



# Winnicentric

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

## Reflections on Fall

by Ron Berard

About 8 years ago, I rediscovered Astronomy. Back then, my favorite time of year was Spring, with June being my favorite month. This was because summer was just beginning, and the evenings were bright with sunlight. Within two years, June was my least favorite month, with September taking its place, and fall replacing Spring as my favorite season. Fall is by far the most colorful season. And though it *is* a harbinger of our long and difficult winters, it also brings with it earlier sunsets, and increasingly earlier observing opportunities. Best of all, the Summer Milky Way seems to slow down its steady march westward, as twilight unveils it progressively earlier each evening.

For the RASC, fall also sees the resumption of Members Observing Nights, as we no longer have to wait until 11:00 for dark. For the Council, summer is only a slight hiatus time, as monthly meetings still must be planned, star parties must be hosted, and meetings have to be held. Each two years also brings with it elections. While not the most exciting events to observe and participate, elections are how we choose who will represent us, who will ensure the fiscal matters are effectively dealt with, and who will oversee the work of keeping the club active and viable.

The past two years, Lindsay has done an admirable job of presiding over a hard working group of Councilors and Executive. I learned a good deal from Lindsay and the rest of my colleagues on Council. I'd like to extend to each and every one of them many thanks, and especially to Lindsay, whose patience with my bumpy learning curves has been exemplary. Now, I have two years to do my best to be facilitator to a new Council, with some familiar and perhaps new colleagues across the table.

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We are in for a couple of months of interesting and varied activity.

## **Friday September 8**

This regular meeting of the centre will be held in the University College. It is near St. John's College, but will afford us a larger meeting room. It will commence at 7 o'clock p.m. with the Beginners' Session on "Simple Astrophotography" brought to us by Mike Stephens. The regular meeting starts right after with a few announcements, then right into "Light Pollution Education" with Fred Wood. Next on the agenda is Gail Wise and "Constellation of the Month", "Jay's What's Up", and "Jenn's What's New". We introduce the next "Pic' o' the Month" and break for coffee, cookies, and conversation. When the coffee is all gone, Stan Runge will have five minutes to show and tell this month's "Pic' o' the Month", M33. Then we have a returning guest speaker. Mr. Rob Dyck, president of the Manitoba chapter of the Mars Society, who will do his presentation on asteroids. Following the meeting, which ends around 10:00 o'clock p.m., many of us will be heading, and everyone is invited, to Boston Pizza.

## **Friday October 13**

"An Overview of the Centre" is the Beginners' Session topic for October, and Marlene Wallace will be our presenter. After Marlene and a few announcements, Past President Gail Wise will conduct the election of our Executive Council. The new President will assume the chair and introduce the "Isabel Williamson Lunar Certificate Programme" speaker, Mike Stephens. After Mike, Gail will return and present the "Constellation of the Month", Jay Anderson with "Jay's What's Up" and Jenn West with "Jen's What's New" and intro the next "Pic' o' the Month". From thence we proceed to coffee, cookies, and conversation, after which we see our "Pic' o' the Month" and shall be treated to guest speaker, Dr. Kathleen Londry, bringing an astrobiology talk called "Microbes in Space". Then we can all join with her at Boston Pizza after the meeting.

**MEETINGS**

**Beginners Session 7:00pm**

**Regular Meeting 7:30pm**

## MEMBERS OBSERVING NIGHTS

### Glenlea Observatory

Hooray Hooray it is starting to get dark early, which means our Members Observing Nights will commence once again.

#### Saturday September 9

8:00 p.m till ???

Your hosts this month: Mike and Ron

#### Saturday October 14

8:00 p.m till ???

Your hosts this month: Nicole and Marlene

### ***News in a minute . . .***

It's official – Pluto has lost its status as a planet. Instead it will be reclassified in a new category of “dwarf planets”, similar to what we have known as “minor planets”.

The Club has a number of loaner scopes that are available for a month at a time. If you are interested in borrowing one, please contact Ray Andrejowich or Ralph Croning. Very soon we will have all of our winter favourites out again – the Orion Nebula and all of those wonderful open clusters in Auriga and Canis Major.

The 2007 RASC calendar will be available very soon. Our 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, Ron Berard, has a picture in it so you will be sure to want to buy a copy. Remember, they also make great gifts.

Welcome to our newest member!  
Elenor Fascione, Winnipeg

### The Winnipeg Centre Executive Council

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*Winnicentrics* is produced by and for the members of the Winnipeg Centre, and any opinions expressed are those of the author.

If you have comments, questions or concerns about *Winnicentrics*, you can contact any of the councilors or write to RASC, Winnipeg Centre, Box 2694 Winnipeg MB R3C 4B3

# Members' Observing

The following members are working towards their:

## Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	41
Murray Rennie	19
Lindsay Price	37
Kris Keller	68

## Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	70
Mike Stephens	109
Ray Andrejowich	107

## Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	178
Sean Ceaser	141
Mike Stephens	134

## Explore the Universe:

Terra Jentsch	55
Stan Runge	13
Tim Kennedy	58
Judy Starr	22
Ray Starr	21
Eugene d'Auteuil	12
Murray Rennie	6
Sandy Shewchuk	47
Peter Toth	13

## Isabel Williamson Lunar:

Mike Stephens	83
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If you are interested in using the Warm Room please contact Lindsay Price for a key (\$10.00 deposit required). If you would like training on the LX200 Lindsay will be running training sessions, but not on Members Observing Nights. You can contact him at 227-4684 or flprice@mts.net or talk to Lindsay at a meeting.

