

# Nova Notes

The Newsletter of the Halifax Centre  
of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada



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PO Box 31011, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3K 5T9 www.halifax.rasc.ca halifax@rasc.ca



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**Nova  
East** ★  
★ **2002** ★  
**See  
Page 8!**

## Astrophoto of the Month

*Sagittarius Milky Way —  
Darren Talbot*

Who says you have to go to Mauna Kea to get some great skies! Just look at the southern horizon as seen from our own St. Croix Observatory. Darren took this shot piggybacked on his 8inch SCT scope during the recent long run of good observing nights over the last 2-3 weeks. This image shows many dark nebulas, stars, and numerous naked-eye Messier objects. ★

# eyes Up!

*eyes Up!* is a forum for observing news from Centre members. This is where you can see what your fellow members have been looking at for the last two months and share your own latest discoveries.

News may include observing reports, observational project status, witnessed daytime or nighttime astronomical phenomena, new equipment reviews, or any other notes of observational interest.

## **Tom Meagher—The Night Sky Observers Guide**

As a condition of borrowing this book from the RASC library, *The Night Sky Observers Guide Volume One, Autumn and Winter* by Kepple and Sanner, I was to write a few observations and make some comments in paragraph form. I have established that the book falls into 3 basic divisions: 1) introduction, 2) 29 chapters on constellations from Andromeda to Triangulum, and 3) the appendices A, B, and C, bibliography and index of authors and contributors. The introduction discusses various aspects of astronomy; I noted areas of interest to myself, such as stellar magnitudes and luminosities, stellar spectra, evolution of star systems, supernovae, and globular clusters. The 29 chapters on constellations, make up the bulk of the book, and in so doing involve huge amounts of detail. For example, the main star chart on Orion is reinforced by various finder charts and other diagrams of deep sky objects. I would suggest complementing these with a star atlas. Appendices A and B do not offer as much detail as our "Observers Handbook". Appendix C has many black

and white photos of various contributing professionals and amateurs with their gear, some of which are similar to the equipment at the SCO. In summary, I feel that this book is very good and is a reference source that could be combined with the R.A.S.C. Observers Handbook and a good star atlas. Thank you for the opportunity to enjoy this book, and contribute this effort to *Nova Notes*.

## **Dave Chapman, Michael Boschat—Naked-Eye Sunspot Pictures**

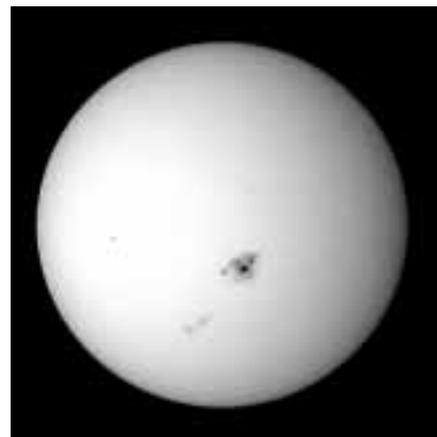
Both Dave and Michael submitted digital camera shots of the naked-eye sunspot currently visible (August 18). Both these were taken with digital cameras held directly over a low power, wide field of view eyepiece. Dave's is on top, Michael's is below.

## **Michael Boschat—Large Sunspot Group, July 31**

Michael also submitted this shot of a large sunspot group which was visible at the end of July. This was also using a digital camera held over the eyepiece, in this case a modified B&W Quickcam attached to a 10 cm f/10, 1000 mm focal length Maksutov telescope.

## **Paul Heath—SCO Diehards**

We met again beneath the stars (a few),  
Rolled off the roof to look anew,  
A fog rolled up to block the view,  
But wonder had it,  
The stars missed us too (a few).  
They came to play awhile about our  
heads,  
Blinking about, changing asterisms,  
Then we decided, TIM's instead.



## **Nova Notes**

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Halifax Centre of the RASC*

PO Box 31011  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3K 5T9

Articles on any aspect of Astronomy will be considered for publication.

Nova Notes is published bi-monthly in February, April, June, August, October and December. The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Halifax Centre.

"Letters to the Editor" or letters to our resident expert "Gazer" are also most welcome.

