Saskatoon Skies

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

Volume 32, Number 02

February 2001

M51 in CVn is now rising up from a fall and winter of skimming the north horizon. With the mild winter we've had, it's time to brush the dust off of those scopes and get observing! This photo is by Al Hartridge, taken with his C-14 scope. It is reproduced as a negative.

RASC Calendar Happenings

Date (2001)	Event	Contact	Telephone
Feb. 11 - 25	**Zodiacal Light** in W after evening twilight	Rick Huziak	665-3392
Feb. 19	**Executive Meeting - Room 8313** - 6:30 pm	Les Dickson	249-1091
Feb. 19	**General Meeting - Room 8313** - 7:30 pm -	Les Dickson	249-1091
Mar. 1	**Youth Group Meeting** – Nutana - 7:30 pm	Andrew Krochko	955-1543
Mar 19	**Executive Meeting - Room 8313** - 6:30 pm	Les Dickson	249-1091
Mar 19	**General Meeting - Room 8313** - 7:30 pm - Paul Campbell, Edmonton Centre	Les Dickson	249-1091
Mar.19 - 31	**Messier Marathon** Opportunity	Rick Huziak	665-3392
Mar. 30	**Youth Group Meeting** – Nutana - 7:30 pm	Andrew Krochko	955-1543
Apr. 16	**Executive Meeting - Room 8313** - 6:30 pm	Les Dickson	249-1091
Apr. 16	**General Meeting - Room 8313** - 7:30 pm -	Les Dickson	249-1091
Apr. 27	**Youth Group Meeting** – Nutana - 7:30 pm	Andrew Krochko	955-1543
Apr. 28	**Astronomy Day** at Confederation Mall	Mike Stephens	682-5989

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; **7X35 Marksman binoculars** with case: and some very good astro books: *Skywatching* and *Advanced Skywatching*, by David Levy, *Nightwatch* by T. Dickinson, National Audubon Society *Field Guide to the Night Sky*; *the Pocket Guide to Astronomy* by I. Ridpath. All books are in excellent shape. Call Darrell Chatfield for prices at 374-9278.

For Sale: Nearly new Meade 10" LX200 with acce[SOLD!] Hardly used. Includes 2 power supplies, 3 eyepieces, carrying bag, Meade dew shield. $[SOLD!]BO. Call Richard Allen at 665-5769.

Wanted: Spider and 2" - 2-1/4" diagonal for 10" scope. Will buy or trade for as separate items. Call Rick Huziak at 665-3392.

Saskatoon Centre

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Copy - Brian Friesen & WBM
Collate - Friesen, Christie, Dicksons, Ferguson, Essar & Krochko

IN THIS ISSUE

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 <huziak@SEDSystems.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.

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME COMMENTARY

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME - A THIRD OPTION

by Stan Shadick, U of S Dept. of Physics & Engineering Physics, < Shadick@sask.usask.ca>

The recent SUMA resolution advocating that Saskatchewan should switch to Daylight Saving Time has unleashed a storm of controversy. Now we are faced with allowing politicians to choose our time-keeping system - a role that traditionally has been the responsibility of astronomers.

Our planet's natural timekeeper is the Sun. Its rising and setting affects our daily and nightly activities. If we used a sundial for tracking time, we would discover that our present time system is already in error by about 1 hour. Switching to Central Daytime Time would double this error. Such political gerrymandering of the time zone map is unacceptable.

To understand this problem, try looking for the Sun at 12 noon when it is supposed to be due south. You will instead find it well east of south. If we adopted Central Daylight Time, the Sun's southerly crossing would be delayed even more from about 1 p.m. at present, until 2 p.m.

Such a change would have unfortunate consequences overlooked by the politicians. It would create problems due to the time zone change for businesses and families wishing to communicate or travel in spring, summer or fall between Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The extra hour of evening daylight also means that students and others would have a hard time getting to sleep at night. Do we want our high school students to wake up tired when they need to write their final exams?

Stargazers would lose out in this switch. The University of Saskatchewan Observatory currently draws over 7000 visitors each year. Changing to Central Daylight Time would mean that we would need to shut this tourist attraction down in summer because stars would no longer be visible until after midnight - too late for the many young families and youth groups that visit our facility. Do we really want to deny our youth the opportunity to view the rings of Saturn through a telescope?

