

AURORA



Volume 33, No. 10

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada - Windsor Centre

MAY 2008

Mark Your Calendar Meeting Schedule for 2008

LAST of the current season

Tuesday, June 17th , 2008 **7:30 p.m.**

Some notable Winter/Spring 2008 Events

Aug 01 Total solar eclipse
Aug 12 Perseid meteor shower
Aug 16 Partial lunar eclipse
Oct 21 Orionid meteor shower

Observatory Open Houses

Observatory Open Houses

June 7 9:30 p.m.
July 12 9:30 p.m.
August 23 8:30 p.m.
September 6 8:00 p.m.

See www.rascwindsor.com/pages/open-house.php
for more information and updates.

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Calendar of Events

NOTE the NEW STARTING TIME

Our next meeting...

Tuesday, June 17th, 2008 **7:30 p.m.**
at
K of C Maidstone Recreation Centre
10720 County Road 34 (Old Hiway 3)

Main Speaker... T.B.A.

Topic... T.B.A.

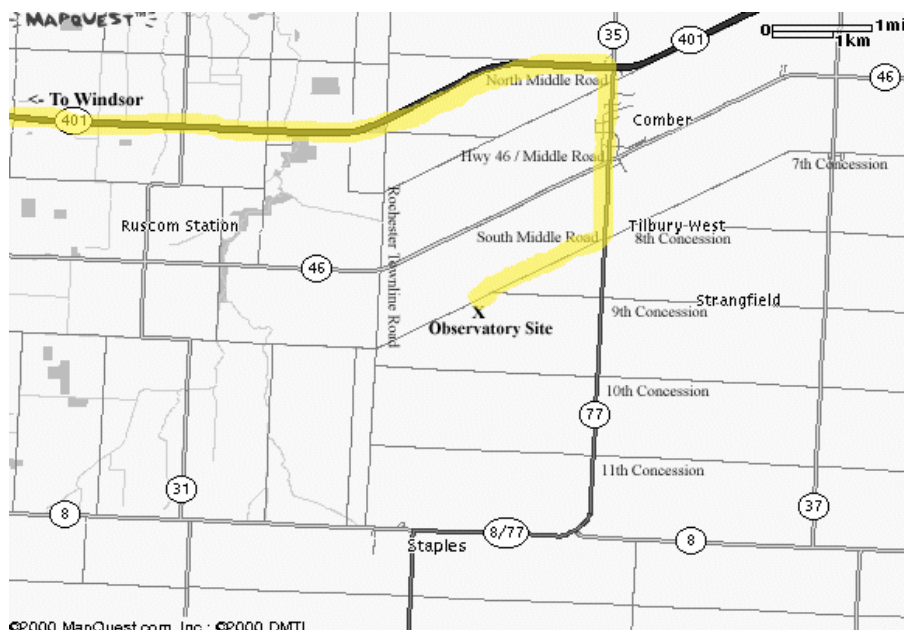
ARTH DAY at MIC MAC PARK

On Sunday April 28th, the Centre put on a display at Windsor's Annual Earth Day. Unfortunately the Sun was devoid of spots.

In attendance were the following members (I apologize if I'm missing anyone):

Susan Sawyer-Beaulieu (pictured)
and the S-B Catering Co.

Al DesRosiers (pictured)
Mike Mastronardi (pictured)
Donna Ronconi
Paul Pratt
Ken Garber
Ken Rount



Hallam Observatory Site

Directions: The map above shows the Comber area and it includes the major highways (401, 77, 8 and 46) that are in the area of the observatory.

The most direct route from Windsor is "highlighted" on the map which is to take 401 East to Highway 77 South to South Middle Road. While on South Middle Road you go about 1 kilometer and just after the barely discernable point where Concession 9 joins it you will find the observatory site on the South side of the road.

If you hit the Rochester Townline Road (i.e. you come to a stop sign and have to turn left or right) you have gone too far.

