

# Saskatoon Skies

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

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2007



## SECOND GREAT COMET OF 2007

Comet 17P/Holmes brightened up from magnitude 17 to a naked eye magnitude 2.8 over a few hours on October 23 in the constellation Perseus. Bob Johnson took this picture of the comet, and as he put it, "Something cool just happened, Sky and Telescope picked my comet pic as an editor's choice, just submitted it a couple hours ago." Read more about Comet Holmes inside.

*Photo by Bob Johnson*



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## A SURPRISING SIGHT!

# MEMBERSHIP? IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO JOIN!

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

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

## Benefits of Membership in the Saskatoon Centre

- knowledgeable & friendly amateur astronomers
- use of the Sleaford Observatory
- use of the U of S Observatory (after training)
- Saskatoon Skies Newsletter
- Observer's Handbook
- The Journal of the RASC (bimonthly)
- SkyNews Magazine (bimonthly)
- use of the Centre library
- rent the Centre's Telescopes  
<http://www.usask.ca/psychology/sarty/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](mailto: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 <[tuomi@sasktel.net](mailto:tuomi@sasktel.net)>. Please send articles in "generic" formats with simple formatting – one tab at the beginning of paragraphs, one space after commas and periods. A separate by-mail subscription to Saskatoon Skies is available for \$15.00 per year. Saskatoon Skies is also posted on our Saskatoon Centre homepage as a .pdf file and can be downloaded free-of-charge. Members may choose to receive the newsletter by regular mail or via the Internet. Articles may be reprinted from Saskatoon Skies without expressed permission (unless otherwise stated), but source credit is requested. DEADLINE for submissions is the 26th of each month. Saskatoon Skies accepts commercial advertising. Please call the editor for rates. Members can advertise non-commercial items free of charge.

# RASC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

|               |                                                                                |              |          |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| <b>Nov 19</b> | <b>RASC Executive Meeting</b> - 6:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.                 | Garry Stone  | 857-4707 |
| <b>Nov 19</b> | <b>RASC General Meeting</b> - 7:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.                   | Garry Stone  | 857-4707 |
| <b>Nov 28</b> | <b>Steak Night at Mulberries</b> - 6:00 p.m.                                   | Norma Jensen | 244-7360 |
| <b>Dec 1</b>  | <b>Observers Group</b> - 7:00 pm., Sleaford Observatory                        | Larry Scott  | 934-5801 |
| <b>Dec 10</b> | <b>RASC General Meeting</b> - Potluck Social - 6:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U of S. | Garry Stone  | 857-4707 |
| <b>Jan 4</b>  | <b>Observers Group</b> - 7:00 pm., Sleaford Observatory                        | Larry Scott  | 934-5801 |



## BOOKS FOR SALE

by Bruce Brandell, Sales Coordinator

All items will be available at our next meeting or call 249-1119, or email [bruce.brandell@yahoo.com](mailto:bruce.brandell@yahoo.com)

