

POLARIS



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
London Centre Newsletter
December 2010

Of Mess and Men Patrick Whelan

As I enter the room I step cautiously over strewn counterweights. One foot beside the 4 inch SkyWatcher ED in its case, the other foot finds a landing area near the 2011 Observer's Handbook. One more step beside a stack of hard drives and voila. I made it to my chair.

A Swift binocular stereo microscope sits on the old Mission desk. It was originally owned by a forestry worker. He had to buy it for school and used it for years in the field. I bought it from him for a song. It has wonderful optics.

To my left is an Intel Play QX USB microscope. On the desk a Sanyo HD camcorder that records to SDHC flash memory. On my monitor sits a Creative webcam. Also on the crowded desk are a couple scanners. One is a flat bed scanner, the other a dedicated film scanner.

On the floor to my right is a Rebel XT digital SLR camera. Beyond it are 10 inch rings for a Meade 10" Schmidt Newt telescope. On the Mission desk another flat bed scanner in an all-in-one HP printer. A hand held pen microscope magnifier that was once used to examine pens from a pen plotter. It has nice glass optics. Microscope slides and a novelty clock that has no hands but the ring with the hours marked on it turns. The case for a Meade 24mm SWA still sits on the floor, the eyepiece safely in my eyepiece case. A Velbon tripod used as a mount for the PST telescope sits in front of a credenza topped with spider plants and golden pothos. Over my left shoulder is a Bushnell ball telescope, the 'Big Blue Ball'. Beside it stands the mighty 10 inch Meade Schmidt Newt. A wind up mantel clock, a 60 year old cuckoo clock and a lovely regulator clock on the wall behind me.

An LXD75 mount is directly behind and the

PST in its box between its legs with my eyepiece case directly behind it. And there is a 2 inch eyepiece case beside that. A 50mm straight through finder scope sits on a bookcase that is filled with astronomy books and more. Part of that 'more' is a Meade LPI imager, books on plants and books on Dali and battery chargers. There are physics books and physics texts and volume II of the Feynman lectures on physics. There is another tripod and my Manfrotto monopod is there too.

A Canadian Tire portable power source props up my observing chair beside the book case. Beside that is an LP, yes an LP. It is the three record set of The First Great Free Rock Festivals of the Seventies with a great rendition of Mr. Bojangles by David Bromberg.

Dare I open the closet door? Oh boy. Old eyepieces live in there with home made solar filters created out of box board and tape. Binoculars and dew shields and a number of

pieces of foam. You never know when they might come in handy! There are empty boxes that eyepieces and other optical paraphernalia came in. There are batteries of all sizes and some more telescopes too.

The room is filled mostly with optics as this is my computer/telescope room. Usually it isn't this messy because everything really does have a place to go. Sometimes it just takes a while to get it all back into place. It is a comforting mess and I really like it in here. I surf the 'net and tend to my digital pictures. I check out the weather and surf astro-sites. Familiar things in a cozy setting.

Then I remember watching those shows about hoarding and I think to myself:

I better tidy this place up!



Moon Phases



December 13 2010



December 21 2010



December 28 2010



January 4 2011

Orion rising over rooftops.

Moon and Jupiter juxtaposed in the sky.

Ice cracking and crisping under foot.

Steam flowing from my mouth.

Frigid air freezing icicles in my nostrils.

Wondrous heavens unfolding to me.

Beauty is in the eyepiece of the beholder.

Patrick Whelan

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LONDON RASC MONTHLY MEETINGS

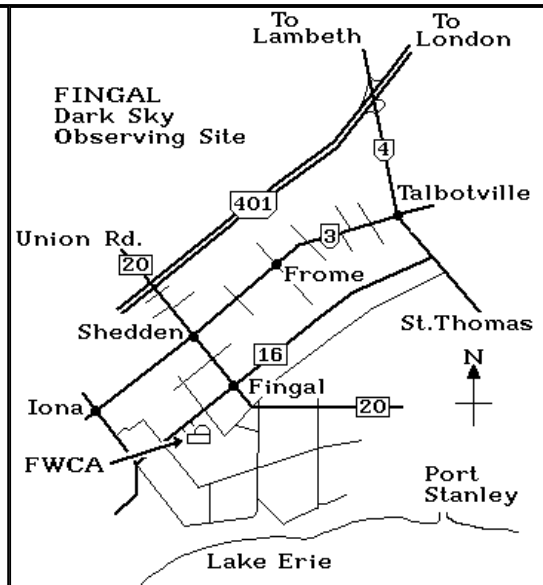
The London RASC group meets at Fanshawe College in London Ontario, September through July on the third Friday of the month at 19:00. We meet in room B1073.

