

Saskatoon Skies

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2007

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



COMET MCNAUGHT PAYS A VISIT

A few people found breaks in the January cloud cover to photograph comet McNaught when it was at its brightest in the middle of the month. One of them was our own Observer's Group Coordinator who took this picture on January 11. Read more about it inside.

Photo by Larry Scott



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THE COMET WITH CHARISMA!

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
- 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.*

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

Thanks to everyone we have collected \$188.75 in Canadian Tire Money! If you cannot make it to a meeting but would like to contribute, your Canadian Tire money please call me at 374-9278.

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

**LIGHT POLLUTION
ABATEMENT
WEBSITE AT:
www.ras.sk.ca/lpc/lpc.htm**

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>. 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

Feb 09	Observers Group - 8:00 p.m., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Feb 12	RASC Executive Meeting – 6:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Feb 12	RASC General Meeting – 7:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Mar 09	Observers Group - 8:00 p.m., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Mar 16 & 17	Messier Marathon - Dusk, Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Mar 19	RASC Executive Meeting - 6:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Mar 19	RASC General Meeting - 7:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U. of S	Garry Stone	857-4707
Apr 13	Observers Group - 8:00 p.m., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Apr 16	RASC Executive Meeting – 6:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Apr 16	RASC General Meeting – 7:30 p.m., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Apr 21	International Astronomy Day	Jeff Swick	373-3902
Apr 21	RASC RAFFLE	Darrell Chatfield	374-9278
Jun 28 – Jul 1 RASC General Assembly (Calgary)			



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

Title

Author

Avail

Price

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i># Avail</i>	<i>Price</i>
Calendars			
RASC 2007	RASC	10	\$14.00
Night Watcher	S. Schadick	3	\$18.00
Miscellaneous			
RASC Centennial Mug		2	\$5.00
RASC Stickers, blue or white		lots	\$1.00
SSSP 2001 Pin (Summer Triangle)		29	\$2.00
SSSP 2002 Pin (Comet)		17	\$2.00
SSSP 2006 Pin (10)		17	\$5.00
Books			
The Backyard Astronomer's Guide	Dickinson & Dyer	2	\$45.00
The Beginner's Observer's Guide	L. Enright	2	\$19.00
Observer's Handbook 2006	RASC	5	10.00
Observer's Handbook 2005	RASC	1	5.00
Isabelle Williamson Lunar Observing Program	RASC	8	\$10.00

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i># Avail</i>	<i>Price</i>
Books			
Skyways – Astronomy Handbook for Teachers	M.L. Whitehorne	2	\$20.00
Exploring the Sky by Day	T. Dickinson	2	\$9.50
Exploring the Night Sky	T. Dickinson	2	\$9.50
Night Watch	T. Dickinson	2	\$33.00
Summer Stargazing	T. Dickinson	1	\$18.00
Night Sky Atlas	R. Scagell	3	\$27.00
Stargazing with a Telescope	R. Scagell	2	\$14.00
The Moon Observer's Guide	P. Grego	2	\$14.00
Stars	Zim, Baker & Chartrand	1	\$10.00
Firefly Astronomy Dictionary	Firefly	3	\$14.00
Pocket Sky Atlas	R.Sinnott	2	\$24.50
Deep-Sky Wonders	W. Houston	2	\$24.50
Mars Observer's Guide	N. Bone	2	\$14.00
Deep Sky Observer's Guide	N. Bone	2	\$14.00
Practical Astronomy	S. Dunlop	2	\$14.00
Field Map of the Moon	Sky & Telescope	1	\$12.50
Moon Map (laminated)	Sky & Telescope	4	\$6.00
Messier Card	Sky & Telescope	7	\$5.00
Saskatoon's Stone	W.K. Mysyk & C.L. Kulyk	4	\$3.00

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12 7:30 PM

ROOM 175, U OF S



Aurora Borealis – Jean-Pierrs St. Maurice, Canada Research Chair,
U. of S. Institute of Space & Atmospheric Sciences

Note: There will be an executive meeting at 6:30 p.m. in room 175.