| <b>Title</b>                                | <b>Author</b>    | <b>#Avail</b> | <b>Price</b> | <b>Title</b>                           | <b>Author</b>          | <b>#Avail</b> | <b>Price</b> |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Books</b>                                |                  |               |              |                                        |                        |               |              |
| RASC 2008                                   | RASC             | 14            | \$14.00      | Binocular Highlights                   | G. Seronik             | 3             | \$28.00      |
| RASC 2007                                   | RASC             | 3             | \$5.00       | Exploring the Sky by Day               | T. Dickinson           | 4             | \$9.50       |
| Skywatcher's 08                             | S. Shadick       | 11            | \$18.00      | Exploring the Night Sky                | T. Dickinson           | 13            | \$9.50       |
| Skywatcher's 07                             | S. Shadick       | 6             | \$5.00       | Summer Stargazing                      | T. Dickinson           | 5             | \$18.00      |
| Skywatcher's 06                             | S. Shadick       | 1             | \$2.00       | Night Sky Atlas                        | R. Scagell             | 3             | \$27.00      |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>                        |                  |               |              | Stargazing with a Telescope            | R. Scagell             | 2             | \$14.00      |
| RASC Centennial Mug                         |                  | 2             | \$5.00       | The Moon Observer's Guide              | P. Grego               | 4             | \$14.00      |
| RASC Stickers, blue or white                |                  | lots          | \$1.00       | The Sun Observer's Guide               | T. Spence              | 3             | \$14.00      |
| SSSP 2001 Pin (Summer Triangle)             |                  | 13            | \$2.00       | Stars                                  | Zim, Baker & Chartrand | 1             | \$10.00      |
| SSSP 2002 Pin (Comet)                       |                  | 24            | \$2.00       | Firefly Planisphere                    | Firefly                | 2             | \$19.00      |
| SSSP 2006 Pin (10)                          |                  | 46            | \$4.00       | Firefly Astronomy Dictionary           | Firefly                | 2             | \$14.00      |
| SSSP 2007 Pin (DSP)                         |                  | 35            | \$5.00       | Night Sky Star Wheel                   | Sky Publishing         | 1             | \$19.00      |
| <b>Books</b>                                |                  |               |              |                                        |                        |               |              |
| The Backyard Astronomer's Guide             | Dickinson & Dyer | 2             | \$45.00      | Patterns in the Sky                    | K. Hewitt-White        | 5             | \$19.50      |
| The Beginner's Observer's Guide             | L. Enright       | 4             | \$19.00      | Scientific American Book of the Cosmos | D.H. Levy              | 1             | \$48.00      |
| Observer's Handbook 2006                    | RASC             | 5             | \$10.00      | Deep-Sky Wonders                       | W. Houston             | 2             | \$24.50      |
| Observer's Handbook 2005                    | RASC             | 1             | \$5.00       | Mars Observer's Guide                  | N. Bone                | 2             | \$14.00      |
| Isabelle Williamson Lunar Observing Program | RASC             | 7             | \$10.00      | Deep Sky Observer's Guide              | N. Bone                | 1             | \$14.00      |
| Skyways – Astronomy Handbook for Teachers   | M.L. Whitehorne  | 1             | \$16.00      | Practical Astronomy                    | S. Dunlop              | 4             | \$14.00      |
| Pocket Sky Atlas                            | R. Sinnott       | 3             | \$27.00      | Field Map of the Moon                  | Sky & Telescope        | 8             | \$17.00      |
|                                             |                  |               |              | Moon Map (laminated)                   | Sky & Telescope        | 7             | \$10.00      |
|                                             |                  |               |              | Messier Card (not laminated)           | Sky & Telescope        | 9             | \$5.00       |
|                                             |                  |               |              | Messier Card (laminated)               | Sky & Telescope        | 2             | \$5.00       |
|                                             |                  |               |              | Saskatoon's Stone                      | Mysyk & Kulyk          | 10            | \$3.00       |
|                                             |                  |               |              | The Messier Objects                    | S.J. O'Meara           | 1             | \$39.00      |

## STEAK NIGHT

Mulberry's (sturdy stone) - 124-3rd Ave North

November 28<sup>th</sup>, dinner at 7:00 pm - cocktails at 6:00

**\$15.00 per plate** coffee/tea \$1.35, dessert \$2.00

Tickets sold at the door to those who have confirmed attendance. Please inform Norma (Njensen@gscs.sk.ca) or Barb (wrightb@sasktel.net) by e-mail with numbers before Nov 23rd. Donations to the silent auction or prizes for draws can be mentioned to us by Nov 19th. See you there.



## Minutes of the Executive Meeting October 15, 2007

By Jim Young

1. Meeting called to order 6:36 P.M.
2. Approval of Minutes of September 17 meeting. Moved by Mike Clancy, seconded by Bruce Brandell and carried.
3. December meeting changed to December 10 and will be a Potluck after a short business meeting if necessary, Moved by Ron Waldron, seconded by Norma Jensen and carried.
4. November 28 will be a Steak Night beginning at 6:00 P.M. and supper at 7:00 P.M.
5. Adjourned at 7:23 P.M.

## Minutes of the General Meeting October 15, 2007

By Jim Young

1. Meeting Called to order at 7:38 P.M.
2. Approval of the September 17 meeting . Moved by Mike Clancy, seconded by Ellen Dickson and carried.
3. Events: Jeff Swick reported on the very large turnout at Sleaford on the night of October the 13. It is estimated that about 300 people attended. A Steak night will be held at Mulberries on November 28 beginning at 6:00 P.M. with supper starting at 7:00 P.M.
4. Membership: At this time we have 82 regular members of which 1 is a youth member.
5. Newsletter: Deadline for the November newsletter is Oct 29 and as always more submissions are always needed.
6. Centre Rep: Les Dickson reported that the new computer system at national office should be totally functional in the very near future.
7. A large discussion on some changes to the center bylaws, led by James Gorkoff. If all things go as planned, we will vote on the updates at the November meeting to finalize the bylaws for the center.
8. Elections:
  - Executive:
    - President: Garry Stone
    - Vice-President: Barb Wright
    - Past President: Ron Waldron
    - Newsletter Co-editors: Tenho Tuomi and Ken Maher
    - Secretary: Al Hartridge
    - Treasurer: Norma Jensen
    - National Council Representative: Les Dickson

