



NOVA

NEWSLETTER OF THE VANCOUVER CENTRE RASC

VOLUME 2006 ISSUE 5

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 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.

Sept. 14: Members' Night.

Oct. 19: Tony Moffat of the U of Montreal on BRITE, the follow-up mission to MOST.

Nov. 9: 75th Anniversary celebrations.

Dec. 14: AGM.

Next Issue Deadline

Material for the November Nova should be submitted by Monday, Nov. 6, 2006. Please send submissions to:

Gordon Farrell
(gfarrell@shaw.ca)

Mount Kobau Star Party 2006

by Craig Breckenridge

This year marked a couple of new things for my annual trek up to Mount Kobau; it was the first time I would tow my trailer any great distance with the new truck and it was the first time I'd tried to travel the highway in tandem with another astronomer.

Bob Parry and I travelled from Hope to Mount Kobau basically together in order to ensure there were no issues with Bob pulling Pomponia and his new trailer with his truck. Once we had made it to the top of the slide, we were fairly sure Bob

wouldn't have any trouble on the trip so we just leapfrogged between my regular stops. I like to take a break every hour or so to stretch my legs.

We arrived at the top of the mountain early Monday afternoon and proceeded to set up camp even though the wind was



Smoke plume from forest fires in Washington State

from the south and blowing in all the smoke and ash from the fires just over the border in Washington State. Monday night was spent sitting under the awning of the new trailer shining our laser pointers

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IMPORTANT NOTICE:

The October meeting will be held on **October 19**, one week later than usual. Please mark your calendars.

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and flashlights through the smoke that had left visibility at about 50 feet. There was so much ash falling that it looked like it was snowing at times. We both woke up the next day smelling like we'd been sitting around a campfire.

On Tuesday we spent an hour or two down in Osoyoos picking up some of the things we forgot and getting some supplies to do some field wiring for the scopes. By Tuesday night the winds had shifted and were coming from the north. I had faith that we would have some good nights observing and we weren't disappointed. Although I have had some better nights on Kobau over the years, this has to rank as one of the better years overall.

Wednesday followed with more attendees arriving. Vancouver Centre had quite a contingent there and it's always great to see old friends like the Paulsons and Barts at this event. There were many observers by Wednesday night and it was another good one for picking up faint fuzzies and favourite objects.

Jason Rickerby and family had come up with the idea of cre-

ating an orienteering course and this was something that Pomponia, Bob and I did over Friday and Saturday, Pomponia having arrived Thursday. The course took trekkies past some of the old sites that have significance from the observatory days on top of the mountain. We got to see the piers



The Rickerby camp

for the solar testing equipment, the location of the 16" scope that once inhabited the only dome ever to be erected there, the survey pin for the mountain itself and to walk by the remnants of the old "stairway to the stars." It was great to go on this hike and be able to share some of the mountain's history with Bob and Pomponia. Next year we're trying to wrestle Craig McCaw into giving a talk about the mountain during the years he was there observing.

Friday and Saturday nights were also great for observing and Lee and I were able to sight and

confirm on subsequent nights IC1296 (the faint little galaxy near M57). This has given Lee the idea to do a 2 for 1 talk next year that I know I'll enjoy. This year Lee talked about some of the obscuring nebulae that was visible and gave us a list of objects to try and find while we were there. It was

fun to work through this list as there were several objects I had never looked for before. The other talks were Murray Paulson's ever popular bino walk, Richard Christie's "Building Blocks of the Universe" and my own Thirty Metre Telescope update.

Saturday brought about the closing ceremonies which were held on the flats beside the now condemned weather trailer (yes it's still there) and Ken Hewitt White gave a great update on the Pluto debate that had just been decided by the IAU. The three astrophoto categories were all won by Vancouver Centre members (Gwen Rickerby – Novice Astrophoto, Jason Rickerby – Piggyback Astrophoto and Bob, Pomponia and I for Prime Focus Astrophoto). Bob, Pomponia and I had entered the photo we took last March of

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President's Message

Summer delivered those long anticipated warm days and pleasant evenings, along with lots of clear skies. The Vancouver Centre was active in two viewing events—a GVRD sponsored Perseid meteor shower gathering and the Mt. Kobau Star Party. Doug Montgomery, Craig Breckenridge, Suzanna Nagy and Jason Rickerby took their scopes to Aldergrove Lake Park for the meteor show and shared their expertise with about 600 public attendees. As the moon was just past full, the shower was not as spectacular as it might have been. Still there were enough “Ooohs” and “Aaahs” to make their efforts worthwhile.

