

Saskatoon Skies

Vol. 38
No. 10
October
2007

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



CASINO TEPEE LIGHTS UP THE SKY

The proposed spotlights were turned on at the Dakota Dunes Casino on August 10 and can be seen up to a distance of 70 km.

Photo by Richard Huziak



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DARK SKIES AND LIGHT POLLUTION

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.*

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.

**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

Oct 12	Observers Group - 8:00 pm., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Oct 13	Sleaford Open House – 4:30 pm. Member and Family BBQ 7:30 pm. Visitors Welcomed , Sleaford Observatory	Barb Wright	249-1990
Oct 15	RASC Executive Meeting - 6:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Oct 15	RASC General Meeting (Elections) - 7:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Nov 2	Observers Group - 8:00 pm., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801
Nov 19	RASC Executive Meeting - 6:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Nov 19	RASC General Meeting - 7:30 pm., 175 Physics, U of S.	Garry Stone	857-4707
Dec 1	Observers Group - 7:00 pm., Sleaford Observatory	Larry Scott	934-5801

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.



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

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>#Avail</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>#Avail</i>	<i>Price</i>
				Books			
RASC 2008	RASC	16	\$14.00	Binocular Highlights	G. Seronik	4	\$28.00
RASC 2007	RASC	3	\$5.00	Exploring the Sky by Day	T. Dickinson	4	\$9.50
Skywatcher's 08	S. Schadick	12	\$18.00	Exploring the Night Sky	T. Dickinson	13	\$9.50
Skywatcher's 07	S. Schadick	6	\$5.00	Summer Stargazing	T. Dickinson	5	\$18.00
Skywatcher's 06	S. Schadick	1	\$2.00	Night Sky Atlas	R. Scagell	3	\$27.00
Miscellaneous				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	4	\$15.00
Books				Patterns in the Sky	K. Hewitt-White	5	\$19.50
The Backyard Astronomer's Guide	Dickinson & Dyer	2	\$45.00	Scientific American Book of the Cosmos	D.H. Levy	1	\$48.00
The Beginner's Observer's Guide	L. Enright	4	\$19.00	Deep-Sky Wonders	W. Houston	2	\$24.50
Observer's Handbook 2006	RASC	5	\$10.00	Mars Observer's Guide	N. Bone	2	\$14.00
Observer's Handbook 2005	RASC	1	\$5.00	Deep Sky Observer's Guide	N. Bone	1	\$14.00
Isabelle Williamson Lunar Observing Program	RASC	7	\$10.00	Practical Astronomy	S. Dunlop	4	\$14.00
Skyways – Astronomy Handbook for Teachers	M.L. Whitehorne	1	\$16.00	Field Map of the Moon	Sky & Telescope	8	\$12.50
Pocket Sky Atlas	R. Sinnott	4	\$24.50	Moon Map (laminated)	Sky & Telescope	7	\$6.00
				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

Minutes of the Executive Meeting September 17, 2007

By Al Hartridge

1. Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Approval of minutes of June 11, 2007 meeting. Moved by Jim Young, seconded by Ellen Dickson and carried.
3. Sleaford Open House will be held on October 13, 2007.
4. Proposal for Associate Membership in Saskatoon Centre. It was suggested that we change our constitution to allow for this.
5. Sleaford break-in. Rick Huziak has notified the RCMP and salvage people regarding the stolen property from the Sleaford school house.
6. Resignation of Bill Hydromako from Sleaford site committee and Sleaford Joint site committee. Darrell Chatfield said he would consider looking at taking over as the Sleaford person.
7. Mower: Larry Scott moved that we grant a one hundred dollar tax write off to a person he knows who is willing to donate a Toro lawn mower to our centre. Seconded by Barb Wright and carried.
8. Treasure's Report: at present there is \$4868.73 in the chequing account and three term deposits of \$5351.96, \$3043.83 and \$5526.42
9. Motion by Les Dickson, seconded by Jim Gorkoff and carried that the Site Committee come up with plans for a new observatory to house the 16" telescope with the hope of starting construction in the spring.
10. Centre Bylaws: reviewed by Jim Gorkoff. Our bylaws generally follow National's bylaws. To amend bylaws at present requires one third of the membership at a meeting. Jim suggests that we should have our own bylaws. Darrell will make a search of the library for an old set of modified bylaws.
11. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes of the General Meeting September 17, 2007