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19 7:30 PM ROOM 175, U OF S

*Non-members are welcome!  
No admission.*

**The History of the Solar System** – a presentation by Stan Shadick.



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

## SKY BUYS & MIRROR CELLS

*The Saskatoon Centre's Swap and Sale Page!*

**FOR SALE:** Televue 15mm Plossl eyepiece \$40, Celestron 10mm Plossl eyepiece \$20, Bushnell Binoculars - 7X50 Broadfield extra wide angle \$40 - Contact Ron Waldron 382-9428 or [starman@shaw.ca](mailto:starman@shaw.ca)

**FOR SALE:** Meade LX90GPS scope and Meade DSI color camera, both for the rock bottom price of \$1,200. Bob Johnson [bjohnson53@shaw.ca](mailto:bjohnson53@shaw.ca)

**FOR SALE:** Intes MN56 telescope. Incredible optics, but could use an improved focuser. Found most of my Messiers with this one. It doesn't look new, because it's not. \$450.00.  
[gcharpentier@shaw.ca](mailto:gcharpentier@shaw.ca)

### Councilors:

Events Coordinator: Jeff Swick  
Fundraising Coordinator: Open at this time  
Membership Coordinator: Mike Clancy  
Observing Coordinator: Larry Scott  
Sleaford Site Coordinator: Darrell Chatfield  
SSSP Coordinator: Barb Wright  
Councilor-at-large: Jim Young  
Councilor-at-large: Les Dickson

### Non-executive Councilors:

Librarian: Darrell Chatfield  
Photographer/Archivist: George Charpentier  
Meeting Room Coordinator: Graham Hartridge  
New and Distant Members: James Gorkoff  
Publications Sales: Bruce Brandell  
Webmaster: Gordon Sarty

9. Presentation by Gordon Sarty.
10. Meeting adjourned

# Summer's Diary of Astronomy & Light Pollution (Part 2)

by Richard Huziak

The Summer of '07 could not be accused of being devoid of astronomical activity. As a matter of fact, it went down as one of the busiest ever. We had a huge mix of astronomy programs, public star-nights, star parties and light pollution meetings, and rarely a dull moment or night off! With article, I will be able to update everyone on all of these activities, and I hope you will become involved in the Prairie goings-on in years to come.

On the September long weekend, Kathleen and I headed for Alberta to participate in the **First Anniversary celebrations of the Beaver Hills Dark-Sky Preserve**. The celebration was held at the Astotin Lake campground at Elk Island National Park. I was asked to be the Keynote Speaker for the event since Edmonton and Saskatoon still cooperate significantly on dark-sky issues. On September 2<sup>nd</sup> I gave a talk entitled "Dark-Sky Preserves and Deeper Thoughts", where I philosophized about what we had to do to preserve our dark-sky preserves from encroaching light from external sources. The Beaver Hills DSP is in danger of being overwhelmed by expanding Edmonton, and the Cypress Hills DSP can now see lights of fast-growing Medicine Hat. Light pollution committees and their astronomy clubs need to aggressively work with those city councils to stop the light assault on our skies. More on this event is contained in this issue in an article authoured by Sherrilyn Jahrig and me.

A week later, I was back into local light pollution issues. On September 10<sup>th</sup> I attended the City of Saskatoon's Administration and Finance Committee Meeting since Saskatoon Light and Power was to present the final report on the Dark-Sky Lighting Project at the Hampton Village subdivision. We've been waiting for this report for almost 2 years, and were not expecting a favourable report because of past history. However, the report was positive and recommended that flat-lens full cut-off streetlights, as were tried at Hampton Village, be used for all of Saskatoon's new neighbourhoods!

This was very good news. But the A&F Committee didn't have final say on acceptance. I spoke at the meeting in support of the recommendation, and received questions only from Councillor Myles Haidt, whose ward encompasses Hampton. He wanted to know what would happen when trees grew up in the area masking the lights. I replied by stating that city planners should not plan to use waste light pollution scattered off of trees as a substitute for good engineering and planning of neighbourhood layouts and that the lights met all requirements of the

Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) recommendations. The recommendation received unanimous support to elevate the issue to City Council for final acceptance.

