

Saskatoon Skies

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

Volume 32 September 2001 Number 9



If you weren't at the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party this year, you missed out on the discovery of P/2001 Q2 Comet Petriew. This new short period comet will forever carry the name of Regina Centre member (and ex-Saskatoon member) Vance Petriew. Photo by Jack Newton, kindly provided only days after discovery!

RASC Calendar Happenings

Date (2001)	Event	Contact	Telephone
Sep. 12 - 16	Alberta Star Party – Caroline, AB	Rick& Carol Weis	(403)286-4347
Sep. 17	General Meeting – 7:30 pm City Hospital	Les Dickson	249-1091
Sep. 21	Wildwood Star Night at Beaver Creek	Sandy Ferguson	931-3184
Oct. 9	2 shadows on Jupiter before sun-up	See Handbook	
Oct. 10	Saskatoon School Board Teacher's Tour at Sleaford	Rick Huziak	665-3392
Oct. 11 - 20	Possible to see Naked Eye Geosynchronous Satellites in dark skies	Rick Huziak	665-3392
Oct. 12	Youth Group Meeting – Nutana Collegiate	Tyrone Klassen	652-4599
Oct. 15	General Meeting & Annual Elections	Les Dickson	249-1091
Oct. 17	Teacher's Tour Back-up night (Sleaford)	Rick Huziak	665-3392
Apr. 2002	Edmonton Centre Georges Moores Workshop	Rick Huziak	665-3392

Sky Buys and Mirror Sells
The Saskatoon Centre's Swap and Sale Page!

For Sale: Brass lined trunk for SC-8 or SC-10, 9 mm Kellner eyepiece, 0.965 "6x30" eyepiece with crosshair for a spotter, and some very good astronomy books: *The Pocket Guide to Astronomy* by I. Ridpath, *Astronomy* by Menzel, *Introduction to Practical Astronomy* by Jones, *Burnham's Celestial Handbook* (3 vol. set, hardcover). All books are in excellent shape. Call Darrell Chatfield for prices at 374-9278.

Still Wanted: 25mm Orthoscopic or Plossl eyepiece, spider and 2" - 2-1/4" diagonal for 10" scope.
Will buy or trade. Call Rick Huziak at 665-3392.

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Saskatoon Skies is published monthly by the Saskatoon Centre of the RASC. Distribution is approximately 165 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 attached .GIFs, .TIFs, .JPGs or similar. Send e-mail submissions to the editor at <huzaik@SEDSsystems.ca>. Submitted materials can be returned upon request. Please send articles in "generic" formats, with standard grammatical formatting appreciated - 5 spaces at the beginning of paragraphs, two spaces after periods, one space after commas. A separate subscription to *Saskatoon Skies* is available for \$15.00 per year. 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.

Top Secrets of the Saskatchewan Sky Cypress Hills, August 2001

By Sherrilyn Jahrig, Edmonton Centre, RASC

Battle-cry of the mighty mosquito and silent strokes of Perseid trails still itching and etching our recent memory, we left the green lawns of Edmonton August 16th and headed for the Cypress Hills in southwestern Saskatchewan. It was our first trip to the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party, held annually at Meadows Campground in the Centre Block of the Interprovincial Park. After a day spent basking in blue sky and blonde prairie flowing by van windows, we saw the spruce and Lodgepole pine hills rising to greet us from the parched fields of a summer drought. A hot wind kept insects at bay as we set up our tents, then cooled down quickly as darkness surprised us, seeming to arrive early as Saskatchewan does not observe Daylight Savings Time.

Setting up the 18" Edmonton RASC telescope in the dark we noticed Mars and Antares glaring just above the hem of southern haze and the teapot of Sagittarius pouring into the tree-line. Wednesday proved to be one of the steadiest and most transparent of observing nights. A lightning storm flickered far behind the western trees but kept its distance. We visited our fair weather friends from last year – the Lagoon Nebula (M8) and the Swan (M17) – which seemed brighter than observed from Mt. Kobau last summer. People were friendly and quiet, especially impressed with the fabulous view of Andromeda (M31), her close companion (M32) and more distant relative (M110) all in the same awesome field of view. This was seen at 61x through the Spacewalk 31mm Nagler, which has an apparent field of 82 degrees and a true field of 1.25°...come out to Blackfoot and see it at our autumn observing sessions...dust lanes easily discernible. The double cluster in Perseus (NGC869/884) is also amazing with this optical combination.

Thursday brought another clear sky, a good day to swim and ride horses. While our daughter Klara sat proudly astride 'Ebony', hair and mane blowing in the wind, her dad sat humbly upon 'Otis', the lone bald mule in the stable. There are lots of things to do with a family and plenty of amenities such as free showers in the next camp, although this was somewhat difficult with the lights burned out and no windows by which to differentiate between bottle contents. The environment is clean, originally left by glaciers and somewhat left alone by humans. There are 220 species of bird in the park, best seen at the feeders from the lodge windows; also moose, badger, elk, deer and trout. One moose wandered over to the water spigot about 20 meters from our tent.