Everyone interested in astronomy is invited to attend and enjoy our guest speaker, member activity and observing reports, announcements of new discoveries and upcoming events, telescopes and telescope accessories show and tell, and other fun activities. Have a look at our future and past activities on our website to see what we are doing.

Parking is free on Friday evenings, and there is plenty of room in the east parking lot off Oxford St. and parking spaces on the south side of B building. Enter the college by B building doors near Oxford Street, just west of the bus stop. College signs at key hallway locations will help you find us.

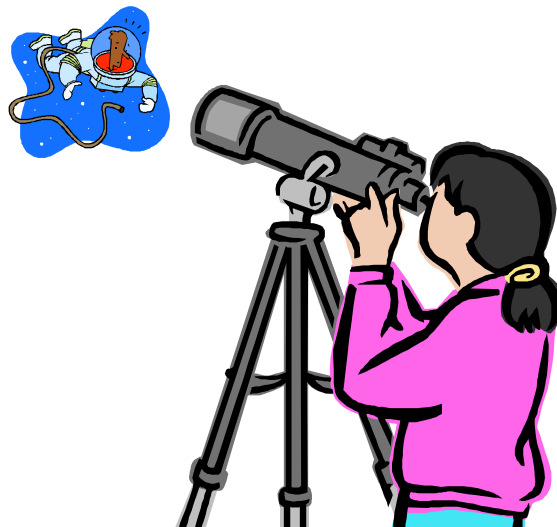
The London RASC webpage can be found at: www.rasc.ca/London

Our dark sky observing site is at the **Fingal Wildlife Management Area**.



Sky Events for late December and early January 2011

- Dec 19 Moon 1.2 South of the Pleiades (M45)
- Dec 21 TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE
- Dec 21 Winter solstice
- Dec 27 Double shadow transit on Jupiter
- Dec 29 Double shadow transit on Jupiter
- Jan 2 Jupiter 0.6 South of Uranus
- Jan 3 Double shadow transit on Jupiter
- Jan 4 Quadrantid meteor shower peaks
- Jan 8 Venus greatest elongation
- Jan 9 Mercury greatest elongation
- Jan 10 Double shadow transit on Jupiter
- Jan 15 Moon 1.3 S of Pleiades (M45)
- Jan 17 Double shadow transit on Jupiter
- Jan 17 Moon 0.9 South of M35
- Jan 18 Double shadow transit on Jupiter



Mercury in the western evening sky
Venus in the southeastern morning sky
Jupiter well placed in the early evening sky
Saturn well placed in the dawn sky
Uranus and Neptune in the western evening sky

R.A.S.C. London Centre Library Books of the Month December 2010 By Robert Duff

As always, these “Books of the Month” are available for loan to members, to be returned at the following monthly meeting. The books for December 2010 are as follows:

Burnham's Celestial Handbook: an Observer's Guide to the Universe Beyond the Solar System, by Robert Burnham. Revised and Enlarged Edition. c1978.

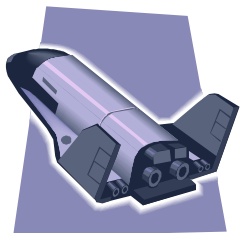
Volume Three, Pavo—Vulpecula.

Pale Blue Dot: a Vision of the Human Future in Space, by Carl Sagan. c1994.

Kepler's Witch: an Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother, by James A. Connor. c2004.