Mt. Kobau was well attended but the weather was windy and cold. Smoke from the forest fire in Washington State clouded the sky intermittently and the final report was only one night of really good seeing. Vancouver Centre garnered a trophy for excellence in three categories of astrophotography. One of the winning images had been taken earlier this year using the Chris Graham Robotic Telescope (CGRT). The CGRT program has not been active the last two months as a result of the monsoon-like weather plaguing the southwest US. The domes at New Mexico Skies have remained closed for much of that time. Once the skies clear, we will start our imaging

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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

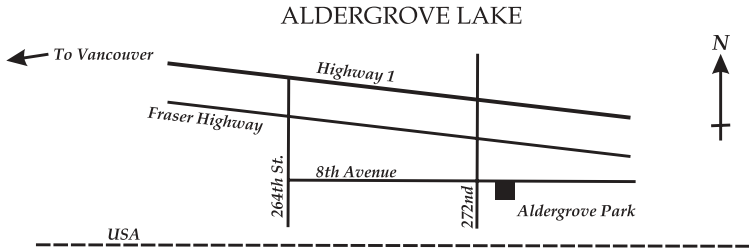
1/4 Page: \$15.00 per issue

1/2 Page: \$25.00 per issue

Full Page: \$40.00 per issue

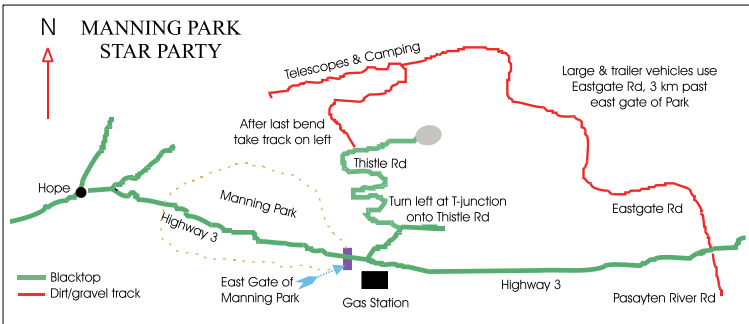
Rates are for camera-ready, or electronic files. Payment, by cheque, must accompany ad material. Make cheque payable to: RASC Vancouver Centre.

Observing Sites

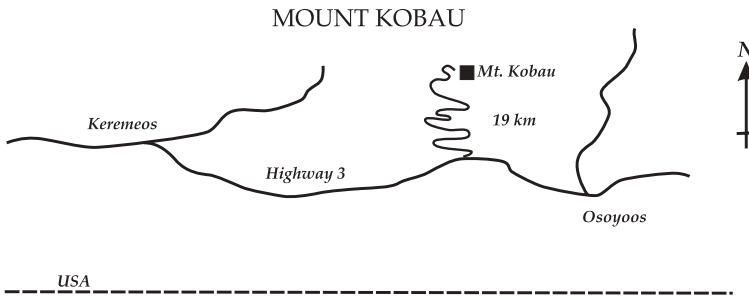


Dale McNabb Observatory in Aldergrove Lake Park (RASC Vancouver Centre's regular viewing site)

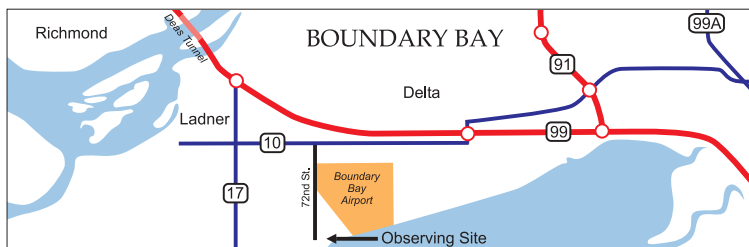
Contact Mike Penndelton (604-888-1505) or Howard Morgan (604-856-9186)



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

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 programs.

