Winnicentrics

Newsletter of the RASC Winnipeg Centre

Sep/Oct 2024

Spruce Woods Roundup

The Annual Spruce Woods Star Party took place over the Labour Day weekend under the dark skies of Spruce Woods Provincial Park. The event, put on by and for Winnipeg Centre members, marks the end of the summer observing season. This year's event in photos begins on page XX.

Above: Centre member Jay Anderson on the ladder of the 25" Dobsonian telescope, the largest instrument at this year's SWSP. [Image: Judy Anderson]

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, Sep. 13, 2024:
Monthly Meeting
Featured Speaker: Mike Karakas, "*Planetary Imaging*"

Tuesday, Sep. 17, 2024:
***Penumbral lunar eclipse/Harvest Moon** observing at Glenlea*

Saturday, Sep 21, 2024:
Members' Observing Night
NOTE DATE CHANGE! Member event at Glenlea 8:30 pm

Friday, Oct. 11, 2024:
Monthly Meeting
Featured Speaker: TBD

Saturday, Oct. 26, 2024:
Members' Observing Night
NOTE DATE CHANGE! Member event at Glenlea 9:00 pm

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Vice-President: Judy Anderson
Secretary: Scott Young
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Past President: Bryan Stach
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Webmaster:
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Observatory Booking:
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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

Good day everyone,

With the awesome Spruce Woods Star Party coming to an end, the signal for fall observing is here. With longer nights, darkness comes sooner and there is more time to get out and observe before the real cold settles in. The RASC Winnipeg Centre's Glenlea Observatory is nearby and available to all members to use pretty much any time.

Spruce Woods did not disappoint again this year. Beautiful pristine skies, with friendly voices drifting across the field as members wandered to see the night sky through scopes. It is always wonderful to see so many people with different backgrounds coming together to share in a common interest. If you have never been, I encourage you to participate next year. Especially now that we have the hot breakfast on the last day again. Special thanks to our cooks and the committee for putting on such a great event. Thank you, Daemon, for leading the team.

Just another reminder that our AGM will happen in the new year and that we have a few positions to fill on the Council. If you are interested, please let myself or Scott Young know as we are the Nominating Committee.

I would like to announce that The RASC Winnipeg Centre Inc. will soon be entering into an agreement with the St. Hubertus Game and Fish Association to use their facilities north of the city for observing. The site has been scouted out by volunteers with the Observing Committee and found to be another good site close to the city. There will be a small user's fee per visit to help cover costs. More information on how to gain access will be distributed to the membership in the near future.

Well, that is all for now. Hope you have a chance to get to some clear dark skies soon for a night with the stars soon.

Clear skies,

Dennis Lyons,
President, RASC Winnipeg Centre

September Centre Events

Monthly Meeting Friday, Sep. 13, 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:** Centre member Mike Karakas will discuss how he makes high-resolution images of the planets from his backyard.	

Tuesday, Sep. 17: Penumbral Lunar Eclipse/Harvest Moon

While not a big enough deal for a public event, this will be a great time to gather at Glenlea and watch the Moon skim the shadow of the Earth. The eclipse begins at 7:36 p.m. Central Time and reaches its maximum (just barely into the Earth;s umbra) at 9:44 p.m. The event ends at 11:47 p.m.

Saturday, Sep. 21: Members' Observing Night at Glenlea

NOTE DATE CHANGE! M.O.N.'s are moving since right now the Saturday after the regular meeting occurs with a bright Moon in the evening sky. Monthly observing night for members. Bring your phone or camera and take pictures of Saturn through the big scope! If the sky is cloudy, the event will run but will focus on training to use the facility. Starts at 8:30 p.m. This month's host: Scott Young.

Coming Soon: New Observing Site North of Winnipeg !

The Centre is working on an agreement with the St. Hubertus Game and Fishing Association to use their range north of Winnipeg as an observing site! This would provide Centre members access to an observing site and warm room north of the city. The skies at the site are slightly darker than Glenlea (still Bortle 4 like Glenlea but on the darker edge of the range), which somewhat offset by looking over Winnipeg's skyglow to the south.

Details are still being finalized but we hope to make an announcement soon. And don't worry, astronomy and target practice won't happen at the same time!

June Centre Events

Monthly Meeting Friday, October 11, 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 - Scott Young, "XXX" **7:30 p.m. Main Meeting** • Dennis Lyons, Welcome & Announcements • Bryan Stach—*"What's Up?"* • Dr. Michelle Boyce—*"What's New"* • **Featured Speaker:** TBC	

Saturday, October 26, 2024: Members' Observing Night at Glenlea

Monthly observing night for members. Start time 8:30 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.

