



NOVA

NEWSLETTER OF THE VANCOUVER CENTRE RASC

VOLUME 2006 ISSUE 3

MAY/JUNE 2006

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Looking Ahead

Remember, you are always welcome to attend meetings of Council, held on the first Thursday of every month at 7:30pm in the G.M.S.O.

May 9: Jonathan Martin, member of the Vancouver branch of the Mars Society: Simulating Mars in Utah.

Jun. 8: Brett Gladman, UBC Dept. of Physics & Astronomy: "Finding Buffy," the discovery of the Kuiper Belt object.

Jul. 13: Chris Gainor, RASC Victoria Centre: What Apollo Taught Us About the Moon.

Next Issue Deadline

Material for the July Nova should be submitted by Monday, July 3, 2006. Please send submissions to:

Gordon Farrell
(gfarrell@shaw.ca)

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Effective in **June**, all RASC Vancouver Centre meetings will be moving from Tuesday nights to **Thursday** nights to accommodate the Space Centre. The next Members' meeting will be held on **June 8th**.

June						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

2006

AMEC's Invite to a 6m Telescope Tour

On Saturday, May 27th, 2006, I would like to invite any members of Vancouver Centre to bring their friends and relations to AMEC Dynamic Structures' Port Coquitlam plant to see the 6M Atacama Cosmology Telescope. Interested members should meet at the entrance gate of the plant at 12:30. The address is 1515 Kingsway Avenue, Port Coquitlam. Please wear sturdy footwear as we will be outside in our assembly yard.

With some luck, one of the Project Scientists, Mark Devlin or Mark Halpren, may be on hand to operate the scope so we can see it

move. If neither of them are there then the telescope will be operated by one of AMEC's Mechanical Engineers, Mike Frost.

The ACT has been developed by AMEC under contract to the University of Pennsylvania and UBC. The telescope is designed to study the Cosmic Background radiation in the sub-millimetre range. The thing that makes this telescope different from other sub-millimetre ones is that it will repeatedly scan an area of the sky taking millions of readings in order to improve the resolution of the data very similar to the process of stacking multiple frames of a con-

ventional image to enhance the clarity.

There are many unique features of this telescope that are a result of the stringent science conditions that must be met and these shall be explained during the tour. Standing over 4 stories tall, the telescope is really something to behold.

I would ask that all members who wish to attend be prompt as we must remain in one group due to safety requirements.

Craig Breckenridge
craig.breckenridge@shaw.ca ✪



President's Message

Our Society's activities have picked up momentum as the arrival of spring has brought increased viewing opportunities. Among the initial events planned were a pair of Messier Marathons. The availability of the Chris Graham Robotic Telescope gave us the advantage of being able to hold our first marathon without concern for our local weather. Bob Parry, Pomponia Martinez and a few keen observers were able to coax all but one of those deep sky objects into photographic range, so we have begun to build our own image library. Although this was not "eyepiece" astronomy, Bob makes no apologies, believing firmly that all is fair when it comes to love and Messiers.

Star parties also bring out hibernating astronomers and the spring Merritt Star Quest is the first one in our neighbourhood. Bruce MacDonald attended and reported that, while the viewing opportunities were not great, the camaraderie and exchange of ideas made the trip worth the effort.

The eclipse in March met most people's expectations, as that ever-present cloud that seems to dog all such events gave way at the last minute. Bill Ronald and Gil Biderman viewed it from different parts of Turkey. Andreas Gada (an unattached RASC member from Ontario), who travelled with National Office stalwart Bonnie Bird to Libya for the event, is reported

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2005 Vancouver Centre Officers

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About RASC

The Vancouver Centre, RASC meets at 7:30 PM in the auditorium of the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre at 1100 Chestnut St., Vancouver, on the second Thursday of every month. Guests are always welcome. In addition, the Centre has an observing site where star parties are regularly scheduled.

Membership is currently \$58.00 per year (\$34.25 for persons under 21 years of age) and can be obtained by writing to the Treasurer at the address below. Annual membership includes the invaluable Observer's Handbook, six issues of the RASC Journal, and, of course, access to all of the club events and projects.

