Winnicentrics

Newsletter of the RASC Winnipeg Centre

May/June 2024

Winnicentrics is the newsletter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada—Winnipeg Centre, Incorporated and is published six times a year. Any opinions expressed are those of the authour(s).

Submissions or comments can be sent via email to: newsletter@winnipeg.rasc.ca

Events at a Glance

Friday, May 10, 2024:
Monthly Meeting
Featured Speaker: **YOU!** Members will spend 5 minutes showing their images and telling their stories of the April 8 eclipse.

Saturday, May 11, 2024:
Members' Observing Night
Member event at Glenlea 9pm

Saturday, May 11, 2024:
Science Rendezvous
See page 3 for details

Saturday, May 18, 2024:
Astronomy Day @ The Leaf
See page 3 for details

Friday, Jun. 14, 2024:
Monthly Meeting
Featured Speaker: Astrophotographer Ron Brecher

Saturday, Jun. 15, 2024:
Members' Observing Night
Member event at Glenlea 9:00 pm

Bring Your Eclipse Story to the May Meeting!

by Judy Anderson

Come one, come all, to share your renewable excitement about eclipse experiences!

We're planning that almost all of the May meeting can be devoted to the topic "Sharing of Eclipse Stories". If we have a lot of speakers, that is, members, we're prepared to forego the "what's up" and/or "what's new" segments.

To participate, please send A FEW images or a sketch or two or a short video to Judy.Anderson@umanitoba.ca before 10pm on Thursday May 9. (Please note the descriptors: A FEW or SHORT!)

Everything received will be assembled in PowerPoint slides and each speaker will get 5 minutes to speak (in the order I receive the image/information).

If you have a nifty story without illustration, that's perfectly fine too; just let me know, and a 5-minute slot will be allocated for you in the slide deck.

NOTE: it's not easy to stick to 5 minutes, but this gives everyone a chance to say something in reflections about their experiences. An eclipse is not only about the pictures or the details of something that happened - pick one image or idea and tell us about why it's meaningful for you that others see or hear about it.

I look forward to hearing about your 2024 eclipse!

Spruce Woods Star Party Volunteers Needed

The Spruce Woods Star Party organizing committee is looking for volunteers for the public events they are holding at Kiche Manitou campground on August 16th and Criddle-Vane Homestead on August 17th (a short drive from the campground). We are also seeking volunteers for the Star Party itself, running from August 30th to September 2nd. Please reach out to Daemon Nightshade, Judy Anderson, Wing Kwong or Bradley Kulbaba if interested.

Winnipeg Centre Officers & Volunteers

President: Dennis Lyons
Vice-President: Judy Anderson
Secretary: Scott Young
Treasurer: Mark Irvine
Past President: Bryan Stach
Councillors:
Michelle Boyce
Kamala Kodi
Wing Kwong
Daemon Nightshade
Stan Runge
Marc Sarrasin
gAIL Wise
Ed Wright

National Representatives:
Dennis Lyons & Bryan Stach

Spruce Woods Star Party Chair: Daemon Nightshade

Webmaster:
Marc Sarrasin

Winnicentrics Editor:
Scott Young

Observatory Booking:
Email observatory@winnipeg.rasc.ca

Visit us online!

Website: Winnipeg.RASC.CA
Facebook: RASC Winnipeg
YouTube: RASC Winnipeg
Forums: rascwpg.groups.io
(For details on how to use the forums and join the various subgroups, see page 13.)

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The President's Corner

by Dennis Lyons,

Winnipeg Centre President

Hello everyone,

Well April 8 has come and gone. The posts for eclipse pictures have been incredible. For those who were here in Winnipeg an outstanding joint event with the Manitoba

Museum and the Leaf at Assiniboine Park was held. Over 3000 people attended and got to see the science of astronomy being presented by many volunteers from all three organizations. At the next monthly meeting there will be an opportunity for members to share their photos as the meeting is dedicated to eclipse o mania!

Welcome to the new Centre Council who have begun working on your behalf—see the image below for our first face-to-face meeting. Some of the goals this year are to work on and possibly expand our observatory and observing sites, update the strategic plan, continue to work with the Nature Conservancy of Canada for another Dark Sky Preserve and of course the Spruce Woods Star Party during the September long weekend.

The Centre is getting more requests for public outreach events. If you would like to help with one of these please let a member of Council know and we will get you on the list.

There are several happening this month including Astronomy Day.

Well that is all for now.

