



Winnicentrics

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

A Star-Hop For Finding the Messier Galaxies in the Coma-Virgo Cluster

by Gil Raineault

A first glance at a standard published star chart of the Coma-Virgo region can leave an observer somewhat puzzled. It might even lead someone unfamiliar with this region of the sky to believe that finding one's way through the clutter of tightly grouped galaxy symbols is complicated business.

Sorting out the clutter in the cluster is not at all daunting if the observer trades in the standard sky map in favour of a computer printout chart that enlarges this stellar region. Planetarium software allows one to print out maps that display only the Messier objects in an enlarged field, and to leave out the confusing jumble of the many NGC and other symbols. Having a simplified map of the region on hand makes it easier to navigate from one Messier object to another in this patch of the sky packed with faint objects.

In his book *Deep-Sky Companions: The Messier Objects*, Stephen James O'Meara describes a clear and useful star-hop for navigating this cluster. I have taken the liberty of greatly abridging and rearranging his excellent prose into a 12-step activity that is easy to follow when at the eyepiece. Let's begin:

Step 1: Start by locating the 3rd-magnitude star Epsilon (ϵ) Virginis, and then proceed 5° to its west to locate Rho (ρ) Virginis. Rho is easy to confirm because it is the brightest star in the middle of an arc of three stars oriented north-south.

Step 2: Locate the star 20 Vir which is found 2° west of ρ Vir.

Continued on page 6

In This Issue:

Coma-Virgo Cluster----- page 1
Meetings ----- page 2
Members Nights, News ----- page 3
Members Observing----- page 4

New Website----- page 5
Mr. Bud ----- page 5
President's Corner ----- page 8

MEETINGS

Room 118, St. John's College,
University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus
Beginners Session 7:00pm. Regular Meeting 7:30pm

Friday March 9

7:00-7:30 Beginner's Session:

Using a Planisphere – Gerry Smerchanski

7:30-7:40 Welcome and Announcements: Ron

7:40-7:50 News

7:50-8:00 Constellation of the Month – Ursa Major: Gail Wise

8:00-8:10 What's up: Jay Anderson

8:10-8:30 What's New: Jennifer West

8:30-8:50 Break

8:50-9:00 Picture of the Month: Speaker TBA

9:00-9:50 **Guest Speaker: Sean Ceaser: The Messier Marathon**

For many observers, completing a Messier list can take months, even years. But for a few veteran star hoppers, the ultimate challenge is to find the entire Messier list in a single all night session! Sean Ceaser, the Messier Guru, will show us a few tips on how to plan and execute a Messier Marathon. March is the prime time for completing this challenge, so if the weather permits, who knows, maybe you'll be inspired to have a go!.

Friday April 13

7:00-7:30 Beginner's Session: Peter Toth

7:30-7:35 Welcome and Announcements: Ron

7:35 to 7:50 My Galactic Scrap Book: Murray Toews

7:50-8:00 Constellation of the Month – Ursa Minor: Gail Wise

8:00-8:10 What's Up: Jay Anderson

8:10-8:30 What's New and posting PoM: Jennifer West

8:30-8:50 Break

8:50-9:00 Picture of the Month: Speaker TBA

9:00-9:50 **Guest Speaker: TBA**

Pizza and Beer at Boston Pizza

MEMBERS OBSERVING NIGHTS**Glenlea Observatory****Friday March 10****8:00 p.m till ???****Your hosts this month: Ron & Gail****Saturday April 14****8:00 p.m till ???**

Would you like to host a Members' Night?
 Don't let Councilors have all the fun.
 Talk to Ron, Gail or Tim.

News in a minute . . .

Thanks to Lucille Eustache and Terra Jentsch
 for hosting a very fun evening potluck on
 January 27.

March 3 will offer a total lunar eclipse. Plans are
 in the works for an evening at the Observatory.
 This will be a great photo op, so bring your
 cameras and get lots of tips from the experts.

Our sympathies to the family of long-time
 member Bruce Pippy who recently passed
 away.

Welcome to our newest members!

