

# POLARIS



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada  
London Centre Newsletter  
March 2008

## Book Review: Deep Sky Companions: Hidden Treasures

Stephen James O'Meara

Craig Levine

Cambridge University Press and Sky Publishing,  
Cambridge Mass. 2007 ISBN-13 978-0-521-83704-0.  
584 pp

Stephen James O'Meara is a resident of Hawaii and a prolific astronomy and vulcanology author, a gadfly who has been described variously as an amateur astronomer, artist, and volcanologist. He has been a columnist for many years for *Sky and Telescope* (S&T), and most recently for *Astronomy* magazine. A major project that he recently worked on was the editing of a distillation and compilation of the "Deep Sky Wonders" column written over a period of 40 years by the late Walter Scott "Scotty" Houston for S&T. O'Meara's detailed observations, including the first confirmed visual observation of the spokes in Saturn's rings, have cemented his reputation as a visual observer par excellence.

This past year alone, he has published two books of his own observations and reflections in astronomy. One is "Steve O'Meara's Herschel Observing Guide", the other (and the subject of this review) is the third in his "Deep Sky Companions" trilogy, "Hidden Treasures". Like the other two books in this series that covered the Messier objects and the Caldwell objects, this volume encompasses 109 observing targets, as well as an additional 20 in the appendix. O'Meara did all of his observing for these books with a four-inch f/5 Televue Genesis refractor and three Televue eyepieces plus a pair of barlows. He claims that,

from his dark observing site some 4200 feet in altitude in Hawaii, his small telescope has the same reach as an 8-inch telescope from a suburban location. What this means for anyone using his books as a reference is that all objects are within reach of the telescopes that most amateur astronomers have available to them. The only limiting

factors to observing these objects are sky conditions and for a few objects, their placement near the visible horizon, and the experience and visual acuity of the observer. All objects were chosen to be visible in a 4" and greater telescope, and are 10° above the horizon as seen from 40° north.

This 584 page book opens with a preface describing how and why each object was chosen. Chapter one details his telescope, observing site, and references that he used in researching the essays for the objects presented in the book. His commentaries on observing are interesting and offer sound advice and will give heart to those just beginning their observing journeys. The next 527 pages comprise the detailed description of each object, and such detail! O'Meara's flowing prose describes 38 open clusters, 35 galaxies, 14 planetary nebulae, 8

globular clusters, 8 bright nebulae, 1 dark nebula, 1 star of high proper-motion, and 4 asterisms. Each object is given a rich treatment over 4 to 8 double-columned pages. For each observing target, he gives voluminous historical

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Moon Phases



March 7 2008 17:14



March 14 2008 10:46



March 21 2007 22:15



March 29 2008 21:47

### Letter from the Editor

March 29 2008

#### Bring back the night: Earth Hour

Created to take a stand against the greatest threat our planet has ever faced, Earth Hour uses the simple action of turning off the lights for one hour to deliver a powerful message about the need for action on global warming.

This simple act has captured the hearts and minds of people all over the world. As a result, at 8pm March 29, 2008 millions of people in some of the world's major capital cities, including Copenhagen, Toronto, Chicago, Melbourne, Brisbane and Tel Aviv will unite and switch off for Earth Hour.