Hallowe'en Astronomy

October 31st brings trick-or-treaters around the neighbourhood in the early evening, and it's a great time to set up your binoculars or telescopes outside for some sidewalk astronomy! Sunset for Winnipeg is 6:06 p.m., and Venus will be very low in the west after sunset. It's in gibbous phase so it won't be a great telescopic view, but Venus is about as scary a place as you can find in the solar system. With surface temperatures over 470 degrees Celsius, an atmosphere of poison gas and acid, and clouds so heavy they would squish you like a bug, Venus is a scary place masquerading as a beautiful evening star.

Saturn will also be visible in the south if you can set up in a place where you can see it—the rings will have opened back up a bit and so should be visible at high power in telescopes, even to new observers. Having a camera and monitor setup can make this view easier, especially if you have a lot of trick-or-treaters.

For deep sky objects, both M13 (the great cluster in Hercules) and M31 (the Andromeda galaxy) will be visible. Most other objects are probably too dim for a casual look unless you have a big scope and dark skies. Kids are often impressed by the fact that Andromeda galaxy is the most distant thing you can see with the unaided eye (from a dark sky), with a distance of about 2.5 million light years. That's about 24 quadrillion kilometers!

It's possible that Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS will still be visible in binoculars, in the southwest near the top of Ophiuchus, but given the unpredictability of comets you'll have to see what happens.

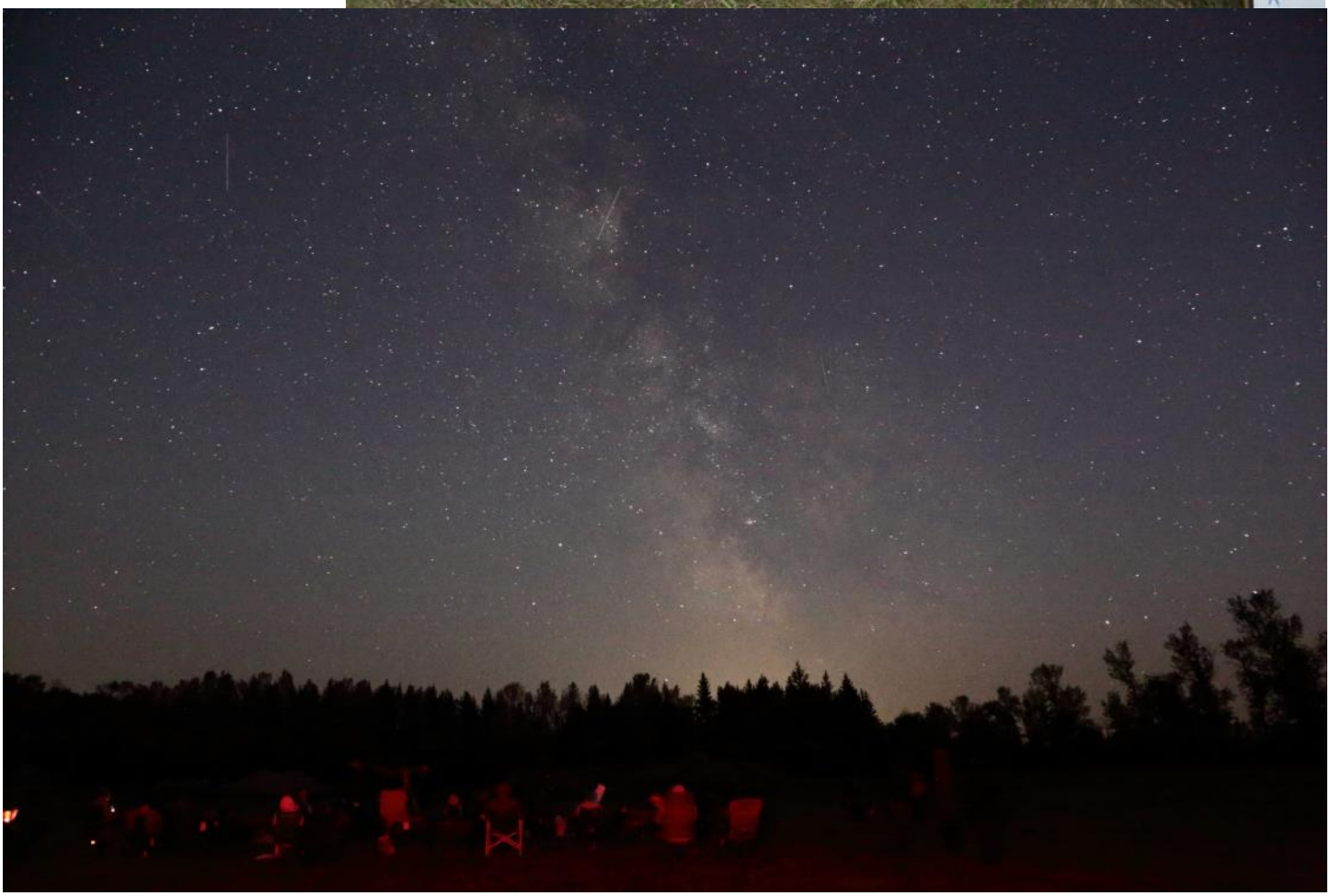
Try Hallowe'en astronomy this year. After all, Hallowe'en *is* an astronomical holiday, being one of the four cross-quarter days that mark the midpoints between solstice and equinox.