For more information regarding the Centre and its activities, please contact our P.R. Director.

NOVA, the newsletter of the Vancouver Centre, RASC, is published on odd numbered months. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Vancouver Centre.

Material on any aspect of astronomy should be e-mailed to the editor or mailed to the address on page 5.

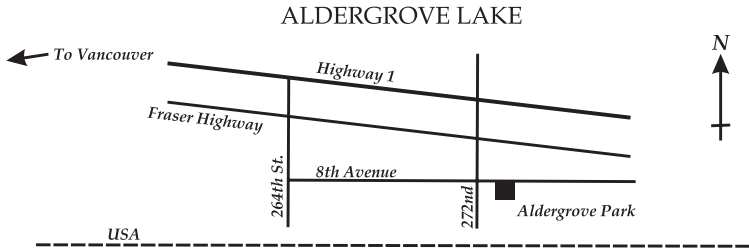
Advertising

Nova encourages free use of its classified ads for members with items for sale or swap. Notify the editor if you wish your ad to run in more than one issue.

Commerical Rates

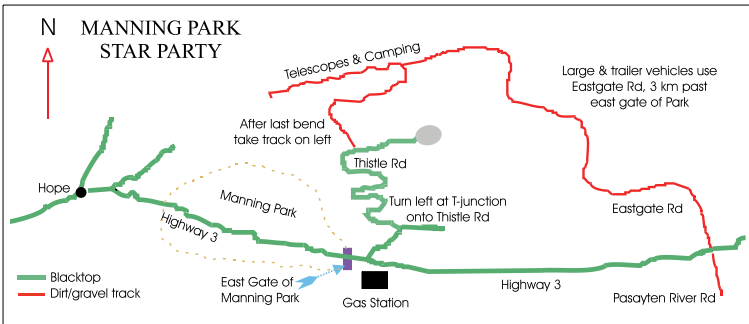
1/4 Page: \$15.00 per issue
1/2 Page: \$25.00 per issue
Full Page: \$40.00 per issue
Rates are for camera-ready, or electronic files. Payment, by cheque, must accompany ad material. Make cheque payable to: RASC Vancouver Centre.

Observing Sites

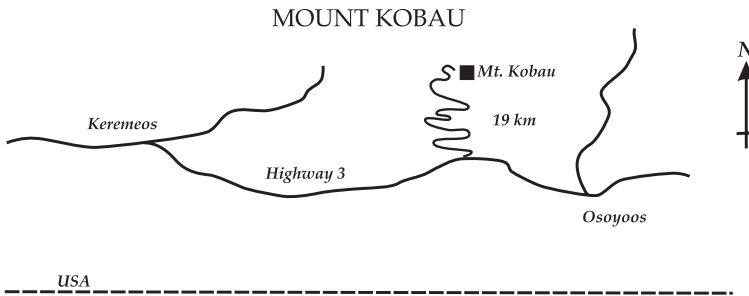


Dale McNabb Observatory in Aldergrove Lake Park (RASC Vancouver Centre's regular viewing site)

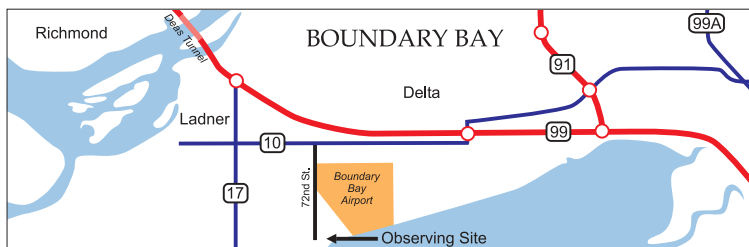
Contact Mike Penndelton (604-888-1505) or Howard Morgan (604-856-9186)



Site of the annual star party organized by the RASC Vancouver Centre



Site of the annual Mt. Kobau Star Party organized by the Mount Kobau Astronomical Society



Site of the regular Saturday night star party. On the dike at the foot of 72nd St.