We spent the early evening collimating reflectors with the laser collimator. I think this handy little instrument gave us the sharpest images I have seen through the club scope. Hindsight, which might be all we have left now, suggests that this procedure might best be done in the dark so that the eye knows how much laser light it is drinking in. Hosting the telescope was a lot of fun as we had families who came in from other camps and met lots of great people who organized and participated in the event. It also meant that I got so adept at finding some of the 'greatest hits' that I could put them in the eyepiece with just the Telrad...except for the time I let M13 slip down between the lower stars and wondered where it was hiding. Bedazzled first-time cluster gazers saw layer and layer of white-on-white sequined sky, then Bob and I would take them on to splashy M92, the ethereal M27, 'Star-legs' (M30, nice legs at 135x) in Capricornus, then drop them into the arms of Andromeda. We like to keep the party atmosphere.

Friday was 36°C degrees so we went to the little lake. Lots of people arrived including Bob Casgrain with his new great-for-the-price Efston 8"; and Paul Campbell, towing an aurora and some big gusts of

wind. During the next 24 hours Paul's tragic tumble with his big scope --- I heard it from across the field -- and generous loan of solar scope to a family who could not predict a sudden gust that blew it over, was to be avenged by another event. Paul Campbell and Rick Huziak spent the wee hours confirming a NEW COMET discovered by Vance Petriew of Regina in the vicinity of the Crab Nebula, close to beta Tauri. We had intended to check out his 20" Obsession, but the 18" was just too popular and Bob and I, tired and already having had two previous good observing nights, retired to our tent by 2:45, unaware of the BIG SECRET until the next afternoon.

Saturday was windy, attendance was good at the lodge. The highlight, of course, was Vance Petriew, baby in arms, announcing his news that he had possibly discovered a new comet. With all the artificial 'eyes on the skies' these days, one sensed a communal wish that it would indeed bear his name. A banquet was held after the presentation and speakers. Alan Dyer's talk, '*Hiking the Milky Way*', left me with a clarified perspective of our placement in the galaxy and reinforced the position of various objects with his outstanding photographs and diagrams. The main lecture of the SSSP is now entitled '*The Lucien Kemble Memorial Lecture*'. That Father Luke was an individual bigger than the legend that follows his passing, was apparent in the many casual conversations his name surfaced in. The Cypress Hills were a special place to him and my awareness of his sphere of positive influence expanded once again. Bob and I have also met writers and musicians who brought him into conversation in yet another context.

Clouds had sneaked in while we were inside the lodge and Saturday night was a night to catch some sleep between thunder-rolls. A downward wind buffeted the tent, only a sucker-hole teased the sky-watchers, of course the comet-checkers used one of these eventually to find the 10.5 magnitude wanderer again.

Sunday night the Edmonton die-hards, Paul Campbell, John Payzant and ourselves stayed on for a good night of viewing. It was calm, cool and dark...no winter gear or repellent required this year...and with less audience I was able to hunt for a couple of objects I hadn't seen before. It was a quiet goodbye to the sky of Cypress Hills. We left, impressed with the Saskatchewan Star Party participants, proud to have observed from the same sub-stellar point that people such as Father Lucien, Alan Dyer, Rick Huziak and Vance Petriew had studied the stars from.

The sky holds the same secrets for us all, no matter who discovers them. A star party is a way to celebrate the beautiful evidence of our common incarnation.

Wildwood Community Assoc. Starnight at Beaver Creek – Sep. 21

By Rick Huziak

We will be conducting a star night at Beaver Creek for the Wildwood Community Association on Friday, Sept. 21 from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Sandy Ferguson will be giving a talk, and then the remainder of the evening will be a starnight, where Community participants can view the stars with our telescopes. Participants are encouraged to bring their telescopes if they have them, so that the RASC can help them with any questions they may have about their equipment. RASC members are encouraged to attend to help out - especially if you have a scope and are willing to help conduct this starnight. We need at least 4 telescopes present. The community association will be making a donation to the RASC for our help. For more information and to confirm you can help, call Sandy Ferguson at 931-3184.

Membership Vote at September General Meeting

By Les Dickson, President, Saskatoon Centre

In the July/August issue of the Newsletter, I gave notice of a vote to be taken at our September meeting regarding our membership system. Our current situation is that we are on a revolving membership in which each person's membership would run for one year from the month that they joined the RASC. We are also *opted in*, which means that the National Office handles our membership for us, and sends membership renewal notices directly to our members, bypassing our Treasurer and Membership Co-ordinator. Our options are: continue with the situation as it is now; opt out of National's membership system while continuing with the revolving membership system; or go back to the fixed membership year, which would also entail "opting-out" of the National membership system.

A few facts to consider: the Saskatoon Centre is not a stand-alone club but part of a national organization, the RASC. The entire Society is itself on the "revolving" membership system, which Peter Jedicke, 2nd vice-president of the RASC likens to a magazine subscription, since both work in similar ways, and there's no way out of this. Also, regardless of whether a Centre is opted in or opted out, the "official" membership list is and always was the national office list.