The problem would similarly create problems for the Astronomy undergraduate programs at the University of Saskatchewan. Our university students would lose 1 hour from the time available for them to complete weekly evening telescope labs. This loss of lab time would exacerbate a shortage of lab equipment in this program.

When faced with deciding between the present system and the proposed Central Daylight time option, respondents to a recent CBC Morning Edition poll voted by a slim margin to retain our current time system. I would personally be happy to follow their wishes. The present *made-in-Saskatch*ewan system has served us very well. A switch to Central Daylight time would be a disaster.

I do recognize the economic advantages of keeping in step with the rest of the nation and switching to daylight time in summer. ***Is there an acceptable compromise?***

Yes there is - a Third Option that more closely follows our solar timekeeper. Let's follow the lead of our Alberta neighbours and switch to Mountain Standard Time in winter and Mountain Daylight Time in summer. Because Alberta has twice the population of Manitoba, Saskatchewan residents have far more family and business ties with our western neighbours than our eastern cousins.

Because Mountain Daylight Time is the same as Central Standard Time, we would continue to enjoy our long summer evenings to which we have become accustomed. A change to Mountain Standard Time in

winter would have the additional advantage of allowing us to rise for work or school when it is daylight instead of getting up in the dark as we are presently forced to do.

What do you think, Saskatchewan? If we do need to change time systems, then let's do it right and move in step with the Sun.

Stan Shadick is an astronomy lecturer at the University of Saskatchewan and author of the Skywatcher's Calendar 2001. Stan is also a member of the Saskatoon Centre.

Membership Update

by Rick Huziak - Acting Membership Coordinator (ubtil Bob's return)

The following are changes to the Membership List published in the January issue of Saskatoon Skies.

Renewed and New Members

David Cornish, 37 Cathedral Bluffs Road, Corman Park, SK, S7P 1A1, david.cornish@sk.sympatico.ca, 242-7125, RS

Brent Gratias, 46, Jalan Izuddin Shah, 34000 Taiping, Perak, Malaysia, brentandtracey@malaysia.net

Beverly Harding, PO Box 2922, Humboldt, SK, S0K 2A0, R

Kathleen Houston, 171 River Street East, Prince Albert, SK, S6V 0A2, macintosh.houston@sk.sympatico.ca, 922-8836, R

Stan Noble, Box 142, Aneroid, SK, S0N 0C0, snoble@t2.net, 588-2690, R

Kenneth Noesgaard, 246 Assiniboine Drive, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 4A2, ken.noesgaard@siemens.ca, 931-4755, RES, 8" Dob.

John Takala, 2602 Cascade Street, Saskatoon, SK, S7J 0N1, john_takala@cameco.com, 668-3998, R, 8"Antares, 4"Meade, 10x50 bin

Nigel West, 420 Lake Cres., Saskatoon, SK, S7H 3A4, 665-5793, west@sask.usask.ca

Corrections

Bob Christie - new email address: Rnebulachristie@aol.com

Chris Dean - change postal code to S0J 2A0

Ruben Eckerman - deleted - has not renewed

John Leppert - corrected city, zip code, phone no. & e-mail: Bismarck, ND, 58504-8922, tel: (704) 222-3283, <johnleppert@peoplepc.com>

Mike Oosterlaken - corrected street: 1342 College Drive E

Ken Staranchek - corrected street: 231 Willoughby Cres.