**Let's all give it a try!**

I copied the above notice from  
<http://www.earthhour.org/>

## London Centre Executive

### President and ATM Chair

Dave McCarter  
email: dmccarter (at) sympatico.ca

### Vice-President and Newsletter Editor

Patrick Whelan  
email: patusratus (at) sympatico.ca

### Tri-County Public Star Party Coordinator, Librarian and Hume

### Cronyn Coordinator

Robert Duff  
519-439-7504  
email: rduff (at) sympatico.ca

### Treasurer and Sky and Telescope Coordinator

Bill Gardner  
email: gardner.w (at) rogers.com

### Secretary and Webmaster

Rick Saunders  
email: ozzzy1 (at) real.ca

### National Representative

Craig Levine  
email: craigslevine (at) gmail.com

### Observer's Chair

Peter Raine  
pete\_raine (at) rogers.com

### Honorary President and past National President

Peter Jedicke  
email: PJedicke (at) fanshawec.ca

### Past President

John Rousom  
email: jdr (at) netscape.ca

### Observatory Trustee and Supplier of Fine Telescopes

Joe O'Neil  
email: joneil (at) oneilphoto.on.ca

## LONDON RASC MONTHLY MEETINGS

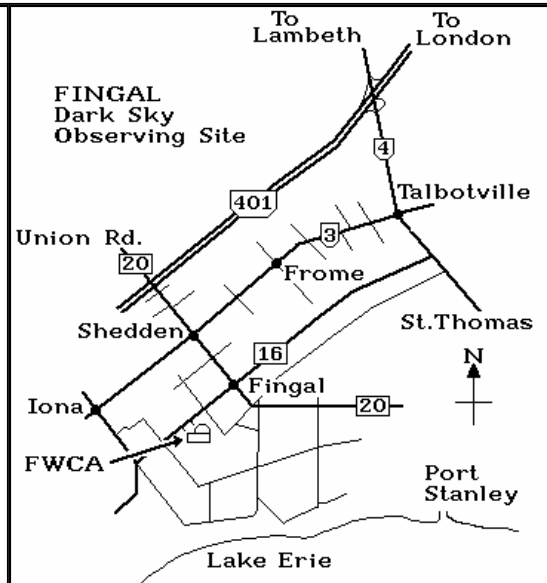
The London RASC group meets at Fanshawe college in London Ontario, September through July on the third Friday of the month at 19:00. They meet in room B1073.

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](http://www.rasc.ca/London)

They have a preferred observing site at Fingal Wildlife Management area.



## Sky Events for March and April 2008

March 20 Vernal Equinox  
 March 23 Zodiacal light visible in the West for next 2 weeks  
 March 23 Mercury 1.0° S of Venus  
 March 27 Mercury 1.7° S of Uranus  
 March 27 Antares 0.5° N of the Moon  
 March 28 Venus 0.7° S of Uranus  
 March 29 Double shadow transit on Jupiter  
 April 2 Neptune 0.0° S of Moon  
 April 5 Venus 5.0° S of the Moon  
 April 5 Double shadow transit on Jupiter  
 April 9 Moon 1.0° N of Pleiades (M45)  
 April 12 Mars 1.2° S of the Moon  
 April 13 Moon 0.1° N of Beehive (M44)  
 April 15 Regulus 0.9° N of Moon  
**Mars is high in the southern skies in the constellation Gemini**  
**Mercury travels in tandem with Venus in the morning sky**  
**Saturn rises in the east northeast at dusk and transits around 11 pm**



### R.A.S.C. London Centre Library Books of the Month March 2008 *By Robert Duff*

In order to make our library collection available to members, I bring three books to our general monthly meetings. These “Books of the Month” are available for loan, to be returned at the following monthly meeting.

The books for March 2008 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 Two, Chamaeleon—Orion.

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

A Portfolio of Lunar Drawings, by Harold Hill. 1991. (Practical Astronomy Handbooks, 1)

For a complete listing of our library collection please see our RASC London Centre Web site at:  
<http://www.rasc.ca/london/>

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](mailto:rduff@sympatico.ca)

### Sky and Telescope Subscriptions

Sky & Telescope subscriptions are available at a discounted rate through the London Centre. The cost is \$39.95USD instead of the normal \$49.95USD subscription rate. Please see Bill Gardner for details.

*(Continued from page 1)*

context with many quotes from various sources covering discovery, astrophysical significance and/or properties of the object, and much information on its appearance to the eye, both his and those of other observers. There is always a picture of the object taken from a large professional observatory, as well as many of O'Meara's own sketches from the eyepiece. For me, these are the most illuminating and valuable of the generous illustrations throughout. All illustrations are in black and white. Each section begins with a large-scale constellation map with the few stars illustrated being at mag 6 at their faintest. There is also a smaller map that shows the objects' immediate region. Beside each picture is much detail listing its name (if applicable), NGC or other number, object type, RA and DEC, magnitude, dimensions, distance, discoverer, Herschel notes (again, if applicable), and other notes.