Clear skies,

Dennis Lyons,
President, RASC Winnipeg Centre

May Centre Events

Monthly Meeting Friday, Mar. 8, 2024	Regular meetings are usually held on the **second Friday of each month** in the Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre in St. John's College, 92 Dysart Road, on the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry Campus. To find the Theatre, enter through the front door and go down the stairs to the left, then turn right and go down the hall until you reach the large open area with tables. The Schultz Theatre is on the right.
7:00 p.m. Beginner Session - Scott Young **7:30 p.m. Main Meeting—Your Eclipse Stories** We are trying something new this month, due to all of the members who observed the April solar eclipse from around the continent. President Dennis Lyons will open the meeting with a welcome and announcements, but after that the evening will be short member presentations on their eclipse experiences. Please contact Vice-President Judy Anderson at xxx to put your name on the speakers' list and tell us where and how you experienced the eclipse. If you want to show images please send no more than 3 images to Judy in advance and we will have them ready for you to present.	Regular meetings are "hybrid" meetings, with both in-person and online participation available. Members receive a meeting invitation with the Zoom link from the "rasc-main" forum on Groups.IO. The meetings are also live-streamed and archived on the Centre's YouTube channel at RASC Winnipeg. After the meeting's conclusion, members are invited to retire to Boston Pizza on Pembina Highway south of Bison Drive for an informal social gathering. (This portion of the meeting is not available online or live-streamed.)

Saturday, May 11: Members' Observing Night at Glenlea

Starts at 9 p.m. Monthly observing night for members. Come use the Centre's Meade 12" LX200 go-to telescope in the dome or one of the loaner telescopes on the observing pad, or bring your own. If the sky is cloudy, the event will run but will focus on training to use the facility. This month's host: Scott Young.

Saturday, Mar. 11: Science Rendezvous

Location: University of Manitoba's Fort Garry Campus (various locations)

RASC Winnipeg Centre will be one of the many featured attractions at Science Rendezvous 2024 - Manitoba's largest hands-on science and engineering festival. Link here.

Saturday, Mar. 18: International Astronomy Day @ The Leaf

Location: Kitchen Gardens outside The Leaf at Assiniboine Park

Astronomy Day is a chance for usd to share our enthusiasm for the universe with the general public. Daytime solar viewing and telescope displays from 10:30am to 4:30pm, and then lunar observoing and constellation tours from 7:30pm to 11:00pmMark Irvine is coordinating this year's event—contact him at treasurer@winnipeg.rasc.ca for further details or to volunteer,

June Centre Events

Monthly Meeting Friday, Jun. 14, 2024	Regular meetings are usually held on the **second Friday of each month** in the Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre in St. John's College, 92 Dysart Road, on the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry Campus. To find the Theatre, enter through the front door and go down the stairs to the left, then turn right and go down the hall until you reach the large open area with tables. The Schultz Theatre is on the right. Regular meetings are "hybrid" meetings, with both in-person and online participation available. Members receive a meeting invitation with the Zoom link from the "rasc-main" forum on Groups.IO. The meetings are also live-streamed and archived on the Centre's YouTube channel at RASC Winnipeg. After the meeting's conclusion, members are invited to retire to Boston Pizza on Pembina Highway south of Bison Drive for an informal social gathering. (This portion of the meeting is not available online or live-streamed.)

7:00 p.m. Beginner Session - gAIL Wise's Constellation of the Month

7:30 p.m. Main Meeting

- Dennis Lyons, Welcome & Announcements
- Bryan Stach—*"What's Up?"*
- Dr. Danielle Pahud—*"What's New"*
- **Featured Speaker:** Rob Brecher is one of Canada's best astrophotographers, creating amazing images that combine telescopic technique and expert image-processing skills. Hear about the process he uses to create his jaw-dropping images.

Saturday, June 15: Members' Observing Night at Glenlea

Monthly observing night for members. Start time 9:30 p.m. Come use the Centre's Meade 12" LX200 go-to telescope in the dome or one of the loaner telescopes on the observing pad, or bring your own. If the sky is cloudy, the event will run but will focus on training to use the facility. This month's host is Scott Young.

The Crescent Nebula, NGC 6888, is an emission nebula in the constellation Cygnus. It is a cloud of hydrogen located a bout 5,000 light years away. The gas is heated by the intense heat and strong stellar winds of its central star, a Wolf-Rayet star called WR 136. This image was taken from a suburban backyard (Bortle 8-9) by Scott Young using a SkyWatcher Quattro 150P reflector at f/3.45 and a ZWO ASI294 monochrome camera. Individual images through Hα and OIII filters were stacked and combined into this colour image.

