

NOVA

NEWSLETTER OF THE VANCOUVER CENTRE RASC | VOLUME 2010 ISSUE 5 | SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

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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 Ray Whittick Lounge.

Sept. 9: Bill Burnyeat's Summer Travels.

Oct. 14: John Chapman: "Mining the Solar System."

Nov. 11: Dr Thomas Kallanger of MOST: "How a Canadian suitcase, a French painter, and an ancient German astronomer sound the stars."

Next Issue Deadline

Material for the November Nova should be submitted by Monday, Nov. 1, 2010. Please send submissions to: Gordon Farrell (gfarrell@shaw.ca)
Title image: Jason Rickerby

Breckenridge Astronomical Open House

by Craig Breckenridge

On August 28th, members of the RASC Vancouver Center were able to see the second largest telescope in BC (the first being the Plaskett Telescope at the DAO in Saanich). The UTas telescope is under construction at

Breckenridge Astronomical in South Burnaby and is in the trial assembly stage. This meant that members could go and see the 1.37m (50") telescope in its nearly final form. Standing about 18' tall and weighing in

at just over three tons, it is an impressive structure to say the least. This was a moment in time when it was possible to see the scope as it will soon be dismantled for final painting and then partial re-assembly before being shipped to Bisdee Tier just outside Hobart, Tasmania.

The host for the event was long-time RASC-Van member, Craig Breckenridge. As we all know, Craig has been involved with many professional telescopes and observatories world-wide and has formed

his own company to build this "working class" of 1m – 2.5m scopes. The UTas telescope is the second to be constructed by the company (the first was assembled in England and now makes its home on the island of Maui). Craig gladly took

questions from all who attended and explained the many features that make this telescope unique. He explained future options that may be added to the telescope in the future (active mirror support) and detailed the design and fabrication

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Star parties are usually planned to avoid interference by moonlight, especially if deep-sky observing and astrophotography are the primary objectives. In that context, moonlight could be considered nature's own light pollution. Still, the moon offers viewing opportunities in its own right, especially when public events are planned. It is quite interesting to discover that, although people look up at the moon from time to time, they rarely, if ever, have trained binoculars on it or looked at it through a telescope. At the Deas Island MetroParks event in August, it was the focus of our observing. That was partly the result of the timing of the event and partly because the extensive cloud cover precluded



us from seeing much else. With activities beginning at 6:00pm and ending at 10:00pm, we did not have a great observing window since it does not really get dark until 10:00pm. Still, we got lucky. The moon was up early enough and the curtain of clouds that covered much the sky remained open around the moon until just about the time we were ready to leave. It worked out very well.

The event was family-oriented and the ethnicity of attendees was

very broad. I mention that because I heard the exclamation “WOW” in ten or fifteen differently languages, most of which I did not understand. Yet, I could tell from the way it is said, and the facial expression, that the wonder and amazement was the same in English, Hindi, Cantonese or Russian. And it was not just the kids who were excited. Their parents were also taken with the sights and often lingered over the myriad of

craters and dark mares, sometimes asking “How” and “Why.” Those of us who were there—Doug, Jason Rickerby, Jim Ronback and me—had, I think, as much fun as our audience.

I had a couple of other opportunities to observe the moon this summer. I took a photography course in June and found one of my preferred shooting times was at night. From our Silk Purse venue in West Vancouver, the view to the east is of the Lions Gate Bridge and

the inner harbour of the city. One full moon night, I thought I would try my hand at a moonrise over the bridge. I was pleased with the results, one of which may be found below.