The book concludes with four appendices. The first one is written by noted visual observer Barbara Wilson entitled "Caroline Herschel: No Ordinary Eighteenth-Century Woman". She describes a fascinating woman and her contributions to astronomy, and includes commentary from O'Meara and Michael Hoskin over its 16 pages. Appendix B and C are tables of basic data about each object described in the book - the 109 and 20 additional respectively. Appendix D is a comparison table listing all 109 objects showing the overlap with 12 other available "Best of" lists of observing targets, including Alan Dyers RASC Finest NGC Objects (there are 32 objects that overlap).

Over all, this book is a valuable addition to an amateur astronomer's reference library. To my mind it is the strongest of the Deep Sky Companions trilogy, the weakest in my opinion being the volume on the Caldwell objects. Like the other two in the series it is not a book that one would take out into the field, however. It is a hardcover weighing in at almost four pounds, and its high-quality, high-gloss pages would not stand up very well to heavy dew. For selecting observing targets, planning an observing session, and getting information on just-observed targets post-observing, this book is a wonderful read. For the frequent cloudy Ontario nights, you would have to look hard for an as-enjoyable companion for engaging in armchair astronomy. My two other most-

favourite books in that category are Leslie Peltier's "Starlight Nights", and Walter Scott Houston's "Deep Sky Wonders"

I do have a couple of nits to pick with the book, however. First, the maps. They are somewhat less-than-useful and are aesthetically poor. O'Meara proudly describes them as being his own design, with the intent that they resemble a treasure map, right down to the "X" marking the object. At least the few stars in the constellation maps show their Bayer or Flamsteed number. Other guide stars mentioned in the text are given an a, b, c, etc designation. On both the constellation and detail maps, the plotted stars are not smooth circles. The curves are jagged, much like you'd expect from simple drawing software from the late nineteen-eighties to mid-nineties. Like a treasure map, they have a home-made look. Given that there are so many applications capable of drawing clear and useful star maps (ECU, MegaStar), there really is no excuse for such poor illustrations.

My other nit isn't major, but for me it is annoying. Perhaps to make up for his own poor maps, under each constellation map are the corresponding map numbers for Wil Tirion's "Sky Atlas 2000, and Uranometria. What annoys me is that the Uranometria version referenced is the original Uranometria first published by Wilmann-Bell from 1987-1996. In 2001 an updated version was published. Because of the many changes and improvements to the maps in the 2001 publication, the chart arrangement differs completely from the original work. It would have been a simple thing to include the second version map numbers, particularly given that there are observing software packages available that will list the corresponding charts of various printed atlases for any given plotted object.

While annoying, these two irritants do little to detract from a well-written, well researched book from one of the finest observers in the amateur astronomy community. He succeeds by being informative, sometimes whimsical, and able to convey his passion for the many elements of this hobby of ours. When you find your passion for observing flagging after the long, cold, and cloudy winter nights, pick this volume up and find yourself making notes on potential targets for your next observing run.

---

## RASC London Banquet March 29th

Every year we have a banquet and hopefully a Guest of Honour.

This year the plans for the banquet are:

Saturday March 29th at Tony's restaurant. Tony's is located at 426 Springbank Drive.

There is normally a 'happy hour' between 6 and 7 PM as people are arriving.

Then dinner and the talk start at 7PM.

This year the guest of honour is Glenn Hawley. For a short bio of Glenn just look at the back page.

If you plan to attend, please talk to a member of the executive to book your seat so we know how many people are coming.

## Exploring the Stars, Cronyn Observatory February 11th—March 13th, 2008

By Robert Duff

### 27th Guides/Pathfinders, February 11th

A clear sky and cold temperature greeted the 27th Guides/Pathfinders on Monday, February 11th, for an evening of Exploring the Stars at the Cronyn Observatory. Doctoral student Alyssa Moldowan delivered a digital slide presentation on Space Junk—expired satellites and other space age debris orbiting the Earth—while I made ready the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome with the 2-inch Meade 28mm Ultra Wide Angle eyepiece (156X) in the diagonal. The 2-inch Erfle 52mm eyepiece (84X) was placed on standby on the table. I directed the telescope at the thick crescent Moon, which was two days prior to First Quarter, occurring February 13th, and switched on the clock drive.