National Office sees being opted in as an advantage to us. They send out renewal notices to our members two months before their membership expires. Members send renewals, with cheques, to the National Office. National Office then updates the National membership list, sends us an updated Centre membership list each month, and sends us our portion of the membership payment. National Office says that this saves our Treasurers and Membership Co-ordinator time and effort keeping up the Centre's list chasing members for renewals and money.

The major complaint that some of our members have with this system is that the National list and our list never seem to jive and justifying the differences in each list takes a lot of time each month. Apparently, many corrections have been sent to National Office that seem never to show up on National's list. I cannot speak to the reason(s) for this ongoing situation, whether the problem is with National or with us, but it should not be an insurmountable problem to solve.

We want to hear your views on the subject, especially if you have had any negative dealings with National with regards to your own membership. Please come out to our meeting on September 17 and make your opinion heard. The more people show up to vote, the more likely that the decision made at the meeting will reflect the will of the majority of the members, not just those who bothered to show up.

Youth Group First Meeting of New Season

The first meeting of the new year for the Youth Astronomy Group will be held at Nutana Collegiate at 7:30 p.m. on October 12th. Tyrone Klassen will be taking the group over from Andrew Krochko. We'd like to thank Andrew for his hard work with last year's group! To participate, you will have to be a paid Youth member of the RASC. For registration, call Tyrone at 652-4599. Note: Nutana Collegiate is still to be confirmed as a meeting place, so please call Tyrone to confirm before attending.

The National View on Opting-In

By Peter Jedicke, National 2nd Vice-President

When the RASC's National Council voted to change the structure of the membership year, this made it easier for a person to join the Society because they didn't have to wait until October 1 to become a member. There was considerable debate over whether a "floating" membership year was better than a "fixed" membership year at the meeting on November 8, 1998, which Sandy Ferguson attended on behalf of the Saskatoon Centre. The floating membership year came into effect when the membership approved the appropriate changes to the national By-Law at the Annual Meeting in 1999. By March, 2001, almost 60% of the 4000 members worldwide had expiry dates other than September 30.

Because the decisions made by National Council (and the changes to the By-Law that are approved by the membership at an Annual Meeting) apply to the whole RASC, a Centre cannot choose to have a fixed membership year. However, the motion also provided "that each Centre be permitted to promote timing of memberships in whatever manner will suit the needs established by the Centre council." By promoting membership only for October 1, a Centre could, in effect, keep the old system.

To help administer the new scheme, a computer application called the Membership and Publications Administration (MPA) system was developed for the national office. Since the Treasurer of a Centre certainly has to do a lot of work to take care of memberships, the idea was that a centralized database of members would put most of this work on the RASC's hired staff and make the volunteer Treasurer's job easier. Also, with electronic communications, it is now possible for a person to join the RASC, or for a member to extend their membership, by a free telephone call or over the Internet, using a credit card. Ease of purchase is a recognized advantage in any marketing strategy. Also, the national office now sends out renewal

forms to remind members when their membership needs to be extended. This saves the Treasurer of a Centre the task of pestering members to remind them.

There has always been some discomfort about exactly when a person actually becomes a member. In the old days, a vote had to be taken to admit someone to membership, and it made sense to consider that the moment the vote passed was the moment a person became a member. But this was not really practical, since most Centres have always permitted a person to participate in most of their activities even before such a person was formally accepted as a member. Even after the vote, there was always the delay involved in sending a person's address information to the national office and, often, months would pass before the new member received such benefits of membership as a copy of the Journal or Observer's Handbook in the mail.

Now that it is no longer required for a vote to admit someone to membership, the moment when a person formally becomes a member is the moment when the staff at national office enters that person's information into the MPA. When the staff at national office receive a new membership, they immediately send the person the current publications through the post, and every month a report is sent to each Centre's Treasurer, summarizing who the members of that Centre are. The monthly report also includes a financial transfer that corresponds to the Centre's portion of the membership fees. A Treasurer of a Centre can handle the financial aspect in a single transaction instead of having to handle a lot of cash or cheques, and they do not need to maintain a local list of members any more, other than the list received from the national office.

On the other hand, a person might hand their membership fees and personal information to a

Centre's Treasurer directly, usually at a meeting of the Centre. This gives a sense of personal contact -- which is very desirable. The MPA system can handle this method, too, but the Treasurer has to transmit the information to the national office. Fortunately, this can be done in an email, rather than through the post, but there is still some delay involved. The financial transfer of the national portion of the membership fees from the Treasurer of a Centre to the national office cannot, at present, be done electronically, and this introduces a further delay because the national office must wait for the money. The By-Law requires that the information about such members be transmitted to the national office monthly (in the old days it was quarterly -- but no one expected things to happen instantly back then), but a Treasurer is a volunteer and there's no way to ensure that they will be able to do it this often.

