

Winnicentrics

The Journal of the Winnipeg Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

The Saskatchewan Summer Star Party Cypress Hills Provincial Park, Saskatchewan August 8th to August 11th, 2002

by *Robin Woods*

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My alarm clock went off at 5.25 am on Thursday August 8th and I managed to have a shower, eat some cereal and carry all of my observing gear onto the front step without waking my wife Roberta. There seemed to be an awful lot of it: Televue Pronto in case, Orion Newtonian in my son's old hockey bag, equatorial mount tied up in a blanket, Telepod mount for the Pronto, observing chair, tackle box (tools, spare batteries, Telrad, red flashlights etc), briefcase (notebook, ECU charts, books and tape recorder), binoculars, folding easy chair, box of kitchen supplies and "carry on bag" with clothes etc. Scott Young and I had looked at the space in his Cavalier on Tuesday and decided that it would all go in, together with his gear and the 10 inch Dob from the Museum. Now I wasn't so sure.

Scott arrived at 6.00 am, having driven further up Main Street to find an open car wash! We shoehorned everything into the space surrounding the Dob and set off at 6.10 am. We stopped for coffee and toast on the Portage La Prairie by-pass at what used to be the Manitobah Inn and set off again in pouring rain. At times the visibility was less than 100 meters and we began to think that the trip was doomed. We stopped briefly at the Saskatchewan Tourist Centre just over the border, bought a road map and set our watches to CST. I suggested that it would be much simpler leave the clocks alone, do away with Daylight Saving and simply start work an hour earlier from April to October! The rain continued and we found ourselves remarking on any clear patches - typical astronomer's optimism!

Deadline for the next issue is
November 20



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September

Beginners Session 7:00
Collimating your telescope!
Regular Meeting 7:30

September
13
Friday

Widefield Astrophotography

Several Centre members including Ron Berard and Sean Ceaser will demonstrate the equipment and techniques needed to capture stunning widefield views of the sky on film. Camera, lens and film selection, and barn-door mount versus telescope tracking will be covered.

Plus the regular features: "What's New" with Lloyel Hull, "Explore the Universe" Observing Certificate and Gail's "Constellation of the Month" looks at Vulpecula the Fox.

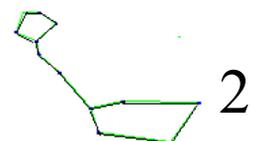
October

Beginners Session 7:00
Regular Meeting 7:30

October
11
Friday

The Annual Meeting of the Centre, where we hold our elections for Council and handle some of the business of the Centre. We'll also show off some of the Centre benefits, including the library, loaner telescopes, and 14.5" Dob, and have a "town hall meeting" so you can let the new Council know what you'd like to see more of. We'll also have a presentation by our wandering astronomer Jay Anderson, who has spent some of the past meetings in places such as Bolivia.

Plus the regular features: "What's New" with Lloyel Hull, "Explore the Universe" Observing Certificate and Gail's "Constellation of the Month" looks at Draco the Dragon.





OBSERVING



The following members are working toward their

Finest NGC's:

Stan Runge	36
Sean Ceaser	52
Gail Wise	102



Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	40
Mike Karak	99
Robin Woods	66
Lindsay Price	11



Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	31
Sean Ceaser	104
Gail Wise	242



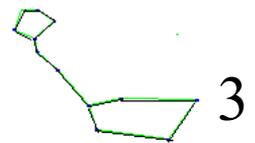
Are you working on your Messier list?

Explore the Universe?

Finest NGC's?

Herschel 400's?

Let me know how many you have and I will publish it here so we can encourage each other!



Humans in Space

by Ray Philippe

Humans in Space will return next issue.



Congratulations to Ray and Sue Phillippe on the birth of their son, Zachary Samuel on July 13, 2002. Zachary joins big sister Shealyn, who is two.

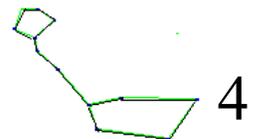
SSSP *continued from page 1*

We stopped for lunch in Indian Head and then somewhere west of Regina we were passed by a Nissan SUV doing well over the limit. When it was a few yards ahead the passenger opened his window and dumped the contents of a mug of coffee into the slipstream. Seconds later it covered our windshield. We both cursed and gave them the finger but decided against giving chase. Just as well. We changed drivers shortly after and just west of Moose Jaw I noticed an RCMP cruiser with its lights flashing. To our delight we saw that it had flagged down the SUV and was ticketing them for speeding! We waved cheerily as we drove sedately past.

At Chaplin Lake there is a Shorebird Reserve; Gil Rainealt, Paul Paradis and I had stopped there on the way to the SSSP in 2000. This year there was an ice cream stall in the parking lot and a lady behind the counter who was very willing to talk about the weather, business and life in Southern Saskatchewan! Most of the stretch from Swift Current to Maple Creek is single lane highway and it seemed to be full of campers happy to travel at 90 kmph. By now we had

had enough and the road from Maple Creek to Cypress Hills seemed much longer than the 27 km on the map. Still, at 19.00 local time we pulled into the parking lot of the Cypress Hills Resort Inn, twelve hours and about 1000 km after leaving Winnipeg. Astronomers are crazy!