Spruce Woods Star Party Images

The Spruce Woods Star Party is the Centre's major observing event of the year. Entirely run by Centre members for Centre mebers and their families, SWSP occurs in the Spruce Woods Provincial Park Dark Sky Reserve.

Right: The Hospitality Tent is the center of the event. [Image: Bryan Stach]

Below: The Milky Way over the observing field. Only red light is allowed from dusk until dawn. [Image: Bryan Stach]



Spruce Woods Star Party Images

This year's event had two clear nights out of three, but even cloudy nights are full of fellowship at the campfirfe (above, image by Bryan Stach]

Right: One of the highlights of SWSP each year is the binocular tour, presented by Centre member Gerry Schmerchansky using a green laser pointer to guide everyone's binoculars. [Image: Brayn Stach]

Spruce Woods Star Party Images

Left: A daytime highlight is the telescope tour, as the group goes around the observing site and everyone gets a chance to show off their gear. [Image: Wing Kwong]

Right: A perfect place for a self=portrait.

[Image: Bryan Stach]

Left: SWSP Planning Committee Chair Daemon Nightshade at the Centre's new griddle, serving up the final day's hot breakfast.

[Image: Wing Kwong]

Farewell Kamala and Keerthan!

One of our Centre families has relocated. Keerthan Nanjundeshaiah, who has been active in astronomy outreach throughout his high school years, has moved to Minnesota to attend university, and his family has made the journey with him. Keerthan's mother, Kamala, has been active in outreach and on Council as well, serving as a Councilor since 2023. Best of luck, friends!

Left to right: Keerthan, Krishna, and Kamala Nanjundeshaiah..

(Image courtesy Judy Anderson)