Unfortunately, the new member might receive the impression that they are a member of the RASC the instant they give their information to the Centre's Treasurer. This is not true. Even if the Centre's Treasurer does maintain a separate local list, this list is not really in effect until it is transmitted to the national office, and the official list is always the one issued monthly by national office. In fact, it is easier for the staff at the national office to handle information and money from one member at a time, rather than having to handle grouped lists which may contain inconsistencies or errors. Centralized membership administration may not be perfect, but the RASC's executive secretary, Bonnie Bird, and her assistant, Isaac McGillis, are available at the national office to help smooth out any difficulties, and they can be contacted by a Centre's Treasurer or by any member over the telephone or by email. Address changes, special orders, or missed publications are among the snags that Bonnie and Isaac deal with, and they try to respond to all membership inquiries without delay.

The consensus of National Council was that it would be appropriate to let each Centre choose to opt

out of the system as described above. At present, two Centres (Calgary and Toronto) do not participate, and the Treasurers of those two Centres do a lot of work maintaining their own membership list. Each month, they can send a report to the national office, and information about the new and extended memberships would be entered into the centralized database so that the members receive their publications and are officially part of the RASC. But because of the provision that a Centre can "promote timing of memberships in whatever manner" they decide, they could choose not to accept new members until October 1. Neither of these two Centres restrict membership in this way at the present time.

If a person calls the national office to join a non-MPA Centre, the staff at national office has to tell that person that they cannot join the Centre right away, but must contact the Centre's Treasurer. The consensus of National Council was that this might discourage a person from joining, but nevertheless it was felt that each Centre should have this choice. Saskatoon Centre had originally opted out, but agreed to join the system last year. Perhaps there was some misunderstanding that the vote then merely referred to the membership year, but the By-Law does not permit a Centre to change the structure of its membership year. All a Centre can do is choose to participate in the MPA or to opt out of the system -- which their membership fees help pay for, by the way.

I wish I could be present in person to discuss the whole issue with all of you at your meeting on September 17. It probably doesn't surprise you that I believe the system is a good one, and I hope you'll continue to be part of it. While it's important for you all to feel that your decision is made in a proper democratic fashion, it's also important to avoid the confusion that might arise because we can't communicate face to face. Good luck in making your decision!

The Planets this Month - September 2001

by Murray D. Paulson

Summer has been a blast, watching the Mars apparition and the return of the outer planets. **Mars** in June showed some details, even though it was so close to the horizon! I checked it early on in June during the watch for flashes in Edom Promotorium, the details were good, but no flashes. There were only a few good evenings in all of June, excepting those from latitude -17, but that is another story! The end of June saw a dust storm that enveloped Mars, so the blank disk made for easy drawing! (Damn!) As a consolation prize, you must consider yourself lucky to have seen this event. Martian global dust storms are rare, coming on the average of once every 30 years. It was easy convincing myself that the lack of planetary details was due to Mars's atmosphere rather than ours. Now Mars is on it's way out, so we must look to the next apparition in 2003 when it will be 25 arc seconds in diameter and at opposition in August. Hmm, that sounds like a Star Party special! It will also be 10 degrees higher in the sky. Bonus!!!

In September, the planet **Mercury** speeds around the sun on it's way to catch up with the Earth. Greatest eastern elongation occurs on September 18th when it will lie 27 degrees from the sun. This elongation is a poor one to try to see it at sunset as it sets only 20 minutes after the sun. The fall evening ecliptic lies very close to horizontal so Mercury is fated to be lost in the evening glare. It will make a fine daytime target with the use of setting circles or a goto scope. On October 13th it catches up with the Earth and sits at inferior conjunction between us and the sun. It will pass 1.4 degrees below the sun.

Venus is receding from the Earth, on its trip around the sun. In September it will descend in the morning sky toward the sun. It will start out 32 degrees from the sun and end up 23 degrees from the sun in early October. Unlike Mercury, however, this is a favorable morning apparition with the ecliptic steeply inclined to the horizon. In the telescope Venus will present a waxing gibbous phase shrinking from 12" to 11" over the month and shines at magnitude -4.

Although **Mars** was always in the murk, it certainly was delightful in conjunction with Antares and Scorpio. By September, it moves into Sagittarius and early in the month it is a red ember floating in the steam of the "teapot" spout. It has faded to magnitude -0.7 and shows a gibbous 12.3" disk. Over the month it will move east to the far side of the teapot and fade to magnitude -0.2 with it's 10" disk.

It was nice to see the gas giants rising in the morning sky at the summer star parties. In early September **Jupiter** rises just before 1 a.m., a magnitude -2.2 beacon in Gemini. In a telescope it shows a 36.2" disk. On Sept 12 at 5:40 a.m., the last quarter moon will pass 7 minutes of arc above Jupiter. A month later, on October 9th, the last quarter moon will rise about 2 -3/4 degrees east of Jupiter. By this time Jupiter rises at 11 p.m. and shines at magnitude -2.3. It will have grown to 39.5" in the eyepiece. Check your *Handbook* for shadow transit times and Jovian moon events.

