



Winnicentrics

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

WOW! Last Summer's Astronomy Trips

by F. Lindsay Price

What a fun and interesting season with a few bumps along the way. It started on June 28 to July 3 with the 2007 General Assembly called "Astronomy Roundup". With a name like that it had to be held in Calgary. GA's are always exciting times in interesting places and that this one ending the day before the Calgary Stampede began made it a great trip for those who were able to stay for a while. Also, being held jointly with the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers Annual Meeting and that of the American Association of Variable Star Observers, made it a feast of astronomical education. University of Calgary offered a beautiful venue for the events and a dorm room better and cheaper than most of the motels where I stay. It all began with a an opening address by the always entertaining lead scientist from Canada's MOST satellite, Jaymie Matthews, a choice of really informative workshops, and a series of short Paper Sessions. Then a whole succession of brilliant speakers, receptions, a banquet, awards, and memorable tours. We saw Alan Hildebrand and his meteor lab and collection, in which yours truly and others, got to see a moon rock through a microscope, (to the novice eye, it looks a lot like any other rock, but is cool knowing that it isn't!) , and actually got to touch a meteorite from Mars! What a thrill!

On Monday there was a day trip to the Tyrell Dinosaur Museum and a field trip to see the Cretaceous / Tertiary boundary, that sedimentary layer left by the impact that spelt the end of the dinosaurs. On Tuesday was a trip to the Columbia Ice Fields and Rocky Mountains to experience a Mars analogue landscape. GA's are always great and this was a terrific one. Next year's will be in York University co-sponsored by no less than three centres. If you can make it, you will not regret it.

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MEETINGS

Room 118, St. John's College,
University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus

Friday November 9

7:00-7:30 Beginner's session: Peter Toth: Star Brightness
7:30-7:50 Welcome and announcements: Ron Berard
7:50- 8:00 Constellation of the Month: Auriga the Charioteer: Gail Wise
8:00-8:10 What's Up: Jay Anderson
8:10-8:30 Special Election: National Rep
8:30-8:50 Break
8:50-9:00 Picture of the Month: Speaker TBA

9:00-9:50 Guest Speaker: Gord Tulloch: Amateur Photometry with Small Telescopes And Consumer CCD Cameras

As an amateur astronomer you can contribute directly to science by observing variable stars, transiting exoplanets, and active galactic nuclei through small telescopes of modest aperture. This presentation discusses the value that amateur observers bring to scientific analysis of these objects, and walks through both visual (naked eye, bino, and telescope) and CCD based photometry methods, with a demonstration of the Meade Envisage software coupled with a Meade DSI Pro camera used for calibrated observation of variable stars.

9:50-10:00 Adjourn and head out for Pizza.

Friday December 14

7:00-7:30 Beginner's session: Gerry Smerchanski: Cosmology 101
7:30-7:40 Welcome and Announcements: Ron Berard
7:40-7:50 News
7:50-8:00 Constellation of the Month: Perseus the Hero: 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: Ron Berard: The Joy of Astronomy

The field of astronomy has a rich diversity of applications, both practical and theoretical. Whether from a purely scientific perspective, or that of an amateur, astronomy holds a vast potential for study and enjoyment. Ron will focus on astronomy as a hobby, and discuss how the wide variety of interests that amateur astronomers hold can be pursued regardless of available resources. Ultimately, it is the enjoyment of the hobby which is paramount, and this enjoyment should be accessible to all.

9:50-10:00 Adjourn and head out for Pizza.

Members Observing Nights Glenlea Observatory

Saturday November 10

8 p.m. till whenever

On November evenings Perseus runs in front of Auriga as they try to keep out of the way of the sharp horns of Taurus the Bull. Aries the Ram watches Pisces the Fish and Cetus the Sea Monster as they swim in the celestial sea.

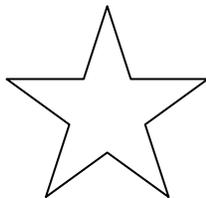
November is host to three meteor showers, the S. and N. Taurids, and the Leonids. Plan to come out for some observing, and hope to catch a few burners as well.