A Collective of Total Eclipses

by Judy Anderson

This April, 2024, Jay and I saw our 25th total solar eclipse. Again it was beautiful, exciting, and breathtaking, viewed from our site in Francisco I. Madero, Coahuila, Mexico (just north of Durango). Jay had studied models, forecasts and soundings, then satellite images, and finally the sky to find clear sky amongst clouds for days. He now watched and enjoyed the view of the event amongst friendly townspeople and fellow travellers in a baseball field. After we arrived at that small town, my next three hours were nerve wracking: three of us set up not once, but twice to a different location to find shelter from the wind at the side of our bus. There, we encouraged one another in the blowing dust as we watched bands of clouds blow past us and repositioned cameras or realigned tripods. Most of the partial phases were in the clear, and then clouds – rats! The video in progress has some "princely words of displeasure" from yours truly! But, as often happens, clouds were evaporating then cleared just before second contact. There was totality: a diamond ring, chromosphere, prominences, and corona. The view evolved with time, and yes, some wispy clouds now and again, especially after third contact. The partials after C3 were hazy or masked by clouds, as we packed up and began the happy ride back to the hotel in Torreon. It was too soon to examine the images except for a quick pass. I was happy too, and wanted to remember that feeling!

However, this piece is not about what Jay or I saw or photographed. I was more impressed by the collective angsts and joys of eclipse chasers that were so patently posted in the RASC general forum, FaceBook, texts from friends, newspapers and online websites – everywhere! From weeks ahead of time, during (yes, imagine!) and immediately after totality, a plethora of news reports, images, personal experiences, and smiley/hugging or frowning/crying emojis inundated the internet! I turned off the phone for some personal time in my head, and gave Jay a hug.

Think about it: so many thousands of people had put regular life on hold, and travelled long or short distances (around the globe or outside to the back yard) for a chance to watch totality. Some had experienced totality in 2017, and were sufficiently tantalized

to crave another glimpse of that special beauty. Many had never seen a total solar eclipse before, but had been encouraged or intrigued by friends, social media, or news media to see whatever the fuss was all about! One reporter who interviewed Jay before we left for Mexico, said he would forever be grateful that he went; he acknowledged he would not have made the effort if it hadn't been for Jay's passionate description of our previous experiences and observations. What a neat email to receive!

Facebook groups like Solar Eclipse Chasers, Total Solar Eclipse Chasers, and The Great American Eclipse – literally EVERYONE – had to unload their own images, travelogues, and sometimes frustrations. Shortly after a substantial dump of data, chatter started about "the next one." "Who's going to Spain?" "How do I travel in Egypt?" "Are you going to Sydney?" Long-time eclipse chasers took less urgent approaches to posting images, and often posted better-edited images. The sheer number of images got overwhelming: not only images from hundreds and hundreds of people, but huge numbers of images. One person posted over 200 images from that three or so hours, AND they were mostly in cloud! I gave up!

I was interested in good images, especially around third contact; that prominence grabbed attention from the world's view of the event. Even after seeing so many eclipses, recent observations of the 2023 annular further taught me how the Moon "rolls around" in front of the Sun as it passes. So I was tickled prominence-pink (more like fuchsia-crimson) by watching that bold outline of a wedge-shaped "coil" through the 2024 totality. I especially enjoyed a nice email exchange with a RASC-Winnipeg

friend about how different pictures showed third contact (and Baily's beads, if they were captured) in a different position relative to that prominence, depending on observing position along the track. You'll see that in images and observations from RASC members at the May 10 th meeting if you haven't already noticed.

I am really pleased that so many people got to see the beauties of totality all along the track. The climatology had suggested Mexico and Texas had the best weather prospects, and that most of the populations in Canadian cities and towns along the track were more than likely to be cloudy. Luckily this time, climatology and weather were two different things, as Jay has long reminded me and the solar eclipse message list. Most places got a reasonable, if not excellent view, although a few were clouded out. I loved the collective expressions of joy and satisfaction from people who caught a glimpse of a diamond ring through cloud (the sun IS bright, right?) in Niagara Falls, and those in Montreal, PEI, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland who revelled in long, awestruck gazes under clear, then darkening, then brightening skies. People went for opportunity to see totality and some took family or a friend or visited old friends and family somewhere along the track. At the meeting on April 12, a few people had returned home, but a lot more were still en route or on holiday. By May 10, we'll get to collect and enjoy that collection of eclipses all together.