**To Make a Charitable donation
to RASC Saskatoon Centre**

write a cheque out to RASC and place on the bottom that the donation is to the Saskatoon centre – a tax receipt will be issued in December of that year . Mail or give to the current treasurer.

SKY BUYS & MIRROR CELLS

The Saskatoon Centre's Swap and Sale Page!

FOR LOAN TO MEMBERS:

Slide set for talks on general astronomy and light pollution. You can borrow this set any time you want to give a talk to your favourite group. Contact Rick Huziak at 665-3392.

Minutes of the Executive Meeting

January 15, 2007

by Al Hartridge

Minutes of the General Meeting

January 15, 2007

by Al Hartridge

1. Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes of the November 2006 meeting. Moved by Ron Waldron , seconded by Jim Young and carried.
3. Report regarding vote on waiving of audit by Norma Jensen . Signing of the statement to that effect, Gary Stone and Barb Wright. A motion was made by Barb Wright and seconded by Gary Stone and carried that the audit review for the 2005-2006 fiscal year be waived.
4. RASC Centre's Entry and Exit Survey Program-generated by central office will be sent to new and expired members.
5. Waiving of Audit- Jim Gorkoff suggests the audit should be waived by resolution at the beginning of each fiscal year. This should be done in the future at the October meeting. Jim also talked about what is on record at the Corporations Branch regarding our centre. He has reviewed our bylaws and some changes are suggested. He also suggested there be as few members acting as directors as possible.
6. Laser pointer- Ron Waldron moved that the observing coordinator be responsible for maintaining the laser pointer for Sleaford. Seconded by Les Dickson and carried. Ron said he would be willing to lend Yannis his personal laser pointer.
7. Meeting Adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

1. Meeting called to order at 7:35 p.m.
2. Approval of the minutes of the November 2006 meeting. Moved by Mike Clancy, seconded by Ellen Dickson and carried.
3. Events committee: Jeff mentioned there have been only a few out for observing because of the cold weather. Kathleen and Jeff have taken on the duties of registration for the 2007 star party.
A Messier marathon will be organized in March and Astronomy Day will be held in the spring.
4. Membership: Mike Clancy stated that 82 members belong to the centre at present. Rick Huziak requested that a membership list be distributed to all members once per year.
5. Newsletter: Deadline for articles, etc. will be Jan.22.
6. Fundraising: Darrell has used Canadian Tire money to buy tools for Sleaford.
Raffle money is coming in. Darrell would like volunteers to work at Malls on some Saturdays to help sell tickets.
7. Light Pollution: over 200 letters have been sent regarding Casino lighting to SIGA and to the Minister of the Environment. A class action may be taken against the Casino lighting by Beaver Creek and Pike Lake.
8. Spectrum 2007: A large STARLAB will be set up at the Engineering Show. Ron Waldron will be helping there.
9. Sleaford: We are hoping that the RM will stop in and clear snow from the Sleaford Site soon.
10. Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Comet McNaught, Surprise Visitor from Space

by Tenho Tuomi

January skies had a surprise visitor in the form of comet McNaught. It wasn't that no one knew about this comet for it had been discovered by Robert H. McNaught at the Siding Springs observatory in Australia on August 7, 2006.



Photo by Tenho Tuomi

It just brightened up much more than expected to become the brightest comet seen in 30 years at least. In spite of its brightness it still was not obvious in the sky, for us in the Northern Hemisphere anyway, for it was a sun-grazing comet never more than a few degrees from the sun. It was visible only within an hour of sunrise or sunset in bright twilight. It rounded the sun on January 12, passing within the orbit of Mercury, and now is best seen from the Southern Hemisphere for the next few weeks.

Christine Kulyk emailed on January 8, "From here in southeastern Saskatoon, the western sky was very clear, so I got a very good view of the comet, and it's a beauty, even naked-eye and with lots of city lights around!"

