Editor’s Message

Last night reminded me of all the reasons I am involved with amateur astronomy at all the various levels I am involved.

Life, light pollution, and tree growth have unfortunately curtailed a lot of my observing recently. I am in a part of the city that, in my immediate area, has had a lot of light pollution but over the past couple of years most of the offending lights have been changed over to much brighter LED’s. In the summer, the trees behind my house shield me from much of the direct light but in the late fall and winter they are all visible and seemed to be aimed directly at my yard. These same trees have grown so much over the last twenty years that now they frequently hide most of the alignment stars my mount is looking for. The view to the north is still fine. East is the trees, west, the house. To the south the trees have also been slowly closing that viewing window.

And then there is work and the kids.

Now I look forward to the star parties at the FLO to get me out observing and last night was an amazing night. The seeing and transparency were both excellent, one of the best nights in a long time according to the imagers present. I kept it simple, just my dob. I spent six wonderful hours tracking down some old friends and also finding some that had been evading me for a long time. It was quiet, peaceful, and very enjoyable. I even managed to complete several deep sky sketches. Every once in a while, one of the other observers would wonder by and we would chat for few minutes. Warm friendships on a cold night. I found I was enjoying the conversations almost as much as the constellations. Maybe COVID isolation is affecting me more than I realized.

I enjoyed tracking down some distant galaxies. I enjoyed the conversations. I enjoyed how everyone there last night was so willing to help the other with whatever issue presented itself or with simple suggestions to solve a problem.

A great night with some great people. What more could you want from a simple star party?

Clear skies.

Stay safe,

Gordon
Annual General Meeting and Elections

Notice is hereby given to all members of the RASC Ottawa Centre that the Annual Meeting will be held at 7:30pm on December 4, 2020. It will be conducted by video-conferencing using Zoom as part of the regular monthly Centre meeting. Registration to attend the meeting can be done using this link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ocLQ9yCtQcWGlxYYx3EaRw

The following business will be conducted:

1. consideration and approval of the agenda for the meeting;
2. consideration and approval of the minutes of the last annual meeting;
3. consideration and approval of the reports of the Council, the officers of the Centre, and the committees of the Council, and presentation and adoption of the financial statements;
4. presentation of awards;
5. election of Officers, Councillors, National Council Representatives and Centre Meeting Chair of the Centre;
6. election of the auditor of the Centre as prescribed in Article 11.01; and
7. other business.

Chris Teron, Secretary

Report of the Nominating Committee

Elections for various executive and council positions in the Ottawa Centre for 2021 will be held during the December 4, 2020 Annual General Meeting. The Nominating Committee, led by Past President Tim Cole and other members, has nominated the following slate of candidates (* indicates an incumbent):

- President: Stephen Nourse
- Vice-President: David Chisholm
- Secretary: Chris Teron*
- Treasurer: David Parfett
- Centre Meeting Chair: David Chisholm
- 3 Councillors: Carmen Rush*, Gerry Shewan*, Jim Sofia*
- 2 National Council Representatives: Paul Sadler, Open
- Past President: Mike Moghadam

Additional nominations will be accepted for any position. Nominees must be members in good standing. National Representatives must be at least 21 years of age. Nominations must be made in writing by at least two other members and received by Chris Teron (secretary@ottawa.rasc.ca) by 8:00pm on November 29, 2020.
Ottawa Skies
By Dave Chisholm

November 30th – Full Moon. This full moon was known by early Native American tribes as the Beaver Moon because this was the time of year to set the beaver traps before the swamps and rivers froze. It has also been known as the Frosty Moon and the Dark Moon.
The moon passes through the earth’s penumbra (lighter shadow).

The Northern Taurids is a long-running minor meteor shower producing only about 5-10 meteors per hour. This shower is, however, famous for producing a higher than normal percentage of bright fireballs. The Northern Taurids is produced by dust grains left behind by Asteroid 2004 TG10. The shower runs annually from October...
20 to December 10. It peaks this year on the night of the 11th and morning of the 12th. The thin crescent moon will not be much of a problem this year leaving dark skies for what could be a really good show. Best viewing will be just after midnight from a dark location far away from city lights. Meteors will radiate from the constellation Taurus, but can appear anywhere in the sky.

