and the Beehive over May 21 to 23, with the 22nd the prime date. On June 7th, a lovely crescent moon passes 1.4 degrees below Mars.

Jupiter is now 8 degrees east of the teapot and shines at magnitude -2.4. It rises just before 2 am, and transits the meridian at 6 in the morning. In the eyepiece Jupiter now shows a 42" disk. By the first week of June, Jupiter will rise at 11:45 p.m., and will shine at magnitude -2.6. The telescope will reveal a 46" disk and it now transits the meridian just before 4 am. The summer twilight washes it out and it may be best to wait it out for

the summer months.

Saturn has been wonderful and was the showpiece of the International Sidewalk Astronomy day last month. At the beginning of May, Saturn is finishing up the stationary phase of the western end of its retrograde loop. It will now start to distance itself from Regulus on its way east. I have enjoyed the pairing of these two over the last few months. Saturn shines at magnitude 0.6 and will show you a 18.35" disk in the telescope. The phase angle is 6 degrees, and the shadow cast on the rings will be rather prominent. The second apparition of Astronomy days will find Saturn still the high point of the evening. By early June Saturn will shrink noticeably to 17.37" and it will dim slightly to magnitude 0.7 as we slide in to the deepening twilight zone.



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<u>Lorne Jensen</u>		<u>89</u>
<u>Kathleen Houston</u>		<u>85</u>
<u>Margo Miller</u>		<u>77</u>
<u>Wade Selvig</u>		<u>75</u>
<u>Garry Stone</u>		<u>57</u>
<u>Ellen Dickson</u>		<u>30</u>
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EXPLORE the UNIVERSE

Certified for Certificate:

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Gratias

<u>Katelyn Metanczuk</u>	<u>15</u>
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<u>Tenho Tuomi</u>	<u>Up!</u>	<u>277</u>
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<u>Scott Alexander</u>		<u>117</u>
<u>Mike Oosterlaken</u>		<u>68</u>
<u>Sandy Ferguson</u>		<u>18</u>

HERSCHEL 400-II CLUB

Certified at 400 Objects:

<u>Darrell Chatfield</u>	<u>304</u>
<u>Richard Huziak</u>	<u>211</u>



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 and Finest NGC lists, charts and logbooks - check out:

<http://www.rasc.ca/observe.htm>

On-line Herschel 400 List - check out the official site at:

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

Observer's Group Notes

by Larry Scott

April showers bring May flowers, but are not conducive to any kind of observing. No Messier Marathon report and no observing report from me. I hope the rest of you managed a little better.

May's dark sky period begins around the 23rd and continues till about June 7th. Please note the date change for the Observers Group to May 31st. I had originally planned on having the May Observers Group on the 30th. That turns out to be the same night as the Cancer Society's Relay for Life and I didn't want to interfere with anyone volunteering. The following weekend, on June 6th, will be the June Observer's Group. Hopefully, we can make up for the short nights by getting out more often. Don't forget

that anyone showing up early will be allowed to cut grass for as long as they want. Lawnmower and gas will be supplied on site.

If you're trying to decide whether or not the skies will cooperate with your observing endeavors, check out

www.cleardarksky.com/c/Saskatoonkey.html.

A useful tool, but as with all weather predictions, don't forget your grain of salt.

See you at Sleaford.