Alyssa brought the group up and gave them a brief presentation about the telescope. Because it was cold, Alyssa took everybody downstairs and sent them up in groups of five to view the Moon through the big refractor with the Meade 28mm Ultra Wide Angle eyepiece at 156X. The Moon was an impressive sight.

We then directed the telescope at Mars and viewed a very turbulent image at 156X. I then directed the telescope at the Orion Nebula (M42) and swapped the 28mm eyepiece for the 52mm Erfle. At 84X the 52mm Erfle gave a fairly sharp image of the Orion Nebula and the Trapezium stars and we showed this to a smaller group of remaining visitors.

It was an enjoyable and informative evening of observing for the Guides /Pathfinders despite the very cold weather.

### 1st Ward Activity Day Girls, February 12th

Clouds and falling snow greeted the 1st Ward Activity Day Girls on Tuesday, February 12th, when they arrived at the Cronyn Observatory for an evening of Exploring the Stars. Graduate student Andrea Domokos began her digital slide presentation on Constellations a little after 7:00 p.m., while I made ready the 25.4cm refractor in the dome, placing the 52mm Erfle eyepiece in the telescope's star diagonal. Andrea followed the first presentation with a constellation tour using Starry Night EDU. Since it was cold and snowing we did not open the dome and Andrea gave a talk and demonstrated the telescope to the group. The group enjoyed the evening in spite of the weather and expressed an interest in returning to the Cronyn when there were clear skies and warmer weather.

### The February 20th, 2008, Lunar Eclipse at the Cronyn Observatory

Clear Skies with a few scattered clouds blowing in from the west greeted us a little before 8:00 p.m. when people started arriving for the Lunar Eclipse open house at the Cronyn Observatory. Graduate student Andrea Domokos set up the digital slide projector with the NASA Total Lunar Eclipse live Web cast and an image of the Moon from the Argentina "Friends of Astronomy" society, which periodically had to be refreshed. Graduate student Alyssa Moldowan arrived later. RASC London Centre members present included Richard Gibbens and myself as well as Peter

Jedicke who arrived later. It was estimated that over 50 people showed up for the eclipse event over the course of the evening from 8:00 p.m. until the Observatory's closing around 11:00 p.m. Andrea Domokos and later Peter Jedicke gave brief presentations about the eclipse. I made ready the 25.4cm refractor in the dome with the 52mm Erfle Eyepiece (84X) and set up the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian with the 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X) on the roof patio. It was clear and cold as the partial eclipse began at 8:43 p.m. with the Earth's shadow appearing on the left (western) edge of the Moon. I opened the dome and directed the 25.4cm refractor at the Moon. Andrea took over this big telescope as I went out on the roof patio and showed visitors the eclipse through the Dobsonian.

When Peter Jedicke arrived we traded places throughout the evening to get warm inside as visitors lined up to observe the eclipse through the telescope. Peter also gave an impromptu talk and answered questions down in the lecture room. The eclipse was spectacularly dark becoming noticeable red with a distinct edge to the Earth's shadow as it progressed across the face of the Moon. Totality was at 10:01 p.m. and mid-eclipse occurred at 10:26 p.m. The Observatory was near to closing as totality ended at 10:51 p.m. with the first glimmer of sunlight appearing on the Moon's right (eastern) edge.

We also observe Saturn with the Dobsonian and it appeared small and bright at 67X with Titan to its right (celestial east). In the dome the 52mm Erfle eyepiece was exchanged for the 35mm eyepiece (125X), which gave a more magnified view of Saturn. On the patio deck we briefly observed Mars with the Dobsonian at the request of a couple of the young visitors. Mars appeared as a small bright featureless orange disk at 67X.

It was a spectacular eclipse and a great evening at the Cronyn. Many visitors enjoyed themselves and asked a lot of questions. It was a fitting celebration of the last total lunar eclipse we will see from London until 2010.