On September 13, I attended the **Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee meeting**. SEAC is a public advisory committee that reports to the city on all matters environmental. Their mandate is to find green ways the city can save money and, hopefully, appear to be green. Needless to say, though I'll say it anyway, we have been promoting light pollution abatement (LPA) to this committee for about a year. They were very interested in an LPA program since the city spends 26% of its energy budget on outside lighting. With this visit I wanted to assure that SEAC was aware of the pending presentation to Council and that they understood that FCO streetlights were only the first in a long string of possible LPA programs. SEAC decided to remind Council of this issue by advising Councillor Tiffany Paulsen to speak at the Council meeting to that effect. (Paulsen is the city representative on SEAC). However, Paulsen was not present at the meeting and she was instructed by email to speak.

Back to astronomy for a bit, Kathleen and I drove to Black Nugget Lake near Tofield, Alberta to attend the **Northern Prairie Starfest**. In addition to us, other Saskatoon members or recent past-members Bill and Marianne Hydomako, Tyrone Klassen and his dad and Donna-Lee May also attended. Although we were able to attend only September 15 – 16, the star party ran for a few days before this. Always in charge was Edmonton's Warren Finley, who bagpiped the start of most of the events.

The star party takes place in an abandoned coal strip mine that has been converted to a regional campground. In the past 3 years, the star party was held in the main campground, which featured a wide-open observing field. However, due to extended public use of the campground, the star party moved to the more remote north end of the site near the location of the Edmonton Centre's future observatory. Because of the snaking winding roads that lead to more isolated campsites, the star party took on a different character where smaller groups set up in their campsites, and we spent the night walking around to everyone's site visiting. In effect, it actually gave us more time to do personal observing since we were not in a more crowded party atmosphere. This was lots of fun. It also gave us a chance to do maximum observing in the excellently clear and dark sky.

A bonus was that the night stayed warm, being about +10 degrees C overnight, which made observing and camping a pleasure this late in the year. The sky was so good that in my 10-inch, I was able to pick out the 3 galaxies that make up Hickson 1 with each galaxy being in the 16.4-magnitude range. We stayed up all night and watched Venus, then Saturn, rise in the early morning. Kathleen and I camped with Alister Ling and Bill and Marianne. John Cliff and his kids observed with us all night, too. Other familiar names that attended were Larry Wood, Murray Paulson, Paul and Sherry Campbell, Sharon Tansey, Bruce McCurdy, Dan and Kim Kulyk and about 65 others.

Alister gave a talk on how to interpret the Clear-Sky Clock better, and the keynote speaker was Dr. Jaymie Matthews who is the lead research scientist on Canada's MOST Space Telescope. We also had a Saturday evening mass wiener roast followed by door-prize giveaways. The NPSF is a really fun star party with a group of really friendly amateurs from the Edmonton Centre. I highly recommend and encourage Saskatoon members to attend this party in the future and return the favour that Edmonton gives up when they attend the SSSP en masse. And once you come here, you *will* come back!

Only a day after returning from the NPSF, I attended the **September 17th City Council meeting**. Because I had not heard from Councillor Paulsen as to whether or not she was going to speak when the Hampton Village report was read, I requested to give my own presentation to support the FCO recommendations by Saskatoon Light and Power. I praised the positive recommendation and threw in the suggestion that this would provide the template for further expansion of an LPA program for the city. No one asked me any questions and when the vote was taken, the following recommendation was accepted without decent:

**"RECOMMENDATION 1) that flat lens street lighting fixtures be adopted as the standard for all future residential street lighting installations including replacements in existing neighbourhoods".**

Although at first sight, this statement effectively eliminates future light pollution growth from Saskatoon new neighbourhood streetlights, our joy and optimism is guarded. Despite the acceptance of the pilot project result we do not believe that council has really caught on that lighting for dark skies can help with GHG reduction and preservation of the environment. They also adopted two other recommendations at the same time that 2) that cobra head fixtures with drop lens fixtures continue to be utilized for lighting arterial streets and other major thoroughfares; and 3) that flat lens fixtures not be used as replacements in existing residential neighbourhoods with specialized light fixtures".

These other recommendations worry us, since we do not have a firm definition of what arterial streets and other major thoroughfares are, and that nothing really prevents the city from always specifying "specialized fixtures" in new neighbourhoods and working around Recommendation 1. One other issue with Recommendation 1 is that the City owns

only about one-half of the streetlights in Saskatoon. The other half are owned and maintained by SaskPower, who is not bound by the Recommendation. However, at least we have our first official recognition of light pollution as an environmental issue that needs to be addressed.

