

# NOVA

NEWSLETTER OF THE VANCOUVER CENTRE RASC | VOLUME 2007 ISSUE 5 | SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

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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 GMSO.

**Sep. 13:** Dr. Ingrid Stairs of UBC: Putting Einstein to the Test.

**Oct. 11:** Gary Seronik on Binocular Objects.

**Nov. 8:** Dr. Ed Krupp, Director of the Griffith Observatory: Inhabiting the Meridian.

## Next Issue Deadline

Material for the November Nova should be submitted by Monday, Oct. 29, 2007. Please send submissions to:

Gordon Farrell (gfarrell@shaw.ca)

Title image: Jason Rickerby

## Mount Kobau Star Party 2007

by Wayne Lyons

When I started on this article for *Nova* I thought it was going to be about the many celestial observations I was fortunate enough to enjoy at my eight-day vacation at

ceremonies on closing Saturday.

I would like to share some of the many observations that I made with Lance Olkovich's (Vancouver Centre) 16" telescope—and



Photo by Ron Jerome

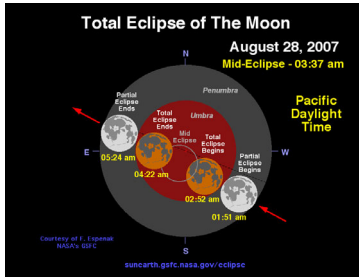
the 24<sup>th</sup> annual Mount Kobau Star Party. In those eight days there were only two when observing was not possible due to weather. When the cloud of the opening Saturday cleared out, observing picked up on the Sunday, became exceptional on the Monday and remained good until rain finally caught up to us after the closing

maybe I will in further articles. This article is dedicated to another side of Astronomy that I also do enjoy: the many people that participate and help to make a success of the event.

Members of the Mount Kobau Astronomical Society do put time in throughout the year to

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The final lunar eclipse of 2007 occurred in the wee small hours of Tuesday, Aug 28<sup>th</sup>. Mid-eclipse was scheduled to happen at 3:37am Pacific Time, and by God it DID. That was what amazed me—there was a



paper that Dan Collier had with the times of First Contact, Mid-eclipse and Final Contact which happened just as predicted. I know that they have big fast computers and very long equations, but it still rather amazing to me that the predictions are that accurate.

The evening for Pomponia and myself started with an early nap from 9:00pm 'til around 11:30. We then got up, loaded the truck with Pomponia's 105 ETX, coffee pot, coffee and hot chocolate and off to the GMSO we went. We arrived there a little after midnight and joined those already setting up. There was a good showing of people with scopes—at my count there were six scopes. I was attending to the ETX while Pomponia did the coffee and greeted the curious public that came out in large numbers, thanks to the great PR done by David Dodge. Below is a graphic from NASA on the event.

The sky was reasonably clear but with a bit of haze that glowed rather brightly from the full moon.

After aligning the little ETX we went searching for interesting things to see in the night sky while awaiting First Contact. The ETX is really quite amazing.

*Warning: stepping up on my Soapbox.* This little computerized scope was finding things easily that could not be “star hopped” to. It put M13 right in the middle of the field of view when none of the stars for the “Keystone” were visible—the nearest visible star was Vega! Dan used the orientation of the ETX to point Ron's 16" Dobbie towards



Photo by Bob Parry

M13, which they missed but did find M92! Aperture really helps. This is where these computerized scopes can be a real help to people who want to see the wonders of the Universe but live in the city, with light pollution obscuring anything dimmer than Magnitude 3 or ever Magnitude 2.5 stars. Computerized scopes have a place for us city observers and should not be put down as not being “Real Observing.” *Stepping down from my Soapbox.*