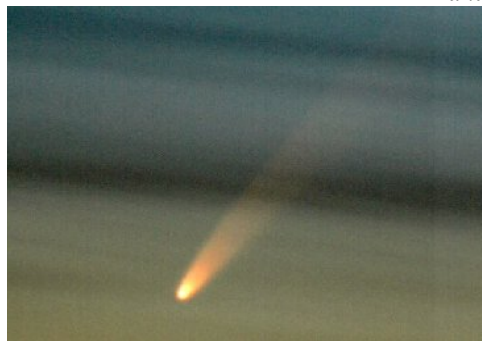


Photo by Tenho Tuomi

Regarding the photo on the cover, Larry Scott reported,

"Arrived at a desolate prairie road, with a clear view to the southwest, about 10 km north of Saskatoon on January 11th at 17:00. Sunset was at 17:20 which gave me a chance to set up my tripod and put on all of my clothes. (Although the winds were calm the temperature was -33

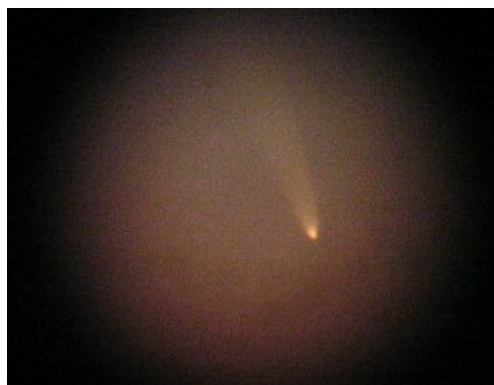


Photo by Garry Stone January 11, hand held camera to 80mm

C). Shortly after sunset I spotted Venus and began looking below and to its right where the comet was supposed to be situated. First caught sight of it at about 17:30. A brilliant core slightly fainter than Venus which I at first thought was a planet until I saw the tail. Observed the comet by naked eye and 15X70 binoculars till it set at 18:30. Although the binoculars improved the detail, the best view of this for me was naked eye. The bright core and classic comet tail in the sunset were very cool indeed. I took some photos with a tripod mounted Panasonic Lumix at 6X. These can be seen at our yahoo! site."



Photo by Tenho Tuomi Through 80mm refractor on the evenings of January 8 to 12, and daytime picture from January 11.

I made sightings of the comet from January 5 to 14, two of them daytime sightings. My last sighting was on January 14 during the day, a dangerous five degrees from the sun. I saw a little curl of smoke rising from the side of my Newtonian where the sun was focused.

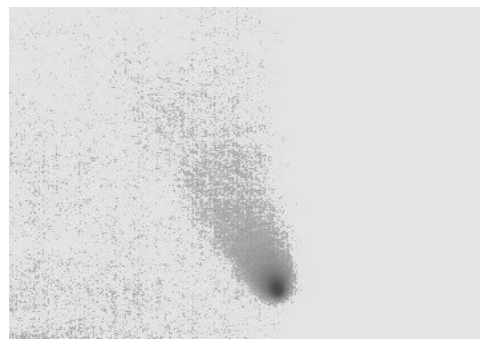


Photo by Tenho Tuomi



Photo by Garry Stone Got quite a few with the webcam. Really neat naked eye eh?

Planning Your Vacation to the General Assembly in Calgary

by Richard Huziak

It is not too early for you to start planning your upcoming trip to this year's RASC General Assembly in Calgary. What? Not going? Didn't consider it? Humm.....

There are many reasons why you should consider going to the General Assembly (GA). The first is that the GA will be held in relatively accessible Calgary, which most people don't think twice about driving to for other reasons. GA's are the National RASC's Annual Meeting, and as such you'll have a chance to meet someone from virtually every one of the 28 RASC Centres plus a few hundred other participants from across Canada, the United States and other countries. One other really good reason is that the Saskatoon Centre is bidding to host the 2009 GA in conjunction with the 2009 SSSP and it is invaluable to have the experience of attending someone else's GA to know what we will have to do at ours. I strongly suggest that all SSSP organizers and all Centre members attend because sooner or later, you will be asked to work on our GA committee.