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

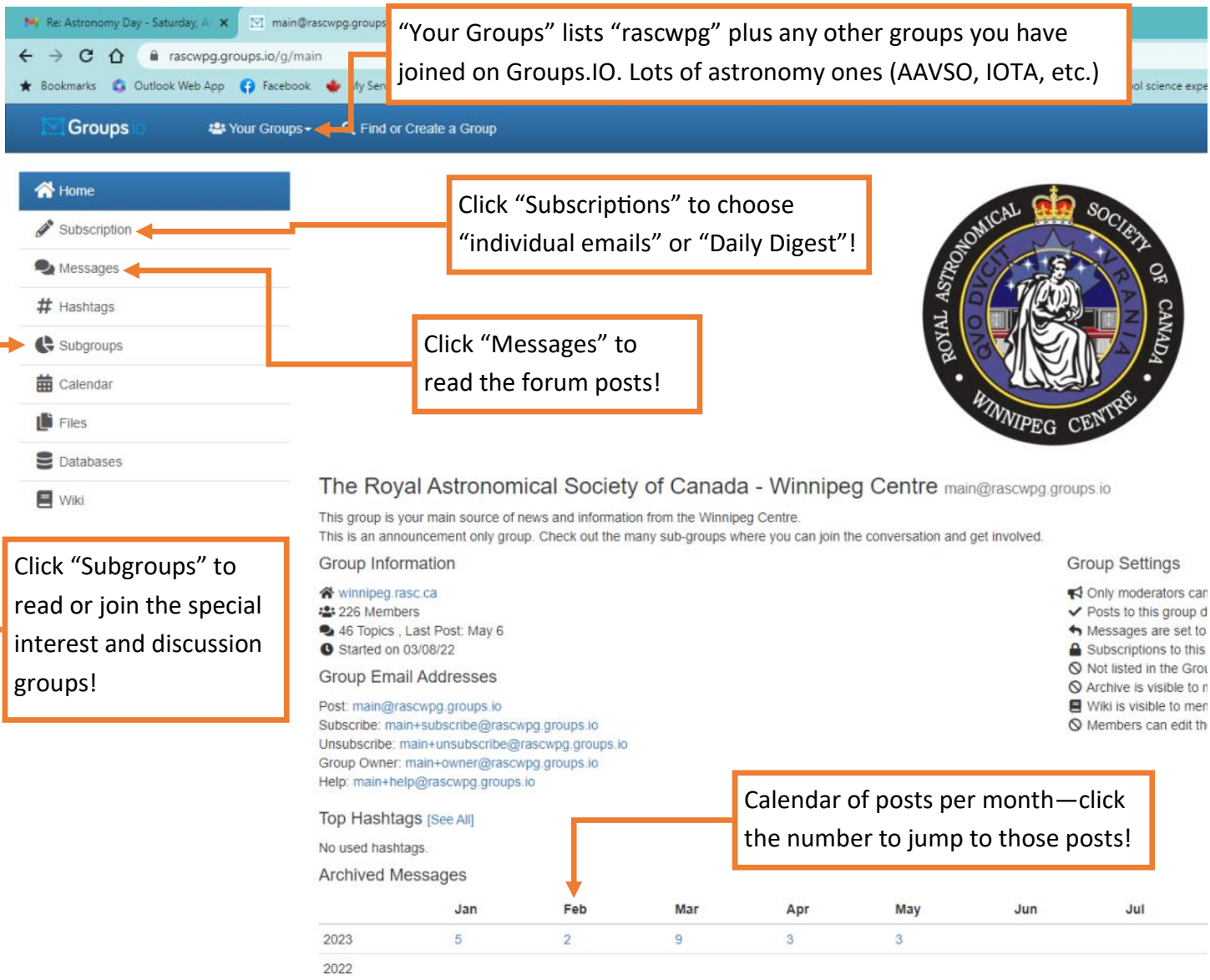
The Centre has moved to the Groups.IO platform for all of its forum and email services. This replaces the in-house forums and the old system of trying to mass-email all 200+ members. It really is a good system, both for the Council and for the users, but it is different and takes a bit of set-up.

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:

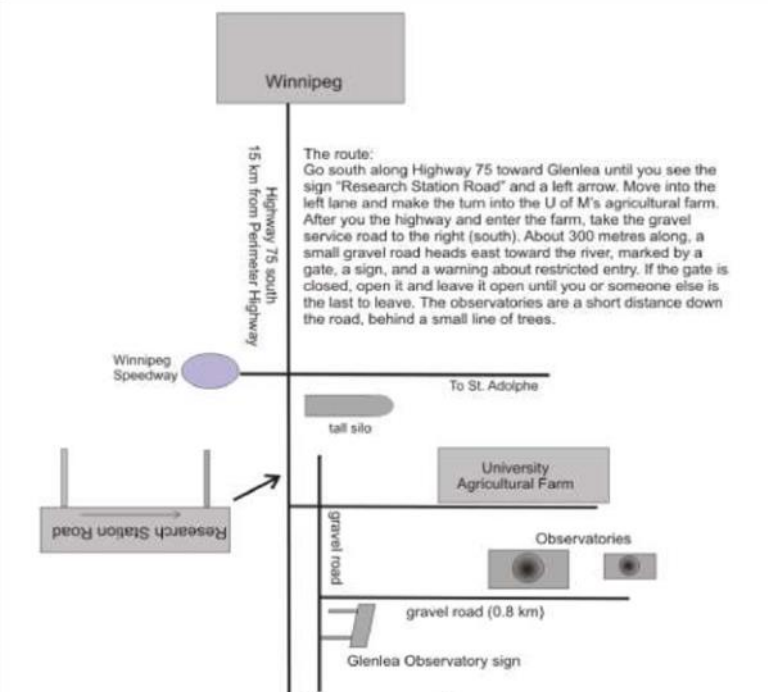
⇒ **if you unsubscribe from the "rascwpg-main" group, you will not receive Centre emails**—this is the only way they are sent out! Please don't do this, or you will not receive important information like noties of meetings, calls for elections, and other important stuff,

⇒ 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.