Saturn was the jewel that rose early in the summer's morning sky. It sits in the horns of Taurus and in early September rises at 11 p.m. It shines at magnitude 0.0 and shows a 18.5" disk. Saturn's rings are tipped so steeply that the south pole of the planet is completely in the backdrop of the rings. By October it rises at 9 p.m., and has brightened slightly to magnitude -0.2. The disk will expand to 19.5".

The planet **Uranus** shines at magnitude 5.7 just 2 degrees above gamma Capricornus. It makes for a good challenge to find it naked eye. In the telescope it shows a bluish 3.7" disk. Use a finder chart in the *Handbook, Sky and Telescope* or *Astronomy* magazine to locate it against the starfield. **Neptune** still can be glimpsed in the early evening sky shining at magnitude 7.9, 5 degrees below beta Capricornus. Once again, you will need a finder chart to locate it against the background star field. Neptune shows a 2.3"

bluish disk in the eyepiece. The low elevation in the sky makes it hard to distinguish it from a star by checking for its disk only, so it is hard to sweep up!

I look forward to seeing some of you at the Alberta Star Party. Remember to bring your gum boots!

C/2001 Q2 (Petriew) and a Malaysian Perspective

By Brent and Tracy Gratias <brentandtracey@hotmail.com>, Taiping, Malaysia

Congratulations to Vance Petriew and to SSSP on their comet discovery! That is fantastic. I was feeling so bad that I couldn't be there this year and then I get that little piece of news and I was crushed. But elated! I'm sure it will add to the success of our event for future years.

We are having a fantastic time in Malaysia. We spend some time in Thailand and just got back from Singapore, the world is a whole lot bigger to me now. Astronomically, however, this trip has been somewhat of a let down. I was so eager to have the opportunity to observe from a developing country, there really is very little light pollution here. The temperature here is a dream compared to most nights I've spent in Canada that start at -20 and drop exponentially as the night wears on. With a nightly low of about 25 degrees year round, there's no need for dew shields here! And can you believe there are no mosquitoes!!? It's also great to be on the equator and have access to both heavenly hemispheres.

Unfortunately, I've learned tropical climates come with tropical skies. In Taiping, the city where we are staying, our annual rainfall is about 325 inches, yup, that's right, an inch of rain every day. Needless to say, if there's not clouds, then there's fog. If there's not fog, then there's mist. If there's no mist, we've certainly got haze. We've been here 6 months and I'm sure I could still count the clear nights on one hand, clear defined here as 50 or more degrees of open sky straight up. If it weren't for Mars, Venus, and the moon, I wouldn't have much to look at at all.

This has however had an interesting result. Since no one here can see the sky that we appreciate so much back home, they have very little knowledge about the heavens. I have had many opportunities to do what I really enjoy the most about my hobby - that is, to share it with others. We are all familiar with the feeling when we point out that orange star to a friend and watch them do a double-take when we tell them that's Mars. Imagine that same feeling when you explain our star-filled nights and northern lights to someone who may never have seen more than a dozen stars at one time. And THEN point out that orange star straight above us...

So friends, despite the challenges of observing in Saskatchewan (the challenges I thought I was escaping by coming here) I really do believe, now, that back home are some of the best skies on the planet. I can't wait to get home and enjoy them.



Something you're not telling us, Jim? See page 15!

The Pike Lake and Beaver Creek Perseid Nights Go Well

By Rick Huziak <huziak@SEDSsystems.ca>

I'd like to report that two presentations and public starnights centered around the Perseid meteor shower went quite well this year. On Friday, August 10th at 8:00 p.m., about 40 campers at Pike Lake attended my slide show, and then followed me outside to take a tour of the sky. Conditions were a bit hazy from forest fire smoke, but we managed to see the occasional Perseid anyway. As we waited for the Perseids, we watched satellites come over, as predicted reliably by the www.heavens-above.com site. To our surprise, a very bright satellite appeared unannounced about 20 minutes before a great International Space Station pass and in the *same* orbit. This satellite 'guest' turned out to be the Space Shuttle Discovery! We also observed common objects through my 10" scope until about 12:30 a.m.

The next night, at 9:00 p.m., I gave a slide show at the Beaver Creek Conservation Area. This night, we had about 80 attendees. After the slides, we all laid down on the deck and watched for Perseids through broken cloud. Those who braved it out a bit longer were rewarded by clearing skies by about 10:30 p.m. So, we watched satellites again, and between satellites saw a fair number of Perseids. I'd like to thank Les and Ellen Dickson for attending this session and helping out with the big crowd!

After the BCCA closed at 11:30 p.m., I drove out to the Sleaford Observatory to catch Bill Hydomako and Tyrone Klassen, who were watching Perseids under dark, clear skies. Even though the moon rose soon after midnight, we were still able to catch around 60 meteors per hours. Like all meteor showers, the Perseids are better after midnight!