Submissions

Aurora is published monthly except for August. The October, December, February, April and June issues are full newsletters (usually 6 pages) with a number of member submitted articles. The November, January, March, May and July issues are short flyers (2 pages) with one short article. September is a dual issue with the full 6 page newsletter mailed just **before** the meeting and a flyer available **at** the meeting. Submitted articles can be of any length from a paragraph to multiple pages. I can scan pictures and/or diagrams (both prints and film) to support your article and the originals will be returned to you. Submission deadline is the 1st of the month.

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Membership

The Windsor Centre of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month (except July and August) at the K of C Maidstone Recreation Centre. In addition to regular meetings the centre hosts a number of observing nights, a picnic and a December social. Members receive a copy of the Observer's Handbook, a subscription to SkyNews magazine and access to the Centre's library and telescopes. And optionally (at extra cost) the RASC Journal (in print form—Online is free).

Annual Membership Fees: Please see the RASC website at www.rasc.ca for current rates

Contact Ken Garber at (519) 966-3478 or visit our website at: <http://www.rascwindsor.com> for more information.

MEETING MINUTES

April 15th, 2008 as compiled by Dave Panton

Chaired by Dr. Pierre Boulos

Members and visitors were welcomed to our first meeting of the Spring Season and minutes from the March meeting read. Susan Sawyer-Beaulieu made the motion to accept, Ken Rount seconded and the motion carried.

Main Presentation:

Amateur Astronomy in China

By Walter Jin

Walter provided an interesting insider's view of amateur astronomy in China. The country has interests all the way from satellite technology to space travel and has a rich history of observing the night skies and the motion of the Sun, Moon and planets. Walter reviewed some ancient Chinese mythology including flying to the Moon 3500 years ago. The Milky Way in one story represented a river separating Altair and Vega, two lovers in the night sky.

In China there are over 45,000 registered amateur astronomers on the largest website. Walter is on the same website with an interesting user name the star "Almach", chosen because it passes over his home once every 24 hours. Walter, from North East China showed lots of astrophotos taken by Chinese amateurs. In areas like Inner Mongolia they have wonderfully clear and dark skies clearly shown in wonderful photo of the Milky Way. Close to his home in China Walter shot a prize winning photo of a 30 hour old Moon with Venus.

One prominent amateur astronomer was a weather man who spent hundreds of hours hunting for comets from his remote posting. Following his death in a road accident an observatory was named in his memory, in translation "A Star is Bright". In 2008 comet 2008-C1 "Chen Gao" was named after him. China and Canada will share an eclipse of the Sun on August 1 this year. Its shadow path will pass over China and Northern Canada. Walter showed lots of Chinese astronomical documents with English sub titles. At first a bit confusing they soon showed we all share the same interest.

Walter answered questions from members. He advised do not visit in 2008 due to the high costs as a consequence of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. China manufactures lots of telescopes but they are primarily for export so many people build their own. The internet is the prime communication mechanism for amateur astronomers in spite of some restrictions. China is in an industrial growth mode and concerns like light pollution abatement are not yet a high priority.

Pierre complimented and thanked Walter for his presentation.

Then Pierre ran a DVD presentation encouraging members to register and attend the annual general assembly of RASC in Toronto June 28 29 and 30. A feature event will be a visit to MacDonald Aero Space, manufacturers of the Canadarm.

Coffee Break and 50/50 Draw

Refreshments by Tom Sobocan were enjoyed during break. The 50/50 draw, won by Paul Pratt was donated back to Windsor Centre.

Pierre announced the main talk at the May meeting will be by Harry Brydon. His topic is "Nightfall". Juliana Grigorescu will present the observers report.

Reports:

Public Relations: Tina Chichkan

Tina had to leave the meeting early so Pierre filled in and volunteers were organized to set up and staff our display at the annual Earth Day event in Mic Mac Park. Al DesRosiers will set up his solar observing telescope.

Secretary: David Panton

Nil report

Treasurer: Ken Garber

Ken reported out current bank balance is \$3537.16 and there are 98 paid up members. Ken requested donations of Canadian Tire Money to purchase odds and ends for observatory maintenance. He plans to solicit members by e-mail to help plan his order for 2009 observer's calendars.

Newsletter Editor: Ken Garber

One article is ready but Ken could use additional articles for the May and future newsletters.