For a complete listing of our library collection please see our RASC London Centre Library Web page at: http://www.astro.uwo.ca/~rasc/newrasc_library.html

If there is a particular book or video you wish to borrow, please feel free to contact me by telephone at (519) 439-7504 or by e-mail at rduff@sympatico.ca



You can find the last four years (or so) of Polaris newsletters online at:
<http://patusratus.ca/Polaris/index.html>

The Bob Duff Report

Star Nights & Other Events

31st B Cubs Astronomy Presentation, December 2nd, 2010

Bob Duff made the digital slide presentation, "Astronomy," to 14 members of the 31st B Cubs, including 11 children (ages 8—10) and 3 adult leaders, at Calvary Church in Old North London, Thursday, December 2nd, 7:00—8:30 p.m. The presentation included stars and constellations, how to locate Polaris, planets, nebulae, galaxies and observing with telescopes. Afterwards the Cubs assembled Star Finder planispheres and the leaders were given additional planispheres to take with them.

Astronomy Display @Cherryhill Village Mall, December 4, 2010

Seven RASC London Centre members assisted with the Astronomy Display at McKittrick's camera store, Cherryhill Village Mall, December 4th, 9:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m. Dave McCarter set up a laptop computer, digital projector and screen showing continuous images, making occasional instructional interventions for visitors. Harold Tutt set up his 80mm Stellarvue refractor on its Vixen alt-azimuth mount and Matt Neima assembled his Celestron C8 on its Losmandy mount. McKittrick's set up a Meade Lightbride

25.4cm Dobsonian and Celestron 70mm alt-azimuth refractor. Other members there included Bill Gardner, Rick Saunders, Peter Jedicke and Bob Duff. They talked to customers about astronomy and observing handing out brochures and Star Finder planispheres. The London Public Library Cherryhill Branch put on an astronomy book display in the library for the event. Two students from Fanshawe College CIXX-FM (106.9 FM) broadcasting interviewed Bob, Peter and Dave concerning current events in astronomy and about the RASC London Centre. We talked to about 30—40 people, including some very interested in getting into amateur astronomy.

Slide Presentation, A. B. Lucas Secondary School, December 9th, 2010

Dave McCarter made his slide presentation, "The Power of Observation," before a grade-9 class at A. B. Lucas Secondary School on Thursday, December 9th, 12:12—1:21 p.m. There were 32 people in all, including 30 students, a student teacher and the classroom teacher. Bob Duff was also there and gave the teacher and student teacher each a brochure.

Exploring the Stars, Cronyn Observatory, November 16th—30th, 2010

I assisted at these events bringing the RASC London Centre's photographic display, setting it up on the table in the lecture room and laying out some brochures.

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December 2010 Pocket Sky Atlas Challenges

With all the hubbub and commitments of the holiday season, it's hard to find a half hour or so to just pop outside and have a look at the night sky. But when you need a break from all the confusion, the night sky is always there, as constant as ever and as tranquil as any oasis. Dress warmly for any outing as you may find yourself spending more time than anticipated, but it will be time well spent none the less.

I've indexed the object to its star chart page.

Naked Eye:

Saiph, Rigel, Cursa, Alnitak, Alnilam, Mintaka, Page 16. Bellatrix, Betelgeuse, Meissa, Page 14

Small Scopes and binoculars:

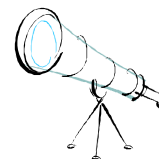
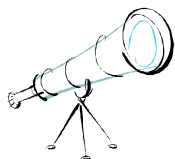
M34, page 13; TV (AKA SAO 91910, Hip, 2219) page 5

Larger Scopes:

NGC 7814 page 5; NGC 7741 page 74

Bonus objects:

NGC 7006, Page 75; NGC 1662 page 15



Happy hunting.
John Kulczykcki

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**Exploring the Stars, 3rd Lambeth Brownies,
November 16th, 2010**

Clouds and rain showers ruled out observing for Exploring the Stars at the Cronyn Observatory, Tuesday, November 16th, 6:30 p.m. I set up the RASC London Centre's photographic display along with some of our brochures on the table in the lecture room. Graduate student Emily McCullough made the digital slide presentation, "Brownie Exploring Space Badge," before 16 visitors (13 children and 3 adults) of the 3rd Lambeth Brownies. She followed this with a tour of the big 25.4cm refractor but rain ruled out opening the dome.