Back to the eclipse. The predicted time of First Contact was 2:52 for the Umbra contact and by gar there was something happening up there just as predicted. The

crowd was getting thicker now. Pomponia's estimates from the amount of coffee and hot chocolate served were around 100 hardy souls. The bite of the shadow was crossing slowly and a red tinge was beginning to form after about half the disc was covered. We had a TV view live from the ETX that showed remarkable detail for everyone to see. Two camera crews from Global and CTV Television stations showed up and provide some very good coverage for the eclipse and the Club. The Global cameraman set up his camera and zoomed in on the Moon—those TV cameras have amazing optics; the view was quite extraordinary. I hope that the images made it to the Evening News. I did take some photos during this part of the eclipse; however I left my tripod at the lake and was shooting hand held with a 300mm lens. The vibration reduction lens managed to give a “usable” photo (cen-

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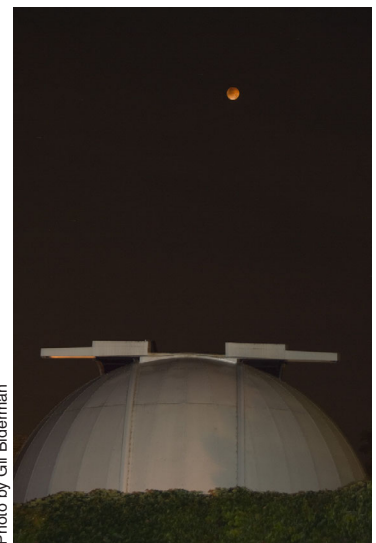


Photo by Gil Bideman

## President's Message

I hope everyone had a nice summer and some time to enjoy the heavens. Quite a number of us were lucky enough to join the Mount Kobau Star Party this year which ran from the August 11<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>. This year was our first time camping in the first parking area at the hilltop. Norman Song—our guest camper—my husband Bob and I were in good company. Ron and Anne camped across the way in their 26' trailer. The Vancouver Telescope crew was there, with more equipment than anyone has ever brought up! The Rickerby family was camped close by as was Craig Breckinridge, who was kind enough to give me a ride up to Kobau this year as I could only get away on Wednesday.

The sky that evening was incredible. Although, as usual, everyone said the sky was even better a couple of nights before! With my new 12" Meade Lightbridge Dobsonian telescope, I had a lot of fun. I was constantly "bumping" into new objects! I was able to see a lot in Sagittarius including the Lagoon nebula, the Trifid and M11 nearby. Andromeda was incredible and the double cluster was stunning in Ron's 16" Lightbridge Dob.

After a few really nice evenings, we woke up Saturday for the pancake breakfast RASC Vancouver Centre had volunteered to cook. First thing in the morning, Anne got all of the guys chopping up fruit for the salad, while Dana

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## 2007 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 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.

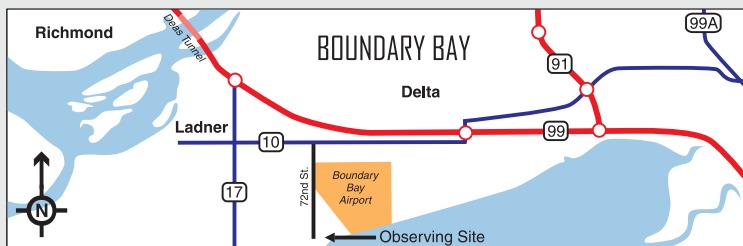
## Advertising

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.

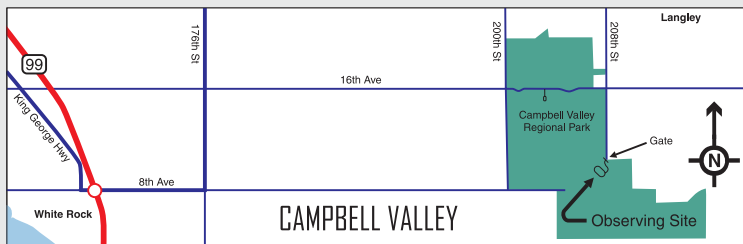
## Commerical Rates

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:  
RASC Vancouver Centre.