### Cronyn Observatory Open House, February 22nd

Clear skies greeted Richard Gibbens, myself and 19 visitors at the Cronyn Observatory on Friday, February 22nd at 6:30 p.m. Program Coordinator and doctoral student Alyssa Moldowan made a digital slide presentation before the group while I made ready the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome and set up the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian of the Observatory's roof patio. I put the 52mm Erfle eyepiece (84X) in the refractor and placed the 35mm eyepiece (125X) and the Meade 28mm Ultra Wide Angle eyepiece (156X) on the table on standby. The 17mm Nagler eyepiece went in the Dobsonian telescope for a magnification of 67X.

It was cold and clear with no clouds when we opened the dome and we directed the big refractor towards Mars, which appeared as a small orange disk at 84X, using the 52mm Erfle eyepiece. Alyssa later directed the refractor at the Pleiades (M45) star cluster.

I went out on the roof patio and directed the Dobsonian telescope at Mars, installing my 7mm Nagler eye-

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Continued from page 5)*

piece (163X) in the focuser. Mars presented us with a pleasing gibbous orange disk, which was quite sharp. We then observed Saturn, which also presented a pleasing image with the moon Titan to its lower right and Rhea to the right of the rings. Finally, I directed the Dobsonian towards the Orion Nebula (M42), which looked good through the 7mm Nagler eyepiece at 163X. Alyssa suggested we try out the Observatory's recently acquired light pollution rejection filter. This was a 2-inch filter so I screwed it into the back of the Observatory's 2-inch 17mm Nagler. With the filter and 17mm Nagler eyepiece we obtained a sharp pleasing image at 67X of the Orion Nebula with the four Trapezium stars in the centre.

It was an excellent night of star gazing at the Cronyn Observatory given the clear sky, despite the surprisingly small turnout of only 19 visitors.

#### **CAGIS, February 25th**

It was overcast with a falling mist when I arrived at the Cronyn Observatory on Monday, February 25th around 7:15 p.m. Doctoral student Alyssa Moldowan was making a digital slide presentation on life in the universe to 30 visitors (including 18 youth and 12 adults) from the Canadian Association of Girls in Science (CAGIS). I went up into the dome and made ready the large 25.4 cm refractor, placing the 52mm Erfle eyepiece in the diagonal. I also set up the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian with the Observatory's 17mm Nagler eyepiece on the roof patio—despite the falling mist. Alyssa later brought the group upstairs and demonstrated the refractor. However, we did not use the Dobsonian on the roof patio. The group had an interesting and enjoyable evening with the digital slide presentation and the tour of the Observatory's dome and telescope.

#### **1st Delaware Sparks/Brownies, March 3rd**

Overcast skies and rain greeted 17 visitors (12 children and 5 adults) of the 1st Delaware Sparks/Brownies to the Cronyn Observatory on Monday, March 3rd at 6:30 p.m. Graduate student Alyssa Moldowan made a digital slide presentation on the Constellations while I set up the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome with the 52mm Erfle eyepiece and the 25.4cm Dobsonian with the 17mm Nagler eyepiece. We demonstrated both telescopes in the dome and the group enjoyed the activities despite the unfavourable weather.

#### **85th Pathfinders, March 4th**

Clouds and falling snow marked the evening of Exploring the Stars for the 85th Pathfinders at the Cronyn Observatory on Tuesday, March 4th. Graduate student Andrea Domokos made a digital slide presentation and RASC London Centre President Dave McCarter assisted with demonstrating the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome. People enjoyed the event and Dave recalls about 22 visitors present including 15 youth and 7 adults.