FOR SALE

'INTES' Russian Made Precision
Quartz Clock Drive
Speeds: Sidereal, Lunar & Adjustable
Adjustable for Observer's Latitude
Power: 12 volts DC 80 mAmps
(Very low power consumption)
Works with battery or AC adaptor
Suitable for scope to 30lbs
\$80 or OBO
Contact Seamus Dunne
604-327-7262
seamus@xtcfx.ca

RASC MERCHANDISE

Available for purchase after meetings:

Calendars	\$14.00
Golf Shirts	\$30.00
Sweat Shirts	\$30.00
Centenary Mugs	\$ 7.00
Beginners' Guides	\$15.00
Observers' Guides	\$20.00
Cloth Crests	\$11.00
Lapel Pins	\$ 6.00
L.E.D. Flashlights	\$22.00

ASTROCOMPUTING

SpaceBase™ (604-473-9358,59).
Affiliated since 1992 with RASC
Vancouver, our link to RASC Net,
RASC Members only chat area.
Future data distribution hub for
CARO Project. Features include
latest HST images, current world
space news and astronomy pro-
grams.

LIBRARY

The centre has a large library of
books, magazines and old Nova's
for your enjoyment at the GSO.
Please take advantage of this club
service and visit often to check out
the new purchases. Suggestions
for future library acquisitions are ap-
preciated.

RASC-VC on the Internet

<http://www.pcis.com/rascvan/> or
<http://www.rasc.ca/vancouver>

H.R. MACMILLAN SPACE CENTRE

The Pacific Space Centre Society
is a non-profit organization which
operates the H.R. MacMillan Space
Centre and Gordon M. Southam
Observatory. Annual Membership
(\$30 Individual, \$80 Family) in-
cludes a newsletter, Discounts on
Space Camps, special programs
and lectures, Vancouver Museum
Discounts, and free admission to
the Space Centre. Admission to the
Space Centre includes: Astronomy
shows, Motion Simulator rides, mul-
timedia shows in GroundStation
Canada, and access to the Cosmic
Courtyard Exhibit Gallery. For Mem-
bership information, call Mahi
Jordao at 604-738-7827, local 237
for information. You can also reach
them on the Internet at [http://
www.hrmacmillanspacecentre.com/](http://www.hrmacmillanspacecentre.com/)

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES!

New members, did you know?
The Vancouver Centre has 8 tel-
escopes available for loan free of
charge! We have telescopes rang-
ing from 60mm to 10" diameter.
For more information see Wayne
Lyons, Director of Telescopes in the
meeting room of the GSO *after* the
members meeting. All telescopes
are to be picked up and returned at
the GSO. The loaner period is for
one month, to be returned after the
next meeting. Telescopes are not
allowed to circulate outside of these
meetings. You can now reserve 2
different telescopes per year and
use what is left at the end of the
meeting anytime. Wayne can be
reached at 604-467-2956.

Your greatest opportunity as a
member of the R.A.S.C. is to take
advantage of the company of other
enthusiasts to increase your knowl-
edge, enjoyment and skill in as-
tronomy.

The best thing you can do to
gain the most from your member-
ship is to get active! Take in the
club meetings; engage other mem-
bers with questions; come out to ob-
serving sessions (also known as
"star parties"), and, by all means,
volunteer to take part in our many
public events.

Observing takes place at
Boundary Bay on the dike at the
south end of 72nd St. in Delta (see
map on p. 4). We are there most
clear Thursday/Friday nights. Con-
tact Jason Rickerby at 604-502-
8158.

RASC
1100 Chestnut Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6J 3J9
604-738-2855

Upcoming Events

May

18-22 – GA 2006 in Ottawa
26 – Sidewalk Astronomy (rain day May 27)

June

29 – CARO tour

August

11-12 – Perseid meteor shower
19-27 – Mt. Kobau Star Party

October

13 – Sidewalk Astronomy (rain day Oct. 14)

November

14 – 75th Anniversary of Vancouver Centre

December

12 – AGM

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to have taken 10,000 photos of their adventure. Apparently some of them were even of the eclipse.