The Leonids is an average shower, producing up to 15 meteors per hour at its peak. This shower is unique in that it has a cyclonic peak about every 33 years where hundreds of meteors per hour can be seen. That last of these occurred in 2001. The Leonids is produced by dust grains left behind by comet Tempel-Tuttle, which was discovered in 1865. The shower runs annually from November 6-30. It peaks this year on the night of the 16th and morning of the 17th. The crescent moon will set early in the evening leaving dark skies for what should be an excellent show. Best viewing will be from a dark location after midnight. Meteors will radiate from the constellation Leo, but can appear anywhere in the sky.
Mercury

Rise/Set 05:34/16:18 -> 06:28/15:44
At greatest western elongation on November 10th
Look for the planet low in the eastern sky just after sunrise.
Venus
Visible before sunrise.
Rise/Set 03:41/15:36 -> 04:55/15:03

Mars
Visible in the evening and through the night.

Jupiter
Visible in the evening.
Visible in the evening.

Visible all night.
Rise/Set 16:43/06:40 -> 14:46/04:40

Visible all night.
Rise/Set 14:58/02:13 -> 13:03/00:18
Member Profile – Paul Sadler

A. Could you give our readers a little bit of info about your background? How did you get into amateur astronomy? What excited you about it?

I grew up in Peterborough, and my parents had a weekend trailer out at Chemong Lake. Some of my fondest memories are of being out there at night, looking up into the sky and seeing a GIANT sky full of stars from horizon to horizon. Like the typical images they show in movies where the whole sky is alive. I knew nothing about any of it. I didn't know you could see planets with the naked eye, I never noticed the glow of the Milky Way, I had no books or star charts or anyone to teach me, it was just part of nature. We would look for the Big and Little Dippers and that was about as far as we went. I was interested but had no idea how to advance that knowledge. It never even occurred to me that you could get books out of the library or at the bookstore that would tell you how to find things.

My parents bought me a telescope one year for Xmas, a typical story of departmental store quality, but even worse, it was handheld (like a sailor's design). I don't think I ever even thought to look at the Moon except when it was full (and thus flat looking when I wouldn't see any detail), and whenever I looked up at stars with it, I just saw the same things only in smaller swaths. I was pretty unsteady too, with no tripod to help stabilize things.

Overall, I just figured "real" astronomy was out of range of a backyard viewer. I considered taking a course in it at university but didn't have room in my schedule for something that I thought would be just all theoretical. I still didn't know anyone with an actual telescope. Eventually, I moved to Ottawa and met a friend at work. One day he was telling me about a presentation that was coming up at the local astronomy group on Cassini, and I tagged along.

I found a whole room full of people who were not only interested in astronomy and watching the big reveals by NASA, but who also had scopes they used in their backyard. And during the second half of the night, they showed some of their own images. This was around 2008, I think. And I was blown away. People could actually SEE STUFF from their backyard? With affordable telescopes? REALLY?

Fast-forward a year or two, and there was a conjunction happening. My friend took me out on a very cold night in April or so, tried to set up his scope with his counterbalances, and he was struggling to get it to all work properly. In the end, I don't even remember seeing the planets as anything more than round discs low in the sky. It was pretty disappointing to me, to be honest. But a few years later, my mother passed away and I inherited a small sum of money from the estate. I wanted to do something with it that would capture some of my memories of her and our time at the lake, and she always liked looking up at the sky. So, I set some of it aside and bought a high-end beginner scope.

My requirements were simple. No complicated setup, no counterbalances, something that was near grab-and-go with easy setup. It came down to either a Dobsonian or a SCT and I am a bit of a computer nerd, so the SCT won out for computers and size. I bought the 8SE, upgraded some of the accessories with a few high-end eye-pieces and I was committed.
B. What excites you still today? What aspects of the hobby have particularly held your interest? What kinds of observing do you do?

My first night of using my scope was up at my inlaws' cottage about 30 minutes from my parent's old camping area. It's on Balsam Lake, and pretty decent for dark skies. I probably couldn't have picked a better first night as the seeing was near perfect, and the air was perfectly calm. I set up near the lake and started following the instructions. For those of you who have used a GoTo scope, you know that you pick any bright star in the sky to start, followed by one or two others, and the computer will figure out the rest of the sky.