#### **80th Brownies, March 6th**

The sky was clear with some hazy clouds on Thursday, March 6th, for 14 visitors from the 80th Brownies (9 children and 5 adults) to the Cronyn Observatory for

Exploring the Stars. I set up the big 25.4cm refractor with the 52mm Erfle eyepiece and, after shovelling a clearing in the snow, set up the Dobsonian telescope on the roof patio. After Alyssa had demonstrated the big refractor in the dome the group came out to observe through the Dobsonian. The Observatory's 17mm Nagler revealed Mars as a small orange disk at 67X. I exchanged this eyepiece for my 7mm Nagler, which yielded a sharp, pleasing, slightly gibbous image of Mars at 163X. We eventually found Saturn in the hazy sky, which appeared small through the 17mm Nagler and an impressive ringed globe through the 7mm Nagler at 163X—with its moon Titan far to right (celestial east). Suffice to say the group, both adults and children, had an enjoyable time.

#### **11th Scouts, March 10th**

Favourable skies greeted the 11th Scouts when they arrived at 6:30 p.m. at the Cronyn Observatory for an evening of Exploring the Stars. Graduate student Alyssa Moldowan made a digital slide presentation on the Constellations followed by a sky tour using Starry Night ECU. I set up the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome with the 52mm Erfle eyepiece. After shovelling some snow off the roof patio I set up the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian as well.

We observed Saturn with the Dobsonian using the Observatory's 17mm Nagler (67X) and 6mm Orthoscopic (190.5X) eyepieces. The moon Titan was visible to the lower left (celestial northwest) and the moon Rhea was visible to the right (celestial east) of Saturn. The Orion Nebula (M42) looked great through the 17mm Nagler at 67X and even better when we installed the light pollution filter—which enhanced contrast.

The Scouts had a great time and were very appreciative of the star night. In all there were 22 visitors including 13 or 14 youth and 8 or 9 adults.

#### **1st Kerwood Cubs, March 11th**

Graduate student Andrea Domokos made a digital slide presentation on the Constellations before a group of some 18 visitors (including 12 children and 6 adults) from the 1st Kerwood Cubs. I set up the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome with the 52mm Erfle eyepiece. After shovelling some snow off the roof patio I set up the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian as well. Since it was cloudy, Andrea simply demonstrated the big 25.4cm refractor in the dome. I showed groups of 5 children at a time with adults the top of a fir tree through the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian using the Observatory's 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X). Andrea ended the evening with a sky tour using Starry Night ECU. The Cubs enjoyed the evening despite the cloudy sky.

#### **26th Cubs & Scouts, March 13th**

Clouds with some clear sky greeted 24 visitors from the 26th Cubs and Scouts, including 16 young people and 8 leaders and adults, for Exploring the Stars at the Cronyn Observatory on Thursday, March 13th, around 7:00 p.m. Graduate student Alyssa Moldowan made a digital slide presentation on the Constellations followed by a sky

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Continued from page 6)*

tour using Starry Night EDU. I went up into the dome and made ready the Observatory's 25.4cm refractor with the 52mm Erfle eyepiece (84X) and set up the RASC London Centre's 25.4cm Dobsonian on the roof patio.

The sky turned completely clear just prior to 8:00 p.m. when the group came upstairs into the dome. Alyssa directed the big 25.4cm refractor towards the Moon, which was at one day prior to First Quarter, and later at the Pleiades (M45) star cluster.

Groups of Cubs and Scouts with their leaders came out on to the roof patio to view through the 25.4cm Dobsonian. I located Mars with the Dobsonian, using the Observatory's 17mm Nagler eyepiece (67X), and then switched to the Observatory's 6mm Orthoscopic eyepiece (190.5X) for a higher magnification view. Mars appeared as a small orange gibbous disk. I then redirected the telescope towards Saturn, locating it using the 17mm Nagler eyepiece and then switching to the 6mm Orthoscopic eyepiece for greater magnification at 190.5X. Saturn was a splendid sight with its large moon Titan preceding it to the left (celestial west) as it drifted across the field of view. Two other fainter moons were also visible closer in, just to the left of the Saturn and its rings.

The Cubs and Scouts enjoyed the evening under the stars and the great views of Saturn, Mars, the Moon and the Pleiades under excellent clear skies.