My second encounter was on a recent backpack trip Anne and I made into the high reaches of the Cascades in Washington State, where we spent a night in an old fire lookout tower, perched on top of a rock pile at 2300 meters. We had

a cloudless night and a 360-degree view from 6:00pm, when we arrived, until 7:30am the next morning when we left. We watched the orange glow of a sunset on Mt. Baker to the northwest and in the morning the same colours returned for the sunrise. As darkness descended that

evening, the white orb of the moon rose through the multicoloured layers of sky followed by the smaller white point of Jupiter, which chased the moon across the sky all night before being swallowed by the light of dawn. It was magical and this time Anne captured it with her camera. She wants to come back again, when the sky is black, to see the stars and the Milky Way. ✨

President's Message

As most of you know, we have designated Saturday, September 18th as Astronomy Day for the Vancouver Centre. The official spring date may work in some locales but inclement weather has frequently made our past efforts less successful than we have wanted. The event will take place at Simon Fraser University beginning at 2:00pm and will run until late if the weather allows some stargazing. There will be a variety of activities including our Paul Sykes Memorial Lecture and a bar-b-que hosted by the university. An array of prizes will be awarded by draws and a number of centre members will be sharing their knowledge of things astronomical in a series of talks. Details are contained elsewhere in *Nova*, on our website and on Meetup. Any members who would like to volunteer time would be most welcome. SFU is using this event as well to promote their telescope project. I want to remind members that your centre has offered to match member donations up to a total of \$5000 toward this project and contributors will receive a tax receipt from the university. Donations can be made on-line through the SFU website.

One of our members sent council a copy of the June issue of *The Express*, a publication of the North Vancouver Museum & Archives. Prominently featured on the front page was the following announcement: "Observatory on Grouse Mountain." The project was undertaken by Thomas Shearman and sponsored by Edward Mahon.

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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 \$70.00 per year (\$41.00 for persons under 21 years of age) and can be obtained by writing to the Treasurer at the address on page 5. 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.

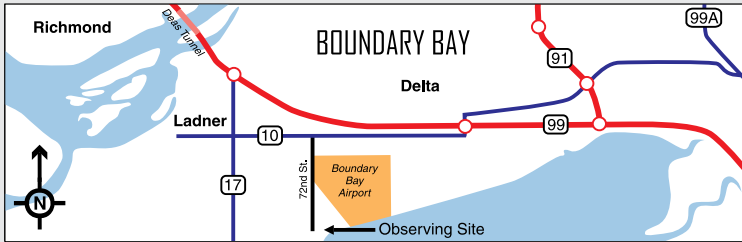
Advertising

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.

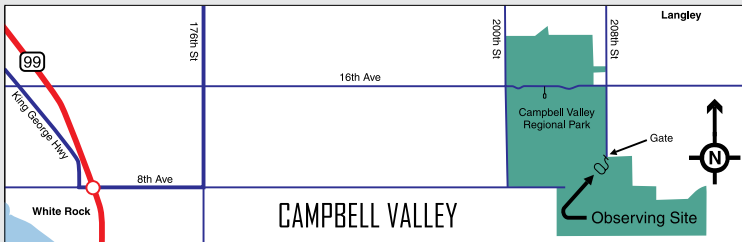
Commerical Rates

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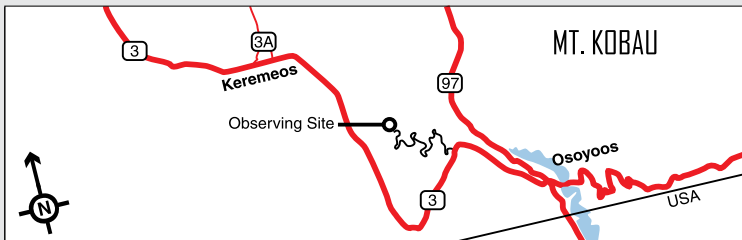
OBSERVING SITES



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



Our alternate observing site. Contact Bruce MacDonald (604-882-3820) to see if this site is in use.



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

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When completed it was to be the world's largest telescope—a Newtonian reflector with a 10-foot mirror. The Grouse Mountain Scenic Incline Railway Company received permission to build an electric railway from Cleveland Dam to the foot of Grouse Mountain and then a cable car up the west side to the proposed observatory. The date of this announcement was August 27, 1912. Needless to say, a depression, a war (WWI) and overly ambitious plans prevented the project from

reaching completion. Sharon Proctor authored the article and we have invited her to visit our centre at a future date and present the story for your enjoyment.