Contact the editor at the following:

Michael Gatto  
michael@allura.com  
453-5486 (Home) 482-1013 (Work)

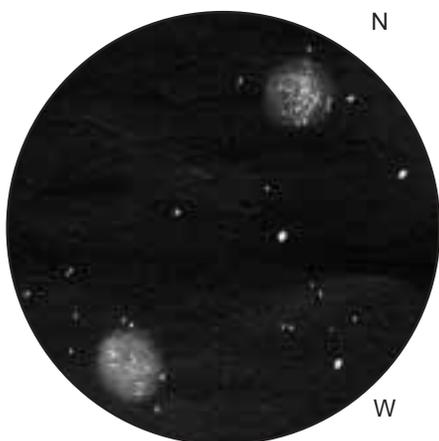
Nova Notes is also available as a PDF file on our centre's website at [www.halifax.rasc.ca](http://www.halifax.rasc.ca)

Material for the next issue should reach the editor by Sept. 27

**Michael Gatto—NGC 6939 & NGC 6946**

On my last two nights I was out observing, Keith Lowe showed me a very interesting set of objects, NGC 6939, an open cluster in Cepheus, and NGC 6946 a galaxy in Cygnus. (Both of these are listed in the Handbook as Finest NCG objects in Cepheus, but both the *Herald-Bobroff AstroAtlas* and the *Observing Handbook and Catalogue of Deep Sky Objects* list NGC 6946 as an object in Cygnus. Hmm... but I digress!) I went back and checked my observing logs and I had observed these objects last year. Here is the sketch I made and the notes.

Very nice field at 50X, both fit in the field. The cluster has a sharply defined straight line of stars running N-S, on the W edge. Resolves to sparkling points at 50X. At 100X the cluster is nice, the line of stars is prominent, and there is a small line of stars outside it on the W. The cluster spreads out to touch the 3 stars that surround it. The galaxy appears larger, very circular and not too faint, fairly easy to see. Almost appears as an open cluster at 50X. At 100X the galaxy has 6-7 stars superimposed over the face of the galaxy. There is a triangle of 3 bright stars on the W of the field. Very nice!



**Paul Heath—Perseid counts 8/13/02**

Well it was the fourth consecutive night of observing for me. Barry Burgess and myself arrived just before 11 P.M. to clear skies. Thin fingers of hazy cloud or fog moved in almost at once but a lot of the sky was left clear. Andrea Misner and Dave Chapman joined us shortly after. Limiting mag. in

the clear part of the sky varied from 5.6–5.8, after 2 A.M. it went to 5.9.

Wisps of cloud drifted over until about 1:30 then it began to clear and stayed clear the rest of the night. Comet Hoenig was clear just outside of Cepheus, it appeared about 9-10th Mag. Bright core with faint coma, no tail.

Hourly rates	Perseids	Erratic
23:00-00:00	14	1
00:00-01:00	18	4
01:00-02:00	21	2
02:00-03:00	35	1
03:00-04:00	31	2
04:00-05:00	31	2

About half of the meteors were 1st mag. but there were no fireballs seen. Counts the first 2 1/2 hours were reduced due to the thin strips of hazy clouds.

Overall it was a much better night for Perseids than last night was. I hope other observers found plenty of Perseids where they were too.

**Darren Talbot—Perseid Meteor**

This may not show up well here but this shot shows a Perseid meteor as it appears to streak out of M31, the Andromeda Galaxy. (Starts at left of streak.)



You may forward your submissions for eyesUp! to Observing Chair Dave Lane, or the Nova Notes Editor Michael Gatto by email, mail or phone:

Email dlane@ap.stmarys.ca  
 Phone 902.826.7956  
 or  
 Nova Notes Editor  
 Email michael@allura.com  
 Phone 902.453.5486

## Are You our next Webmaster?

We're putting out the call for someone to take over duties as the Halifax centre's new webmaster! The position would require a working knowledge of HTML, as well as a few hours a month to maintain and update the site. If you're really ambitious you can redesign the whole site if you like! The webmaster will have free reign over the look and feel of the site as well as updating/adding any or all sections as needed. If you feel like contributing to the centre in a productive way and web design is your thing, then this is a great opportunity!

For more info contact our present webmaster, Dave Lane, at 902-420- 5633 (W), or 902 499 6196 (H) or by e-mail: dlane@ap.stmarys.ca



Andrea Misner enjoying some solar observing at this years Nova East, see page 8–10 for more details.

# May Meeting Report

Keith Lowe

May's meeting was again held on the 2nd Friday of the month to avoid conflicting with Victoria Day weekend. There was another large crowd on hand and a jovial one at that. Everyone was a comedian, even the past presidents and their hecklers (which were usually other past presidents).

Our reigning president, Mary Lou Whitehorse, opened the meeting with the benefits of RASC membership. She then encouraged members to write articles for Nova Notes and maybe even win the annual Burke-Gaffney Award. Next Mary Lou launched The Great Cookie Debate: Do we keep the cookie break in the middle or do we move it to the end where it may encourage more post-meeting socializing? It was to be decided by a show of hands. It was intense but in the end, the keep-the-cookies-in-the-middle side carried the day.