Jeff Bradshaw, Winnipeg
 Bill Burton, Winnipeg
 Roger Seewald, Winnipeg

The Winnipeg Centre Executive Council

President	
Ron Berard	668-6551
rcberard@mts.net	
1 st Vice-President	
Gail Wise	794-2624
wgail@mts.net	
2 nd Vice-President	
Tim Kennedy	269-0183
tajab@mts.net	
Past-President	
Lindsay Price	227-4684
flprice@mts.net	
Secretary	
Jay Anderson	474-1485
jander@cc.umanitoba.ca	
Treasurer	
Mike Stephens	832-0485
mikestephens@shaw.ca	
<u>Councilors</u>	
Marlene Wallace	999-7423
mtlwallace@hotmail.com	
Stephen Smyth	999-4892
weatherwisentrentals@hotmail.com	
Ralph Croning	885-4326
rcroning@mts.net	
Nicole Choptain	255-5682
nicolewpg@shaw.ca	
Ken Metcalfe	857-9843
metcalfe@cips.ca	
Peter Toth	757-9300
peter_toth@pcs.mb.ca	
<u>Appointed Positions</u>	
<u>Librarian</u>	
Fred Wood	774-3238
fred_wood@shaw.ca	
<u>Observatory Director</u>	
Ray Andrejowich	667-6896
saturn3@shaw.ca	
<u>Observatory Bookings</u>	
Kevin Black	224-0182
cblack@shaw.ca	
<u>Webmaster</u>	
Ron Berard	668-6551
rcberard@mts.net	
<u>Winnicentrics Editor</u>	
Gail Wise	794-2624
wgail@mts.net	

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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	26
Lindsay Price	40
Kris Keller	68

Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	70
Ray Andrejowich	107

Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	178
Sean Ceaser	141
Mike Stephens	147

Explore the Universe:

Terra Jentsch	62 finished!
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	138
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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.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

We are looking for volunteers to bring 'scopes, binoculars, and enthusiasm to our winter Bird's Hill Park public observing event.

Date: March 24

Start Time: 9:00 PM

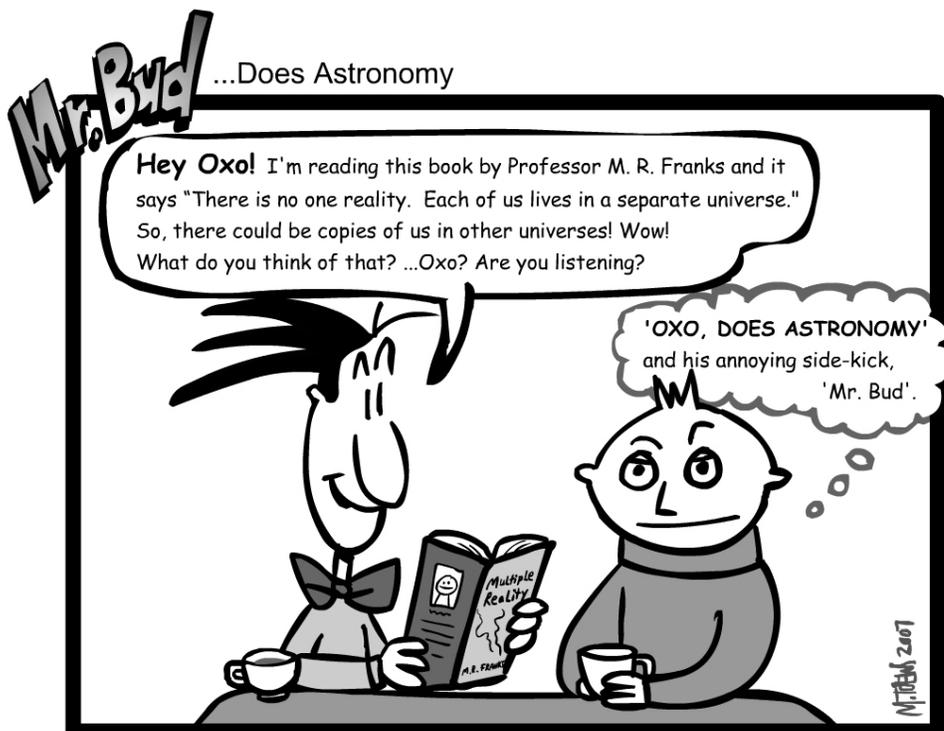
Location: Cedar Bog Trail Parking Lot (first left on North Drive if you are entering from highway 59)

If you have a telescope that you need to keep right next to your vehicle, come a bit earlier or contact Marlene at 999-7423 to ensure priority parking.

The Website has a new look! Thanks to Ron Berard's very impressive efforts, it is now much easier to navigate. Please send us your feedback regarding usability, navigation, and recommendations for contact to be forwarded to the webmaster by clicking the "contact us" link found at the top left hand side of every page. Many thanks to Gord Tulloch for all his work these past years in keeping up the site.