And then I got to thinking: eclipses are everywhere since April 8 and yet everyone's experience was unique! As individuals, we can gather our minds (and hearts) and celebrate a collective of eclipses. But, that seems an awkward way to phrase what is a singular, singularly beautiful event seen by a multitude of individuals. I looked up collective nouns for total eclipses, just for fun.

There's an array of eclipses, about a range or many eclipses simultaneously or in a short time. There's a panorama of eclipses portraying awe-inspiring views of the numerous phenomena that come with eclipses. There's a cascade of eclipses, like a series of linked or sequential observations during a wonderful celestial event. There's a profusion of eclipses, over-powering, en mass observations that "saturate the sky" and grab us all. There's a cluster of eclipses, maybe shown in a composite image styled after a flower, a circle, or a line, or a time-lapse or video to capture the gestalt of the event. And there's a confluence of eclipses that tries to parse the intersections of orbits, nodes, and us, all smushed into a single instant and location. That collectivity is what has, and will in future, captivate me as it calls from some part of the globe I haven't yet seen, through the sun and the moon, to me…

A post script: there are also eclipses of bats and stingrays, referring to visually staggering collectives of animals. The word "eclipse" derives from the ancient Greek word for abandonment, downfall, darkening of the sky, shadow, and leaving behind. It's a pretty special experience, that's for sure. And we do need an eclipse emoji!

TELESCOPES FOR KIDS WINNERS!

The following young astronomers were awarded a free telescope as part of the Winnipeg Centre's "Telescopes for Kids" program in 2024:

Alexis Bottle (age 9) ;

Keiran and Keagan Daeninck (age 10);

Aria Fajardo (age 10);

Aarav and Ananya Kalia (age 13);

Keira Wiebe (age 14)

Telescopes for Kids accepts donations of cash or gently-used telescopes and accessories, and provides them to young astronomers who don't have access to a telescope. Each entrant submits a short essay, video, or other piece describing why they would like a telescope. Entrants are judged by a group of Centre members, and as many telescopes are awarded as the program can afford.

Wing Kwong will be heading up the next iteration of Telescopes for Kids. Contact him at wkwong88@gmail.com to donate or volunteer.

Centre Member Benefits

As a paid member in good standing of the RASC Winnipeg Centre, you receive a number of benefits from the local group in addition to any benefits that come from the national Society. These include:

Access to the **Glenlea Observatory**, which features a 12" Meade LX200 computer-controlled telescope under a dome, a 14.5" truss-tube Dobsonian reflector, and a warm room. There's also a concrete observing pad with power hook-ups to set up your own telescope. **Member observing nights** are held once a month (usually on the Saturday after the regular meeting), and members can use the observing pad and warm room any time. Once you've taken the training course you can also book the LX200 dome for your own use. (Booking the observatory can be done by sending an email to the Glenlea booking coordinator at observatory@winnipeg.rasc.ca.)

Telescope Lending Library: The Centre also has a number of portable telescopes that members can borrow on a first-come, first-served basis. The current inventory includes reflectors, refractors, and SCTs of various sizes, as well as some specialized gear such as a Coronado Personal Solar Telescope.

Online Forums: The Centre has a series of Forums on Groups.io, which all paid members are automatically subscribed to so they can receive announcements from the Centre. You can also sign up for other forums depending on your interest - go to Groups.io and sign in with the email address you used to sign up as a member.

Other local benefits such as attending **meetings** and **special events**, a **mentoring** program for beginners, this **newsletter**, **voting rights** at the Centre's Annual General Meeting (usually held in January each year), and **opportunity to serve** on the Centre Council – the group of folks who put together meetings and run the Centre!