Mary Lou briefly turned the floor over to Gary Weber who gave a briefing on the upcoming Nova East star party that will take place Aug 9-11 at Smiley's Provincial Park. He informed us that Bob Hawkes will be the main speaker and there will be participation by cubs and scouts this year. (More to follow). Gary was given the floor early so that he could attend another <ahem> meeting. They were close but Mars and Venus didn't quite meet that night.

Next on the agenda was tonight's main presentation – Observa-Stories. Pat d'Entremont, Craig Levine and Rollie Strand discussed how they started in astronomy with some of the things they learned with a few anecdotal stories thrown in. This was a fun session filled with interesting, informative and entertaining presentations. When Mary Lou was musing



This year's Public Observing event was held at Alderney Landing in Dartmouth on August 13, 2002. Here curious community members look over the Halifax skyline at the slim crescent moon. Photo-Craig Levine

## Public Observing

### Public Observing *Paul Gray*

The event was a great success! Must have been about 20–30 people per boat load that stopped by to see the views with every ferry unloading through the evening. As for my dob I did pull in M13 for some lucky folks who could see that it was all a ball of stars, it resolved somewhat. M57 (the Ring) was OK but too hard to view for the public due to stray light in the eyepiece. So stuck to a couple of the brighter double stars and the double-double in Lyra.

Clint was OK with the go-to finding M29 or M39 up in Cygnus I think it was. Hard to find most anything else though with the Dob. Just could not see enough finder stars.

But well worth doing again especially during a future summer when the planets are up. ★

### Public Observing Report

*Dave Chapman*

1. By telephone at 7 P.M., I agreed with Alderney Box Office (Jason Ross) to proceed as planned.

2. Arrived at 7:50: Paul Heath already there, Jason there, members of public already waiting for us!

3. In time, Clint Shannon, Keith Lowe, Craig Levine (sans telescope but with wife & dog), Paul Gray, and Steve Tancock and friend arrived and set up. We had 2 dobs, 2 refractors, 1 SCT, and a pair of binos. (Thanks to everyone!)

4. The transparency was awful, but we saw the Moon, Venus, some double stars, and some shallow sky objects. The skyline was good in the south and west. The lighting was OK. (Hey... whaddya expect for sidewalk astro?)

5. The publicity by Alderney Landing was effective: when I asked, it seemed that about half (maybe more) of the visitors had seen posters, read about the event in newspapers, or heard about it on the radio. We also picked up crowds of people going to and coming from Busker Fest by ferry.

6. The crowds were good, could not hazard a guess at numbers... a steady stream from 8 until 11, almost all of them community members (the odd NS tourist). They were enthusiastic, appreciative, and full of questions.

7. People actually travelled from Halifax to Dartmouth to attend this event!

8. Marble Arch caterers set up a table with free coffee and cinnamon rolls for everyone!

Dave ★

openly about the order of the presenters, Rollie drew a chuckle when she made it clear that she wasn't going to be first!

First up was Pat d'Entremont, who opened with a quick contest. He wanted to know who performed the song, "At Night the Stars put on a Show for Free". Some lucky contestant answered "James Taylor" and won a DDA shirt. After a few more questions and a few more marketing items Pat got down to non-business. He told us about some of his memorable astronomical moments. These included as a kid being very interested about the planets and Orion. He then raised a few eyebrows when he recounted an observation he made about seeing a star in the middle of a crescent moon about 20 years ago! It was due to atmospheric refraction. From there we found out about his first 60mm Sears 675X-Whooper-Dooper telescope. Most amazingly he managed to get views of the planets in it good enough to continue his interest in astronomy. Pat talked about his frequent encounters with the public while he had his telescope out in Flemming Park and possible future members from some of these encounters (of which I was the first). Pat then launched into one of the highlights of the evening, his audience-participation-grading-of-*The-Galaxy-Song*. He posted a sheet of facts stated in this song with blanks representing the answers and asked the audience to fill in all the values. The song was then played and its statements were graded. All in all, despite being over 20 years old, the song did a decent job of stating facts. One exception was understandable when it gave 100 billion as the numbers of stars in the Milky Way, which was the accepted number at the time. Perhaps the song's only outright mistake was stating the Universe is expanding at the speed of light.