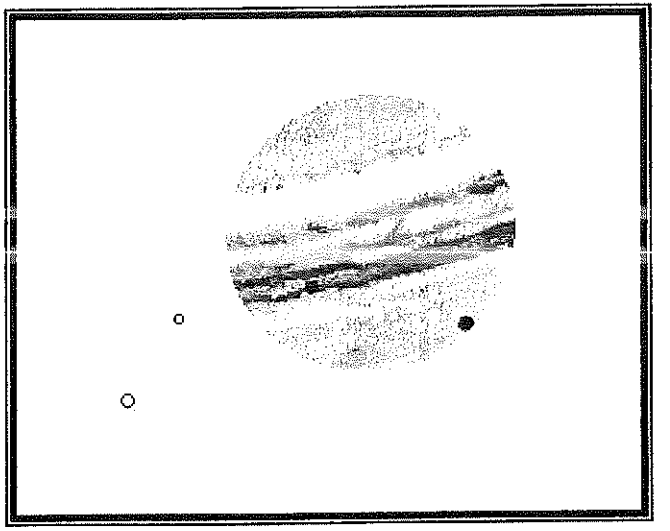
The Planets This Month

By Murray D. Paulson, Edmonton Centre, RASC

The beginning of February saw **Mercury** at perihelion, only 0.31 au away from the sun. Mercury's orbit is quite eccentric and in just over one month's time, it will have made it to the other extreme of its orbit - aphelion, where it will sit at 0.47 au from the sun. We have just gone from a rather favorable evening apparition, and Mercury will be lost in the sun's glare over the next month. On February 12 it was at inferior conjunction with the sun and only 3-3/4 degrees directly above! At magnitude 4.5, this is not an event that has much potential. When it's proximity to the sun is more favorable for observation, it makes a fine daytime target since the sun is now marching up the ecliptic.

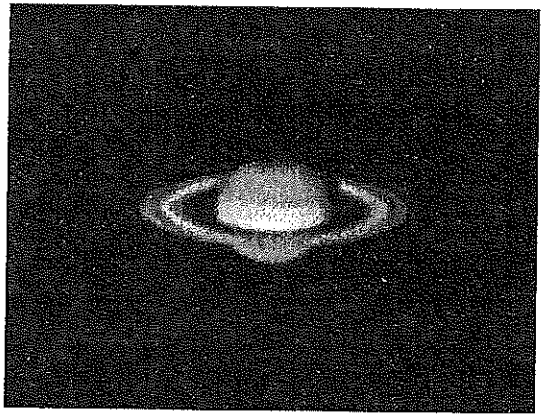
Venus will reach perihelion on the 22nd of February at 0.72 au. Its nearly circular orbit produces an aphelion that is only at 0.73 au. Venus is starting to swell dramatically in the evening sky. It has just passed its greatest eastern elongation and has started to fall in the evening sky. It starts off this month at a 34" thick crescent shining at a dazzling -4.6 magnitude, and sets 4-1/2 hours after sunset at around 10 p.m. Its pure white cloud tops make it the brightest whitest object in the evening sky. By early in March, it will be a thin sliver of a crescent, with a 53.5" width. It will have only dimmed fractionally to -4.4 magnitude and will set just over 2.5 hours after sunset at 9:15 p.m. This phase of its orbit is great to watch as Venus swells in the eyepiece and its crescent changes dramatically from week to week. You will notice that its set time doesn't change all that much over the month, but sunset does! The sun is now racing up the ecliptic and Venus just seems to float northward. The 29th – 30th of March will see Venus at inferior conjunction with the sun, exactly 8 degrees above it. This will be discussed in next month's installment and this type of Venus conjunction is not to be missed! Venus and the moon are symmetrically disposed about the ecliptic on February 26, 11 degrees apart. This shows how far the moon strays from the ecliptic, but Venus has a ways to go before topping out.

The gas giants are now well placed for early evening viewing. Taurus will never be the same! **Jupiter** starts off February with a 40.5" disk shining at magnitude -2.5 and by the beginning of March will have retreated to 5.315 au with a 37" disk. By then, at magnitude -2.2, it will set 7 hours after sunset. Spring will see the snows thaw and the planets disappear from the night sky. It kind of gives me mixed feelings! Jupiter's moons continue to play their shadows on Jupiter's great face. The dual shadow transits are quite a lark. The one I witnessed was an **Io - Ganymede** event on January 14. I caught the pair of shadows just after Ganymede entered and just before Io's shadow left. Io was just off preceding Jupiter and was rather close to the planet, it's shadow mirrored it's distance from the limb nested in the South Equatorial Belt. Ganymede on the other hand was just beyond



and below Io but it's shadow was on the opposite limb on the South Polar Region of Jupiter. I have included a ***Skytools*** simulation image of the event as seen through a mirror diagonal. This was a neat case of foreshortening that demonstrated the individual distances of the two moons. I have a short list of interesting events for the following month. Mark your calendar. The first event is interesting because of the reappearance of **Europa** from behind Jupiter followed so closely by the moon's disappearance into eclipse. If you return 2 hrs and 40 minutes later you can see it reappear from the veil of Jupiter's shadow. The last event is cool because it involves 3 of Jupiter's moons with a potpouri of events. Remember the listings are universal time! 0:35 on the 15 UT is actually at 6:35 p.m. local time on the 14th.