Saturday December 15

8 p.m. till whenever

On December evenings we find the familiar Big and Little Bears in the northern sky, along with the Northern Crown, Corona Borealis. Draco the Dragon keeps a fierce eye on the strong man, Hercules.

December also has a meteor shower, the Geminds, which is one of the best of the year. Winter nights mean crisp clear sky, so brave the cold and see all the wonders.



The Winnipeg Centre Executive Council

President	
Ron Berard	668-6551
rcberard@gmail.com	
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	
Nicole Choptain	255-5682
nicolewpg@shaw.ca	
Peter Toth	757-9300
peter_toth@pcs.mb.ca	
Kevin Black	224-0182
cblack@shaw.ca	
Kris Keller	667-5540
keller1@mts.net	
<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@gmail.com	
<u>Winnicentrics Editor</u>	
Gail Wise	794-2624
wgail@mts.net	

Winnicentrics is published six times each year by the Winnipeg Centre, RASC. *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 Counts

The following members are working towards their:

Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	41
Murray Rennie	26
Lindsay Price	47
Kris Keller	110
(YAY Kris!)	

Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	81
Ray Andrejowich	110
Berni Plett	45

Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	188
Sean Ceaser	145
Mike Stephens	220

Explore the Universe:

Peter Toth	57
Stan Runge	13
Tim Kennedy	58
Judy Starr	22
Ray Starr	21
Eugene d'Auteuil	12
Murray Rennie	6
Sandy Shewchuk	47

Isabel Williamson Lunar

Mike Stephens	149
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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.

Welcome to our newest members!

Marc Amaral, Winnipeg

Robert J Becker, Winnipeg

Lisa M Becker, Winnipeg

Hans Becker, Winnipeg

James Branscombe Windsor ON

Brady Brenot, Winnipeg

Chris O'Donoghue, Winnipeg

Paul Trudel, Anola

Stuart Walton, Winnipeg

President's Corner

A Year in Perspective

*Ron Berard, President,
RASC Winnipeg Centre*

When I first embarked on the task of writing a regular article for the Winnicentrics, I wondered if I'd eventually be "shaking the trees" to find content to report on. How wrong I was. What a whirlwind of activity this past year has been. In retrospect, I came into the first year of my term with a number of significant challenges to consider. We had a deficit budget to begin with, due in large part to prior, important expenditures; we had an emergent need to revamp and update our website; we had declining use of our observatory and loner scopes; and most concerning, we were seeing an apparent drop in membership.

Having been on council for almost 5 years prior to becoming President, I had an accumulation of ideas based on the many concerns and suggestions that members had shared with me, both publicly and personally. And of course, there was no shortage of great ideas and talented people willing to help make this club even better than it already was. All that was required was to pull together the wealth of talent and resources, set some priorities and get to work on moving forward.

To start the process off, Scott Young and I got together and organized a visioning session for a number of council and veteran members. With input informally gathered from the general membership and past surveys, we set about identifying a list of goals, prioritized a few key goals, and focused our club's mandate into the following mission statement: "Dedicated to the pursuit and enjoyment of amateur astronomy and allied sciences". The rest, as they say is history.

A new, simplified website was launched by January with a public calendar of events that provides at a glance a view of upcoming events, as far in advance as we can plan them. We have yet to find a webmaster, but are still moving forward toward improving our website through a more stable, and user friendly content management system. Such a system will enable content to be uploaded by a number of people, rather than having a volunteer webmaster's available time become a bottle neck to keeping the site up to date and interesting. To that end, we've already found a new web host that can support more up to date content management tools. We are still looking for members with web design and management skills to help us see this goal through, so if this sounds like something you have skills in, let me know.

Also, in consultation with the membership, we implemented a few changes in order to move our fiscal status back towards the black. We now have online distribution of the Winnicentrics, introduced a coffee "kitty" to encourage user donations during our monthly meetings, and,

thanks to generous donations from the membership, we've been able to organize a raffle, which has already generated enough revenue to boost us far beyond the goal of balancing the budget, and well into the surplus zone!