By Al Hartridge

1. Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. Approval of the minutes of the June 11, 2007 meeting. Moved by Barb Wright, seconded by Ron Waldron and carried.
3. Nominations for elections at October meeting. Members will be contacted by the Nominating Committee consisting of Ron Waldron, Darrell Chatfield, and Garry Stone.
4. Fundraising: New locks at Sleaford purchased with Canadian Tire money. Darrell will reapply to National for funding. Sask. Gaming will refund \$486.00 from the 2006 Lottery and will also refund us for the 2007 Raffle.
5. Observer's Group: Larry Scott says people are getting out as often as possible to use the facilities.
6. Newsletter: deadline for next newsletter will be September 24.
7. Kim Hay is requesting data on totals at Star Parties each season.
8. SSSP: book sales at latest SSSP were in the \$600.00 range.
9. Barbeque: will be held at Sleaford site before the open house. This will consist of Hot Dogs and Pot Luck.
10. Program:
Slides from the SSSP - George Charpentier
Light Pollution - Rick Huziak
11. Meeting Adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

SLEAFORD OPEN HOUSE

by Barb Wright

October 13 is Sleaford Open House, held in co-operation with the U of S physics dept. We will need people with their telescopes to set up for public viewing. It would also be a good idea to have someone controlling parking.

RASC will be having a BBQ at Sleaford that afternoon. It is potluck, with paper plates, cutlery and coffee provided. If you want hot dogs, they will be provided as well. If you want to have a different meat, bring it along with your salad or whatever else you bring. We plan to begin the BBQ around 4:30 so we can be finished and ready for the public by 7:30. We are also in need of a portable BBQ.

If you can supply one please contact Barb Wright at 249-1990. I would also like to have an idea of how many will be coming to help out that night. e-mail wrightb@sasktel.net to let me know you are coming. thanks! See you then.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15 7:30 PM ROOM 175, U OF S

*Non-members are
welcome!
No admission.*

PROGRAM: Annual
general election of officers

LECTURE: TBD

(depending who gets their act together first)
Could very well be R. Huziak or G. Sarty
talking about working at the Dominion
Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria.
We're not quite sure yet!

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



Summer's Diary of Astronomy & Light Pollution (Part 1)

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.

The summer began with a trip to Calgary from **June 28 to July 2** where Kathleen and I joined a dozen Saskatoon members to attend the **RASC's General Assembly**. The GA featured a joint meeting between the RASC, the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) and the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO). The meeting provided a great opportunity to meet the *Who's Who? of Astronomy*, at least everyone from all of the RASC Centres across Canada and the big shooters in variable stars and planetary observing! It was great to finally meet Mary-Lou Whitehorne, Geoff Gaherty, Paul Gray, Dave Lane, Rob Dick, Dr. David Turner, Al Whitman, Frank Dempsey, and dozens of others whom I'd only communicated with by email, or read about in the JRASC. Calgary put on a first-class event – they deserve a big round of applause for an excellent General Assembly. It was also very nice to see Vance Petriew awarded the AAVSO Director's Award from Dr. Arne Henden, an honour that I was fortunate enough to receive 5 years ago in Tucson. Barb Wright wrote a great summary of the event in the July/August newsletter.