Comet Petriew P/2001 Q2

By Rick Huziak

By now, most of you have heard that Vance Petriew of the Regina Centre discovered a new and bright comet at the SSSP, and that Paul Campbell and I were involved in confirming its reality as a new object. Much more will appear on this comet in an upcoming issue of the RASC Journal. For now, I'd just like to tell you where it is and encourage you to get up early and look for this comet in the morning sky! The following ephemeris is from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, with ephemerides being found at <http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iau/Ephemerides/>. Strangely, LINEAR and NEAT automated telescopes have combined to find 3 new comets since Vance's discovery – but none anywhere near as bright!

Y/M/D (0hUT)	RA	Decl	Mag
2001 09 13	07 36.53	+17 35.2	10.8
2001 09 18	07 55.66	+15 21.6	10.9
2001 09 23	08 13.39	+13 10.4	11.1
2001 09 28	08 29.83	+11 02.5	11.3
2001 10 03	08 45.09	+08 58.8	11.4
2001 10 08	08 59.26	+06 59.6	11.6
2001 10 13	09 12.41	+05 05.1	11.8
2001 10 18	09 24.61	+03 15.5	12.0
2001 10 23	09 35.88	+01 30.7	12.2

Y/M/D (0hUT)	RA	Decl	Mag
2001 10 28	09 46.26	-00 09.1	12.4
2001 11 02	09 55.80	-01 44.0	12.5
2001 11 07	10 04.50	-03 14.1	12.7
2001 11 12	10 12.36	-04 39.5	12.9
2001 11 17	10 19.39	-06 00.1	13.0
2001 11 22	10 25.56	-07 15.7	13.2
2001 11 27	10 30.86	-08 26.3	13.3
2001 12 02	10 35.28	-09 31.6	13.4
2001 12 07	10 38.79	-10 31.5	13.6

Messier, FNGC, H-400 & Binoc Club

MESSIER CLUB

Certified at 110 Objects: R. Huziak, G. Sarty, S. Alexander, S. Ferguson, D. Jeffrey, D. Chatfield, R. Christie, K. Noesgaard

Mike Stephens	**APPLIED!! **	110
Wade Selvig		71
Bill Hydomako		68
Mike Oosterlaken		64
Andrew Krochko		42
Lorne Jensen		39
Brent Gratias		39
Stan Noble		28
Les & Ellen Dickson		20
Debbie Anderson		17
Brian Friesen		15

FINEST NGC CLUB

Certified at 110 Objects: R. Huziak, D. Jeffrey , G. Sarty, D. Chatfield

Scott Alexander	89
Ken Noesgaard	24
Sandy Ferguson	23
Mike Stephens	22
Mike Oosterlaken	10

HERSCHEL 400 CLUB

Certified at 400 Objects: Dale Jeffrey

Rick Huziak	**APPLIED **	400
Darrell Chatfield	** GETTING THERE**	373
Gordon Sarty		147
Scott Alexander		98
Ken Noesgaard		44
Mike Oosterlaken		29
Sandy Ferguson		18

Chatfield BINOCULAR CERTIFICATE

Mike Stephens	**ALMOST THERE **	37
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**Join the Messier, Finest
NGC, H-400 & Binocular
Club!**

Observe all 110 Messier, 100 FNGC or 400 H-400,
or 40 Binocular objects and earn your
CERTIFICATES!

The first 2 lists can be found in *the Observer's Handbook*. The Binocular List & Herschel 400 list will be available at each general meeting for 50 cents (covers photocopying) or can be mailed out on request to distant members. Each month I'll be posting updates.

Hey, Observers!

This month, I've received updates from Mike Stephens, Bill Hydomako & Lorne Jensen. Lorne is making great Messier strides with his new 6" Newtonian. Bill Hydomako has shifted gears from building Sleaford to observing at it, and has been seen knocking off Messiers in Sagittarius all summer long!

I've manage to now finish my Herschel 400 list by staying up until 3:30 am at Cypress Hills in order to catch my last object - NGC 513 in Sculptor. Darrell Chatfield has now tested me, and will apply for the Herschel 400 Certificate in my name.

As I've said before - to get started in observing, you only need your eyes and maybe some binoculars. If you are not on the Messier list, why not come out to Sleaford, and we'll get you started! For those who have not reported their observing numbers lately - well, please do!

Send observing numbers to
huziak@SEDSsystems.ca

**Notice of the General Meeting of
the Saskatoon Centre**

Monday, Sept 17, 2001

at 7:30 p.m.

Room 8313 City Hospital

Presenting

Members at Large

**"The GA, Comet Petriew,
SSSP'01, Tripod
Photography"**

Members are invited to present their observing experiences for any summer astronomy activity that they have done.

U of S Observatory Hours

The U of S Observatory is open to the general public every Saturday in September from 8:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Admission is free. The observatory is located on campus, one block north of the Wiggins Avenue and College Drive entrance. On clear evenings visitors may look through the 6-inch refractor to the moon, star clusters and other exciting astronomical objects. For further information, phone the recorded Astronomy Information Line at 966-6429.