But despite the city victory, light pollution has not been eliminated from the earth, so on September 20<sup>th</sup> I gave a talk to the **Saskatoon Nature Society general meeting** featuring the problem of the light tepee at Dakota Dunes Casino. The meeting was attended by about 100 Nature Society and general public and also by members Les and Ellen Dickson, Barb Wright, Stan Shadick and Carmen Whitehead. A pleasant surprise was the appearance of Regina's Darcy Kozoriz who was in town helping to promote SaskPower's compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) giveaway. It was good to have Darcy present to critique my public presentation. The talk also attracted a few REPAS members from Pike Lake.

The summer was very busy, and it doesn't stop there. On October 3<sup>rd</sup> I will give a light pollution presentation at the **Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council** fall forum, and I'm sure activity on the 6 proposed light tepees will get interesting soon! But fall is also a time for observing with the remaining dredges of summer & fall still around and good skies now showing up for deep sky observing and photometry.

## Sleaford Loses a Fine Piece of History!

by Darrell Chatfield

Sleaford, and the Colonsay community lost an important supporter of our site, with the passing of a fine lady by the name of Frances Eley.

Frances was born in 1909, and later went to Sleaford School from 1915 to 1921. She graduated from grade 8 with Honors! She worked on the family farm after her school days, and for various neighbours in the area. She married Norman Eley in 1940, She raised her young children in Winnipeg and Regina while her husband served in WW II. Upon her return to Colonsay in 1945, Frances served as a school trustee and library volunteer for 20 years. She took many photos of scenes, skies, and people. This led to her hobby of painting. Her abundant gardens were to be envied!!

I had the pleasure of meeting Frances at one of our Sleaford Open houses about 5 or 6 years ago. She really enjoyed the tour, and of course the renovated schoolhouse she attended some 85 years prior. She was so impressed with our use of the site that she donated \$50.00 to our club, and had her picture taken with a few of our members. This was a grand day for her.

Frances passed away at the age of 97! Indeed, Sleaford, and the whole community lost a very fine piece of history.

(This information came from the obituary on Frances that appeared in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix on May 22/07.)

# Comet 17P/Holmes Explodes

by Tenho Tuomi

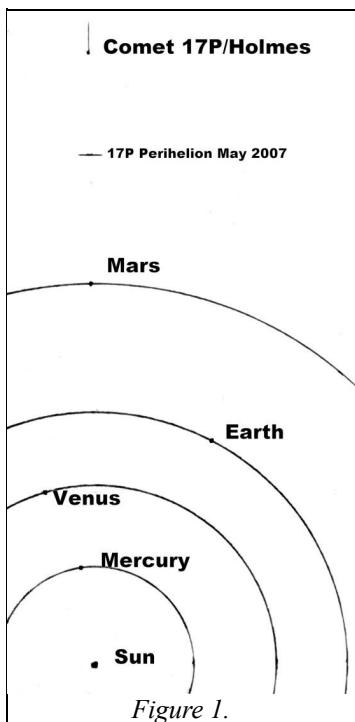


Figure 1.

British amateur astronomer Edwin Holmes discovered comet 17P/Holmes in 1892 when it was in a brightness increase as it is this year. It was found to have a 6.9-year orbital period. It was lost from 1906 to 1964 but has been observed since then, but has not been seen to suddenly increase in brightness again until now.

October 25th at 8:00 p.m. with his Meade LX200r and DSI II Color. He said, "Out in my backyard, even with the Full Moon glaring, got an excellent shot of Comet Holmes, can even make out a little tail pointing away from the Sun at 400x." That photograph is on the front cover.

Gordon Sarty observed the comet the same night and sent this drawing (Figure 2) of the comet and its position in the sky.

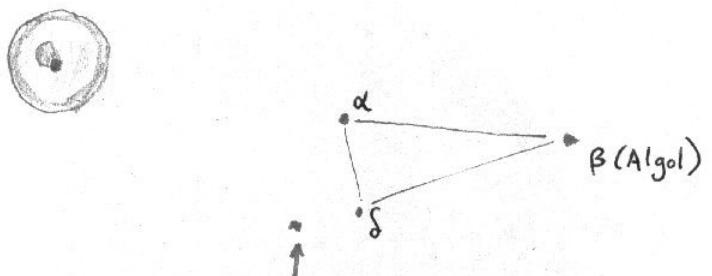


Figure 2. Comet 17P/Holmes on October 26, 2007, 04:15 UT at 273x in my 18 inch f4.5 Newtonian. Its position (2nd magnitude) in Perseus is shown. No apparent tail, diameter roughly twice the apparent diameter of Jupiter.

reached perihelion, its closest point to the sun, in May of this year at magnitude 14.5, and was on its way out when it brightened from magnitude 17 to 2.8. As you can see from this picture we are looking at the comet almost head-on, its tail is pointing away from the sun and us. On October 27 its dust cloud increased in size to become the biggest object in the solar system after the sun, even bigger than the giant planet Jupiter (maybe all comet tails are too). Usually deep-sky observing is not done during a full moon, but this time the moon was almost forgotten in the excitement of a naked-eye comet that the moonlight or city lights could not overcome.