We weren't home from Calgary long before Kathleen and I packed up again on July 6th and gave a talk at **Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park**. Talking at parks is an activity that members of the Saskatoon Centre could do full-time in the summer as parks are always looking for programming, and most parks are also on-board with dark-sky programs. The parks provide free entry, free camping and an honorarium. I had planned to give a talk and starlight and enticed Tenho Tuomi to come down to help out since he lives in the area. In the end, we had a small turnout of 12 to 15 people for the talk, and the sky clouded over. But we all had fun. Kathleen and I stayed an extra day and enjoyed the very scenic park and great beach. Sask Landing is a real jewel on the prairies!

But all the astronomy fun wasn't going to last. On **July 12th Saskatchewan Eco-Network** (the Saskatchewan Light Pollution Committee is a member) had arranged a meeting with the Deputy Minister of the Environment, Alan Parkinson. At the meeting, I gave a presentation on

Light Pollution Abatement issues in Saskatchewan showing ways to save energy, reduce GHG emissions, and requesting that light pollution be recognized and implemented in Saskatchewan as a conservation measure with provincial legislation. I also complained about the light tepee at the Dakota Dunes Casino and asked for an update as to what Environment was doing about the invasion of the country by uncontrolled light. I received no answers at all, and since, the Deputy Minister has not responded at all. Go figure. Maybe our province isn't as *green* as it professes it is.

I had a few days off then hustled down to **Greenwater Provincial Park** on July 21 for another park presentation. I had a good crowd of about 30 people and gave a talk on what we would be able to see in the dark skies the park offered. I included a description of noctilucent clouds in the talk, which I rarely do, but since it was the height of NLC season, I figured odds were pretty good we'd see something. We were greatly rewarded when we adjourned to the sky, for waiting for us was an amazing NLC display covering the entire northern sky! I also used my telescope to show the crowd Jupiter, Alberio, Mizar-Alcor, the moon and a few other deep sky objects. If you haven't been to Greenwater – go! This is a very nice park, and once again, another jewel of the prairies! I hadn't been there since I was a kid, and I should have come back much sooner!

Well, astronomy will only be astronomy if we can prevent those who want to destroy the night sky from doing so. So on July 24th I met with Mike Finley who is the research lawyer with the Saskatchewan Law Reform Commission. The SLRC is currently preparing law reports for the Minister of the Environment, John Nilson. Since we started complaining about light pollution at the Dakota Dunes Casino, and since the Minister received over 100 letters about the Dakota Dunes Casino, he's been a bit interested in the issue and asked the SLRC for advice. One good thing is that Mike Finley is Chairman of the Sask Eco-Network, and a bit of an amateur astronomer, so he is very well informed, and presented a very good report to the SLRC. We are currently waiting for the second report to the Minister, and hopefully some action on light pollution abatement.

The Casino tepee of light was the major issue of the summer since the spotlights were scheduled to be turned on in September, which soon became August 9 since construction was ahead of schedule. So on July 26 we had another **light tepee information meeting at Pike Lake** for concerned residents.

cont.

I gave an update on what we had been doing to move our concerns forward, and Mark Kornder introduced a new ENGO, the **Rural Environment Preservation Association of Saskatchewan** (REPAS) which was formed to coordinate the fight against the bad rural lighting. We had an excellent turnout of about 40 people. We had also invited all of the local MLAs and government officials. No one came – why should they? Their job is only to represent out concerns! However, we did have Scott Robinson attend, who works for John Nilson in Environment.

Back to astronomy the next week. On August 3rd I gave a U of S Observatory tour to participants of the **Cold Resistant Crop Conference** being held at the University. I had a crowd of about 50, the best part of which was that this was an international conference and the people were from all over the world!

No rest for the wicked when light pollution is at stake, so on August 6th Mark Kornder (Pike Lake), Brian Newman (Beaver Creek hamlet) and I met with David Forbes. We weren't sure what this meeting would produce with respect to some action on the light tepee issue, but meeting with any politician produces at least some more contacts and more useful information that we can chase down. Then again, David Forbes was also the Environment Minister when the Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve was created. We got precious little from the meeting, and I was also disappointed that the past-Minister knew very little about the CHIPP DSP and even less why our all-parks DSP program died in Environment after being far-advanced in planning.