So I picked the brightest star I could see and started focusing. It took a few seconds for my brain to figure out that it wasn't a star but Saturn. I was using my 8SE with a 25mm plossl, no Barlow, which works out to about 81x magnification. Far from what any experienced astronomer would consider an ideal size. But for me? I thought I had struck gold.
I went running to the cottage to get people to come see, yelling "I found Saturn! I found Saturn!". If I was 12, it would have seemed natural, but no, I was a 45-year-old kid. I don't know why I rushed, it wasn't going anywhere, but I was so excited I felt that they had to come now, or it would be gone forever. I gave up on alignment and for almost 45 minutes we all took turns looking through the scope to see it. It finally occurred to me to increase my eyepiece power and I bumped up to a Delos 17.3mm. About 117x, and subsequently my favorite eyepiece of all my accessories by far. My brother-in-law said it best..."It doesn't even look real; it looks like you have a picture on the front of your scope." We could see the Cassini divisions; it was clearly Saturn. No doubt, we were all seeing another planet for the first time.

And that sense of wonder is what keeps me looking. Everything is new to me. I have few expectations. So, most of my observing is simple visual. I almost always start with the planets for the night, and if the moon is overwhelming, I'm even fine to just do a lunar observing night.
Photo by Paul Sadler - M 5
I've done the sun a few times, but it doesn't hold my interest for long. I'm open to doing some imaging, but I have no real desire to have a lot of equipment slowing down setup. If it takes much longer than 10 minutes to setup, I start to lose interest. Adding in laptops, more power, tables, it all starts to feel like I'm working, not having fun. And some nights, if I don't have time to plan an outing, I'll set up and let the computer take me on a star tour of whatever it thinks is at a good height for viewing.

C. What connections has the hobby made to the rest of your life?

People often don't believe me, but I am an introvert by nature. If I have a choice of going to a group event or reading a book, I would almost always choose a book. Yet some of my best memories of the last 7 years have been at star parties. I remember being at CASM on a cloudy night when over 1500 people showed up and were impressed with just seeing the moon. Another night, I was out at Carp and following along with another member with a Dobsonian as he gave a manual star tour to a couple after everyone had left. I got to compare the views in his scope to mine, and when I ran into a small alignment problem, he came over and helped me. No judgment of me or my scope, no question of not helping, he just came over, took a peek, helped me correct, and I was up and running again. The shared community of observers is pretty supportive. (Unless you forget to dim your headlights or cell phone!)

When I went to my first star party with my own scope and set it up to let people see through it, I felt a surprising rush. It was like a drug. I could SHOW them what I never saw as a kid, or even more generally, even as an adult. And the public viewers at star parties often have the same reaction I did when I saw Saturn. They can't believe what they can see, they can't believe you can do this with a small scope, they can't believe we're setting up for free and anyone can just come out and look. I found that I love sharing my scope with anyone who wants to look. Maybe being relatively anonymous in the dark makes that easier, I don't know. But my desire to share my passion overcomes my introversion.

Of all my experiences though at star parties, my favorite was a young family who came to Carp one night. The husband had brought his wife, two kids, and his mother to see the stars. He mentioned that they didn't have much money, so they were so impressed it was free. While the two kids and wife had the normal reaction to Saturn, it was his mother who made the night. She was in her late 50s, and when they suggested she look, she kind of nervously shuffled forward, laughing a bit. When she looked through the scope, it totally rocked her world. She suddenly grabbed her son's arm, she was shaking a bit, and she looked really hard into the scope, and in a very shocked voice, totally serious, she said, "I. See. Another. Planet." The same reaction I had when I saw Saturn for the first time. She stood up straight, adjusted her clothes, looked again, and grabbed his arm again, gripping really hard. And said the same thing again. "I. SEE. ANOTHER. PLANET."