### **RASC London Centre Star Nights, March 2008 Astronomy Presentation, 80th Westmount Cubs, Jean Vanier School, March 4th, 2008**

Because it was snowing on Tuesday, March 4th, I made a presentation to the 80th Westmount Cubs and their Leaders in the Jean Vanier School gymnasium between 6:30 and 8:00 p.m. Since I had no slide presentation is simply spoke briefly about finding the North Star Polaris, using the Big Dipper, talked about a few of the constellations, stars and planets visible in March 2008. One of the Cub Leaders had printed out a whole bunch of copies of star charts from a Cubs web site along with some information sheets on the planets. I also brought my copies of the books, "NightWatch" (c1998 edition) by Terence Dickinson and "Splendours of the Universe," by Terence Dickinson and Jack Newton as well as the "Observer's Handbook,"

"SkyNews" (March/April 2008). I brought "Sky and Telescope" (February 2008) but did not refer to it.

The Cubs asked a lot of questions about astronomy and some seemed quite knowledgeable for their age. The Cub Scout Leader and I arranged to try for another star night on Tuesday, March 18, 6:30--8:00 p.m. on the football field behind Jean Vanier School (1019 Viscount Road, beside Saunders Secondary School and across from Westmount Mall.

I did not count the people present but the Cub Leader gave me a preliminary estimate before the event to expect 29 Cubs plus 4 Leaders.

### **1st Glencoe Scouts Star Night at Fingal, March 12, 2008**

Despite hazy clouds Dave McCarter, Peter Raine and I went out to Fingal Wildlife Management Area to put on a star night for the 1st Glencoe Scouts on Wednesday, March 12, 2008. The road to the pad had been ploughed out and the Conservation Authority even cleared a large area of the pad for the star night. There were about 17 Scouts and 10 adults, including leaders and parents.

The crescent Moon, two days prior to First Quarter, brightened as it got darker and the haze thinned somewhat. I observed the craters Theophilus, Cyrillus and Catharina near the terminator with my 20.3cm Dobsonian. I began with my 25mm eyepiece (49X) but switched to my 7mm Nagler for an exquisitely sharp view at 174.3X and a number of people admired the view through the telescope.

We also observed a small gibbous image of Mars and a fine view of Saturn, preceded by its moon Titan as it drifted across the field of view, at 174.3X. The Orion Nebula (M42) was a splendid sight at 174.3X and I managed to view the brilliant star Rigel with its companion as a tiny star at the 2:00 o'clock position--an observation confirmed by Peter Raine.

Dave McCarter showed people the stars through his 25.4cm Dobsonian and also identified objects in the sky with his laser pointer. Another member, Jeff, also showed up, as did one non-member, named Greg, with his 20.3cm Sky-Watcher Dobsonian.

It was a good star night despite the hazy clouds which moved in towards 9:00 p.m. Dave, Peter and I stopped at Tim Horton's in Lambeth on the way home. Many thanks go to the RASC London Centre members who came out to this star night.

## **Astronomy Night in Canada By Katrina Ince-Lum**

The 2008 General Assembly of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will be held in Toronto at York University, Keele Campus, from June 27 to July 1, 2008.

This years General Assembly (GA) will be co-hosted by the Hamilton, Mississauga and Toronto Centres along with the Department of Physics and Astronomy at York University. These Centres would like to invite members from across the country to join them for the GA, and to help them celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hamilton Centre, the 140th anniversary of the Toronto Centre and the

2nd anniversary of the Mississauga Centre. The GA will also serve as a launchpad and forum for the exciting events and programs that will highlight astronomy in Canada and around the world in 2009 during the International Year of Astronomy. The theme of this year's GA is "Astronomy Night in Canada" and the schedule will feature many entertaining mash-ups between hockey and astronomy!"

We are very fortunate to have an excellent line up for the GA. Speakers so far include:

-Dr. Phil Plait an internationally renowned astronomer, author, and lecturer. His numerous appearances on radio, television, podcasts, and in front of audiences have made him a

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Continued from page 7)*

celebrity in science circles, and put him in demand as an expert on astronomical matters. Dr. Plait will be giving the Helen Sawyer Hogg lecture this year, as well as talking to the Society about dealing with the public about the International Year of Astronomy.