I continue to watch the play of the **Saturn's** shadow on the rings, elongating as the season progresses. Saturn's great distance minimizes the variations in it's size, so it will stay about 18" in diameter and the ring system will provide excellent views for the rest of its season. *That system of moons!* The dramatic tilt places them in an array about Saturn that describes the plane of their orbit and I, with my telescope, experience a sense of their dimensionality. The moon's orbits are tilted just like the rings and it is amazing where you can find **Titan** or **Iapetus**, not to mention the rest of the lot! A 6-day old **moon** will join Jupiter and Saturn on the night of March 1st. It will sit below and halfway between them.



Uranus and **Neptune** are lost for the moment in the glare of the sun, but **Pluto** is sneaking closer to our rather narrow observing window. Springtime offers us a brief glimpse at it before May's twilight sneaks up and steals the show.

Jupiter's Moons Event Table

Date	time	moon	event
02/15	0:35	II	OcR
	0:38	II	EcD
	3:18	II	EcR
02/20	2:42	III	ShI
	4:55	III	ShE
02/27	1:21	III	TrI
	3;38	III	TrE
	6:43	III	ShI
	8:52	II	TrI
	8:58	III	ShE

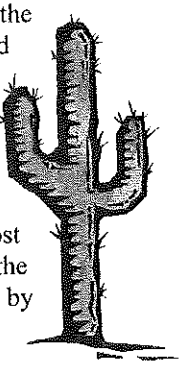
Date	time	moon	event
03/10	0:40	III	EcD
	0:50	II	TrI
	2:59	III	EcR
	3:21	II	ShI
	3:26	II	TrE
	3:36	I	OcD
	5:57	II	ShE
	7:04	I	EcR

Murray can be reached at mpaulson@ecn.ab.ca.

A Winter Texan Astronomy Report

by Bob Christie, RASC Saskatoon AWOL member < Rnebulachristie@aol.com>

How y'all. Well partners, the night sky down here in the Rio Grande Valley, approximately 26 degrees north latitude, is a little different than in Saskatoon, over 4000 kilometers via highway 83 to the north. At the west and east horizons the ecliptic is vertical with Leo pointing with its head straight up. The ecliptic is so high in the sky that the planets Jupiter and Saturn are directly overhead at the zenith. This makes them much harder to observe and show to other interested parties. I didn't bring my clock driven telescope mount with me, and that further compromises my efforts. Venus is so bright and also a lot higher in the evening sky. Sirius is high up in the southern direction, with lots of "new-to-me" stars below. Orion seems more on edge. The crescent moon looks like the smile on the Cheshire Cat, with the crescent almost horizonal at the botton of the moon sphere. I plan on having an astronomy viewing night for the local park residents. Those with astronomy software can check out what the sky looks like here by selecting Brownsville, TX. or approximately 97 degrees W longitude, 26 degrees N latitude.



News from the SSSP 2001 Committee

by L. C. Dickson <lcdickson@sk.sympatico.ca>

Looks like it's time to get the 2001 edition of SSSP off and running. Here are some highlights of our first organizational meeting. Alan Dyer has agreed to be our keynote speaker and do a Saturday afternoon session on basic astronomy. We also have the resort at CHIP confirmed, so now we have to sort out the fee schedule and put together a brochure. As always, there is a great deal of work to do, so if any members would like to participate in the SSSP Committee and help to bring the 2001 Saskatchewan Summer Star Party into form, please contact me, or attend the next organization meeting. This meeting date will be set at the February 19 general meeting.