Groups.IO: How to Use the Centre's Forums and E-Mail Lists

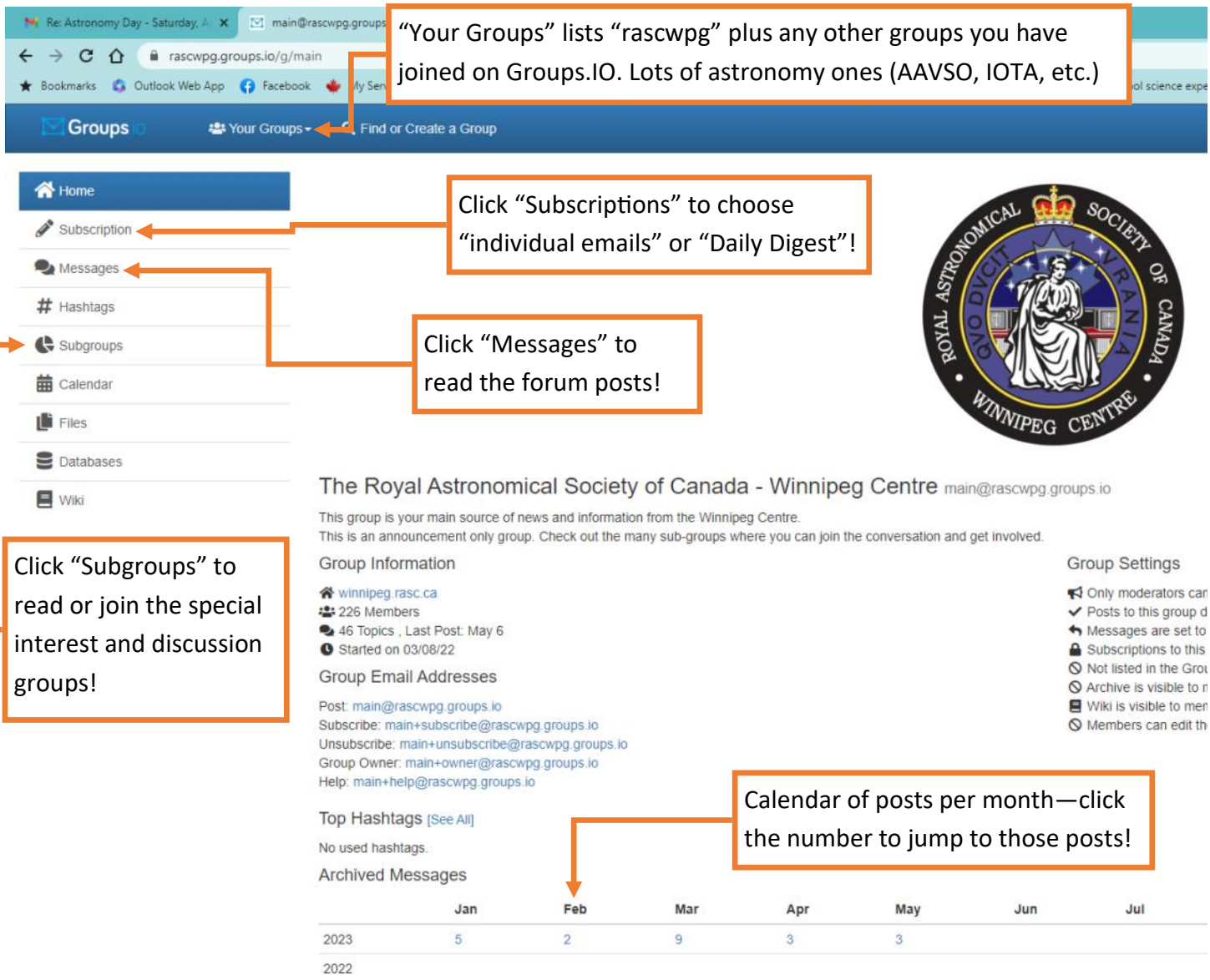
The Centre has moved to the Groups.IO platform for all of its forum and email services. This replaces the in-house forums and the old system of trying to mass-email all 200+ members. It really is a good system, both for the Council and for the users, but it is different and takes a bit of set-up.

If you've never used it before, it is very easy to access. Go to the website https://rascwpg.groups.io and click, "Forgot Password" when you are asked to log in. Enter the email that you used when you joined the Centre. You'll receive an email at that address telling you how to set up a password, and then you are good to go.

Once you've set up your password and logged in, you'll see a blue menu across the top of your screen. (See the next page for an annotated diagram.) If you click on "Your Groups", you will see that you are already subscribed to a group called "rascwpg.groups.io". This is the Centre's all-hands email, where we send meeting invitations, event news, and information we are required to send to all members (like calls for nominations for Board positions, news about the AGM, and so on).

When Council wants to send an email to everyone, they just make a post to this "main" group, and then everyone in the Centre gets an email. It helps prevent Centre mass emails from ending up in a spam folder or not getting through, and it also archives the email on the group where you can see it again. This "main" group can only be posted to by the Council Executive, and generates a few emails per month at most, so it shouldn't overwhelm most people with email.