*The following members have completed their:*

### Explore the Universe

Gail Wise  
Janet Pollock  
Janice Low  
Mike Stephens  
Lindsay Price  
Ralph Croning

### Messier Certificates

Kevin Black  
Alan Sherlock  
Mike Stephens  
Rick Turenne  
Gail Wise  
Ray Andrejowich  
Stan Runge  
Bernie Plett  
Sean Ceaser  
Mike Karakas

### Finest NGC's

Kevin Black  
Stan Runge  
Gail Wise

## Niverville Star Party

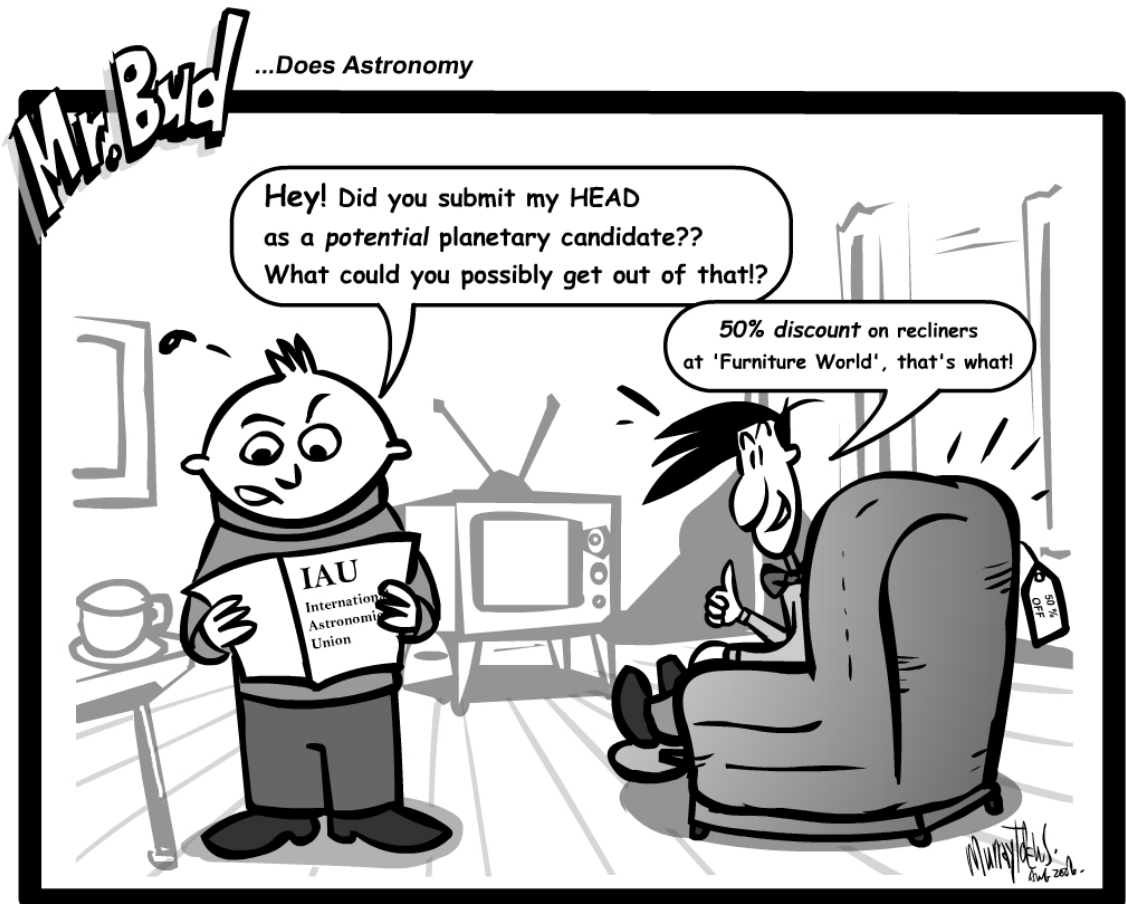
The RASC Winnipeg Centre will be hosting a public star party in Niverville on Saturday, September 30, from 7:30-10PM. Sunset is at 7:08PM that evening. We need some volunteers who can bring a telescope to the event, which will be held in a park near the edge of town.

A map will follow closer to the date.

Please let Jennifer West know if you can volunteer for this event.

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### **Mr. Bud . . . does astronomy** *by Murray Toews*



## **CSA KIDS' CONTEST**

If you are 10 to 14, or know a young astronomer who is, you may be interested in this contest put on by the Canadian Space Agency and the Canadian Library Association. This was forwarded to us from the RASC National Office and reprinted here for the benefit of any of us who qualify.