In addition, about 50 Calgary Centre members attend our SSSP every year, and it is only polite to do return visits to their events once in a while. Since Bill & Marianne Hydomako, Kathleen Houston and I are the only regular Saskatoon attendees to the Alberta Star-BQ and Alberta Star Party, some of you may want to get caught up on your visitations. (Call me for a personal attempt to instill 'guilt' over the phone).

However, this GA is also a special gathering of the 'clans', where in addition to the RASC events (keynote talks, amateur and professional paper talks, banquet, wine and cheese, song contest, Murphy slide show, astro-tours, etc), both the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) and the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO) will also hold their annual meetings at the same time and in the same place - at the GA! Get that - a 3-for-1 sale!

The AAVSO also puts on a great show all by themselves. (I've been to the last 4 of their spring meetings). Saskatoon AAVSO members and/or observers Gord Sarty, Mike Clancy, George Charpentier, Margo Millar, Wade Selvig, Sandy Ferguson, Jim Young, Tenho Tuomi, and I all contribute observations to the AAVSO, so this is a great time to meet all of the wonderful other AAVSO

staff and members that you talk to on e-mail or hear about on the discussion group or web-site. The ALPO also was part of a joint meeting that I attended in Berkeley 3 years ago; they put on a great show on scientific planetary observing. You will be hobnobbing with the best of all three organizations! It is a great time to renew friendships and make new ones. You will learn a whole lot about the National RASC and how two of the top-notch data-collection organizations, the AAVSO and ALPO, do amateur-professional science collaboration. I also encourage members to give a paper at the paper session on whatever project you are working on. You won't be disappointed!

Get more information and register on-line at:

<http://calgary.rasc.ca/ar2007/index.htm>

RASC Ga / AR2007

Display Competition

by Jim Kinnaird, Calgary Centre RASC,
Organizing Committee of Astronomy Roundup 2007

Greetings from the Organizing Committee of Astronomy Roundup 2007. AR2007 is the conjunction in Calgary from June 28th to July 1st of the 2007 RASC General Assembly, the 96th Spring Meeting of the AAVSO and the 60th Annual Meeting of ALPO.

Our committee's responsibilities include arranging the RASC's traditional General Assembly display competition. We want to determine as soon as possible whether your centre collectively, or creative centre members working independently, will be taking advantage of the opportunity to participate. I'd appreciate it if you'd investigate this for us or direct me to the official of your centre who is in a position to respond.

Please ask potential exhibitors to respond to this email address < AR2007@shaw.ca > with some information about their requirements. We need to know how much space each exhibitor requires. We provide a poster board about 4 feet wide by 6 feet tall for each display that isn't free-standing. We can also provide a table to exhibitors who need one.

I'm looking forward to meeting a large group from your centre at Astronomy Roundup 2007 this summer and I hope you'll bring some colourful and informative displays with you.

Activities Coordinator Report

by Jeff Swick

The first order of business for this report is a meeting at Barb Wrights house with Kathleen Houston and Bill and Maryanne Hydromako and myself. Bill and Maryanne have been the registrars for the star party for the last couple of years and have stepped down. Kathleen and I will share their duties.

The first thing I learned at the meeting is just how organized the Hydromakos are. They had everything down to a science. One never really appreciates a job until they examine the intricacies. Maryanne has even written a program to gather, collate and disseminate the information in whatever manner of report one could ask for. Now Kathleen and I are both Mac folks so we will either have to reinvent the wheel or get a peecee. Believe me it will be easier to get a peecee.

As the star party gets closer the workload will increase and so will the need for volunteers. Should you have a spare hour or so please reach out to Barb and ask where your services could be used.