A welcome relief to the summer activities was the **Saskatchewan Summer Star Party (SSSP'07)** held August 8 – 12. Barb Wright gave a good description of the star party in the September issue of *Saskatoon Skies*, so I won't repeat it here. However, on August 11 while still at the star party, we convened a meeting to begin planning a **Dark-sky Campground** within the park. Park manager Brad Mason called this meeting because he had been receiving several inquiries about where environmentally minded naturalists could camp in pristine dark skies within the park. The short answer is that there currently is no campground devoid of all light. The Meadows, for example, used to be that way, but the recent introduction of streetlights (that are turned off for SSSP) made the campground bright at other times of the year. The interesting thing is that the requests for a dark campground did not come from astronomers, but from other unrelated naturalists who are questioning why a Dark-Sky Preserve

doesn't have dark camping! In response, Brad and his staff met with representatives of the Friends of Cypress Hills and members of the Edmonton, Regina and Saskatoon Centres to start planning a dark-sky educational center that would provide a campground, an observing field, and an observatory that would become home to the park's astronomy interpretive program. This initiative comes because of the Dark-Sky designation.

On August 31st both the SSSP and the Cypress Hills Dark-Sky preserve received some major advertising when the fall issue of **Prairies North** magazine hit the newsstand. Journalist John Campbell wrote up a great 6-page full-colour glossy article on why we go to Cypress and why the area was chosen to be a Dark-Sky Preserve. Alan Dyer, Tenho Tuomi and George Charpentier illustrate the article with photographs. Material for the article came from interviews of myself, Alan Dyer and Fort Walsh National Historical Site manager David Rohatensky, done in December 2005! Major articles can take that long to get queued into magazines! If you haven't seen *Prairies North* yet, pick up a copy of this excellent magazine. You'll want to subscribe!



October Elections

Each year at the October General Meeting, elections are held for places on our Executive Council.

Positions are open to any member in good standing, and are nominated then elected by show of hands by the general membership. All positions except President & Vice president (two-year terms) are up for grabs. If you are interested in any Executive or Councilor position, please contact one of the nominating committee: Garry Stone, Ron Waldron or Darrell Chatfield. Nominations will be taken from the floor as well.

Executive:

- President - Garry Stone
- Events Coordinator - ____?
- Vice-President - Barb Wright
- Fundraising Coordinator - ____?
- Past President - Ron Waldron
- Membership Coordinator - ____?
- Newsletter Editors - ____?
- Observing Coordinator - ____?
- Secretary - ____?
- Sleaford Site Coordinator - ____?
- Treasurer - ____?
- SSSP Coordinator - ____?
- National Council Representative - ____?
- Councilor at-large - ____?
- Councilor at-large - ____?

BEAVER HILLS DARK SKY PRESERVE 1st ANNIVERSARY

by Sherrilyn Jahrig (Edmonton Centre) & Richard Huziak (Saskatoon Centre)

The first anniversary celebration of the signing of the Beaver Hills Dark-Sky Preserve declaration was held in Central Alberta at Elk Island National Park, on September 2, 2007. Whereas the **RASC Edmonton Centre** did the majority of organizing for last year's inaugural event: **'Many Cultures, One Sky'**; Parks Canada staff did most of the organizing for 2007. The event was well attended with several hundred guests, a lower key event compared to last year's gate count of over 2,500!