Astronomical Events Calendar

Date (2001)	Event
Feb 20	Neptune 2° N of Moon
Feb 20	Mercury 6° N of Moon
Feb 22	Venus at perihelion (greatest brilliancy)
Feb 23	New Moon
Feb 24	Asteroid Vesta 0.2° S of Moon
Feb 25	Mercury stationary
	Asteroid Juno 1° N of Moon
Feb 26	Venus 11° N of Moon
Feb 27	Comet Kohoutek at perihelion (1.787 AU)
Mar 1	Saturn 2° N of Moon
Mar 2	Jupiter 3° N of Moon
Mar 3	1st Quarter Moon
Mar 4	Mars 5° N of Antares
Mar 7	Venus stationary
Mar 9	Full Moon
Mar 10	Mercury 0.1° N of Uranus
Mar 11	Mercury greatest elongation W (27°)
Mar 12	Zodiacal light visible in W next 2 weeks
Mar 13	Double shadow transit of Jupiter
Mar 15	Mars 1.8° S of Moon
Mar 16	3d Quarter Moon
Mar 18	Asteroid Ceres 0.5° S of Moon
Mar 20	Spring Equinox 13:31 UT

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Saskatoon Centre Incorporated
Balance Statement
September 30, 2000 and 1999

	2000	1999
Current Assets:		
Cash	10,492.24	7,704.76
Telescope fund	2,221.50	2,651
($434 to clean & coat telescope parts)		
Raffle account	395.71	395.71
Inventory books	400.50	77.70
Deposit Cypress Hills	513	319
Total current assets	14,022.95	11,148.17
Fixed assets @ cost:		
Office equipment	2,225	2,225
Sleaford observatory	7,485.89	6,595.50
Warmup shelter	10,231.87	8,451.07
	19,942.76	17,271.57
less accumulated amortization	11,502.18	10,666.09
	8,440.58	6,605.48
Library	1	1
Equipment	7,326	7,326
Total Fixed Assets and Equipment	15,767.58	13,932.48
	29,790.53	25,069.94
Liabilities and Equity:		
Accounts Payable	62.65	-
Deferred Revenue	400.50	77.70
Prepaid membership	232	285
total current liabilities	695.15	362.70
Equity:		
(per accompanying statement)	29,084.09	24,678.05

2001/1/17

2001/1/17

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Saskatoon Centre Incorporated
Income Statement
September 30, 2000 and 1999

		2000	1999
Income:			
Membership fees	regular	2,412.94	2,182.50
	youth	225.00	
Life member grants		43.20	57.60
Member surcharge (newsletter)		289.50	233
Member surcharge (key)		25	25
Donations		5,680.86	871
Cypress Hills Star Party		6,513.88	6,576.40
Books: Observers Handbook			
Firefly books			
Heritage books			
Skywatchers Trivia calendar			
RASC calendars			
Astrophotography handbooks			
	total:	1,493.96	1,896.88
Advertising		-	30
Raffle and bingo		-	364.65
Telescope rentals		85	40
Interest		9.25	8.69
Miscellaneous		66.32	258.06
		16,844.91	12,543.78
Expenses:			
Fees to National Office		1,587.58	1,552.50
Newsletters and Postage		826.52	650.56
Educational Activities		252.12	105.17
Star Party		5,539.34	5,027
Books:Observers Handbook			366.64
Beginners Observers Guide			122.63
Firefly books			437.35
Heritage books			150.66
Astrophotography books			60
RASC calendars			256.80
	total:	1,327.18	
Library		55.20	11.77
Office Administration		149.96	170.55

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Saskatoon Centre Incorporated
Income Statement
September 30, 2000 and 1999

Insurance	346	331
Sleaford	678.17	212.01
Sleaford (to U of S)	840.71	
total expenses	11,602.78	9,454.64
surplus before amortization	5,242.13	3,089.14
Amortization	836.09	836.09
Net income	4,406.04	2,253.05
Equity beginning of year	24,678.05	22,425.00
Equity end of year	29,084.09	24,678.05

Notes to Financial Statements
September 30, 2000 and 1999

Significant Accounting Policies

a) Observatory and buildings are recorded at cost and are amortized using the straight-line method over 20 years.
b) Observing equipment is recorded at cost and is not amortized.
c) Library items are carried in the accounts at a nominal value of $1, new additions are expensed during the current period.
d) Office equipment is recorded at cost and amortized using the straight-line method over 3 years.