Pomponia Martinez, Bob Parry, Alan Jones, Doug Montgomery and I travelled to Mt. Kobau last month for the annual star party. For me, the best night was also the windiest and those of us with big Dobs had to hold tight to keep the viewing steady. On one evening, Doug trained his scope on Stephen's Quintet and managed to tease two or three of the faint galaxies

from a rather nondescript area of the sky. The others, he concluded, were candidates for the imagination. If the opportunity presents itself, I invite you to peer over Doug's shoulder. He is a fine observer with a good eye for detail. He is also good company.

Returning to Pomponia, following the Vancouver Centre pancake breakfast at Mt. Kobau, she was inundated with requests for her sourdough recipe. *[Editor's note: look for the recipe in the Astronomy Day issue of Nova later this month]* Jack

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Newton and his wife Alice drove up from Osoyoos just for breakfast—quite an endorsement I would say. The pancakes are wonderful and the breakfast has been a great way for attendees to share the camaraderie of the mountain.

Our public outreach programs this summer were very successful. The night before Doug and I left for Mt. Kobau, we attended MetroParks' Perseid meteor event at Aldergrove Lake. It was an all-night affair with lots of room for tents and trailers, talks and telescopes. There were six instruments set up for the evening and the last of the attendees left around 2:00am. The final count was 1100 people and two meteors, at least that was all I saw since I spent most of my time with my scope and the long line that snaked into the dark, each person patiently waiting for a turn at the eyepiece. A second MetroParks' event at Deas Island attracted some 500 people. Bill Burnyeat's travelling telescope tour through some of B.C.'s parks put another 1600 eyeballs to eyepieces over the summer.

Under the heading of official business, nominations for Council are open. We invite anyone interested to put your name forward and help contribute to the ongoing success of this centre. It is my intention to step down at the end of this year. My wife and I continue to spend increasing amounts of time travelling and she has been needling me more lately about being an astronomy widow. It is hard to imagine, however, something else being nearly as much fun. *

— Ron Jerome

LIBRARY

The centre has a large library of books, magazines and old NOVA's for your enjoyment at the GMSO. 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://rasc-vancouver/> or
<http://www.rasc.ca/vancouver>

Details of upcoming meetings and events can be found at our Meetup group at:

<http://astronomy.meetup.com/131/>

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 Bob Parry, Director of Telescopes in the meeting room of the GMSO after the members meeting. All telescopes are to be picked up and returned at the GMSO. 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 two different telescopes per year and use what is left at the end of the meeting anytime. Bob can be reached at 604-215-8844.

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 Friday/Saturday nights. Contact Jason Rickerby at 604-502-8158.

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

Fall Star Quest 2010

Loon Lake gravel pit
Merritt
Saturday, September 4, 5pm –
Sunday, September 12, 10am

Each year the Merritt Astronomical Society hosts a large and roomy Star Party! If you're into camping and doing all-nighters under a canopy of stars, observing deep sky objects and the occasional planet then this event is right up your alley!
<http://www.merrittastronomical.com/>

Sidewalk Astronomy

Roundhouse Community
Centre & David Lam Park,
Vancouver
Friday, September 17
7pm – 11:30pm

Presentation at the Roundhouse Community Centre 8:00 – 10:00 PM with observing on the Sea Walk at David Lam Park (weather permitting). Further information will be posted on Meetup.
<http://www.meetup.com/astronomy-131/>

Astronomy Day

Simon Fraser University
Saturday, September 18
2pm – 11:30pm

Astronomy Day & SFU Open House/Star Party. Kick off for promotion of a New Observatory at SFU.
This year's Paul Sykes presentation: "A Laser View of the Atmosphere on Mars." Speaker: Dr. Jim Whiteway of York University was the principal investigator for the Canadian weather package that went to Mars aboard the Phoenix lander. Keep posted on this event at:
<http://www.meetup.com/astronomy-131/> or
<http://www.sfu.ca/starrynights/observatory.html>

Summer

by Bill Burnyeat

Community Astronomy was on the go this year, visiting Provincial and Federal Parks plus camping venues all around the province.