**Interested in
Saskatoon RASC
Membership?**

Regular - \$48.00 per year**

Youth - \$26.00 per year

**National Council has voted a \$4/yr increase in these rates. Final Saskatoon membership cost to be decided in Sept. or Oct. Youth rates are unaffected

It's never too late to join!

The Saskatoon Centre operates on a one-year revolving membership. You will now be a member for the next 12 months no matter when in the year you join.

***Benefits of Membership in the
Saskatoon Centre***

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

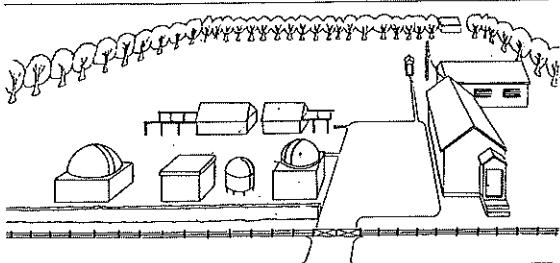
The Sleaford Observatory

Longitude: 105 deg 55' 13" +/- 13" W

Latitude: 52 deg 05' 04" +/- 08" N

Telephone: (306) 255-2045

by Rick Huziak



Astronomy 212 Labs Start Up Again – Astro

212 students are now running their labs at the Sleaford

Observatory on almost every clear night. New equipment at the site now includes a second Meade LX-200 12" scope (the original is on the roof of the Physics Building), and a new SBIG CCD camera. These students understand red light policies. Remember, when you arrive at the site, your car lights may kill an exposure they are taking through the CCD, photometer or spectrometer. Feel free to enter the Roll-off Observatory to see what they are doing! We'll plan a training night later in the fall for RASC members.

Telephone is now Long Distance - The telephone in the Warm-up shelter has been changed to be a long distance call back to Saskatoon. This was done sometime in August by SaskTel, completely unannounced. If possible, use a calling card to make your calls, but if not, you *MUST* fill out the telephone log after each use. You will be billed for the cost of each call by the RASC afterward. If you DO NOT record long distance calls, telephone privileges may be suspected!

Work at the Site – The floor has been painted a second time in the Warm-up Shelter, and soon everything will be back to normal. Wiring and construction continues in the Patterson Dome, with completion scheduled before it snows. Some outside construction will be done to put up a deck ramp (to ease Eetook extrication) and safety railing on the Warm-up deck and Dome deck. This will occur in the next few weeks.

Teacher's Workshop Oct. 10 – Rick Huziak will be conducting a Public School Teacher's Workshop at the observatory on October 10th, or if cloudy, on October 17th. Any help would be appreciated. The teachers will tour the facilities then be treated to a grand tour of the sky. The teachers are signing up for this workshop, and are the group that will hire speakers for their school camps.

Minutes of the General Meeting – June 18, 2001

Held in Room 8313, City Hospital

Recorded by al Hartridge, Secretary

1. Presentations:

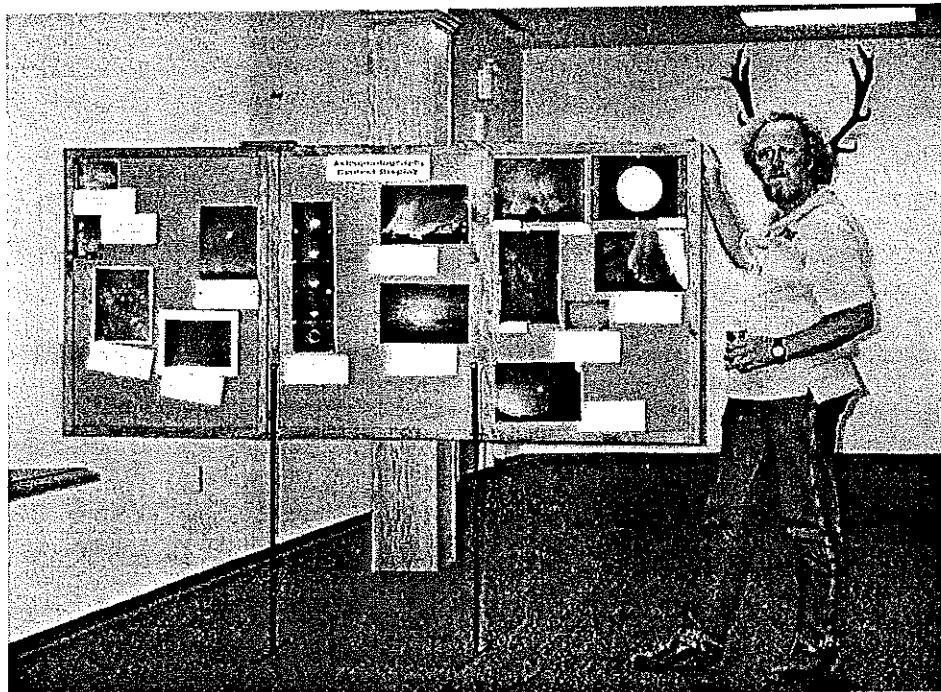
- Dr. Martin Beech - "Collecting Astronomy"
- Rick Huziak - "Noctilucent Clouds"

2. Approval of Minutes: moved by Jim Young and seconded by Tyrone that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved. Motion was carried.