Notice of the General Meeting of the Saskatoon Centre

Monday, February 19, 2001 at 7:30 p.m.

Room 8313 City Hospital

Presenting

Something Wonderful (the Students can't make it – it's the Break!)

U of S Observatory Hours

The U of S Observatory is open to the general public every Saturday in February from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 pm.. Admission if 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, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus and other exciting astronomical objects. For further information, phone the recorded Astronomy Information Line at 966-6429.

Executive Members

Please remember that if you are on the executive council, we meet one hour prior to the General Meeting (6:30 p.m.) in Room 8313, in order to discuss Centre business. If you cannot make these times for some reason, please contact President Les Dickson early enough that he may brief others on matters you may be working on in your absence.

Interested in Saskatoon RASC Membership?

Regular - $48.00 per year
Youth - $26.00 per year

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 2001
- 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!

Saskatoon Centre Books for Sale

Books For Sale: The Saskatoon Centre has a number of Firefly Books left over form SSSP sales, and these are now available to general members to purchase at discount rates! There are only one or two copies remaining of the following titles. Contact Debbie Anderson at 242-8854.

Astronomy Quiz Book - $10.00
Big Bang to Planet X - $10.00
Exploring the Night Sky - $8.00
Exploring the Sky by Day - $8.00

Other Worlds - $8.00
The Universe and Beyond - $20.00
Cosmic Phenomenon - $25.00
Extraterrestrials - $8.00

International Space Station and Mir Visible Evening Passes Feb 20 to Mar 19, 2001

The ISS has had its Science Module added by the Space Shuttle Atlantis on February 10th. This makes the station bigger and just a little brighter. Try following this speedster in your telescope and try to see its shape. I haven't been able to distinguish the outline of the ISS, but I have seen MIR as a cross-shape in my 10-inch scope. MIR is still scheduled to be de-orbited in February, so this may be your last chance to see this amazing vehicle. [Data taken from "Heavens-Above" website (http://heavens-above.com) for location Saskatoon (52.133N, 106.667W)]. Data by Les Dickson. Visibility comments by Rick Huziak.

International Space Station

Date	Mag	Starts			Max			End		
		Time	Alt	Dir	Time	Alt	Dir	Time	Alt	Dir
Feb 20	0.2	19:43	10	W	19:46	40	SSW	19:48	16	SE
Feb 21	1.4	20:10	10	W	20:12	21	SSW	20:14	14	S
Feb 22	0.5	10:01	10	W	19:04	38	SSW	19:06	10	SE
Feb 23	1.7	19:27	10	W	19:30	19	SSW	19:32	10	SSE

Mir

Date	Mag	Starts			Max			End		
		Time	Alt	Dir	Time	Alt	Dir	Time	Alt	Dir
Feb 24	1.2	19:59	10	S	20:00	14	SSE	20:00	14	SSE
Feb 25	0.5	19:58	10	SSW	19:59	21	SSE	20:00	21	SSE
Feb 26	-0.1	19:56	10	SW	19:58	29	SSE	19:59	26	SE
Feb 27	-0.5	19:54	10	SW	19:57	40	SSE	19:58	28	ESE
Feb 28	-0.9	19:53	10	WSW	19:55	54	SSE	19:56	26	E