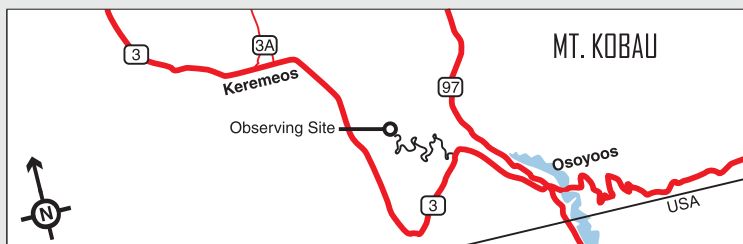
# OBSERVING SITES



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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Rickerby and I whipped up the pancake batter. We were using Dana's sourdough starter which was great. We lined up all of our camping tables and stoves outside of Ron's trailer and started flipping pancakes and grilling sausages. Bruce and Wayne kept coffee brewing and I figured we served at least 80 people. We used 16 pancake recipes—which is about 180 pancakes—and all of the sausages, bacon and ham that we had. I want to thank our Vancouver

Centre members along with Anne Jerome and Dana Rickerby for helping to make this a memorable breakfast for all!

On our last evening it hazed over, so a few of us sat around Ron and Anne's table for coffee and cookies. Ron thought I should tell you my story about my first encounter with the Kobau star party. I was in Osoyoos with my three young kids one summer, long before I knew anything or anyone from the RASC. I wandered into a shop right on the main street that

sells natural products and candles and mentioned that there were such beautiful dark skies even in town. I asked if there was any observing done. The lady at the counter said not that she was aware. But she said there was a seemingly strange group that did something under the stars at the top of this barren mountain just outside of town. Before I could say anything, she looked down at my kids and whispered, "but I wouldn't bring my kids there..." Well, I definitely

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## For Sale

105 F/10 Refractor Tube assembly for sale:

- Vixen research grade objective
- 2" focuser
- 2" diagonal
- 9 X 50 finder
- Custom built wooden stained case with brass latches - \$300 obo

14" F/4.3 Reflector on

Dobsonian mount for sale:

- Large altitude bearings with wilsonart and teflon bearings
- 2" Rack and pinion focuser (Tectron)
- 18 point floatation cell
- Custom spider assembly by Gary Wolanski
- Optics refigured in 1995 by Edmonton Optician Barry Arnold - \$950 obo

80mm Synta Maksutov Spotting Scope:

- F/ 12.5
- 45 degree 1.25 inch diagonal prism
- 6 X 30 finder
- photo tripod available

Ralph Hildebrand

home phone: 604-572-1084

work: 604-540-7258

e-mail: ralph\_rush@lightspeed.ca

## 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 Bob Parry, 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 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**

## September

9-15 – Merritt Star Quest  
22 – Sidewalk Astronomy at the  
Inukshuk at Sunset Beach

## December

13 – AGM

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got the impression that there were sacrifices or some strange occult stuff happening and I didn't go near there. That was the last I heard of it until after I joined the RASC. I

chuckle. Here I am now part of that strange group! I should really go back to that store and set things right. But wait, did I hear Bruce MacDonald muttering something about sacrificing a watermelon to

the weather gods?

Here is to clear skies, then!

– Pomponia ★

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help bring the Star Party together with speakers and prizes. Special thanks have to go to James McRae, Guy Mackie, Jim Failes, and Jason Rickerby for spending time at Kobau to ensure that day-to-day needs were looked after. The three members from Okanagan Centre are also busy fundraising and planning the construction of an Okanagan Observatory.

One evening, I managed to observe through the telescope of Gary Clemans-Gibbon from Castlegar. After my disappointment with viewing Jupiter at opposition this June from my local viewing sites in the Lower Mainland, I was impressed with what we could see in the early evening sky. Views of the Great Red Spot crossing the face

of the planet were great.

The following evening I was able to do some observing with Harris Christian (RASC Edmonton) and a 17½" Discovery telescope

from a long-time attendee of the party, Murray Paulson. He pointed out the Helix Nebula, Melotte 20 (the Alpha Perseus star association) the North American Nebula and the Veil Nebula. It was impressive to see both parts of the Veil in one field of view. Did I mention we were using his 10 x 70 binoculars?