3. Membership: many of the members did not realize that opting in to National Membership Plan meant accepting a revolving membership as well. If we decide to opt out again we should wait until

September. Further discussion will take place at the GA with Bonnie and Peter from National Office. Any concerns should be forwarded to Jim and Barb Young before they leave for the GA.

4. Fundraising: the fundraising committee has sent a letter to the Saskatoon Foundation requesting assistance with the Sleaford project. An astronomy seminar for teachers was also proposed as a possible way to raise some funds.
5. Treasures Report: the present balance is \$10,568.83. A cheque has been sent to the Physics Department for our share of the utilities for this year.
6. SSSP update: there are only 25 people registered so far. Speakers so far include Dr. Martin Beech, Alan Dyer and a talk on the Regina club's Millennium Telescope Project. A new t-shirt design was also described.
7. Bob Christie has also been given permission to buy one hundred pins for \$330.00 to sell at the star party.
8. Sleaford open house: only ten people showed up for a barbecue but a good time was had by all in spite of the low attendance. Darrell Chatfield also installed shelves into the Warm-up Shelter the same afternoon.
9. Proxy votes: anybody who wishes can send their vote with Barb to the GA. Jim Young also needs a letter from Les to allow him to be the stand-in National Rep. at the GA.
10. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.



It looks like Jim's can of beer grew more than hair on his chest at this year's SSSP! Jim displays the wonderful astrophotos displayed for the photo contest, and mysterious bony protrusions that show up only on photographs! Weird! Photo by an equally evil Debbie Anderson!

Reflections from a Chant Medal Winner

by Rick Huziak

On July 1st, at the General Assembly in London, I was presented with the National Chant Medal in recognition of “*significant astronomical work in amateur astronomy in Canada*”. Cited were recent works that I have done in variable star research, including submission of over 14,000 variable star estimates to the AAVSO (now over 20,000), work into correcting AAVSO charts and researches into missing and incomplete labeling of variable stars in the Millennium Star Atlas. There was also mention of probably a bizzillion school talks that I have done.

I was unable to get decent flights to the GA, so I was not able to accept this award in person. (I would have loved to, since the presenters were scheduled to be Dr. John Percy and David Levy). Jim Young kindly accepted this award on my behalf. The award was then re-presented to me in person at this year’s Saskatchewan Summer Star Party, by Jim. I was able, at the star party, to give a small speech about what this award meant to me. I’d like to relay it’s message in the next few lines. Maybe I’ll make a bit more sense below, since at the star party, this presentation occurred only hours after Vance Petriew had discovered his comet, and he and I had spent time well after sun-up getting everything confirmed and sent in! I was dead tired at the presentation.

The award was a total surprise. The Saskatoon Centre did a bang up job of keeping it completely secret! And I never thought that what I was doing in astronomy was anything unusual; the work I was doing was done out of love for this hobby. Award or not, I would do it anyway. To me, astronomy is *observing*. All of my life, I’ve observed and I always encourage others to observe. I find it amazing, that in this hobby, amateurs can still make significant and recognized contributions to astronomy by discovery, and by doing amateur research using very modest equipment. To do this work, one has only to observe and to write down what they see. If you record your observations then these observations may become valuable to others. Notes and sketches are all that are required – it doesn’t have to be fancy to have meaning.

Astronomy is a field in which amateur and professional astronomers cooperate every day, and the distinction between the two is very gray. Just as amateurs are awed by professional photos taken from the Space Telescope, professionals are also awed by the dedication of amateur observers in so many field where observing is both fun and valuable. Fields such as the study of variable stars, asteroid and lunar occultations, fireball chasing, aurora and noctilucent cloud observing and planetary studies allow amateurs to observe for fun, and make valuable contributions to astronomical databases used in both professional and amateur research projects. Why not check out the AAVSO, or IOTA or NLC Can/Am or the IMO or NAMN or MIAC or any other amateur/professional group that would value your observations, and gear a new observing program around counting meteors, observing asteroids or measuring variable star brightnesses?

Contributing data to research is a natural evolution of observing, yet fewer than two dozen amateurs in Canada contribute any variable star observations to the AAVSO. A similar number respond to calls for asteroid occultation events, and only that many help Mark Zalcik out each year to report noctilucent clouds, even though there are over 10,000 amateurs in Canada, counting the RASC and independent amateurs. Maybe my work in amateur research will encourage at least one other observer to begin a regular and recorded observing program! It is really just a lot of fun, and always a blast! The Medal also helps a whole lot – a sign that it is worth the while!

I’d like to thank the members of the Saskatoon Centre for nominating me for this award. (I still do not know who all the ringleaders were, though I know that at least Les, Sandy and Dale were involved – and I’m sure many others!) The medal will be framed and will occupy a place of honour on my wall for all time!