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING

for January 15, 2001, Room 8313, City Hospital

recorded by Al Hartridge, Secretary <ahartrid@sk.sympatico.ca>

1. Minutes of December meeting approved.
2. Open positions on the Executive. The position of Observer's Group Coordinator is still open as Ken Noesgaard is unable to accept the position. Darrell Chatfield and Rick Huziak can be phoned by people who are wanting to go out to Sleaford.
3. Membership: There are 63 paid up members as of this meeting. Les and Rick will call stragglers. Rick will e-mail Les a copy of the membership list on a regular basis. National should supply a list of expiry dates for members.
4. Honoury President: Halyna Turley will be asked to take the position, Yannis was also suggested.
5. SSSP 2001update: The first planning meeting will be held at Sandy Ferguson's at 2:00 p.m. Sunday Jan.21st. Things to look at include: a new Logo, price structures, subdivision of labor, etc. Alan Dyer will be the featured speaker. He also is willing to give a 2-hr. workshop for beginners on Saturday afternoon.
6. Treasurers Report: Total Income is $17,278.91. Expenses are $12,036.78.
7. Sleaford: Rick, Bill, Darrell, and Mike were out yesterday, the wiring is essentially complete, the building has been cleaned up, counters have been installed above the lockers and a second table is up.
8. Youth Group: Number remains at six members.
9. Library Committee: Ellen and Sandy still have to get together. Darrell has the OG Handbook destined for Sleaford. He will take it out to the observatory.
10. Book sales for December were $62.50. Nearly all the books ordered in September have been sold.
11. New Business
    - Bottles are still being collected and the funds submitted to our treasury. Darrell has a cheque for $28.00.
    - Expenses for displays at the last GA in Winnipeg have been submitted by Ken Noesgaard. Rick Huziak moved that Ken be reimbursed in full and the cap established be ignored in this case. Seconded by Jim Young and carried. This will cost the club another $28.00.
    - Legal Status for the site: there is an agreement in principal but the agreement is still not signed.
12. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Minutes of the General Meeting

Room 8313, City Hospital, January 15, 2001, 7:30 p.m.

recorded by Al Hartridge, Secretary <ahartrid@sk.sympatico.ca>

1. Minutes of December meeting approved.
2. Agenda for the meeting approved.
3. Ken Noesgaard's expenses incurred at the GA in Winnipeg will be covered in full ignoring the cap previously established.
4. SSSP 2001 Update: The money has been sent to the resort to reserve the meeting room and block of rooms. Alan Dyer will be the featured guest speaker for the star party.
5. Membership Report: 63 paid up members to date.
6. Treasures Report, see figures in executive minutes.
7. Sleaford Report: see executive minutes. In April or May an official reopening of the warm up shelter will be held. This will probably include a barbeque.
8. Library: Ellen and Sandy are planning for a sort and store get together. They would appreciate lots of help.
9. Youth Group: No change in status.
10. Books Sales: Calendars are gone, as are most of the books. The Messier cards are also gone.

11. New Business:
    - John has been nominateded as a councillor but he has not yet excepted the position.
    - Lorne Jensen is in need of low and high power eyepieces and wonders whether anybody has any to sell.
    - The family membership for our Centre still has to be sorted out by the Executive.
    - Astronomy Day will be on April 28th at either the Confederation Mall or Lawson Heights Mall.
12. Meeting adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

The Meade 60EQ Refractor - a Biased Opinion

by Rick Huziak

I have recently had the great misfortune of observing (or *attempting* to observe) through this contraption which is advertised to be a telescope. The Meade 60EQ refractor at first glance appears to be a reasonable scope with an apparently well-coated doublet objective. But this is where the apparent quality stops.
The young gentleman who proudly showed me the scope told me that he was having trouble finding objects. Since I grew up with a 60mm scope, I though that I might be able to help him. In 5 minutes, I felt for him.

The 60EQ has a 60mm aperture (2.4 inches) and a focal length of 900mm, so it is an f/15 system. It comes with an equatorial mount, slow motion knobs, a wooden tripod, 3 – 0.965-inch Huygens eyepieces, and a 5 x 25 spotter. It also comes with very poor instructions on how to set it up and maintain it.

Upon pulling out the legs of the tripod to attempt to get the scope up to a decent observing level, I found that amazingly, although the tripod was about 2 feet long to start, the legs only extended out an additional 6- or 8-inches. Therefore, at a height of 2-1/2 feet, this scope is too short for even the shortest astronomers I know. Looking at the zenith would cause you to place your head about one foot from the ground!

After struggling to find a craned observing position, I noticed that the finder mounted so sloppily on the scope tube that it could not be tightened into a firm position. (Gluing it would work better). However, that really didn't matter, since this 5 x 25 (and stopped down!) plastic-lensed wonder is impossible to look through anyway. It provided a badly formed chromatic image of Saturn so distorted that it looked as if I was looking through a lens badly smeared with Vaseline! (It reminds me of my view through the "Chatfield Filter" where Darrell forgot to take the plastic cover off of one end of an eyepiece). Anything fainter than Saturn (at 1st magnitude) was not visible in this spotter! (A simple 1x gun-sight finder would work better).