Anne and I had to cancel our plans to go, in part, because of another equally wondrous event—the birth of our first grandchild. While our daughter did not bestow an astronomical name on the new little girl, she is certainly a new star in our skies.

We did have the opportunity to go New Mexico Skies in late April for a tour of the site where the CGRT is housed. Lynn and Mike Rice, our hosts, have a 53-acre site, 7300 feet up in the Sacramento Mountains in south central New Mexico, about 3½ hours drive northeast of El Paso, Texas. They are in good company. Across the narrow valley to the northeast is another “bed and telescope” site, while 36 miles to the

west, on the southwest ridge of the Sacramento Range are the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, the Sunspot National Solar Observatory and a number of other professional facilities.

NMS has six separate permanent observatories for individual scopes plus an assortment of portable scopes with a variety of accessories that can be used by visitors for visual or imaging work. As well there are another six domes (one that holds the CGRT) and two buildings with roll-off roofs, all of which house internet-operated instruments.

The NMS apartments were very comfortable and fully equipped, even to the red lights in every room to protect night vision. For those who want a change from the nightlife, there are walks and hikes in the surrounding Lincoln National Forest as well as a vari-

ety of birds that liven up the daytime skies.

I got to spend an evening with a 25" Dobsonian. It was touch-and-go as to whether I was actually going to be able to see anything, as clouds moved through the area, offering only sucker holes for the better part of two hours. Finally, about 11:00pm, the sky began to yield its stars and for the next 3 hours I was about as close to heaven as I may ever get. Besides examining all the Messier objects in Virgo (twice, just to be sure), the special treats were Comet SW3, Omega Centauri and Centaurus A. The last two, of course, are well below the accessible horizon from Vancouver. I quit reluctantly about 2:00am as my concentration began to fade. The trip was quite wonderful and I am looking forward to a future

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Photos by Ron Jerome

Vancouver Centre Needs a Treasurer

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Receive all funds paid to the society and handle the related banking duties;
- Verify and make all disbursements required in the ordinary course of the society's business;
- Keep all books and financial records;
- Help track the society's inventory;
- Help prepare annual budgets and advise council on the financial requirements necessary to realize the projects and programs of the society;
- Present regular financial

statements to council with appropriate commentary;

- Advise council on investments;
- Present the financial statements at the Annual General Meeting;
- Prepare the financial statements required by the National Office of the RASC at year-end.

Time Commitment:

- Council meetings are held once a month, a week prior to the regular members' meeting and the treasurer should be in attendance. Meetings last about 2 hours.
- Banking and recording keeping, including preparation of

financial statements, requires 2-3 hours per month.

Book keeping or accounting experience would be useful, although our financial reporting is not complicated. Familiarity with spreadsheets and/or a basic accounting program is necessary.

Your council needs to fill this important position and we ask anyone interested to contact any other of your centre executives.

Ron Jerome – President
jerome3292@shaw.ca
604-298-3292 ✪

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visit.

Astronomy Day, our biggest production of the year, was accompanied by, dare I mention it, rain, after a stretch of really decent viewing weather. Ah well... it is spring in Vancouver. While attendance was low, the talks were excellent and our featured speaker—Dr. Carolyn Porco—delivered an extremely informative presentation on NASA's Cassini mission. Pictures of Saturn, its multiple rings and fascinating moons, accompanied by a discussion of the trials and tribulations

of bringing sense to the frequently perplexing images, kept the audience in rapt attention for an hour and one half. For those who have



yet to discover the imaging team's website, visit <http://ciclops.org/index.php>. We do live in interesting times.

Next on the annual agenda is the General Assembly in Ottawa, the weekend of May 18th – 22nd. The speakers and workshops look very instructive and I suspect there will be more than a few “interesting” discussions at the council meetings. I am sure financial matters will dominate the sessions as National continues to look for solutions to its budget dilemma. We anticipate a fee increase in the coming year, which, as we know, will not be

shared by the centres. To those members planning the trip, I look forward to seeing you there.