Murray also puts on a binocular star walk through the evening sky that is part of the Mount Kobau talks. The Star

Walk is pretty close to a Messier Marathon.

One of the hazards at Mount Kobau is the sporadic arrival of local residents. You do have to make sure they don't wander in when you're not looking and leave a deposit of their presence. I have

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Photo by Ron Jerome

on an equatorial table. We watched the ingress of Europa and transit of this moon on Jupiter's surface. Harris is typical of many of the attendees at the party and has been working with the Edmonton group to promote local astronomy.

On another evening, I was fortunate enough to bum some views

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to thank Randy Klassen from Coquitlam for the use of his shovel to clean out the cow paddies from my campsite. Randy has been attending the party for some time and likes to join up with the Edmonton group.

Early on in the week Norman Song had difficulty when his scope was knocked over by a sudden gust of wind but thanks to help from Bob Parry and Murray Paulson the scope was repaired and he managed to continue observing.

Les Disher (Comox) arrived in a pick-up truck and constructed his portable observatory. It housed all his equipment and provided him with sleeping quarters and protection from the elements.

Experienced observers at Mount Kobau have learned that the top of the mountain can be a dangerous place to be when the winds pick up. This year was a pleasant surprise as there was only one night that a mini Kobau Jet Stream hit. That was the evening of the Perseid meteor shower on August 12 and Ken Hewitt-White

announced that he had recorded a count of about 74/hour around the peak of the shower.

A few of the observers that did camp out on the peak for the excellent views were Bill from Lytton, Walter Klaus, Craig McCaw and Lee from Maple Ridge.

From Lytton, Bill had a home made computer-controlled 10" reflector telescope.

Wally had driven his antique Plymouth with a small travel trailer from North Vancouver. He usually announced his arrival and departure with a BC Ferries fog horn. I was also privileged to observe his personal demonstration on collimating his 10" Meade Starfinder with a sharp thump on the side of the tube while he adjusted one of the collimation knobs. I'm looking forward to some photos taken by James McRea of this demo.

Mr. Kobau himself, Craig McCaw, had his site well prepared for the mountain's strong winds. Craig also gave a talk with a little history of Mount Kobau and the advancement of astro-imaging

from the early days of cookbook cameras.

Lee (Maple Ridge) is also new to astronomy like myself. He braved the peak of the mountain with a local resident (Oscar, a lost rattlesnake). Oscar kept pretty much to himself and gave warnings when anyone got too close. He also made himself available for any photo-ops.

Another one of this year's speakers was Lee Johnson with a list of DSO 2-4-1's. Many of the dark sky objects that we seek out have nearby companions that are just as wonderful to observe. With the increased use of computerized telescopes it is important to really take time to study your target and look for any nearby objects of interest. Lee shared a view from his 17½" Olkovich telescope of a galaxy, I believe was NGC 4236. It was a view of a very faint oval that stretched from top to bottom of the FOV.

Other speakers at this year's Star Party included Brian Morse with a talk on webcamming and

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Photo by Jason Rickerby



Our Centre faces the perennial problems of attracting and retaining new members. Trying to appeal to a wide range of interest, skills and knowledge is a challenge which we have attempted to address through our diverse group of monthly speakers and a variety of observing activities. We are embarking on a new venture this month which we hope will raise our community profile and offer our new members an opportunity to both increase their knowledge and to hone their observing skills. We are initiating an introductory astronomy course starting September 26<sup>th</sup> that will include both astronomy basics and hands-on observing opportunities.

Prince George Centre developed this course about three years ago and the Calgary and London Centres have adopted it. NOVA—New Observers Visual As-

tronomy—is designed to encourage people to take a more active interest in the night sky. The course will cover the following topics:

- Observing plans, techniques and tools
- Binoculars and telescopes—how to use them
- Motions of the sky and the seasons
- Maps, position, distance and brightness
- Star designations, right ascension/declination and deep sky objects
- The moon and eclipses
- The solar system
- Stars, the galaxy and the universe

The objective is to provide the participants a working knowledge of visual astronomy.