**Exploring the Stars, 14th Chatham Scouts,
November 17th, 2010**

Clouds and later clear skies greeted 19 visitors (11 children and 8 adults) from the 14th Chatham Scouts for exploring the Stars at the Cronyn observatory, Wednesday, November 17th, 6:30 p.m. I set up the RASC London Centre's photographic display along with some of our brochures on the table in the lecture room. Graduate student Alexander DeSouza made the digital slide presentation, "Constellations." He followed this with a tour of the big 25.4cm refractor and explained the Standard and Sidereal Time clocks on the wall. The chance of rain ruled out opening the dome. Alexander gave them some Star Finder planispheres. The Scouts were gone and we closed the Observatory around 8:30 p.m. Moon and Jupiter were visible between the clearing clouds as we left the building.

**Exploring the Stars, Northdale Central Public
School, November 23rd, 2010**

Graduate student Emily McCullough made the digital slide presentation, "Our Solar System," before 66 children, teachers and parents from Northdale Central Public School, Tuesday, November 23rd, 6:30 p.m. Bob Duff set up the RASC London Centre's photo display and brochures on a table in the dome. Since skies were cloudy, they viewed the red lights on the communications tower in south London through the 25.4cm dome refractor.

**Exploring the Stars, Northdale Central Public
School, November 24th, 2010**

Graduate student Robin Wing made the digital slide presentation, "Our Solar System," before 20 visitors (11 children and 9 adults) from Northdale Central Public School, Wednesday, November 24th, 6:30 p.m. Since

skies were cloudy, they viewed the red lights on the communications tower in south London through the 25.4cm dome refractor. Bob Duff set up the London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian on the Observatory's roof patio for visitors to view the weather vane on the Engineering building.

**Exploring the Stars, Northdale Central Public
School, November 25th, 2010**

Graduate student Alexander DeSouza made the digital slide presentation, "Our Solar System," before 63 children, teachers and parents from Northdale Central Public School, Thursday, November 25th, 6:30 p.m. Rain ruled out observing and Alexander gave them a tour of the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome. Bob Duff set up the London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian and photo display in the dome and talked with some of the visitors.

**Exploring the Stars, 3rd St. Thomas Brownies,
November 30th, 2010**

It was a cloudy night with rain, Tuesday, November 30th, 6:30—8:00 p.m., when graduate student Alexander DeSouza made the digital slide presentation, "Brownie Exploring Space Badge," before 30 visitors (15 children and 15 adults) from the 3rd St. Thomas Brownies. Alexander gave them a tour of the big 25.4cm refractor without opening the dome. One parent asked me about how to choose a telescope and I showed him the London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian in the dome storeroom.

**Cronyn Observatory Open House, Saturday,
November 27th, 2010**

Clouds and later clearing skies made for an enjoyable and informative evening for 35 visitors, including adults and children, to the Cronyn Observatory Open House, Saturday, November 27th, 7:00 p.m. Graduate student Emily McCullough made her digital slide presentation, "Space Junk," concerning out-of-service satellites and other space debris. The visitors then viewed Jupiter through the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome.

Bob Duff and Dave McCarter assisted with the big refractor and also set up the 25.4cm Dobsonian on the Observatory's roof patio and showing people Jupiter, Albireo, Vega, the Pleiades (M45), Aldebaran and the Hyades, the Double Cluster in Perseus and the Andromeda Galaxy (M31). Dave brought some "Star Finder" planispheres for the Observing the Stars program. It