I had booked a cabin for three nights to sleep Scott, Stan Runge and myself. There were two double bedrooms, a living room with pullout bed and a cot, a cooking area and a bathroom. Scott and I bagged a bedroom apiece and then set off for the first social event - The Wienie (or should it be Wiener?) Roast. It was damp and raining slightly but everyone was happy to renew old acquaintances. We stayed long enough to scarf back a wiener apiece and then decided we need real food so we left for the hotel dining room. The clouds stayed put all evening and our cabin became the social centre for Winnipeggers and others - Kevin Black and his friend James, Stan Runge, Ron Berard, John Leppert (Bismark ND), Scott and myself. Stan had brought a six pack of Guinness (way to go Stan!) and some



Sleeman's Honey Brown Lager and Big Rock Warthog so we had plenty of choice for beer. For entertainment we had a choice between a showing of the DVD of *The Lord of the Rings* on Scott's laptop or playing cards. We chose cards and played 31, a new game for me. Not surprisingly I lost the first three hands and had to deal but I think I got the hang of the game, as I didn't have to deal again. That night we slept four in the cabin - John Leppert joined us as his tent had begun to leak the night before. No-one snored.

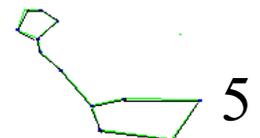
The next morning I fried bacon, Scott fried eggs and Stan washed up. We set off for the Meadows Campground observing area and staked a claim on an observing site, close - but not too close - to Kevin and Stan. We found an unclaimed picnic table and carried it to our site, put up a tent to store our gear overnight and set up the 10" Dob. I set up my Pronto for a quick look at the sun and sunspots. Then I wandered around to look at other scopes, check in at the Registration Desk and locate the rest of the Winnipeg crowd (Sean Ceaser, Mike Karakas and his son Glenn, Lindsay Price, Denise Terpstra and her partner John Cope and Father Dominic). Later in the day Bob Gow and his wife arrived, making a total of 15 from Winnipeg, nearly 10% of the 190 or so at the Star Party.

Scott borrowed my Cheshire eyepiece to collimate the Dob and found that the primary mirror was more than dusty - it was filthy. He decided that he would have to clean it but that this required distilled water and isopropyl alcohol - and a trip to Maple Creek to find a pharmacy. We removed the mirror and I carried on my lap for the drive back to the cabin, taking care not to let the reflection blind either of us. Maple Creek turned out to have a camera store, that did

not seem to contain any cameras but did have a battery for Denise Terpstra's Rigel finder, and a pharmacy that sold distilled water, isopropyl alcohol and cotton wool balls. John Leppert, our colleague from North Dakota, took advantage of the low prices and the exchange rate to stock up on some pharmaceuticals. Back at the cabin Scott consulted the Backyard Astronomer's Guide for instructions on mirror cleaning and set to. The end result of cleaning and collimating was, as he found later, a great improvement in performance.

After dinner there were several short presentations in the Wapiti Room at the Resort Hotel. Rick Husiak (Saskatoon) talked about Observing Meteors and Geosynchronous Satellites, John Leppert (Bismarck ND) gave his impressions of visiting Zambia for the Solar Eclipse in 2001, Les Dickson (Saskatoon) explained the Clear Sky Clock, which Kevin Georgison has put on the Winnipeg Centre website, and our own Kevin Black talked about his venture into Medium Format Astrophotography. Ron Berard showed some very attractive shots combining the sky and stars with illuminated foreground objects. One of them, a silhouette of Kevin at his scope, aroused Alan Dyer's interest and Ron hopes that it will be included in the next edition of the Backyard Astronomer's Guide.

After the talks everyone trooped off to the Meadows hoping that the clear skies would last. They did and we had good observing until around 02.00. I had made myself a modest list of objects to find - mostly Messiers in the region of Sagittarius and Ophiuchus. I polar aligned my EQ mount and attached the Pronto but found the viewing



angle awkward with the targets so close to the horizon. So I swapped the Pronto to the Telepod and soon found and drew M54 and M70. I tried for M69 but was frustrated by a bank of cloud. M9 and M24 were straightforward as they were higher in the sky. At around midnight I decided to try for Uranus. Unfortunately the view to the South East, towards Capricornus and Aquarius, was rather close to the radio tower at the edge of the Meadows Campground. The tower has three sets of red flashing lights, the middle set had lost some of the red shielding and was bright pink so that my night vision was not as good as it might have been (excuses, excuses!). Anyway I carefully placed the red dot of the Quikpoint where my ECU charts suggested, between Delta Capricornus and Iota Aquarius, and found the right star pattern. I could see that one of the "stars" was not a pinpoint and but even at high magnification (120x) I could not see a planetary disk. Scott called me over to look at Uranus in the refurbished Dob - there it was a clear greenish blue disk (3.9 arc-seconds in diameter). Very impressive, there is no doubt that with respect to telescopes size does matter! Interestingly Uranus was only 1.3° from Mu (51) Capricornus, very close to the position of Neptune when it was discovered on September 23rd in 1846. (I checked ECU for that date and found that Neptune, Saturn and Mu Cap were within a 3° circle! It must have been quite a sight). The skies clouded over at around 02.00 and we drove back to the cabin tired but satisfied.