Librarian: Rick Marian

Rick will shortly have a PDF file for our website. It will list all the books in our observatory library.

Public Education Director: Open

On May 10th a group of boy scouts are set to visit the observatory accompanied by Steve Pellarin. This is also open house night. Pierre recently gave the Ryerson talk on the first reflecting telescope conceived and made by Isaac Newton.

Light Pollution Abatement: Dan Taylor

Dan was absent. Randy Groundwater read a letter carefully worded by Dan and sent to members of Windsor City Council encouraging them to act regarding the grossly polluting light from the Big 3 used car lot. Another LPA matter involves the new Home Depot outlet on Cabana Road. A complaint has already been lodged via the 311 phone system.

National Council Representative: Open

Steve Mastellotto has been following affairs at National and summarized them for members. Of most immediate relevance to Windsor Centre is a pending annual dues increase to \$66. A larger portion will be rebated to local centres. Steve noted Windsor Centre does not levy an additional fee as do many other centres.

MEETING MINUTES continued

The traditional RASC observer's awards certificates excluded observers equipped with modern computer controlled telescopes. A new category of awards has been created for these observers.

Observatory Report by Steve Mastellotto

Al DesRosiers has used some donated CTC money to purchase a new kettle large enough to prepare hot drinks for several visitors at a time.

A new 777 mm F7 "Astrotech" APO refracting telescope on Losmandy mountings owned by Steve has been mounted on the Hallam C14 telescope optical tube assembly. Steve showed photographs of the installation done the day after our heaviest snow storm. Al DesRosiers and Dave Panton assisted. He also showed some of the first astrophotos taken with this setup showing the much greater utility of two telescopes working together, one aiding aiming while the other is fitted with a camera. Each has unique capabilities for different types of observing and photography. Hallam observatory is thus even better equipped.

Directorate of Observing Report:

Randy explained there would be no report this evening in view of Steve Pellarin's father passing after a long illness on the weekend.

Dorothy Hallam, Randy noted at the age of 94 also recently passed. Our connection with our founder has thus been lost. Randy read a eulogy of this very distinguished lady highlighting her many accomplishments and support of RASC Windsor. Pierre adjourned the meeting at 10:01 p.m.

Appointment with a Nova Comet by C. Joady Ulrich

Generally it is an exciting surprise when an unexpectedly bright comet is predicted and seen. It is even more of a surprise when a usually rather dim one becomes unusually brilliant. Such was the case of Comet Holmes in the latter part of last year.

On the evening of November 1, 2007, I was talking to Randy Groundwater on the telephone when he mentioned to me about a rather bright comet in the constellation of Perseus with an estimated magnitude of 2.0. He mentioned that it was readily visible in binoculars. After talking to him I went down to Alexander Park, which is across the street from my place on Riverside Drive to observe this new visitor. The park has a clear north horizon since it is beside the Detroit River. I had two small instruments of optical aid to observe with: half of a 20x50mm pair of binoculars and a hand held 10x30mm "monocular" that I use for distance viewing in the daytime. Despite the overly illuminated light polluted sky, within a few minutes I found the comet.

That odd feeling of seeing something looking obviously out of place since it was not normally visible where it was viewed helped hold my attention as I observed that intriguing object

Just as Randy had earlier said this object looked like a planetary nebula. In both the binocular and monocular views the illumination appeared uniform within the comet. I could see no brightened area indicating the coma, the inner area of the comet's tail. Its unusual shape and brightness made it a memorable comet to have seen.

I had learned that this short period in orbit comet usually was around 17.0 magnitude. A possible explanation given for its vastly increased illumination from that usual level of brightness was that a sufficient amount of fresh icy material had somehow become exposed to the comet's surface that resulted in a massive outpouring of material that then greatly increased the brightness of the comet as the ejected material expanded into the sunlight.

I also saw the comet on the following night, November 2 and noted that along with two other stars it continued to form a triangle and did not appear to be a fast moving object since it seemed to be in about the same place as it was the night before in relation to the other stars.