Les has also just forwarded on the following changes from the Park regarding changes in accommodations from the resort.

From Cindy Downie, Special Events Coordinator:

"As per our conversation this morning the following changes are scheduled to take place. 2 bedroom condos - 4 more will become 3 bedroom units, the 3rd bedroom will house a twin bed. 1 bedroom cabins - we are not sure if they will be available, the plan is to make all 1 bedroom cabins into 2 bedroom cabins.

The rates for 2009 have not been confirmed at this time, the forecasted rates are as follows: 2 bedroom cabin \$119, 3 bedroom cabin \$145, hotel \$109, 2 bedroom condo \$145, 3 bedroom standard condo

\$165, deluxe and executive condos \$185."

Rates and numbers for 2007:

Hotel rooms	31	\$95
1 bedroom cabins	9	\$75
2 bedroom cabins	8	\$109
3 bedroom cabins	2	\$119
Standard condo	10	\$119
Deluxe condo	3	\$169

RAFFLE UPDATE!

I would like everyone, who hasn't as yet, to take at least one booklet of tickets to either sell, or buy for yourself. We are not quite to the half-way point of ticket sales, and we need everyone's help. We have already sold tickets in two shopping malls (6 booklets of tickets on Jan 20/07 at Lawson Heights Mall, and 9 booklets at Market Mall on Jan. 27/07), with more mall sales to come. I will send out another mass e-mail when needed, and will be calling on you to come out and sell tickets at the malls in the future. If the centre wants to have the building to house the new telescope, we all need to push sales before the draw date of April 21/07. Thank you for your participation.
Darrell (for the Fundraising committee)

Note that we have scheduled SSSP 2009 for August 13-16. We may have to make our room block include Wed. Aug. 12 for people arriving the day before the scheduled events start.

One other item I want to talk a bit about is what we should do for astronomy day. I think the library and Beaver Creek portions of the of the program work well. Last year Ron Waldron

gave a talk at Beaver Creek and it was well attended.

One item I suggest should be changed is this business of sitting in empty malls on a glorious spring day. It's my opinion that we try another venue. We are all open to suggestions and should you have any ideas either contact me via email or telephone with your suggestions.

Lastly but certainly not least I want to thank Gord Sarty for such an engaging presentation on his work and adventures in Australia at the last general meeting. I also know that Tenho has been busy with his astro photography and I imagine we should be seeing a slide show at an upcoming meeting. Also Al Hartridge was in Southern Cal for an imaging workshop so it will be interesting to follow Al's work as well.

That's it for this report. I'm off to Cabarete.

Observer's Group Notes

by Larry Scott

As advertised I showed up at Sleaford on January 12th. The roads were fine, skies were clear, seeing was good, wind was calm and temperature was -24 C.

You would think that might be a little too cold for observing but the warm-up shelter and shoveling contributed to keeping me warm. Sadly, I was alone. On another note, I've learned that I will now be in charge of

caring for the club's laser pointer. This should prove helpful in pointing out deep-sky objects to myself.

Should anyone so desire I will be out to Sleaford again on Feb 9th.

See you out there.

Observations on Not Observing (Nov – Jan)

by Norma Jensen

free verse –

the daily view of sun becoming cloud as days begin and end – fevered plans as each quarter to new moon approaches- messier and ngc lists consulted – comet viewing planned – Sky Hound.com consulted – pouring over charts – dreaming the dream - packing and unpacking telescope after Sleaford trips where meet – skies that disappear as you drive east (who pulled the curtain down at the St. Denis hill?) – gates securely shut by wind-blown snow – storms and cloud and bitter cold – or cold and cloud and snow – plans made and unmade with viewing friends – and then at last, two stolen evenings at Sleaford

late December (poor transparency but joy in a viewers heart) - noted physical and mental symptoms of non-viewing – twitchy limbs that reach out for charts whenever the sky clears for 30 minutes – constant physical movement between and speculation on the truths of the Sleaford Clear Sky Clock, Environment Canada 5-day forecast, Weather Channel and looking outside or “I’ll just drive out of town a little ...” - long sighs – abnormal sleep patterns (regular) – exultation at brief backyard viewing of moon when she favourably presents herself followed by a settling of body and mind in the crisp stillness of the view – with a wish for clear skies to all

Saskatchewan Summer Star Party 2007

by Barb Wright

Planning for the 2007 Saskatchewan Summer Star Party has begun. The date is August 9 to 12, at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park.