-Dr. James Hesser Director of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, BC. His research applies ground and space-based facilities, like the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope and the Hubble Space Telescope, to questions concerning the history of how the Milky Way and other galaxies formed and have evolved, with particular emphasis on the oldest stars and on clusters of stars. He joins us at the 2008 General Assembly in his role as Canada's national representative for the International Year of Astronomy.

-Terence Dickinson editor of SkyNews since the magazine's first issue in 1995. He has been involved in astronomy full-time since 1967 as a writer, an editor, a teacher and a broadcaster and will celebrate his 50th anniversary as a member of the Society at the 2008 General Assembly.

-Scott Young the Society's National President. An accomplished science educator, Director of the Planetarium at the Manitoba Museum and speaker. Scott will be speaking at the closing banquet of the 2008 General Assembly setting forth his vision for the Society as we enter the International Year of Astronomy.

Friday is tour day at the GA. In the afternoon, we plan to visit MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. (MDA) Plan to arrive early for the General Assembly and get a firsthand look at Canada's role in space exploration. The creators of Canadarm I and II, components for the Mars Phoenix Lander and other space hardware, along with the Dextre Manipulator System launched aboard STS-123 and transferred to the International Space Station in March 2008. The Space Missions division of MDA hosts a special tour of their facilities for RASC delegates.

Later that day, will be the Toronto Telescope Tour. Transportation will be provided to dinner at a deli situated between two of Toronto's telescope stores, Efston Science and Kahnscope Centre. There will be time to eat (members

from Montreal can critique Toronto smoked meat sandwiches!), and shop.

These tours have limited capacity, so book early.

There will be two banquets during the GA. On Sunday June 29, the Hamilton Centre will be celebrating its centenary at the Ontario Science Centre, with an early arrival planned to view the exciting new exhibit "Facing Mars". On Monday, the Toronto Centre hosts the closing banquet following the Helen Sawyer Hogg lecture.

GA's are not usually renowned for the observing, especially in an urban environment. However, the Department of Physics and Astronomy's observatory will be accessible during the evenings at the GA, weather permitting. If on vacation, there is much to do in Toronto during the summer months for members and their families. There is a TTC (Toronto Transit Commission) bus stop within short walking distance of the Vanier residence building, which provides public transportation to Downsview subway station, and to downtown Toronto and all its attractions.

There will be many opportunities to talk about how to best celebrate the International Year of Astronomy in 2009, including a panel session on Saturday morning, lead by Dr. Hesser.

After the official ceremonies have ended, plan to stay in Toronto for an extra day or two and spend Canada Day at the Toronto Centre's E.C. Carr Astronomical Observatory (CAO), one of the best amateur observatories in Canada, located on the beautiful Niagara Escarpment overlooking Georgian Bay. Come and see it for yourself.

Mark your calendars and make your plans to attend, to renew friendships, and meet members from all Centres across the country.

Registration is now open and early bird registration ends April 30. Please visit [www.rasc.ca/ga2008](http://www.rasc.ca/ga2008) for more information, to register and to apply to present a paper session. Check back regularly for updates as more information becomes available.

**Come and join us for the opening face-off on 2008 June 28!**

---

### RASC London Annual Banquet 2008 Guest of Honour

Our Guest of Honour will be Glenn Hawley, a long-time member of the RASC Calgary Centre. Glenn is a Saskatchewan native who did a double major in Botany and Zoology at the University of Manitoba and then a Diploma of Education at the University of Calgary. For 16 years, Glenn worked for a French geophysics company and spent 18 months at their head office in Paris. Then he was a partner in a small geophysical company in Calgary and now he is semi-retired and drives a bus.



Glenn will tell us about his adventures in chasing solar eclipses. It was the 1979 eclipse that got Glenn excited about astronomy and he was on eclipse tours in 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2006, and 2008. Glenn's working on plans for the 2009 eclipse. He has twice been President of Calgary Centre, been a representative on National Council and attended all but one General Assembly since 1990. London Centre members may remember Glenn from the 2001 GA -- when he zoomed in from South Africa and wore a big hat.