Shortly thereafter, later in November, I had the chance to observe the comet with Randy at the Hallam Observatory. Through the 14-inch Lee Telescope, Comet Holmes did show a horizontal elongated brighter inner coma.

Comet Holmes's surprising brilliance reminded me of a very bright nova I had seen years ago. In the latter half of 1975 I was observing the fading light of Nova Cygni in my old 8-inch f/7 Newtonian reflector. It was truly a new and interesting experience for me to watch that star's magnitude visibly diminish as time went on.

Helen Sawyer Hogg in her book *The Stars Belong to Everyone* gave the following description of that nova:

"Sky observers had a rare treat on the last days of August, 1975, when a hitherto unrecorded star in Cygnus staged a massive flare-up to millions of times its original brightness. It was discovered first by Minoru Honda of Kurashiki, Japan. ...

With the greatest rise on record for any nova, more than 19 magnitudes, it was brighter than magnitude 2.0 at maximum, and was independently discovered by hundreds of observers. For only a week it lingered at naked-eye brightness, falling about 1 magnitude a day after its maximum. Then the rate of decline slowed." (Sawyer Hogg, 1976, pg. 199).

The above quote when compared to the magnitude increase of Comet Holmes clearly indicates why I consider that object a "nova comet."

It was of interest for me to have not only been caught up in the excitement of the unusual brightness of Comet Holmes but as well to have actually seen it. Having done so, makes me wonder when will we see the next nova comet show up.

"A single gentle rain makes the grass many shades greener. So our prospects brighten on the influx of better thoughts." Henry David Thoreau. Walden, (1854), pg. 299.

Continued >>>

Earth Day at Mic Mac Park

Photos by Ken Garber



A Little Fund Raising

Got any Canadian Tire money lying around that you'd like to get rid of?

Why not donate them to the Centre?

To date we've collected more than \$100 and of that, about \$65.00 has been spent on trees planted on the grounds, oil and gas for cutting the grass, chain lube for the dome, some bug spray and even a kettle for you tea, coffee and hot chocolate drinkers.

Bring them along to any meeting and drop them off at the treasurer's table, and they will be put to good use.

Time to Renew ??

Don't forget that you can renew your membership at the treasurer's desk, by snailmail to the National, or online at the RASC 'store' at

<http://www.store.rasc.ca/>

Renewing S & T

If you are a subscriber of Sky and Telescope and have done your renewing through the Centre, you can now renew directly with S&T. You need not send your form and payment to the Centre.

If you are not a subscriber but wish to be, send your first payment to the Centre Treasurer for forwarding to S&T and you'll be able to renew directly after that.

For Sale

FOR SALE

6 inch **Meade Starfinder** Reflecting Telescope with Equatorial Mount. Package includes:

- 1 - Meade Multicoated 9mm eyepiece
- 1 - " " 12mm "
- 1 - " " 15mm Super Plossl eyepiece
- 1 - " " 25mm eyepiece
- 1 - 2x Telenegative Amplifier (Barlow), 1 - Red flashlight, 1 - Instruction Manual

Price \$550.00 (new price)

If you are interested contact John Murray at 519-944-7052 or email at jmurray100@cogeco.ca

FOR SALE

Celestron Nexstar 114GT. It is 2 years old and used once. Note this is a Goto computerized telescope and includes a 25mm eyepiece.

Asking \$200

Contact Alan King at 519-326-1361 or at jackall2@cogeco.ca

FOR SALE

Identiview 3 inch solar filter by J.M.B. Industries.

\$150.00

Contact Ken Rount at 519-738-3479

FOR SALE

Skywatcher reflector telescope in new condition having had very little use. It is a 150mm diameter tube and mirror and is 650 mm in length. It has 10mm and 25mm objectives with a 2x Barlow, a moon filter and a skylight filter. It is on an aluminum tripod with an equatorial mount and has a red dot finder scope. **\$250.00.**

If interested, please contact Stuart Kelch by e-mail to skelch@cogeco.ca

FOR SALE

Celestron Nexstar 8se, used three times, 6 months old. Paid \$1846
Phone Isaac 519 324-9766(land), 519-816-8566(cell)

Asking \$900