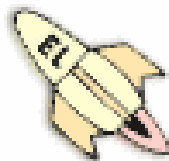
### ***Contest - Launch your future with reading!***

Are you 9 to 14 years old? Here are two contests just for you! Write a story in which a magical book transports you on board the space shuttle with Steve MacLean. You have until September 30 to send in your story of 250 to 600 words to the Canadian Library Association at: [info@cla.ca](mailto:info@cla.ca). The winning entries will be the most creative and well-written stories, in French and in English, in two age categories: 9 to 11 years old, and 12 to 14 years old.

Send a question to astronaut Steve MacLean, and he will answer the five best questions after Mission STS-115. You have until September 30 to send your question to the Canadian Library Association at: [info@cla.ca](mailto:info@cla.ca). Remember: When you send your e-mail, include your name, complete mailing address, and the age you will be on September 1, 2006.

### ***The Prizes***

Winners will receive a Steve MacLean Mission Kit from the Canadian Space Agency as well as a gift certificate for a local bookstore. Winners will also see their names and contributions posted on the Websites of the Canadian Library Association and the Canadian Space Agency."



## The Perseids

(or Well, I Tried Anyway)

*by Gail Wise*

Since it rained all day Saturday I was not having much hope for clear sky at night, but when I looked out just before 9:00 it was clearing. I packed up my meteor observing gear (cookies and tootsie rolls) and set off, listening to Willie Nelson on the way.

I arrived at the Observatory just before 10:00, as it was getting dark. I saw a real live Lepus and a Rangifer without the Rangi part (go ahead, look it up) beside the road, which has been graded and all the holes filled, by the way. The sky was almost completely clear so I spread out my tarp, sleeping bag and pillow and did a bit of binocular observing. I could just make out M11, M13 and the Coathanger but it was too light for anything else yet. Since it was August I was only wearing 4 layers instead of my usual 5. I saw a flash of lightning and heard rumblings in the distance, which I managed to convince myself were imagination.

I saw my first Perseid at 10:20 and another one about a minute later. A promising start, the predicted rate of 1 per minute in the first 2 minutes. Then I saw all these white wispy things covering the stars so I decided to play "Find Shapes in the Clouds". One of them started out as a horse, then became a dog, and just as it was turning into a pig I saw another Perseid streak across the sky. Soon I noticed that the clouds were not only moving across the sky, they were descending upon me. The moon rose about 11:00 but it did not interfere because it was covered in cloud. As I moved into the Warm Room I noticed I could not even see the University dome. Since I was all alone I decided there was no chance of any more observing so I packed up and went home. As I exited my garage at 11:45 I looked up and the sky was clear again (!) and saw another Perseid. I lay down to watch for more but was soon playing my game again. One cloud made a perfect kitten face with Vega and Deneb as the eyes. Since that will give you an idea of the size of the cloud, I went into the house to sleep.

I woke up at 4:15, look out the window and the sky was clear again (!) so I went outside and spread out my tarp, sleeping bag and pillow. I was actually quite toasty. (Who me?) At 4:30 I saw one more Perseid, and a watched a couple of tumbling satellites, but that was all. By 5:30 the sun had risen enough that I couldn't see any more stars, but the clouds were coming back anyway. Oh well, the Orionids are only a couple of months away.

## OBSERVING IN THE MARITIMES

*by Darren Gillis*

**T**his summer my work brought me to the Maritimes once again. I grew up in Nova Scotia, so I have seen my share of rain before, but I wasn't ready for this past July. After my first 2 weeks in Nova Scotia the sun was a fading memory and the night was only a damp blackness. By the time that work took me to Moncton I had given up on summer astronomy.

Fortunately a friend and colleague in Moncton, Elmer Wade, is also interested in the sky. I had told him that I was a RASC member at the Winnipeg Centre, so when the sky cleared he suggested an evening of star gazing. He contacted his friend Gerry (Moncton Centre) to get "the sky scoop" on evening observation. Before long, I found myself as a passenger driving on a forgotten road towards an uncertain destination. I suspected the night would either end very well or very badly [INSERT THEME MUSIC HERE].

When we ran out of road I noticed several telescopes were being set up. Gerry offered me the use of his 8" Dob. for the evening! As the night fell the sky didn't disappoint. Sure there were mosquitoes, but did I mention that I now live in Winnipeg? The real recognition of endurance should go to Elmer who faced the hoard in only shorts and a tee-shirt.

I hadn't really prepared, so I spent the next hours casually scanning my favorite "showcase" objects. Most of my observations were made with Gerry's 32mm eyepiece. I used Albeirio to adjust the focus and began to hop between targets. M13 was as impressive as always. The Dumbbell Nebula (M27) was particularly well defined in the dark sky. Satellites and fireflies flashed through the night. Target after target fell to Gerry's Telrad, but the high point for me was an opportunity to see the Lagoon Nebula (M8) through a telescope! My summer travels usually restrict my observing to binoculars. Thank you, Moncton Centre, especially Gerry and the club member who pointed out M8 to me, but also to everyone who welcomed me that evening!

This night was a great time on all accounts. The view and the company reminded me once again of the hospitality of the Moncton area and the camaraderie within the RASC. We all share the sky, but it is better when we can do it together.