While I was happy for her, I was talking to the husband and it was his reaction that stayed with me. He had given this experience to his kids and wife, just a casual outing, but it had totally blown his mother away. He was awestruck, not at Saturn, which he hadn't even VIEWED yet, but at the reaction of his family. I know that feeling, the one where you do something for your family and based on their reaction, you realized, "I nailed it!". I had the same experience showing Saturn to my family. Two years later, they came to Carp again, and this time his mom was practically elbowing the kids out of the way so she could look again. It was awesome. I feel honored to have been a small part of that family's experience. It was both humbling and rewarding. I mentioned in passing that I remembered him, and his mother's reaction to Saturn previously, and he said, "She didn't stop talking about it for months!".
D. What advice would you give to novice amateur astronomers?

My advice tends to be one positive thing to do and two cautions to avoid.

Astronomy can be a lonely hobby for some people. By default, you can often go out at night by yourself, set up in the dark, and stare at the sky. Instead, for a more positive experience, I feel that if you can find ways to share it with others, either through shared observing with other astronomers or with the public, it helps keep the spark of discovery alive. My son has a 4SE and set it up at a star party in Carp when he was 10 years old. He loved showing people various objects through his scope, a bit showing off I guess, and my wife was operating my 8SE scope on her own, having fun showing people the setting moon. Both were raw beginners, but they were having a blast.

For the cautions, I tend to start by telling people buying telescopes to be clear about what they want and how they intend to use it when they ask for advice. I find too many people are quick to offer advice on which scope to get based on their own preferences, not what the person actually wants or needs (Get a Dob! Buy binos! Get an EQ mount!). Equally, many people say they want to jump into full astrophotography when they have never even looked through a scope before. I prefer to tease out some of the context from people before advising them about which type of scope they might consider. Everyone's mileage will vary depending on how they drive.

In the same conversation, I don't think any one design is the best scope, they all have their pluses and minuses. A GoTo scope on an Alt-Az mount is the best configuration for me, and yet there are people out there who will clearly state their opinion that GoTo scopes are a complete waste of money, and should be considered toys. To be honest, most of them have not only never owned one, but many of them have also never even used one. They assume you don't need to know any stars, except you need them for alignment, or that you can't use them in manual mode if you want (you can). There are pros and cons of every scope.

For example, my son wanted a scope, and after trying a few out at star parties, he chose the 4SE. The Maksutov design is great on planets, easy to set up, and portable enough that he can move it easily himself. I walked him through the setup the first time, answered his questions of clarification the second time, and on the third outing, I was still unpacking my scope when he was asking, "Dad? What are the GPS coordinates for this location? I need to enter it before I start alignment." I think the 4SE, 5SE, and 6SE are fantastic starter scopes for anyone to find out if they like visual observing or if you are in light-polluted areas and don't have a lot of visible stars to navigate by for manual star hopping. But they are not great for imaging nor as cost-efficient as a Dobsonian for visual.

Finally, I advise new observers not to rush into star hopping to more complex objects, either manually or using computerized mounts. I recommend to new GoTo owners to not even do a computerized alignment for the first couple of nights but rather to just spend time looking at the moon, planets and any bright star they can find. Don't even worry about the names. Just have fun exploring the sky. The same feeling I had lying on a hill in a field when I was 12 and looking up at a huge sky. Let's see what's out there.
Editor’s Note

Paul forgot to mention that he has been a member since 2014. As the Star Party Coordinator from 2017 to 2020 he organized and ran our Public Star Parties at Carp. Paul is also a member of the Board of the AstroPontiac Initiative in Luskville. Last December Paul was awarded an Ottawa Centre Service Award for his contributions to our group over the past few years. And Paul has just been appointed to the position of National Rep for the Ottawa Centre

Monthly Challenge Objects

By Oscar Echeverri

Observing Challenge

Last Month

Beginner Challenge: M33
Intermediate Challenge: NGC7009
Advanced Challenge: IC1396
Solar System Challenge: Eye Of Mars
Deep Sky Challenge

Beginner Challenge
Messier 52

- Open cluster in Cassiopeia
- Also catalogued as NGC 7654
- 5.0 apparent magnitude
- 4600 ly away

Deep Sky Challenge

Intermediate Challenge
NGC7331

- Spiral galaxy in Pegasus
- Also catalogued as Caldwell 30
- 10.4th magnitude
- 10.5’ x 3.7’ apparent size
Deep Sky Challenge

Advanced Challenge
The Globular Clusters of Fornax Dwarf Galaxy

- The globular clusters orbiting the Fornax Dwarf Galaxy
- Catalogued as Fornax 1 through 6

Lunar Challenge
Crater Tycho

- Lunar impact crater
- Located in the Souther Lunar Highlands
- 85km wide
- 4.8km deep
FOR SALE

This enquiry was received a few days ago so I thought it would be worth running here.