Welcome Jeff Swick and Kathleen Houston to the planning committee. They will bring new ideas and help SSSP be better than ever. They have taken on registration for SSSP, from Bill and Marianne Hydomako. Thank you Marianne and Bill for all the work you did for the star party. We are grateful.

The search is underway for our Father Kemble speaker for this summer. The committee hopes to be able to make that announcement soon. We are looking for someone to take over volunteer coordinator for SSSP.

Please do consider joining the planning committee, we would welcome your contribution. Our next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 11, 2:30 pm at: 1635 Vickies Ave.

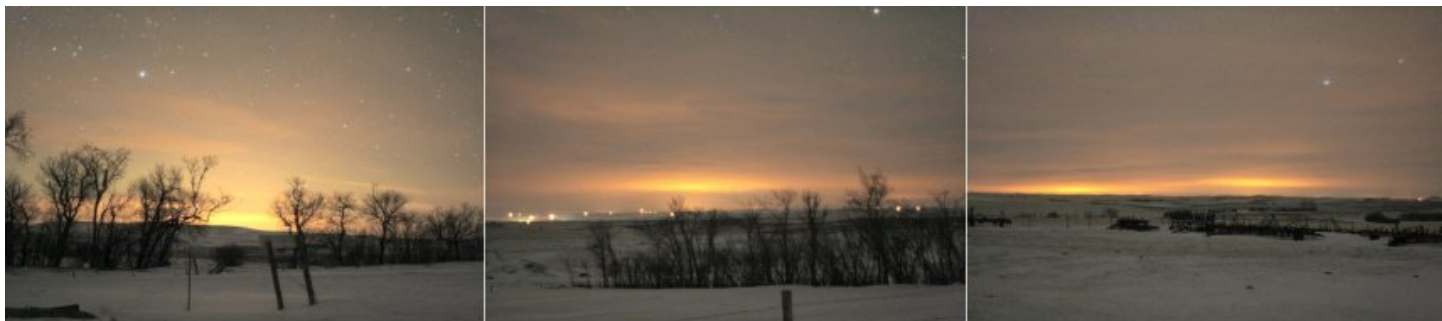


Photo by Tenho Tuomi Pictures of the light domes over the cities as seen from my “dark” location even on a semi-clear night; Saskatoon 115 km, Swift Current 100 km, Regina 195 km, and Moose Jaw 140 km.

The Planets This Month, February 2007

by Murray D. Paulson, Edmonton Centre

Comet McNaught caught many of us by surprise. A real flash in the pan! I had gone out on Saturday the 6th of January to hunt for Venus in the twilight, and didn't know that the comet was only 15 degrees away! It was one of those times when my computer was down and I didn't see the traffic on the comet. In the subsequent bad weather I had opportunity to regret that, but on Thursday the deep freeze weather cleared off the sky and I dashed to a convenient place after work to see the comet. I sighted it in binoculars in a blue sky 20 minutes after sunset and gasped in surprise and awe when I saw it. What a comet! I saw it over the next three days and on Sunday I managed to see it in binoculars 6 degrees from the sun at noon! A bit of the tail was visible at the time. Later the same day I saw it in my 90 mm scope but could not discern -1 magnitude Mercury less than 1 degree away.