Class details are as follows:

- Six Wednesday Evenings, 7:30-10:00 pm

- September 26<sup>th</sup> – November 7<sup>th</sup> (ex. Halloween)
- Vancouver Telescope Centre  
3303 West 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, Vancouver

Registration is open to existing RASC members at a cost of \$67.00, which covers our anticipated expenses. We are also advertising the course to the general public. Their cost will be higher as it will include a one-year membership in the RASC. We are limiting the number of participants to 20 to maximize the benefits of the observing sessions. There is a park across the street from the store that will facilitate our viewing activities. We hope the weather cooperates.

For more information and to register call:

Ron Jerome 604-298-3292 ★

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tre image, page 2). The crowd was quite excited by the event and had many good and interesting questions to ask. People moved from scope to scope with a number of people taking photos through the larger scopes and through the 20" GMSO scope.

At full eclipse, the moon was quite red to the eye and was very dark. There were clouds moving in that made the moon look darker than it would have in a clear sky. It was interesting to note how many stars were now visible that had not been when the Moon was not

eclipsed.

Ron had brought his tripod and, as he also had a Nikon camera, I let him use my 300mm lens and he let me use the tripod. Here is a picture of the Moon at deepest eclipse.

Not too bad. The only processing was brightness and contrast adjustment. Exposure was 8 sec. at f/8.

After full eclipse, the crowd started to thin out and by the time the shadow started to move off the Moon there were just us hardy types left. Pomponia and I started to pack up as we both had to work the next

day. When we got home the shadow had moved off about 30% of the Moon's surface and the Moon was again quite bright.

This will go down as my second most memorable lunar eclipse to date. The one at Spanish Banks with comet Hale-Bopp 90 degrees from a blood red moon will be almost impossible to beat; a once in a lifetime event.

The next eclipse is in February 2008, I hope that the sky is clear enough for a good view as this one happens at a respectable hour. Hope to see you there. ★



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Gary Seronik's talk on binoculars and a list of his top-10 binocular objects.

There was also some new equipment being tried out. James Martin, one of our Vancouver Centre members, was spending time with a new C9 and computerized EQ6 equatorial mount. Ron Jerome, another one of our members, shared some views with his new 16" Meade Lightbridge.

The highlight of the week was not observing but a social event. Vancouver Centre hosted a pancake breakfast. The menu included pancakes, bacon, sausages and ham with a fresh fruit salad. There was a good turnout of astronomers

from many different places. Pomponia Martinez, Bob Parry and Craig Breckenridge had the job of keeping the rest of our volunteer staff busy preparing the meal. All praised the cooking and some even managed to get back for seconds.

The 24th annual Mt. Kobau Star Party closed on Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup> with the following presentations:

Jason Rickerby received an astrophotography award in Prime Focus (stacked image of M31).

Jack Dudych of Burnaby was awarded the ATM Mechanical Excellence category for his 12" Side-View Newtonian Binocular.

Another ATM award in the

Other Astronomical Equipment Category was handed out to John Karlsson of Vernon.

Bill Haut (Victoria Centre) was winner of the Vancouver Telescope Centre's 10" Skywatcher Dobsonian telescope.

Special thanks have to be given to Harout Markarian and the staff of the Vancouver Telescope Centre for their attendance and support of this event.

The 24th Annual Mt. Kobau Star Party was a great success and I am already looking forward to next year's 25<sup>th</sup> Party to spend some time with old and new friends in astronomy. ★



Photos by Norman Song





### M31 – Andromeda Galaxy (Winner: Prime Focus)

Jason Rickerby

Canon EOS 20D, Skywatcher Equinox 80mm F6.25, Mount: Losmandy GM-8 Gemini

9 x 3 Minute exposures, ISO 400, Stacked with DeepSkyStacker, Noise Reduction and scaling with Lightroom 1.1



Photo by Ron Jerome



Photo by Norman Song





Proud To Serve Vancouver's Astronomical Community



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