

POLARIS



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada London Centre Newsletter March 2011

My Telescope **Patrick Whelan**

The last warm day of Autumn. I bring my telescope from outside. Dew forms on the outer surfaces giving it a dimpled look. I worry about dust that will stick to the moisture and wipe it down. I look at my telescope and my telescope looks at me.

The first snow. Cold and blowing hard. A long day at work. I come home and start my evening chores. I go to my room. I look at my telescope and my telescope looks at me.

Winter has been raging for weeks. Dark nights with cloud and more cloud. Snow is piling up like privacy fences between everywhere. I peer through cold dark windows into the night. It is dark and starless. I go to my room. Things have cluttered the floor around my telescope. I look at my telescope and my telescope looks at me.

It is a brand new year. Celebrations and visiting with friends and family. Snow is steadily piling up outside like a white rash on the Earth. Boots and mitts and hats and parkas cover everyone. Outside frosted breath hangs on the breeze. I go to my room. Dust bunnies are attacking my telescope. I look at my telescope and my telescope looks at me.

A weekend of less busy-ness. I go to my room.

My telescope is dusty and astro-paraphenalia lie in random order everywhere. I clean the telescope's outside surfaces. I tidy the floor under it. I arrange the astro-box under it. I look in the closet and it looks like an astronomy store has thrown up inside. I turn and look at my telescope and my telescope looks at me.

Days are getting longer and nights are getting shorter. Why did they move daylight saving? Why do we still have it? The sun was shining down on

the city today. Still cold but not as cold. Snow is sublimating and melting and running down the drains. New eyepieces have arrived over time into my mailbox. I go to my room. I organize the closet. Things are now visible and usable. I take foam and a used case and create a new eyepiece case. Everything has a spot and everything is in its spot. Wires and

batteries are tidied and controllers are dusted. I look at my telescope and my telescope looks at me.

Warm days caress my face. Warm breezes brush my nose. Cloudless day and cloudless night. Photons rain down from the Milky Way. The telescope in the back yard with wires and batteries and controllers. Motors whirring and eyepieces exchanging. Views from horizon to zenith and back. I stand and in gentle starlight I look at my telescope. And my telescope looks at me.



Moon Phases



March 12 2011



March 19 2011



March 26 2011



April 3 2011

WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in
 columns before me,
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add,
 divide, and measure them,
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lec-
 tured with much applause in the lecture-room,
 How soon unaccountable I became tired, and sick,
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to
 time,
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

Walt Whitman 1865

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LONDON RASC MONTHLY MEETINGS

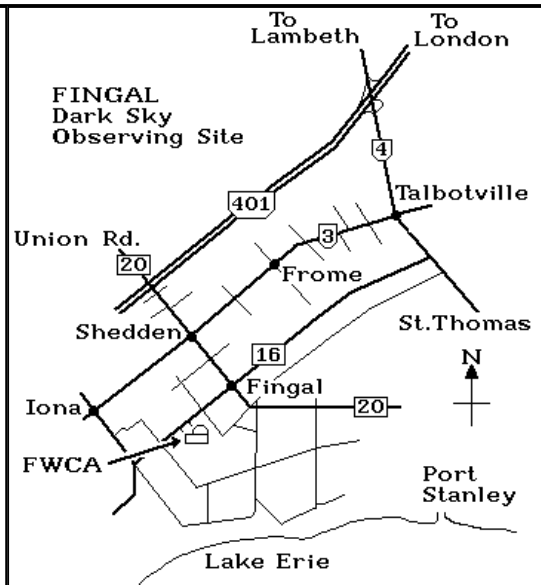
The London RASC group meets at Fanshawe College in London Ontario, September through July on the third Friday of the month at 19:00. We meet in room B1073.

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 March and early April 2011

March 20 Equinox
 March 21 Zodiacal light in Northern latitudes in west after evening twilight for next two weeks
 March 23 Mercury greatest elongation E
 March 27 Venus 0.1 S of Neptune
 March 28 Vesta 1.2 S of Moon
 April 4 Saturn at opposition
 April 7 Moon 1.9 S of Pleiades (M45)
 April 10 Moon 1.5 S of M35



Mercury is in the western evening sky
Venus is brilliant in the eastern morning sky
Mars is not visible
Jupiter vanishes into the evening twilight
Saturn rises in the early evening, retrograding in Virgo
Uranus is not visible
Neptune reappears in the morning sky



R.A.S.C. London Centre Library Books of the Month March 2011 *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 March 2011 are as follows:

Looking Up: a History of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, by R. Peter Broughton. c1994.