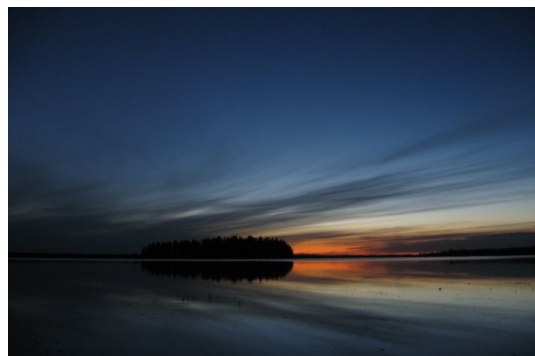


The better-looking author poses with her Lewis Lavoie "Dark Skies" painting, presented in appreciation of her work in the creation of the DSP.

Alberta Parks participated this year with a constellation/star-lore presentation. In January 2008, Alberta Parks will be introducing a BHDSP Provincial Initiative in Astronomy and Dark Sky Preservation Education available to elementary schools. **'D.S.I.: Dark Sky Investigators'** includes a theatre performance, classroom component and field trip centered on astronomy and preservation of the nocturnal environment.

On the national front, **Dow Community Grants Program** and **Elk Island National Park** are partnering to enhance the Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve Designation through interpretive and outreach education programs. The project will provide students and teachers in Elk Island School District with resources to learn more about the Dark Sky Preserve. As well, guides and interpretive panels will be created for park visitors to increase awareness of the Dark Sky Preserve and the role that individuals play in energy conservation and responsible lighting practices. They have already purchased telescopes and have a good start on an astronomy library.

The anniversary celebration started at 4:00 pm with an open-air ceremony chaired by Dr. Douglas P. Hube. Doug and Laurie Guyote, Parks Canada, unveiled the beautiful painting **'Dark Skies'** by Lewis Lavoie, created at the declaration event.



Beautiful Astotin Lake. However, the cirrus crept in before we could get the night viewing in.

Sherrilyn Jahrig of Edmonton Centre was awarded a print for her dedication to the DSP team's success. Public Education Director, Orla Aaquist, provided live music including an original song, **'The Stars Belong to Everyone'**, dedicated to the BHDSP.

At 4:45 pm, presentations moved into the Astotin Theatre where talks followed until 9:30pm. Speakers included Doug Hube: *A Celestial Embrace: Sun, Earth and Aurora*; Parks Interpreter Matt Davis: *Scotobiology*; Rick Huziak: *Dark-Sky Preserves*; David Roles: *The Grand Tour of the Planets*; Richard Vanderberg: *Dark Sky Objects*; Bruce McCurdy: *Constellations from the Top Down*; and Massimo Torri: *Moon Walk*.

As the presentations held the fort, outdoor children's activities and solar viewing was available. Paul and Sherry Campbell, Murray and Joanne Paulson, Greg and Lindsay Brundell, Mike Noble, and a dozen others hosted telescopes. As



Paul Campbell shows the eager crowd the sun. Paul was later eclipsed by the only nearby tree in a poor site-planning accident.

dusk set in, we all got our scopes set up and eagerly awaited the clearing of a promising sky, but alas, haze and cirrus continued to thicken, and by the time the moon rose around midnight, all hope of seeing anything specific to a dark site was lost. We took consolation in the success of the great indoor programs. We showed our telescopes and the usual brighter objects, which were

exciting to new observers. We were all a bit sad that we didn't get to see the moon's passage through the Pleiades – but it looked great on our computer programs!

It was awesome to watch the Parks presentations and to realize that staff is funded to produce astronomy programming, research such things as Scotobiology, buy telescopes and books, and raise public awareness about dark sky preservation. The ripple effect is enormous already...and so soon! Congratulations need to go to the Beaver Hills DSP curators and the Edmonton RASC volunteers for a job well-done!

Letters for the Casino Tepee Lighting Disaster

by Richard Huziak

In a previous issue of Saskatoon Skies and at the last two general meetings I challenged members to write letters in support of our effort to eliminate the Dakota Dunes Casino tepee of light which is destroying the skies of hundreds of acreage owners in the Pike Lake and Beaver Creek hamlet area, and additionally, the skies of Pike Lake Provincial Park, Brightwater Science and Nature Camp and the Beaver Creek Conservation Area.