(continued on page 11)



There's lots more than just the main announcement list, though. Click on "Subgroups" on the left-hand menu, and you'll be presented with a list of the various special interest forums attached to the rascwpg group. So far, there is a solar group, a sketching group, a binoculars group, a groups for posting astroimages,an armchair astronomy group, a buy & sell, an equipment discussion group, a solar system imaging group… you get the idea. If you are interested in a topic, click on that group and you'll be brought to that group's home page. You can click "join this group" here, and start getting the posts emailed to you, but you can also see how many messages have been posted in this group and even read them without joining. The calendar at the bottom shows how many posts were made each month, and by clicking on the number under a given month you will be shown the list of posts.

Some of the groups have a lot more discussion than others, though, and so you might not want 30 emails a day about a topic. Luckily, you can adjust the settings for each group. Go to the group you want to adjust, and click "Subscription" on the left-hand menu. This brings up the options for that group. You can elect to receive emails as individual messages as soon as they are posted—this is the best setting for the "rascwpg-main" group because it may contain timely information like a meeting change or observing session cancellation. For other groups where the information isn't time-sensitive, then "Daily Digest" is a good option—you'll only get one email a day from that group, containing all the posts that have been made that day. This prevents your email box from being flooded, but also sends you the content rather than you having to go look for it.

Every time someone posts to a group, every member of that group gets an email according to their personal settings. The emails are also archived, forming a valuable reference of the Centre's activities and discussions. There are some really good nuggets of wisdom in the forums already, and it would be a shame to lose them.

The key things to remember about Groups.IO:

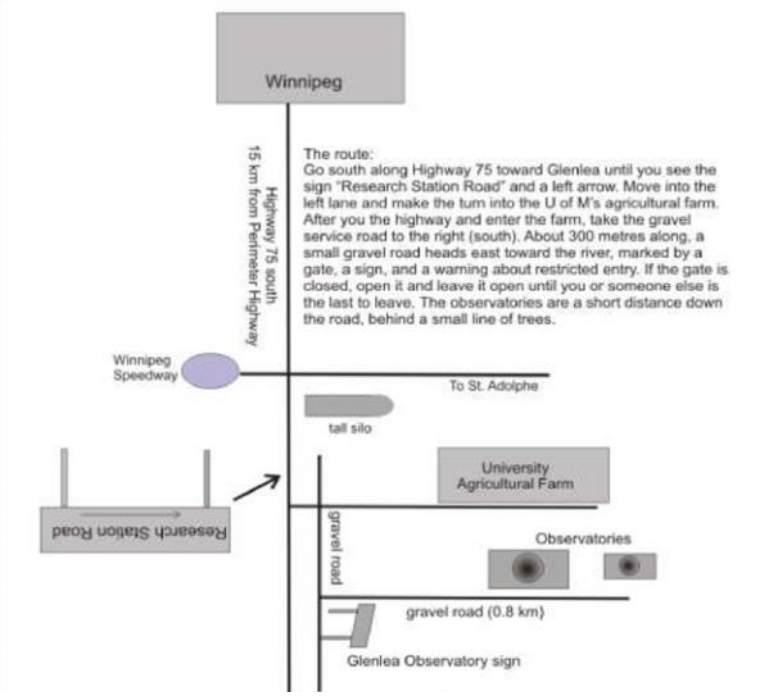
⇒ **if you unsubscribe from the "rascwpg-main" group, you will not receive Centre emails**—this is the only way they are sent out! Please don't do this, or you will not receive important information like noties of meetings, calls for elections, and other important stuff,

⇒ Most conversation happens in the "rascwpg-general" forum, which roughly duplicates the function of the old RASC email list. Other groups are more focused in their topic. If you're not sure where to post a specific question or idea, "general" is the place for it.

⇒ You have to set your email preferences for each group—if you want daily digests, you have to set that up in the group's home page.

If you'd like help getting set up on Groups.IO, email newsletter@winnipeg.rasc.ca and we'll figure out a way to walk you through it.

Glenlea Observatory

The Winnipeg Centre maintains a working observatory, pad, and warm room at the University of Manitoba's Research Farm. The observatory dome contains a 30cm (12") Meade LX200 telescope on a fork mounting. Members of the Centre who have taken the training course can reserve this telescope by emailing observatory@winnipeg.rasc.ca.

Etiquette requires that you approach the observing site with your headlights off if that's possible on your model of car. Headlights should remain off, but you can still use your parking lights to drive. Proceed slowly, and be careful about parked cars along the road, or people walking. If you cannot turn off your headlights, make a cardboard or garbage bag mask to dim the lights or, raise the parking brake lever one click-stop. This usually turns the headlights off on most, if not all, cars. You might wish to turn around at the end of the road so that you are facing the direction back toward the highway at the end of the evening.