365 Starry Nights: an Introduction to Astronomy for Every Night of the Year, text and illustrations by Chet Raymo. c1982.

Universe on a T-shirt: the Quest for the Theory of Everything, by Dan Falk. c2002.

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



Star Nights & Other Events

By Robert Duff

Slide Presentation and Solar Observing, Tecumseh Public School, February 23rd, 2011

Dave McCarter and Bob Duff returned for a second visit to Tecumseh Public School, Wednesday, February 23rd, 2:20—3:30 p.m. Dave used the RASC London Centre’s digital projector to show the 21 Grade-6 students and their teacher slides of Comet Temple 1, target of the Deep Impact

space mission and revisited by the Stardust space mission on February 15th, 2011. He then used Stellarium sky charting software to show them the current evening sky from Fingal, with tours of Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus and their moons.

Towards the end of the session the students viewed the Sun through an open classroom window in Dave’s 80mm Stellarvue refractor fitted with a Kendrick white light solar filter. There was a small sunspot visible near the Sun’s left edge. Dave had also delivered some back issues of Astronomy magazines to the class a few days previous for use by the students. Dave and Bob were very much impressed by the knowledge and interest displayed by the children.

(Continued from page 3)

**Exploring the Stars, Cronyn Observatory,
February 15th—March 10th, 2011**

By Robert Duff

Ten Exploring the Stars events took place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, February 15th—March 10th. RASC London Centre members who helped out included Dave McCarter, operating the big 25.4cm refractor for Space Society of London (SSoL), February 15th; Greg Andres (and son, Abram), with their 20.3cm Sky-Watcher Dobsonian, and Mike Roffey and Bob Duff setting up the London Centre’s 25.4cm Dobsonian, for the 68th London Cubs, February 22nd. Bob was at all events, except February 15th, bringing the RASC London Centre’s photographic display and setting it up and laying out some brochures. In all, 4 RASC London members took part in these 10 events, involving 321 visitors.

**Exploring the Stars, Space Society of London (SSoL),
February 15th, 2011**

Graduate students Alexander DeSouza and Amanda Papadimos greeted visitors from the Space Society of London (SSoL), a student group, Tuesday, February 15th, 6:30—8:30 p.m. Amanda made her digital slide presentation, “Our Messy Solar System,” to a few visitors. Dave McCarter operated the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome, showing visitors the nearly 3-day-prior-to-full Moon. Some people stayed to discuss and ask questions, while others viewed the Moon through the big telescope and left. The sky was partly cloudy. In all there were about 25 visitors throughout the evening.

**Exploring the Stars, 84th London Cubs, February 16th,
2011**

Graduate student Robin Wing made the digital slide presentation, “Our Messy Solar System,” before 41 visitors (23 children and 18 adults) from the 84th London Cubs at the Cronyn Observatory for Exploring the Stars, Wednesday, February 16th, 6:30 p.m.

Mild temperatures made for an enjoyable evening of observing despite some sky haze. Robin showed them Jupiter and, later, the nearly full Moon through the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome, using the 32mm Erfle eyepiece (137X). Bob Duff set up the RASC London Centre’s 25.4cm Dobsonian on the Observatory’s roof patio and showed them the Moon, using the 17mm Nagler (67X) and 6mm Orthoscopic (190.5X) eyepieces. Bob gave RASC London and National brochures and a “Become a Sidewalk Astronomer” booklet to a couple of interested parents with small telescopes.

The Cubs, their leaders and parents expressed their thanks for an interesting and enjoyable evening of astronomy and were gone by 8:30 p.m.

**Exploring the Stars, Homeschoolers, February 17th,
2011**

Graduate students Robin Wing and Alexander DeSouza greeted 60 visitors (38 children and 22 adults) from a Homeschool group, to the Cronyn Observatory for Exploring the Stars, Thursday, February 17th, 6:30 p.m. Robin made the digital slide presentation, “Observing the Universe with Telescopes” and the children assembled telescope kits.