At these parks, we have conducted over 300 star nights over the last 15 years, and with the casino now blazing unnecessarily, all this becomes very compromised and future astronomy south of Saskatoon is seriously in jeopardy. As it turns out, only 8 of our 65 members wrote letters, and I am baffled why astronomers, of all people, continue to ignore light pollution, even at a time where public awareness and support for the environment is at an all-time high. So, I renew my request!

IF YOU WANT A DARK SKY, ONLY YOU CAN SAVE IT.

The way you do this is to write a letter to your MLA and/or MP, FSIN, SIGA, Saskatoon Tribal Council.

Addresses are at our protest website at:

<http://www.dakotadunescasino.ca>

or write to your favourite other representative. Go and see what the casino bad lighting has done to a rural environment, and keep in mind that the light tepee is currently turned down to about ¼ power to keep complaints down. It won't remain that way.

SKY BUYS & MIRROR CELLS

The Saskatoon Centre's Swap and Sale Page!

FOR SALE: 12" Orion SkyQuest Intelliscope with object locator. Regular \$1400.00, first \$850.00 takes it, never used. Bob Johnson
bjohnson53@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

Furthermore, the 126 mispointed high-powered lights of the parking lot themselves are enough food for complaint.

Write from your heart and describe your love of the sky, and your green environmental hopes for the province. To help you start out, **template letters are posted on our Dakota website**, and remember to send me a copy in the mail or email so I know who has written.

You may also be interested that if no one protests against the casino light tepee, you may be getting another one with the River Landing Parcel Y development in Saskatoon! If you don't believe this, check out the architect's night view on page 17 of the *Lake Placid/S2 Engineering* proposal on the City of Saskatoon website.

Observer's Group Notes

by Larry Scott

The September monsoon season came along right on schedule and washed out our session on September 7th. We tried again on Friday the 14th but conditions were average to begin with and deteriorated as the evening went on. Thankfully there were butter tarts, cookies, and fresh pears to ease the pain. Finally, on Sunday the 16th we had a good night. Although it was a little windy the skies were steady and transparent till about 01:00 am. Some highlights of the night were the Veil nebula, M15 and Stephan's Quintet.

It turns out our next observers group is scheduled for the night before the Sleaford Open House on October 13th. I was thinking we might want to figure out ahead of time what object each of us will show so we

don't have 10 scopes pointed at the same object. It would also give us a chance to do a little brush-up on some facts for each object. Just a thought. If you can't make either of these dates there are (relatively) moonless skies from October 4th to the 19th. Our November observers group date is the 2nd which is at the start of a dark sky period running until about the 16th.

If anyone has any questions or requests please don't hesitate to contact me (ph: 934-5801 / email: larry.scott@sasktel.sk.ca). I don't have all the answers but I do have lots of opinions.

Clear, dark skies everyone.
See you at Sleaford.



The Planets This Month, October 2007

by Murray D. Paulson, Edmonton Centre

Mercury was at Greatest Eastern elongation in the evening sky on September 29th, and is now headed back toward the sun. The fall ecliptic will maintain Mercury in close proximity with the western horizon for the descent back to an inferior conjunction with the sun on October 23. If you want to get a view of Mercury as it expands to a crescent, you will have to do it with either a goto scope or with coordinates in hand and an equatorial with setting circles. It will fade fast from Magnitude 0.4 at the beginning of the month to magnitude 1.5 by the 15th. If you miss it, you get a second chance in the morning sky a few weeks after inferior conjunction. Mercury will swing out with amazing speed into the morning sky and by November 8th, it will be at Greatest Western elongation where it will shine at magnitude -0.5. In the eyepiece it will show a 7" half disk. How soon can you spot it in the morning sky before this date?