First reports of a brightness increase came on October 23. My first observation of it was on the evening of October 24. At that time it was so bright and star-like that a 2-second exposure saturated my digital camera.

Rick Huziak observed it the next morning and reported, "I must say that in my 39 years of observing, this comet may be the most astonishing thing I've seen in the sky! I had about a 1/2-hour view this morning between 1:30 and 2 am, and the view through the scope, first at 130x then 203x caught me completely off guard. I may even have gasped!"

Bob Johnson photographed the comet that evening on



Figure 3. Despite upper Cirrus clouds on Sunday night, I managed a photo of Comet Holmes that shows the two broken pieces? in the foreground. This photo was taken with my 10" dobsonian telescope.

October 26 seems to have been cloudy for there were few reports.

On October 28 Ron Waldron took the picture in Figure 3.

Bob Johnson continued to photograph the comet and sent this series of pictures showing its growth from October 25 to October 28, with October 26 missing. (Figure 4)

By the time you are reading this the comet may have faded, but if not, look at the star Mirphak in Perseus. The comet is moving towards it and will be within one degree of it by November 19.

The next (predictable) comet to watch for will be 8P/Tuttle which might reach naked-eye visibility by January 2 when it is closest to earth.



Figure 4.

# Activities Coordinator Report

by Jeff Swick

Wow....what a turn out we had at the open house in October. I'll bet there were over 300 people over the course of the night. I feel sorry for poor Stan after teaching all day. I heard him speaking almost non-stop to the folks in the roll off. I'm surprised he even had a voice left by the end of the evening. The ramp was lined up all evening, it reminded me of a line up to get onto a ride at an amusement park.

It was good to see every one at their 'scopes sharing with the crowd and I especially was amazed at the enthusiasm in your voices even after you had answered the same question time after time. It just goes to show that all the stars aren't in the sky; the folks doing the public outreach are stars as well.

Coming up on November the 28th is the Steak Night at Mulberries in the Sturdy Stone Center. Please remember to bring a few friends if you can as this works as a fundraiser to our center. If you or any of your acquaintances have anything they would care to donate for the auction please reach out to Norma with the details.

While I'm talking about food please take note of the date change for the December meeting moved to the 10th. There will be a short business meeting if necessary followed by our annual Pot Luck dinner so be there or be square.

One can never look too far in advance and with that in mind I've contacted the folks at the new Farmers Market to book space for Astronomy Day, which is May 11 next year. They tell me they are not yet taking bookings that far in advance but are looking forward to having us back again. I'm not sure if we will have any sidewalk astronomy this year at the civic

center due to the late setting of the sun during this year's event. Starry Night is showing a fairly bright sky at 9:00 pm and reasonably dark by 10:00 just the time the center closes. Give it some thought and we can speak about it at the meeting.



Great group of volunteers at the Sleaford Open House.

Photo by Rick Huziak

Also that weekend we usually have an event out at Beaver Creek. This works better for us as the park staff is usually willing to stay until around midnight and we also have room in the theater for a talk and slideshow presentation. I've not been out there since the casino lit up the sky so I'm not sure if this is a viable venue or if we may be forced to stop utilizing that beautiful and very functional facility due to light pollution.

I'll close with a couple of words about the Yahoo Group which seems to be functioning smoothly now and enabling us to share activities all year long instead of just meeting nights. I'm particularly impressed by the quality of the photos uploaded of Comet Holmes to the photo section. For those of you not yet signed up or for new members you can find us at this URL

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/rascstoon/>

Before I close let me remind you that Darrell has stepped into the role of site co-coordinator for the Sleaford facility and new members should arrange with Darrel to get trained on the use of the facility. As Darrel steps into his role we are in need of a Fund Raising Coordinator to take Darrel's place. If you are interested please shoot Garry an email.