(Continued on page 5)

March 2011 Pocket Sky Atlas Challenges

March finds most astronomers pining for warm weather to go with nights that are still long enough to do some serious observing. Alas, March would rather tease us with few good observing opportunities and cause us to work on our virtue of patience and improve our self control. Fight back. and take from the March sky all you can by being ready to observe whenever the opportunity comes.

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

Naked Eye:

Acubens, Page 24; Zaurak, Page 17; Arneb, Page 16.

Small Scopes and binoculars:

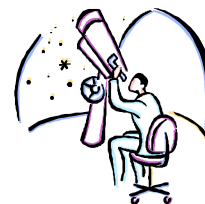
M41, Page 27; 10UMa, Page 22; NGC2281, Page 23

Larger Scopes:

NGC 2185 page 27; MCG-1-24-1, Page 26; NGC 2266,Page 25

Bonus objects:

NGC 1407 Page 17; Melote 71, Page 26; van den Bergh 97, Page 27 (Refer to page viii for notational notes!).



Happy hunting.
John Kulczycki

Under cloudy skies they viewed nearby campus buildings from the Observatory roof patio, using the simple telescopes (cardboard tube and lenses) they had assembled. After being shown of the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome they returned downstairs where Alexander made the digital slide presentation, "Constellations." The evening ended with the children receiving and assembling Star Finder planispheres. The group expressed their thanks for an interesting and enjoyable evening about telescopes and astronomy.

Exploring the Stars, 68th London Cubs, February 22nd, 2011

A clear cold night greeted 27 visitors (19 children and 8 adults) from the 68th London Cubs for Exploring the Stars at the Cronyn Observatory, Tuesday, February 22nd, 6:30 p.m. Graduates student Emily McCullough brought them into the dome immediately to show them Jupiter, low in the west, in the big 25.4cm refractor, using the Meade 28mm Ultra-Wide eyepiece (157X). Jupiter's cloud belts and 4 Galilean moons were discernable despite the poor atmospheric seeing. Bringing everybody back to the lecture room, Emily made the digital slide presentation, "The Cub Astronomy Badge."

Another observing session followed with views of the Orion Nebula (M42) in the big 25.4cm refractor. RASC London Centre members Mike Roffey and Bob Duff also showed them M42 in the Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian, using the 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X) and Orion Light Pollution filter, which enhanced the nebula and made stars look green. Greg Andres and his son Abram showed visitors the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) in their 20.3cm Sky-Watcher Dobsonian, using a 35mm eyepiece (34X). Back down in the lecture room, Emily distributed Star Finder planispheres to the Cubs and showed them how to assemble and use them. It was a very enjoyable evening for the Cubs who left a little after 8:30 p.m.

Exploring the Stars, 82nd London Girl Guides, March 1st, 2011

Graduate student Alexander DeSouza greeted 16 visitors, including 13 children, 2 leaders and one parent, from the 82nd London Girl Guides to the Cronyn Observatory for an evening of Exploring the Stars, Tuesday, March 1st, 6:00 p.m. Alexander made the digital slide presentation "Girl Guides Astronomy Badge" and then distributed 13 Star Finder planispheres, showing the Guides how to assemble and use them.

RASC London Centre member Bob Duff showed the visitors Jupiter, low in the west, through the big 25.4cm

refractor in the dome, using the Meade 28mm Ultra-Wide Angle eyepiece for a magnification of 157X. On the Observatory's roof patio, Alexander showed them the Orion Nebula (M42) through the 25.4cm Dobsonian, using the 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X). They also viewed the Orion Nebula through the big 25.4cm refractor. Bob later showed the visitors the stars Sirius and Capella through the 25.4cm Dobsonian. It was an enjoyable evening for the Guides although poor horizon seeing made the view of Jupiter somewhat smeary and hazy clouds diminished contrast on the Orion Nebula.

Exploring the Stars, 2nd St. Thomas Brownies, March 2nd, 2011

Cold clear weather greeted 38 visitors (17 children and 21 adults) from the 2nd St. Thomas Brownies at the Cronyn Observatory for an evening of Exploring the Stars, Wednesday, March 2nd, 6:00 p.m. Graduate student Robin Wing made the digital slide presentation, "The Brownie Exploring Space Badge," and answered questions. Robin showed them Jupiter, low in the western sky, through the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome, using the Meade 28mm Ultra-Wide Angle eyepiece for a magnification of 157X. RASC London Centre member Bob Duff showed them the Orion Nebula (M42) through the 25.4cm Dobsonian, using the 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X). Robin gave some Star Finder planispheres to the Brownie leaders to take with them and they were gone by 7:30 p.m. after an interesting and enjoyable evening of astronomy.