Winnicentrics will be available online starting with the May-June 2007 issue. This will be the last paper copy mailed out, but you will be able to print it out for yourself if you wish. An email will be sent out on the RASC Winnipeg e-mail list letting you know when *Winni* is available. If you are not on the list please be sure that Gail has your correct email address. This is the same way that the Journal is now distributed through National Office.

If you do not have access to the Internet please let Gail know and she will continue to mail the newsletter to you. Phone her at 794-2624 or talk with her at a meeting. If you send an email she will know you are lying!



by
Murray Toews

Coma-Virgo Star Hop

continued from page 1

Step 3: Locate M58, the first object of our search. M58 forms the northern apex of an equilateral triangle with ρ and 20 Vir.

Step 4: Proceeding from M58, move $1\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ to the east and slightly south, to find the first galactic pairing of M59 and M60. These two galaxies are separated by only $30'$.

Step 5: Return to M58, and continue in a straight line an equal distance to the northwest to find M87, a bright, round galaxy.

Step 6: Continue 1° onward to the northwest along the imaginary straight line linking M60, M59, M58, and M87 to find the second galaxy pairing of M86 and M84.

Step 7: Locate M90, the northern apex of another equilateral triangle with M58 and M87.

Step 8: M89 is found near the center of the triangle described in Step 7.

Step 9: From M90, move $1\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ northwest to find M88. This galaxy is easy to identify, as there is an obvious double star at its southeastern tip.

Step 10: Move 1° due east of M88 to locate M91. The nearby galaxy NGC 4571 is located just to the southeast of M91, so care must be taken not to mistake one galaxy for the other.

Step 11: M98 should present no problems as it resides just northwest of the binocular star 6 Coma Berenices. Just locate the star with binoculars, and then point your telescope at it.

Step 12: Similarly, M99 and M100 are located near binocular stars. Repeat the process of locating these two stars with binoculars and then pointing the telescope at each one to locate the galaxies.

And that's it! You can successfully complete the star-hop for finding the Messier galaxies in the Coma-Virgo Cluster by following these 12 simple steps, and add a baker's dozen of objects to your Messier List to boot. Don't forget to take the time to carefully observe each one of these objects, as some of them are real gems. Enjoy the hunt.

President's Corner

Another two months have passed since my last article, and it's again time for some reflection on club activities. Again, I'm pleased to have a good deal of progress to report.

First, we have had 5 new members join. It's always a pleasure to have new members to welcome at our Monthly Member's Meetings. So far, every meeting I've hosted has seen two or three new members join up, so I hope we can keep this up for a while! Surely, we intend on keeping up progress on maintaining and enhancing our member services in order to attract new members, and, of course, keep all of our members satisfied.

Speaking of member services, the Website has been revamped and is now online! We have a new look and a number of new services. As you will see, the site has been pared down and has incorporated a number of Google services that enable us to offer dynamic content development that can be easily updated by a number of different individuals. This ensures that the content will remain current, regardless of how busy one or more of the web-masters get. We have also established a work group to review our club's website needs, so you can all look forward to enhanced web services that will be tailored to your feedback. The work group members are Ken Metcalfe, Stephen Smyth and me. Send your comments and suggestions on the website directly to us, or to the webmaster.

On the topic of member feedback, council has also agreed to develop a comprehensive member survey in order to better poll your opinions on the pros and cons of current club activities and services, as well as tapping into our members' ideas on potential activities and services. This initiative will be led by Nicole Choptain, whose expertise in data analysis will ensure a well-designed and effective poll. You can expect to see this towards the end of this current fiscal year (fall 2007).

Finally, the Bylaws committee (Jay Anderson, Jennifer West and I) has met and developed an initial draft of bylaws and established a template for appending terms of reference and policies and procedures for council duties and club activities. We hope to have a draft ready for March's Council meeting that can be reviewed and approved for forwarding to National. This keeps us on schedule for ratification by the general membership in the fall. Of course, we need to factor for Murphy's Law!

So that is it for this edition of President's Corner. If anyone has suggestions for me or any of the council members, you can contact us by navigating to the "Council" page of the member's only section of the webpage. You can also access Council Meeting Minutes there as well. Those of you without web access can still find contact information for council published in the Winni. Note that this is the final edition of the Winni that will be mailed to members who have not yet "opted in" for a print version. If you want to "opt in", contact Gail Wise, Newsletter Editor, to ensure you're on the mailing list. We're hoping as many members as possible help us save our resources by accessing their Winnicentrics online for printing or reading on their computer.

Keep Looking Up!

Ron Berard, President,
RASC Winnipeg Centre.