Good luck to Darrel in your new role and a BIG THANK YOU for your many years of effort in the past. I'm going to miss those Glen Scrimshaw prints that Darrel was always able to round up for draws and such

## National News - November 2007

by Les Dickson National Council Representative, Saskatoon Centre

The next National Council Meeting will be held by teleconference on Saturday, November 24. The main agenda items are:

Membership Increase. There will be a vote on increasing the RASC membership rate from \$55 to \$59 at the upcoming National Council meeting on November 24. If passed, the National's portion will be \$37 and the Centre portion will be \$22, and will become effective January 1, 2008. This membership increase was originally passed at the Annual Meeting held in Ottawa in 2006. The new fees were to become effective at a date determined by the Council, but no earlier than January 1, 2007. This left Council with the ability to enact the fee increase by a

motion in Council. The motion was made by the Pilot Committee and submitted to Council to be voted upon at the November meeting.

Budget Deficit Reduction. There will be a discussion on ways to reduce the society's budget deficit.

Membership Survey Results. There will be a presentation on the results of a recent Membership Survey.

2008 Budget. The budget for 2008 is being prepared and will be presented at the meeting.

I will have a summary of the results and discussion from the National Council meeting in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

# The Planets This Month, November 2007

by Murray D. Paulson, Edmonton Centre

The month starts off with **MERCURY** at Greatest western elongation on November 8th in the morning sky. On the 8th, it will sit 19 degrees from the sun and shine at Magnitude -0.5. Mercury rises 3 hours before the sun and in the eyepiece you will see a 6.9", 57% illuminated disk. Dichotomy was just a day and a half earlier in the week. It is poised for its next trip around the far side of the sun, with a conjunction in mid December. Over the second and third week of the month, look an hour before sunrise, and you may catch this fleet of foot traveler about 7 degrees above the horizon in the Southeast. It will tend to brighten a few tenths of a magnitude in the weeks following the elongation.

**VENUS** has dimmed slightly since its greatest elongation last month, and will start to make its way back down the sky over this coming winter. At the beginning of the month, Venus shines at magnitude -4.3, and will show you a gibbous 22.64" disk in the eyepiece. It rises just before 2:00 a.m. of all things! Over the next month, Venus will shrink steadily to 17" by the first week of December and will dim accordingly to magnitude -4.2. If you are up imaging Mars with your CCD camera, put in a UV filter or deep violet filter and do a shot of Venus. You can actually get quite decent structure in the cloud tops of the planet. ALPO is encouraging anyone imaging Venus to submit his or her images. [note 1]

**MARS** now rises before 8 p.m. and has made it into Prime time! It is getting quite close, and in early in November we see Mars at 12.55" in diameter, 80% of its maximum size over this opposition. At that time Mars shines at -0.7 magnitude and is sitting near the top of the ecliptic in Gemini. After 11 p.m., Mars will be above 25 degrees altitude, and well worth looking at. The North polar cap/hood is quite obvious and the dark features come and go. When Mars gets higher in the sky, the view will get better and we will see great details. On November 14th, Mars is at the eastern end of its retrograde loop and starts to head west in the sky. A very gibbous moon will pass 52' above Mars on the night of November 26 at 10 p.m. local time. This almost mirrors an event on December 11 2005.

By the first week of December, Mars is now over 15" in size and shines at magnitude -1.3. It now rises before 6 p.m. local time and doesn't set until 11:30 a.m. the next day for a total of 17.5 hours. By way of contrast, the sun is below the horizon for 16 hours and 10 minutes. We have a wide-open observing window on Mars.

## Table of visible features:

*Week of Prominent features on disk at around 11 p.m. local time*

|                    |                                                              |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>November 7</b>  | Sinus Meridiani, Aurorae Sinus, Chryse region, Nilacus Lacus |
| <b>November 14</b> | Syrtus Major, Sinus Meridiani                                |
| <b>November 21</b> | Mare Tyrrhenum, Syrtus Major                                 |
| <b>November 28</b> | Mare Cimmerium, Mare Tyrrhenum                               |
| <b>December 5</b>  | Solus Lacus, Mare Cimmerium                                  |

We find **JUPITER** floating in the space between Ophiuchus and the Scorpion's back. It is making its way to its Conjunction with the sun, so is presently not visible in the night sky.

**SATURN** has been in a lovely conjunction with Venus in the morning sky last month, but is now left on its own with Regulus as its companion. It still is a morning planet, rising after 1:00 a.m., but it is nicely placed in the morning if you are an early riser. In the eyepiece you will see the very shallow set of rings, 7 degrees inclination, and the 17.3" diameter of the planet. It shines at magnitude 0.8. By early December, it rises just before 11:30 p.m. local time, and now shines at magnitude 0.7. The planet is now just over 18" in diameter. The moon passes 2.5 degrees below Saturn on the morning of December 1st at 2:30 a.m.