We've also endeavoured to actively promote membership to the growing number of public enthusiasts that find their way to our monthly meetings. These individuals find their way to meetings via the website, referrals from Scott Young at the Planetarium, or through our many public events. This approach, in combination with high quality content and presentations at our meetings, has contributed to a dramatic influx of new members. These new members are in turn showing their enthusiasm by participating in Member Observing Sessions that fill our Observatory's pad and warm room to capacity!

Finally, we've promoted the use of our local RASC email list to all members, new and old. This step alone has brought together various individuals and groups from the membership into a vibrant and active community that has always existed, but only come together in such numbers, at meetings and group events. Now, there are daily posts sharing observing reports, new equipment purchases, posing and fielding questions, and sharing observing plans

The RASC email list has also given us a way to rapidly bring attention to interesting news and events. Perhaps the most salient example has been the stir around Comet Holmes. Within a few days of a notice of the sudden brightening of this long period and distant comet, people were congregating at Birds Hill Park to observe and photograph it. Before you knew it, spontaneous star partying erupted that lasted for several consecutive clear nights. Just imagine all of the events that could be enjoyed all the more with that kind of community spirit!

It was at one of these moonlit nights at BHP that Gerry Smerchanski brought to my attention the following truism; "Aaahhh, you are presiding over a good time for this club". To be honest, I can't recall any "bad times" in my years as a member, but I have to agree with Gerry, that I'm finding this past year to have been one of the best I can remember.

Over the year, I've worked with some great people on a number of projects and events, had the honor of bestowing certificates and awards to deserving individuals, represented the club to a good number of organizations that have interacted and collaborated with RASC Winnipeg, participated in one of the best Spruce Wood Star Parties yet, and received donations and kudos on behalf of the club. And with the recent excitement of a one of a kind comet in the offing, spent many great nights under the stars. Along the way, there's been a lot of hard work by a good number of people, and there remain yet a number of challenges to take on, but the rewards of this year serve to bolster my resolve. I have to agree with Gerry, I did preside over good year for this club. And if we all continue to pull together, the coming year will be even better!

News in a minute . . . or two

At our October meeting we elected a new Councillor, Kris Keller, who is well known to all for his enthusiastic participation in public events. Welcome aboard, Kris!

We also elected Kevin Black to Council, who has served on Council and as President. Marlene Wallace was re-elected to a second term as Councillor. Welcome back, Marlene and Kevin!

Stepping down as Councillors were Stephen Smyth, Ralph Croning and Ken Metcalfe. Thanks for all of your hard work during your terms.

At our November meeting we will elect a new National Representative. Many thanks to Jennifer West for her work in this position during the past two years.

Special awards were given to Jay Anderson, the Winnipeg Centre Achievement Award, and to Stan Runge, the Winnipeg Centre Service Award. Congratulations to both! And thanks to Ken Metcalfe for providing a very tasty cake for the break.

The 2008 Observers Handbooks are being mailed out by National, so keep your eyes on your mailbox.

Sky & Telescope and Astronomy magazines offer reduced subscription rates to members of the RASC. Contact Mike Stephens at mikestephens@shaw.ca for rates or more information.

The world premiere performance of Manitoba Opera's "*The Transit of Venus*" will be at the Centennial Concert Hall November 24, 27 and 30, 2007. Go to www.manitobaopera.mb.ca for more information.

Thanks to Scott Young for his invitation to RASC Winnipeg members to the free show at the Planetarium on October 18 on "*The Race to Measure the Transit of Venus*".

ELECTION for National Representative

At the November meeting we will elect a new National Representative. Any Centre member in good standing can nominate another Centre member using the form on the next page.

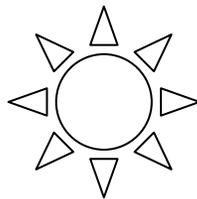
The duties of our National Rep are to represent the Winnipeg Centre on the National Council, at the GA plus two other meetings during the year, to inform the Centre of impending Council decisions and survey their wishes, and to vote accordingly at the Council meetings. This is a 2-year term.

Nominees for National Rep must have been members of the Winnipeg Centre in good standing for two (2) years prior to nomination. To nominate a current member for this position, nomination forms may be mailed to:

Nomination Committee
c/o Lindsay Price
37 Amundsen Bay
Winnipeg MB R3K 0V1

or brought to a meeting.