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 appreciated.

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) includes 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, multimedia shows in GroundStation Canada, and access to the Cosmic Courtyard Exhibit Gallery. For Membership 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/>

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES!

New members, did you know? The Vancouver Centre has 8 telescopes available for loan free of charge! We have telescopes ranging 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 knowledge, enjoyment and skill in astronomy.

The best thing you can do to gain the most from your membership is to get active! Take in the club meetings; engage other members with questions; come out to observing 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. Contact Jason Rickerby at 604-502-8158.

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

Upcoming Events

October

13 – Sidewalk Astronomy (rain day Oct. 14)

November

9 – 75th Anniversary of Vancouver Centre

December

12 – AGM



The old pier for the 16" scope

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the Flame Nebulae with the CGRT (processing by Brian Morse). The award for mechanical excellence and innovation also went to a Vancouver Centre member whose name slips my mind right now for his 12" bino scope (Don't be offended – you guys all know I can barely remember my own name at times!).

All in all the week was another great one for relaxing and observing—two of my favourite things to do. I can hardly wait for next year. ★



A 12" binocular scope

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training sessions and interested members are invited to join the program.

Anne and I packed up our trailer and headed to the Rocky Mountains—Yoho, Banff and Jasper. Over the years we have travelled *through* the area. This time we lingered, spending nearly two weeks hiking and star gazing. Each day was magnificent. In the campgrounds, bulletin boards described evening events—generally talks related to local history, flora and fauna. To our surprise and delight, one of the evenings was to be an astronomy talk by the Space Centre’s roaming community astronomer, Bill Burnyeat, travelling the countryside with a 25" Dobsonian in tow.

Bill delivered his first presentation at Lake Louise, a very entertaining recap of some astronomical history, sprinkled with personal stories and some “how to” ideas for those with piqued curiosity. One of his suggestions was to take a toilet paper roll, hold it up to the night sky and count the stars within that circle. This would be a sample of one percent of the sky and, when multiplied by 100, would tell the observer how many stars could be seen under the light conditions from that location. Pretty simple and quite clever!

When it got dark, Bill unpacked his light bucket and introduced his audience to the night sky. I set up my 8" Newtonian as well. While Bill attracted the longest line-up, it was fun to show people a variety of sights and discuss different telescope options. After the last camper had gone to bed, he introduced me to some interesting new objects, including the double star Eta Cassiopeiae. We even



The Cultus Lake Astronomical Society

caught sight of a few meteor streaks before moonlight enveloped the sky.

His presentation the following night was in Yoho and Anne and I drove the short distance to see it. Murray Paulson from Calgary was there as well, on his way to Mt. Kobau. Bill’s second talk was equally entertaining and he found ways to reach the younger viewers in the audience. The night sky was far less cooperative as clouds made targets harder to find. It was probably the worst night of the two weeks of our holiday. Still, people

waited patiently for a chance to look at whatever presented itself.

Over the next eight or nine days, as Anne and I travelled to Jasper and back, I managed to spend a few hours nearly every evening under the Milky Way with my scope. I added a few more Messiers to my list (89 in total now) and discovered double stars, a target group I had generally ignored until this summer. *The Night Sky Observer’s Guide*, an addition to my library before our holidays, begins each constellation chapter with a list of variable and double stars. Those two volumes have greatly aided my celestial navigation and added to my enjoyment.

Over the September long weekend, I was invited to attend the founding meeting of the Cultus Lake Astronomical Society. Pomponia Martinez and Bob Parry chose Cultus as their quick get-away from the city and organized a fund raising event for the RV Park they settled into. After a fine potluck meal and a short astronomy introduction by Bob, the residents were treated to as many interesting sights as we could find. No one went away disappointed and I think we recruited one grade-five student as a future member.

It was a good summer.

— Ron Jerome ★

RASC-VC Observing Sites

by Wayne Lyons

Having just returned from the Mount Kobau Star Party, it is a little difficult to think about good observing sites in our local area of the world. It truly was amazing to view NGC 7331 in Pegasus at nearly 50 million light years and then slide over about one half a degree South West to locate a faint patch of light known as Stephen's Quintet about 300 million light years from home.