**URANUS** shines at Magnitude 5.7 and is located between Phi and Lambda Aquarius. The autumnal advancing of night has kept it prominent in our sky. In the beginning of November it transits the meridian at 10:40 p.m. In the eyepiece, it shows a distinctive blue-green 3.6" disk. On the morning of Nov 19, (the night of the 18th!) you can watch Uranus chase the Moon as they set at 1:20 a.m. local time. We see them 1.75 degrees apart when Uranus hits the horizon. In the Far East they get to see closest approach of 1.4 degrees at 10:40 UT.

At the beginning of November, **NEPTUNE** transits the meridian just after 7 p.m., and sets just before midnight. It is still a good hunt if you haven't found it so far this year, or maybe you want to see how much it has moved since those summer star parties. The 7.9 magnitude 2.28" blue disk is quite distinctive in the eyepiece, but you need a good finder chart to sort out which one it is out of the field stars. Neptune sits just above the eastern end of Capricorn, 2 degrees east of iota Capricorn.

## Note 1:

[http://www.lpl.arizona.edu/~rhill/alpo/venustuff/venus\\_proam.html](http://www.lpl.arizona.edu/~rhill/alpo/venustuff/venus_proam.html)

# The Messier, H-400 & H-400-II, FNGC, Binoc & EtU Club

**Join the Club! Observe all 110 Messier, 110 Finest NGC, 400 Herschel I or 40 Herschel II  
Explore the Universe, or 35 Binocular Objects and earn great OBSERVING CERTIFICATES!**

## MESSIER CLUB

### Certified at 110 Objects:

R.Huziak, G.Sarty, S.Alexander,  
S.Ferguson, D.Jeffrey, D.Chatfield,  
B.Christie, K.Noesgaard, M.Stephens,  
B.Hydomako, T.Tuomi, L.Scott,  
G.Charpentier, B. Johnson, M. Clancy,  
L. Dickson

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Brent Burlingham | 109 |
| Ken Maher        | 109 |
| Ron Waldron      | 105 |
| Donna May        | 97  |
| Brent Gratias    | 96  |
| Mike Oosterlaken | 93  |
| Norma Jensen     | 100 |
| Lorne Jensen     | 89  |
| Kathleen Houston | 84  |
| Margo Miller     | 77  |
| Wade Selvig      | 75  |
| Garry Stone      | 57  |
| Ellen Dickson    | 30  |
| Jeff Swick       | 24  |
| Barb Wright      | 23  |
| Brian Friesen    | 15  |
| Bruce Brandell   | 5   |

## FINEST NGC CLUB

### Certified at 110 Objects:

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D.Chatfield, T.Tuomi

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Larry Scott        | 110 |
| Scott Alexander    | 97  |
| Bill Hydomako      | 55  |
| Sandy Ferguson     | 23  |
| Mike Oosterlaken   | 20  |
| George Charpentier | 13  |
| Ken Maher          | 10  |
| Mike Clancy        | 7   |

## Chatfield BINOCULAR

### CERTIFICATE (35 Objects):

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

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Brent Gratias    | 36 |
| Mike Oosterlaken | 32 |
| Anna Clancy      | 24 |

## EXPLORE the UNIVERSE

### Certified for Certificate:

M.Clancy, T.Tuomi, K Maher, Brent  
Gratias

## HERSCHEL 400 CLUB

### Certified at 400 Objects:

D.Jeffrey, R.Huziak, D.Chatfield

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Gord Sarty       | 251 |
| Tenho Tuomi      | 222 |
| Scott Alexander  | 117 |
| Mike Oosterlaken | 68  |
| Sandy Ferguson   | 18  |

## HERSCHEL 400-II CLUB

### Certified at 400 Objects:

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Darrell Chatfield | 304 |
| Richard Huziak    | 211 |

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



On-line Messier 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>

## What's In A Name?

by Ellen Dickson

We were just going through the mailing list for the newsletters and it just hit me that we have some "interesting" names of members in our club - i.e. actors, and recipe author's.

William Campbell - Star Trek Actor - played "The Squire of Gothos" (a "Q")

Found in a Cookbook: Barbara Wright's Lemon Broccoli (The Best of Cooking with 3 Ingredients, Ruthie Wornall.)

Enjoy



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