On Saturday we had a leisurely scrambled eggs breakfast and set off for the Meadows and the Swap Table. Scott found a Barlow, Lindsay Price bought an

observing chair and Mike Karakas failed to find a buyer for his 5-inch Maksutov. I think his son Glenn bought a 32 mm Plossl. After lunch there were formal presentations in the Wapiti Room at the hotel. Scott Wilson (Regina) gave an interesting presentation, entitled The Crowded Universe, on the likelihood of life in the universe. I liked a quotation attributed to Woody Allen - "Eternity is very long, particularly towards the end." Lorne Harasen (Regina) suggested how we might "Take Astronomy to the Public." After the talks Scott and I rested while Stan went to see the unveiling of a commemorative plaque recording the discovery of Comet Petriew at last years SSSP.

In the evening we had the Dinner Banquet followed by the Lucian Kemble Memorial Lecture - "The Discovery of Comet Petriew" - by Vance Petriew (Regina). Les Dickson then presented Vance with the Bring Home the Bacon Award. This award from Starfest (run by the North York Astronomical Society) honours the achievement of a Canadian astronomer. Vance received a commemorative medal, a touque, 500 g of back bacon and \$500 worth of loonies in a white sock! On a more serious note Kevin Black won another prize for his astrophotographs. This was followed by the draw for the door prizes. No one from the Winnipeg Centre won one - quite a change from the GA in Montreal!

The weather was not very promising after the talks, in fact it was raining, but we went up to the Meadows Campground anyway. At 22.30 the skies cleared and about three of us (Scott, Vance Petriew and myself for sure) got out our



telescopes; the rest were either talking or drinking beer. I found and drew M107 and then spent a frustrating 30 min trying to find M72 and M73, right next to the @#\$\$%** radio mast. As compensation Scott showed me Comet Honig in the Dob and I had a look at M15 through Vance Petriew's 20" Obsession. WOW! I could see stars right to the centre of the cluster! By midnight the clouds were rolling in from the west but with some good clear patches. Every now and then there were whoops from the other astronomers as an early Perseid flashed through the sky. There had been some on Friday night but there were several real "burners" on Saturday. Sometime after midnight Kevin Black showed Mike Karakas and myself how to locate M33 in binoculars. It was easy! First we located Mirach (Beta Andromeda) and Metallah (Alpha Triangulum) then scanned down slowly from Mirach to Metallah and there it was - a pale greenish fuzzy patch filling about one fifth of the field of view! I tried on Monday August 12th at Glenlea and the procedure worked again!

For me the highlights of the Star Party were the people and the atmosphere. I am used to scientific conferences where you give nothing away for fear of being scooped. My experience of astronomers and their meetings has been very different; people are more than happy to share their knowledge and show you things. I saw Comet Honig and Uranus in the clean 10" Dob - thanks Scott! I saw M33 in my binoculars - thanks Kevin! And I recorded another 6 Messiers. So despite the mixed weather I am glad that I went.



Spruce Woods AstroWeekend

**Spruce Woods Provincial Park
September 6 – 8, 2002**

It's official! The Brandon Astronomy Club has invited us out for some great dark sky observing. We are going to be in the same area as last year, the Winter Use area. It's past the campground, go up a hill and turn left. We'll have signs posted so you won't get lost. We'll have the whole area to ourselves, so bring your tent, food, water, telescopes, binoculars, family, etc.

If you can't come for the whole weekend, just one night will have you hooked.

We'll be having a hotdog barbecue on Saturday to help everyone get acquainted.

If you don't want to sleep all day there's a beach and hiking trails nearby.

It won't cost us a dime, but remember to have a provincial park pass for the weekend.

If you need more info call Gail at 253-8297 or email wgail@mts.net.



Observing Sessions

September

14

Saturday

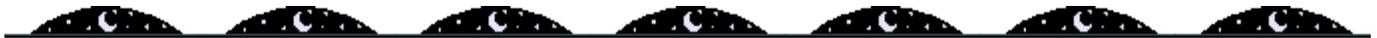
Members Observing Night

8:00 p.m. to ???

Glenlea Observatory

Come out and work on your observing certificates, clear skies permitting. The moon is just past 1st quarter and we can still identify the summer constellations. Bring your telescopes and binoculars and get advice from the more “seasoned” astronomers about telescope set-up, what to look at, etc.

Your hosts this month: *Robin and Scott*



October

12

Saturday

Members Observing Night

8:00 p.m. to ???

Glenlea Observatory

With the nights getting dark earlier now we can get out and find some of the autumn constellations and do some observing for your certificates. Be sure to dress warm as it gets cold at night!

Your hosts this month: *Jay and Lindsay*