Mercury has come out from behind the sun to sit in greatest eastern elongation on February 7th. It will show you a magnitude -0.5, 7" half phase in the eyepiece. It sits at 18 degrees elongation from the sun, so get it fast in the evening twilight. Binoculars will be a necessity and look for it at azimuth 240 to 245 degrees, or in the WSW 8 degrees from the horizon 45 minutes after sunset (6:15 pm). Mercury sets at 7:20 pm at this time. As the week progresses, Mercury heads back toward the sun but it sets at about the same time each day. At the same time, Sunset is later each day and Mercury gets dimmer until by Feb 12 it shines at magnitude 0.4 and the sun sets at 5:37 pm. A much tougher chase. How long a stretch can you see it? Only a few weeks later Mercury zips back and is in inferior conjunction with the sun on February 22nd.

On February 7th, **Venus** is in close conjunction with Uranus. You should be able to see the pair in a medium power telescope field as they sit only 44' of arc apart. Venus shines at magnitude -3.9 and Uranus at +5.9. In the eyepiece, Venus is a 11.8" gibbous disk and Uranus is a diminutive 3.36" blue disk. Cool to see the pair together. Note that they are both on the far side of the sun with Venus at 1.49 AU away compared to Uranus's 20.9AU. Over the month, Venus continue to move up into the night sky and by months end, Venus will sit 30 degrees from the

sun. It will have grown infinitesimally to 11.9" and still shines at magnitude -3.9.

Mars is in Sagittarius at the beginning of the month and sits 32 degrees from the sun. The morning ecliptic is almost parallel to the horizon, so don't expect to see it in the twilight. By month's end Mars has moved into Capricorn, and now sits 42 degrees from the sun. The ecliptic still lies low, so it will be a tough hunt. Mars shines at magnitude +1.2 and will show you a 4.5" disk in the eyepiece if you could find it.

Jupiter shines at Magnitude -1.9 and sits in the constellation of Scorpius. It rises at 4:30 in the morning and is high enough in the South East that you can easily see it if you get up before morning twilight. In the eyepiece

it will show you a 34" disk. It will take a while for it to make it back into the evening skies, further exacerbated by its very far southern location.

On February 10, **Saturn** is at opposition, and if the previous month is any indication, it may be a great opposition. On the January dark of

the moon observing session, Saturn was the highlight. Our seeing was in the "legendary" category and we saw fine details on Saturn that I haven't seen in years. Larry Wood's 12.5" scope and mine showed an incredible image at 330 power. We could see striations in the B ring and the C ring was very obvious in the anse of the rings. Cassini's division was dark and well defined. I noticed that the rings were highlighted as they passed in front of the planet. This was brought about by the shadow of the rings below the rings and the Crepe ring above the rings. These created a gray margin above and below the rings. I have never seen, or maybe noticed this effect before. Quite outstanding! The difference in the rings inclination also struck us. In the eyepiece the ball of the planet is 20.26" and the rings extend out to 43.5". The planet shines at magnitude 0.0 and will be well sought out over the next few months. On March 1st be sure to get out and see Saturn 20 minutes of arc from a nearly full moon. Closest approach comes at 6:45 pm in twilight. Get out there and enjoy. Till next month, Clear skies.



Photo by Murray Paulson

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

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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>



Many hours of hand work went into the making of this very fine looking quilt. Most of the work on the star was done on a treadle machine, for those of you who know about quilting. The side of this quilt is 85" x 101", which is large enough to fit a queen size bed! (value\$2500)

RASC RAFFLE

(Lic. # L06-0213)

by Darrell Chatfield

The RASC RAFFLE is now on, I will have ticket booklets at all the meetings from now until April/07. The other two prizes are a Viewsonic 19" flat screen monitor, and a Weitzel scratch art "Owl" print. The raffle is to raise money to house our new 16" Meade scope. Pick up your books of tickets today!

Ticket prices are: \$2.00 each, or three for \$5.00.

Draw Date: April 21, 2007 at Saskatoon, SK.

See our web page for more information:

<http://www.usask.ca/psychology/sarty/rasc/raffle.html>