At the Northern Prairie Starfest, we could just barely see the shadows **Venus** cast in the wee hours of the morning. At Magnitude -4.5, it is just amazing! Venus will start its gradual descent from this peak of brightness in mid October and will shine at magnitude -4.3 by the first week of November. At the beginning of this month, Venus presents a fat 33" crescent in the eyepiece. On October 28th, Venus will be at Greatest Eastern elongation where it will sit 46.5 degrees from the sun and in the eyepiece will present you with a 24.1" half disk. It shines at magnitude -4.4 now and by the first weeks of November will decline to magnitude -4.3 as it crosses into the southern hemisphere.

At the beginning of October, **Mars** rises at 10:30 p.m. and shines at magnitude 0.0. In the eyepiece you will see its 9.8" gibbous disk, and note that it is no longer small. You can actually see details on it, polar hoods, Maria and limb hazes. Cool, but you have to wait up till some time after midnight! By the first weeks of November, Mars rises at 8:30 p.m., and now has grown to 13" in diameter. That gibbous phase is fattening up and it shines at magnitude -0.8. You can now get a good view without having to wait up till the morning hours. Because of Mars's position on the top of the ecliptic in Gemini, it is way up in the sky when it crosses the meridian. Here in Edmonton it crests at 60 degrees altitude! By the way, this happens at 5 a.m.!

Some of the things that have been seen on Mars recently

in amateur photographs are the shield volcanoes and some dust activity. Polar hoods and limb hazes are also quite visible. It is time to get out those color filters and clean them off for the coming apparition. One other naked eye treat is to watch the red planet above Betelgeuse and Alderbaran.

Jupiter sits in Scorpius, 65 degrees from the sun, but in the glare of the early evening sky. Once again, it's the fall ecliptic that sinks rapidly south at this time of year. Jupiter sets before it gets completely dark, so Jupiter is lost for this season.

Saturn has risen up in the morning sky and passes 3 degrees north of Venus on the morning of the 13th of October. Saturn is brighter than the similarly colored Regulus at magnitude 0.7. In the eyepiece it presents a 17" disk and a much flatter ring system than we witnessed last year. The rings are tilted at an 8 degree angle and have a 36.3" extent. Saturn will remain in Leo for the duration of this apparition.

Uranus was at opposition in early September, so it still is a fine object to hunt down on a fall evening. I have made a few attempts to spot the moons of Uranus, but my 10" aperture without an occulting bar in the eyepiece is not enough. I would be interested in any reports of Uranian moon sightings in moderate telescope sizes. Uranus sits near Phi Aquarius, an M class star, and shines at magnitude 5.7. In the eyepiece Uranus will show you a 3.6" blue-green disk. If the seeing is good, try to up the magnification to get a good view of it. If you are chasing the moons, you need to use magnifications in the 300 plus range. On October 22, the Moon and Uranus pass 25 minutes of arc apart at 7 p.m. local time. The moon will be quite gibbous at the time and magnitude -12.5, quite a magnitude difference with Uranus. Check the handbook to find a chart of the Phi Aquarius region showing the placement of Uranus.

Neptune is still reasonably well placed to hunt down in the evening sky. I recommend that you find a chart from Astronomy magazine or Sky and telescope to find it. Neptune shines at magnitude 7.8 and has a diameter of 2.30 arc seconds. It will show a greenish disk in the eyepiece at above 200 power. Its Moon Triton is visible in 10" and larger scopes, but you need to make up a finder chart with your favorite astronomical software.

Till next month, clear skies.

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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>

Great World Wide Star Count, October 1-15, 2007!

from http://www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen_science/starcount/



"Join thousands of other students, families, and citizen scientists counting stars this October, for the Great World Wide Star Count, October 1 - 15, 2007!"

This international event encourages everyone to go outside, look skywards after dark, count the stars they see in certain constellations, and report what they see online. This Windows to the Universe Citizen Science Event is designed to encourage learning in astronomy!"

Looks like fun for the whole family. Go out and take part in it!