– Ron Jerome ✪

RASC-Vancouver Centre Telescope Loaner Programme

by Wayne Lyons

There are a number of loaner telescopes available to members at no cost. The primary purpose of the program is to provide an assortment of telescope for beginning amateur astronomers to use and compare. Each scope has advantages and disadvantages and may be suitable for different types of viewing. By comparing the different scopes you will be able to make an informed telescope purchase best suited for your personal use.

Each scope has an equipment list with it and also a list of other scopes in the loaner program. The current list of loaner scopes is:

- OKKK, Refractor, 60mm - f/15
- Carl Wetzler, Refractor, 80mm - f/15
- Karl Stein, Refractor, 80mm - f/15
- Sky-Watcher, Refractor, 102mm - f/10
- Tasco, Reflector, 110mm - f/8
- Homemade, Reflector, 150mm - f/5
- Omcon, Reflector, 150mm - f/6
- Homemade, Reflector, 152mm - f/6
- Homemade, Reflector,

- 200mm - f/6
- Sky-Watcher, Reflector, 203mm - f/5
- Homemade, Reflector, 250mm - f/5.6
- Homemade, Reflector, 250mm - f/5

GUIDELINES FOR USE:

Loaner telescopes are to be picked up and returned to the GMSO at the end of monthly meetings.

Reservations: Up to two different scopes may be reserved throughout the year. The reservation of a scope may be done up to three months prior to the date of use. Any unreserved scopes are available at the GMSO at the end of our regular meetings.

If you are familiar with the process of collimating you may realign the primary mirror. Collimation of the primary mirror may be done if you feel comfortable. The secondary mirrors are checked frequently. To prevent damage to hardware supporting the secondary mirror we would prefer that it be realigned by a member of Council.

CLEANING:

Transporting and storing RASC-VC scopes should be

done with care. Dust and vibrations are the worst enemies of a telescopes optical system. Please keep the scope covered with a dust cap when not in use to prevent dust from settling on the lens surface or mirrors. Ideally reflector telescopes should be stored with the primary mirror in a vertical position and the secondary mirror face down. An additional large plastic bag to cover the entire scope will offer further dust protection. Finderscopes and eyepieces are to be cleaned with special lens paper & cleaning fluid only. Eyepieces need to be handled with care.

AVOID TOUCHING OPTICAL SURFACES.

DO NOT CLEAN the MIRRORS.

IMPORTANT:

In order to keep the scopes in good operating order please **REPORT** any difficulties or problems with the scope to the Director of Telescopes. ★



Diamond Ring at Third Contact

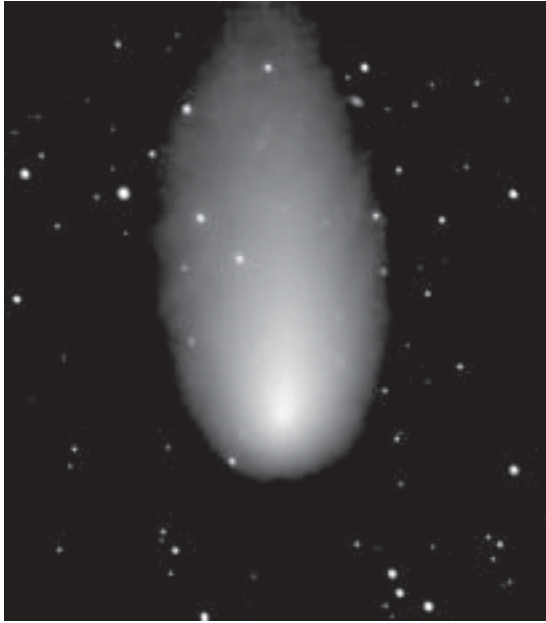
Bill Ronald

29 March, 2006

Astronomy Day 2006



CGRT Gallery



Comet Schwassmann-Wachmann 3 (73P)

50 seconds, unguided

25 April, 2006



M51

Ten stacked 20-second exposures, unguided



M63

30 seconds, unguided

Proud To Serve Vancouver's Astronomical Community



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