Hello

I’m not currently a member of the RASC so I don’t know what kind of for-sale/wanted notices you have, but I recently dis-assembled a Dob I had built a couple of decades ago, and have an 8 inch f/6 mirror I no longer need. Would any of the Ottawa members be interested in this?

Andy Fraser
andyf01@sympatico.ca
Submitted Images

Mars Images by Taras Rabarskyi
The Elephant’s Trunk – Paul Klauninger
Hoodoos and Milky Way – Paul Klauninger

IC 1396 – Paul Klauninger
Estelle’s Pick of the Month

The Library is closed until our physical meetings resume.

Carp Star Parties

🌟 PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL PUBLIC STAR PARTIES ARE ON HOLD UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE DUE TO THE VIRUS THAT CAN’T BE NAMED!!!

Special thanks to Paul Sadler for all the splendid work he has done over the last few years to make our Public Star Parties such a resounding success.

FLO Star Party Dates for 2020

🌟 Our Ottawa Centre’s Members’ Star Parties at the FLO will continue this summer. If you haven’t attended before, be sure to mark at least one of these dates on your calendar. You are welcome to bring family members or a guest. The GO/NO GO call will be made on the Centre mailing list, about noon the day of the star party.

SUMMER & FALL DATES

🌟 July 18 – Waning Crescent, 27 days old – NO GO
🌟 August 22 – Waxing Crescent, 3 days, 19.7% illumination – NO GO
🌟 September 19 – Waxing Crescent, 2 days old, 9.1% illumination – NO GO (but Sunday night was fun)
🌟 October 17 – Waxing Crescent, 1 day old, 2% illumination – GO
🌟 November 14 – Waning Crescent, 29 days old, .01% illumination – GO
🌟 December 12 – Waning Crescent, 27 days old, 4.2% illumination

Next Meeting

7:30 PM Friday December 4, 2020 This will be A VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM. Watch for email updates. Note there will be no $4.00 parking fee. The meeting runs until 9:30 pm

PLEASE NOTE: This is the Annual General Meeting so it is important for you to attend.

PLUS: all our regular meeting features: Ottawa Skies, 10-minute Astronomy News Update, Observation Reports and, sadly, no Door Prizes!
All RASC monthly meetings are free and open to members and non-members alike. Refreshments will be available, and this will be a wonderful opportunity to meet new friends who share a common interest and chat in a relaxed, stimulating, and fun environment. Please join us!

Centre Information
To subscribe (or unsubscribe) to our members-only discussion list (rascottawa@googlegroups.com) please contact secretary@ottawa.rasc.ca.

The Ottawa Centre 2020 Council
President: Mike Moghadam (president@ottawa.rasc.ca)
Vice President: Stephen Nourse
Secretary: Chris Teron (secretary@ottawa.rasc.ca)
Treasurer: David Parfett (treasurer@ottawa.rasc.ca)
Centre Meeting Chair: Dave Chisholm (meetingchair@ottawa.rasc.ca)
Councilors: Carmen Rush, Gerry Shewan, Jim Sofia
National Council Representatives: Paul Sadler, OPEN
Past President: Tim Cole

2020 Appointed Positions
Membership: Art Fraser
Star Parties: OPEN
Fred Lossing Observatory: Rick Scholes (flo@ottawa.rasc.ca)
Light Pollution Abatement: OPEN
Public Outreach Coordinator: Jean-Sebastien (JS) Gaudet
Hospitality: Art & Anne Fraser
Stan Mott Astronomy Library: Estelle Rother
Ted Bean Telescope Library: Darren Weatherall
Webmaster: Mick Wilson (webmaster@ottawa.rasc.ca)
AstroNotes Editors: Gordon Webster & Douglas Fleming (astronotes@ottawa.rasc.ca)