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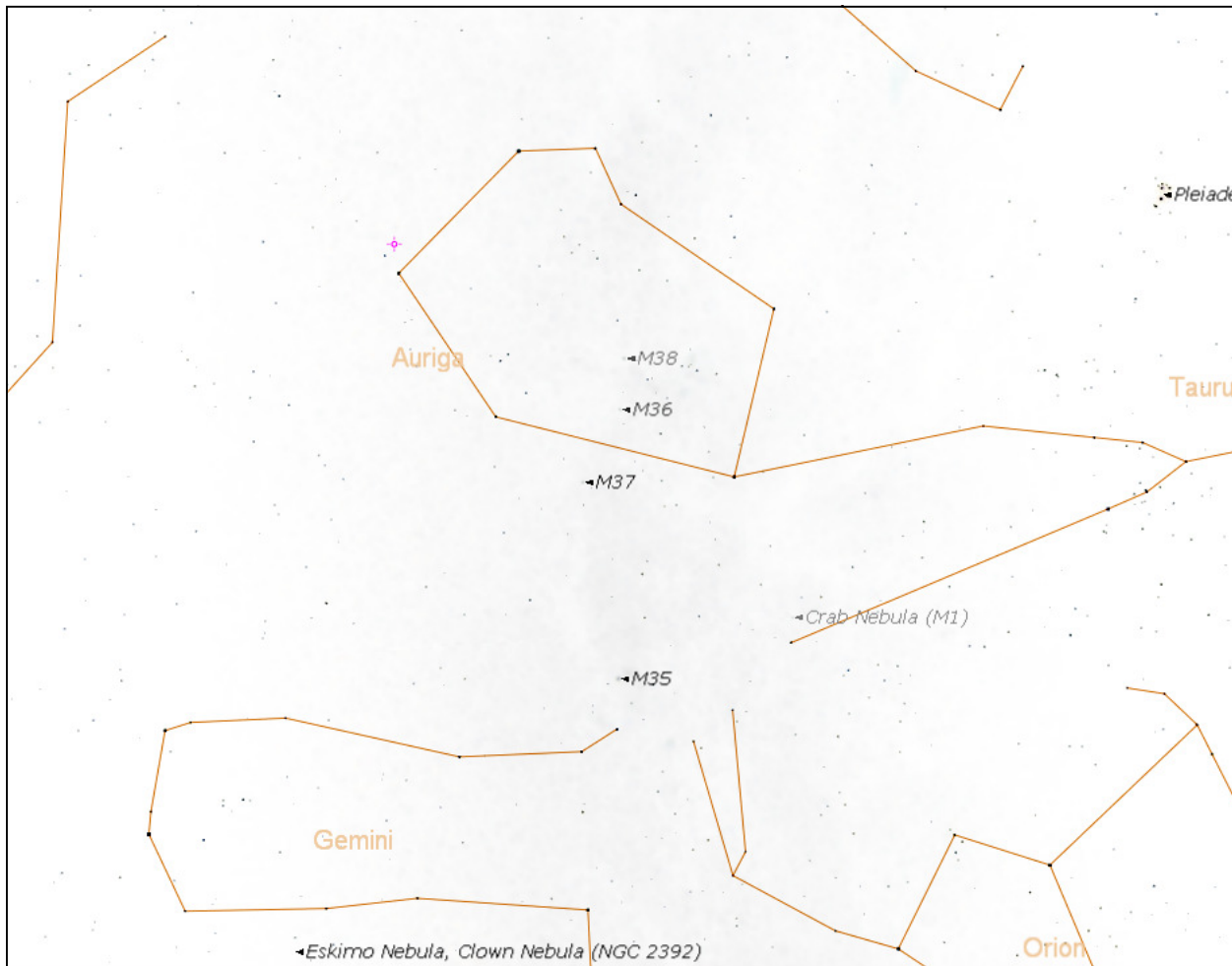
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was a great evening and we closed the Observatory around 9:00 p.m.

Cronyn Observatory Open House, Saturday, December 11th, 2010

Clear skies with hazy clouds greeted visitors to the Cronyn Observatory Open House, Saturday, December 11th, 7:00 p.m. Graduate student Alexander DeSouza began his digital slide presentation with just 13 visitors, with more arrivals during and after the presentation, totalling 38 people by the end of the evening.

Graduate student Robin Wing operated the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome, showing people the thick crescent Moon, two days prior to First Quarter. Dave McCarter and Bob Duff assisted, although seeing conditions were not great with the 32mm Erfle eyepiece showing a hazy cratered Moon at 137X. People also viewed Jupiter through hazy clouds. We talked to several people interested in astronomy and gave out RASC London Centre brochures, "Become a Sidewalk Astronomer," and "SkyNews." We closed the Observatory at 9:00 p.m. after a successful evening.



Looking SE from London at midnight on Dec 22 2010 almost directly overhead. Three open clusters in Auriga are wonderful to view, M36 M37 M38. You also have M1 the Crab Nebula and M35 which is also an open cluster. Don't forget the Pleiades and the Hyades (not marked but in Taurus at right)