Wait a minute. After spending seven days camped out at the top of a distant mountain my log shows that there was one night completely washed out by cloud and smoke, one night spent jumping to sucker holes, four nights of above average skies and only one night that made the whole trip worth while.

The point is that taking advantage of local viewing opportunities is just as rewarding as planning a trip to some far off dark sky observing site in the hopes of catching a glimpse of some faint object. Even at such a location there is no guarantee of viewing all of the objects on your observing list.

The RASC-Vancouver Centre has an active group of observers. We have a selection of sites being used in the Lower Mainland and all amateur astronomers are welcome to attend our observing sessions.

At Mount Kobau I was approached by a few people interested in setting up sites closer to

their homes. Tsawwassen and North Vancouver were suggested if there is a contact available to coordinate observing sessions. If you have any other suggestions, please pass them along.

Having an observatory in your back yard all set up and ready to go is the most ideal way to observe. The next best viewing is getting to a good site and being ready to observe in a reasonable time period. With a little bit of work you should be able to find a relatively dark site not too far from home and find a group of people to share the night skies with.

Local Observing Sites

See the sidebar on page 9 for a list observing sites and contacts.

To find directions to any of these Observing Sites:

- Go to the Vancouver Centre website: <http://www.pcis.com/rascvan>
- Click "**Observing:**" from the Contents menu on the left.
- Click "**Observing Sites**" from the Contents menu on the left.
- Select & click the Observing Site for which you need directions.

The Observers Group

The RASC-Vancouver Centre does have a list of observers that are contacted by e-mail when one of their members has planned an observing session.

To see if your name is on our Observers list:

- Go to the Vancouver Centre website: <http://www.pcis.com/rascvan>
- Click "**Sign In**" above the Con-

tents menu (the screen will change to the Sign In page).

- Enter your username and password.
- Click "**Sign In**"
- Click "**Members**" from the Contents menu on the left.
- Click "**Groups**" from the menu on the upper right.
- Click "**Observers**" to verify that you are on the list.

If you would like to be contacted by e-mail when an observing session is scheduled to occur please contact a member of Council to have your name added to the list.

In order to preserve privacy notification e-mail is sent out as Bcc. Bcc is an abbreviation for blind carbon copy. If you add a recipient's name to this box in a message, a copy of the message is sent to that recipient, and the recipient's name is not visible to other recipients of the message. *

Local Observing Sites

Vancouver Space Centre – GMSO

Contact: Simon Johnston
tel: (604) 616-7009
e-mail: simonjohnston@shaw.ca
Contact: Suzanna Nagy
tel: (604) 230-0106
e-mail: snagy@slatervecchio.com

Boundary Bay

Contact: Jason Rickerby
tel: (604) 502-8158
e-mail: rickerby@dccnet.com
Contact: Doug Montgomery
tel: (604) 322-3345
e-mail: dougmont@shaw.ca

Cambridge House, Boundary Bay Regional Park

Contact: Jim Ronback
tel: (604) 948-1589
e-mail: Jim_Ronback@dccnet.com
Note: booking required

Campbell Valley Regional Park

Contact: Bruce MacDonald
tel: (604) 882-3820
e-mail: brumac@gmail.com
Note: booking required

Pitt-Addington Marsh

Contact: Wayne Lyons
tel: (604) 467-2956
e-mail: lyonsww@shaw.ca

Aldergrove Lake Regional Park

Contact: Mike Penndelton
tel: (604) 888-1505

MacDonald Park, Abbotsford

Contact: Paul Greenhalgh, FVAS
tel: (604) 302-2921
e-mail: fvas@shaw.ca

All members are invited to come out to the November 9th meeting to help us celebrate Vancouver Centre's 75th anniversary. We'll have special presentations, prizes, food and, of course, cake!



Members' Gallery



M45 - Pleiades

Jason Rickerby

Mount Kobau 2005

Canon EOS 20D

Canon EF 70-200mm f/4L USM

Piggyback image on Celestron

Ultima 2000 8". 200mm Focal

Length, F5, ISO 400, 10 minutes

Newish Moon

Jason Rickerby

Canon EOS 20D

Celestron Ultima 2000 8"





Star Trails – Craig Breckenridge

Proud To Serve Vancouver's Astronomical Community



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