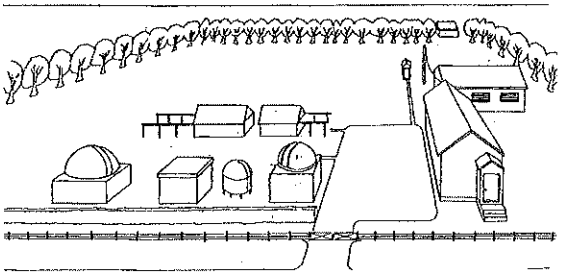
I attempted to point the poorly aligned finder at Saturn and struggled to locate the planet, since the RA and dec bearings had about 1 degree of play in them. As I found the planet in the scope and turned the lock knob, everything would "settle" and the planet would move out of the field of view. Once finally found, I looked in the main scope though a 12.5 mm "lowest power" eyepiece to get 72x magnification. And I was once again vastly disappointed. Saturn was a fuzzy blob. No amount of playing with the focuser could sharpen the image. The likely reason for this fuzziness, besides the poor eyepieces, was that the draw tube would sag by 2 mm or more as it was pulled out of the scope, thus destroying the optical alignment.

Luckily, the full moon was out and thus I did have at least one object in the sky that might be viewable with this scope. Well – not really. It was coated with "Vaseline", too.

For those who may have bought this scope, I hope yours is working better than the one I described. But if they all work this badly, we will have a new generation of beginning astronomers who will rather watch TV! I don't blame them! Please do not buy this telescope – and mention to vendors that carry it that they most likely should not! In the March issue, less complaining! I will present an article that will help you choose your ***first love***!

The Sleaford Observatory

Longitude: **105 deg 55' 13" +/- 13" W** ***Latitude:*** **52 deg 05' 04" +/- 08" N, tel.: (306) 255-2045**
by Rick Huziak



Warm-up Shelter – Well – It's finally done, more or less. A work party by Bill Hydomako, Darrell Chatfield, Mike Stephens and I, and a second one by Bill and I virtually completed what needed to be done. Counters are now installed on the lockers; there is a formal "kitchen area", the 2nd observer's table is in place, everything is cleaned up, and the panels are finally back on the power wall! We also mounted an electric hand warmer and eyepiece defogger. **It's now time to use the site!** No more excuses! Minor additions will still be added – a bookshelf, a key box, chart tables and flooring by the spring or sooner.

U of S Roll-off Observatory - The C-14, Meade 8, LX-200 and their computers have all been removed for servicing until further notice. We have had some discussions about "cross-training" RASC members to use this observatory and it's equipment. Details will be worked out in the next few months by the Sleaford Joint Committee.

Missing Supplies - We have found the "missing supplies". They were not taken from the site. They were only stored in an unusual location during a school clean-up for the last open house.

Observer's Group Sessions

by Rick Huziak and Darrell Chatfield

Since no one volunteered for the Executive position of Observing Group Coordinator, we have a large gap in the club, without an organized observing program. Darrell and I are coming to the temporary rescue, and we have volunteered as *'acting OG dudes'* for the time being. Although we will not have a formal observing session time or program, both of us make it to the site now and then, and company is always welcome.

Darrell has more family commitments than I do, so he has limited times that he can go out, and he prefers observing times during the two weeks around new moon, when deep sky objects can be best hunted down. I can go out to the site any day of the week except Friday evenings (though I may have a few Fridays open for the next month). I also do not particularly care if the moon is out, since the sky is filled with objects that can be observed during moonlit periods, such as double stars, variable stars, planets, brighter open clusters, asteroids, etc. I also do not care how cold it might be. (We do have a warm-up shelter!)

One problem is that both us enjoy staying quite late if we go out, so it is best that you bring your own vehicle. But if you do not have a ride, give me a call, and we will see what we can do! Please do not feel shy about giving one of us a call anytime you feel like observing.

Call Darrell at 374-9278 and Rick at 665-3392.