Community Astronomy (CA) is an outreach program that brings telescopes and lectures to dark sky areas around BC and western Alberta. After years of activity, bringing views to tens of thousands of campers, Community

plus funds from the PromoScience program of the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council

Community Astronomy Summer tour.

The tour started off at Pacific Rim National Park on July 14 and ended on Saltspring Island on August 20. Between those two dates, a total of 1,600 people saw an object in the 40 cm Dobsonian telescope and attended a "slide talk" (actually a power point-style presentation) at a nature circle or amphitheatre.



Astronomy has languished recently due to a lack of sponsorship. This year, generous grants from the Vancouver centre of the RASC

of Canada, plus monies from a Vancouver area astronomy fan, made it possible for our club's Bill Burnyeat to operate another

The Community Astronomy team of Bill, Colleen Kern and Michael Burnyeat travelled 4,000 kilometres
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processes for those who were interested.

Also on hand was local Vancouver artist Stacy Sakai whom Craig lets use a section of the shop for her studio. Stacy paints using Hubble images for inspiration and is a great conversationalist for Craig when he wants to turn to in-depth conversations about life, the universe and everything... Stacy provides an outlet for Craig's support of the Vancouver Art Scene and since her work is space-related, they feel it is a perfect fit.

Hot dogs, juice drinks, coffee and water were provided for any who wished to stop by throughout the afternoon and were gladly cooked up by Teague and Dar, Craig's two sons. Jill (Craig's wife) and Barb (her friend) made sure everyone got some star cookies and galaxy cupcakes while Craig's brother Chris entertained people with his story

of how to crash a giant truck while working in a strip mine... Chris is in Vancouver for a course in pain management before he goes home to Tumbler Ridge.

All in all it was a good day with just over 100 people attending. We went through five dozen hot



dogs and a similar number of juice boxes. Our final guest for the day was one of our favourites; just as we were getting ready to pack it all up, a car drove past, turned around and drove past again. It then backed up and parked with the driver getting out and saying, "that's a telescope." Craig replied, "why yes it

is." It turns out that this was Jim Weis, Mechanical Engineer for the Large Binocular Telescope, who happened to be in town looking for a martial arts supply store. Just by chance, Jim drove by and spotted the scope. It made for some very entertaining conversation with Jim letting Craig know the status of the remedial work being performed on the LBT.

Craig let us in on future plans for the company, with the next project being three, 1m telescopes of an Alt-Az design. These scopes will feature and active mirror support, thin-cast cellular mirrors and the latest control system from SiTech. Additional plans call for a new building to be constructed in the valley with more room for machine equipment, optical grinding, polishing and testing equipment, a coating chamber and much more. Keep you eyes on this space as we continue to grow. *

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in the new CA truck to make the trip happen. Popular Manning Park was visited twice, August 8 and August 11 and a few bright Perseids entertained those in the line-up waiting for the chance to look at M13 or Albireo. Other local venues included Alice Lake provincial Park (Aug. 13), Porteau Cove Provincial park (Aug.6) and a three-day engagement at a



Saltspring Yoga retreat (Aug 17-19). On Aug. 14, CA visited our friends

of the Sunshine Coast RASC for a program, hosted by that Centre, at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park.

Further afield, the CA Summer tour visited Provincial Parks on Vancouver Island, the Kamloops area and the UBC research station at Gavin Lake near Williams Lake. Dark skies were enjoyed by all. *

Proud To Serve Vancouver's Astronomical Community

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