Exploring the Stars, 24th London Brownies, March 3rd, 2011

Graduate student Emily McCullough greeted 13 visitors (7 children and 6 adults) from the 24th London Brownies at the Cronyn Observatory for Exploring the Stars, Thursday, March 3rd, 6:30 p.m. Emily began with a drawing activity, rolling out several metres of ½ metre-wide paper on the floor, and having the children draw the planets in order from the Sun, using colour pencil crayons. This was followed by the digital slide presentation, "The Brownie Exploring Space Badge."

The weather was cold and cloudy. Emily took the group upstairs for a tour of the 25.4cm refractor in the dome and a view of the lights on the communications tower in south London through this big telescope, using the 32mm Erfle eyepiece (137X). On the Observatory roof patio, Bob Duff showed them the weathervane on the roof of the Engineering Building through the 25.4cm Dobsonian, using the 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X).

Returning to the lecture room Emily distributed 15 Star Finder planispheres to the group and Bob helped assemble them with Scotch tape. The Brownies left around 8:30 p.m. after a very enjoyable evening of astronomy, despite the cloudy weather.

**Exploring the Stars, 3rd St. Thomas Guides,
March 8th, 2011**

Clearing skies greeted 51 visitors (30 children and 21 adults) from the 3rd St. Thomas Guides to the Cronyn Observatory for an evening of Exploring the Stars, Tuesday, March 8th, 6:30 p.m. Since the sky was clear, graduate student Emily McCullough took the group into the dome to view the crescent Moon, which was a splendid sight in the big 25.4cm refractor, using the 32mm Erfle eyepiece (137X). RASC London Centre member Bob Duff also showed them the Moon and later the Orion Nebula (M42) in the 25.4cm Dobsonian. Returning to the lecture room, Emily made the digital slide presentation, "Girl Guides Astronomy Badge," and ended the evening by distributing some 52 Star Finder planispheres and demonstrating their assembly and use. The group left around 8:30 p.m. after an enjoyable evening of stargazing and learning the sky.

**Exploring the Stars, Sparta Beavers, Cubs and
Scouts, March 9th, 2011**

Graduate student Robin Wing greeted 40 visitors (31 children and 9 adults) from the Sparta Beavers, Cubs and Scouts at the Cronyn Observatory for Exploring the Stars, Wednesday, March 9th, 6:00 p.m. Robin made the digital slide presentation, "Girl Guides Astronomy Badge," since it emphasized constellations and finding

Polaris as well as comets asteroids and meteors. Since it was cloudy and raining Robin demonstrated the 25.4cm refractor but did not open the dome. Bringing the group back downstairs to the lecture room Robin distributed 39 Star Finder planispheres to the group and RASC London Centre member Bob Duff helped assemble them with Scotch tape. Robin also gave a group leader some 40 Galileo Moment cards to distribute later. The group left around 7:55 p.m. after an interesting evening of astronomy, despite the clouds and rain.

**Exploring the Stars, 1st Ilderton Guides,
March 10th, 2011**

A cloudy evening with rain greeted 10 visitors (6 children and 4 adults) from the 1st Ilderton Guides for Exploring the Stars at the Cronyn Observatory on Thursday, March 10th, 6:30 p.m. Emily made the digital slide presentation, "Girl Guides Astronomy Badge." She followed this with the activity, "Kitchen Comet," in which Emily made a comet using dry ice, water, dirt and silver paint (to simulate hydrocarbons). Clouds of vapour from the dry ice (frozen carbon dioxide) were evocative of a true comet.

Emily took the group up into the dome for a tour of the big 25.4cm refractor and also demonstrated a reflector telescope using the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian, hauled out of the storeroom by Bob Duff.

Returning to the lecture room Emily had the group assemble 7 Star Finder planispheres, supplied by Bob, and explained their use. Despite the rainy weather the Guides had an informative and enjoyable evening of astronomy.