Nominations for National Representative will also be taken from the floor at the November meeting.





ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA WINNIPEG CENTRE NOMINATION FORM

I, _____

being a member in good standing of the Winnipeg Centre of the
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, do hereby nominate

(name of nominee)

for the position of _____

for the 2007/2008 membership year.

I, _____

being a member in good standing of the Winnipeg Centre of the
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, accept the nomination and will allow my
name to stand for election at the Annual Meeting of the Winnipeg Centre. I certify
that I meet the membership qualifications of the position I am nominated for and
understand the duties and responsibilities of the position.

In witness hereof:

Signature of Nominator

Date

Signature of Nominee

Date

WOW! *continued from page 1*

Next on the travelogue was the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. August 09 through 12 with several of the usual crowd absent this year. They must have been those who read the weather forecast. Notwithstanding, Winnipeg was ably represented by Margaret and John Childs, Mike Stephens, Peter Toth, myself, and Denise Terpstra and hubby John. Last year Denise received the "Perfect Attendance" award and added another one this year. Eleven out of eleven for Denise! The weather was a mix of clear skies, cloudy skies, and rain this year, and for the first time ever, there was a problem with the park staff mixing the astronomers and non-astronomers together in the Meadows. That is something to address for next year, but for most people it was a good weekend.

Thursday saw a Barbequeue and an interesting public lecture by guest speaker Dr. Luc Simard from the National Research Council talking about Mauna Kea. This was followed by the only cloudy night of the weekend. Friday was a night of mixed weather, that did afford an excellent view of the Space Shuttle with Canadian Dave Williams chasing the ISS. Saturday was a day of swap tables, dealer tables, and excellent short talks on backyard observatories, the new centre in Prince George, and an illustrated presentation by Alan Dyer from his observing trip to Australia. Terrific! In the evening we enjoyed both a really good banquet and the Fr. Lucien Kembel lecture given by Luc Simard, this time telling us about adaptive optics and the plans for the imminent 30 m telescope. Saturday night was clear! Burner Perseids, ISS/Shuttle, Iridium flares, no moon, faint fuzzies and Messiers galore! 286 registered participants and it seemed about as many telescopes, to share. Sunday nice weather to drive home. Trip total \$360 for four days. Not bad!

September's offering was our own Spruce Woods Star Party, held annually in (not surprisingly) Spruce Wood Provincial Park, this year from Sep 07 through Sep 09. By the efforts of our hard working committee, the event has added daytime and cloudy night activity, and with the co-operation of the park and Weatherwise Tent Rentals, better amenities, even to hot coffee and cookies. Hooray for cookies! Mixed in with clouds and rain were some beautifully clear nighttime skies. Along with the chance to see Jupiter missing one of its dark bands and transited by Europa, we were treated to an amazing binocular sky tour led by Gerry Smerchanski. Amazing in that he could not only find objects, invisible to the naked eye in lickety split time, but he named the nearby stars, and did it all without notes nor star charts! Later the clouds came in so we all got our night's sleep.

Jennifer and Scott gave first class workshops and the invited speaker, Dr. Tyler Foster from Brandon University, shared the latest knowledge on Radio Astronomy with us and then stayed for our catered banquet and made himself available to talk with us as individuals or small groups. Again, the night began with beautiful skies and then clouded over between midnight and 01:00. By 04:30 the sky was again crystal clear and showing all its winter constellations and right up with Taurus was our old friend Mars, whom we have not seen for a couple of

years! Up on Sunday with a wonderful pancake breakfast, thanks to chef Ken Metcalfe and friends. Then to finish the weekend on a high note, there was a two hour hike through the Spirit Sands Desert before trekking back home. Kudos galore to Nicole Choptian and her dedicated crew!

Astronomy can be so much more than lonely nights with cold hands and feet when it is done with the R.A.S.C. Solo observing is very productive and enjoyable, but to this humble observer, those opportunities to share the hobby and learn collectively are the highlights of my astronomical year. Thanks to everyone who make them possible.



Mr. Bud . . . Does Astronomy

by Murray Toews