Pat's presentation was entertaining so no one seemed to mind when he started delivering the 2nd presentation of the night too! Pat then talked about buying his first real telescope, his first

contacts with RASC and his first trips to the SCO. He then recounted a funny story about how after first joining RASC he wanted to lay low for a while. However, he went on vacation leaving his email auto-reply turned on. To make matters worse his email signature was comprised of 2 graphic files that appeared as 2 huge attachments for those not using a HTML compliant mail reader. Pat then briefly listed some of his favourite eyepiece views including Jupiter, Alberio, M13, M81/82 and  $\nu$ Hydrae. He wrapped things up by commenting on a few things he has learned at the RASC meetings so far. "We Each Have Our Own Rainbow" which led to his comical musings, "Do you see that rainbow?" "Well I don't see that one, but I see this one!"

Next up was Craig Levine. Craig walked us through a slide show on "The 10 Things I've Learned Since Diving Into This Hobby". Number 10(a) on the list was "To maintain matrimonial harmony, never look into premium eyepieces" or in short Nagler's = Divorce. This was followed by another slide. At first I didn't understand why Craig was showing us a picture of an archaeology dig with dozens of fine white stone monuments. Wait a minute; that's Craig's front yard! It was meant to highlight the need to compromise on your spouse's hobby if you do buy those premium eyepieces. Wow, send us an update shot when that's in full bloom. Next Craig presented some beautiful, wide, rich field shots of star clouds that demonstrated the importance of observing under dark skies. The next few were about not forgetting to observe with your naked eye or binoculars. Number 7 on the list was titled "Take a Deep Breath—Every problem has a solution". To demonstrate, Craig showed us some pictures of a light barrier he built to shield his deck from the neighbour's lights and followed this with a warning about leaving such contraptions unattended in the wind with your telescope nearby! Number 6 was a warning about wild animals, or was it a cheesy excuse for Craig to get his dogs on the big screen? He then explained that

the nasty wild animal on the right likes chewing on Telrad dew shields, a.k.a. dishrags, and related a moment of utter panic when the beast got a hold of the dew shield while it was attached to the telescope. Number 5 led into another of tonight's impromptu contests. Craig offered up one of those stock eyepieces that he no longer needs because of some new matrimony-straining-behemoths he now owns. This went to the first person to come up with a word that rhymed with "globular". It was awarded a few minutes later for the word "modular". The next slide listed a number of resources for getting questions about astronomy answered, which was followed by a slide titled "Size Does Matter!" Were those 36" Obsessions? Now there's an apt name. I'm not sure if this slide was a plea for help from Craig or not but if his ocular-ism carries over into aperture—we may have to consider deprogramming. Then like someone in denial Craig showed us a slide titled "The best telescope is the one that gets used". Number 2 was a shot of all the sky mapping charts and books Craig likes which highlighted the importance of planning an observing session. The number 1 thing Craig has learned about this hobby—it ain't a competition! Relax, enjoy and have fun.

Rollie Strand now realized she had run out of wiggle room and had to take the floor. This was fortunate for us because she related some delightful and humorous stories about her lifetime of budding astronomy interest. Rollie shared her first ever astronomical experience, which had happened while in a canoe with her Grandfather. Her Grandfather got her to look up and really see the night sky for the first time. She then told us about taking her 5-year-old brother out to see Sputnik and how this led to another having a lifetime of astronomy interest. She related some stories about sharing astronomy moments with her husband, much of which was aboard ships, including grabbing binoculars and heading up into the Crow's Nest. She shared a funny quip her husband once said while they were strolling one dark night –

"I'm going to have to hold your hand so you don't kill yourself while you're looking up at the sky". Rollie then told us about receiving a telescope in the mail 2 months after her husband had passed away, and what a surprise it was. Rollie ended her talk by relating 2 very funny stories about her first contacts with RASC. Writing about them could never do justice to the clever and humorous way Rollie told them, but here goes anyway. The first was about her being reluctant to call Dave Lane about seeing a brilliant fireball. This story was much like one Pat d'Entremont had related earlier. Rollie was hesitant to call because while she thought the fireball was spectacular but surely it would be commonplace for Dave Lane. Dave had to once again state, "I've never seen a fireball". Rollie's first thought was "what!" Rollie then recounted a story about coming to a RASC meeting when an ISS pass was due that evening. Around 8:30 P.M. or so, everyone went outside to observe the pass. While out there, Rollie thought to herself, "this stuff is old hat for these people so don't get excited when you see it". Then the ISS was spotted and Rollie was amazed to find many jumping up and down and yelling, "There it is!" Not so 'old hat' after all!

Ferengi Moment, cookie break.

Dave Lane, as presiding observing chair, gave the What's Up talk. The ongoing planetary conjunctions dominated the talk. Dave also informed us that we are missing the best conjunction tonight when Mars and Venus are within 1/3 of a degree of each other, though they will still be quite close the following night. A waxing crescent moon will form a nice triangle with Venus and Mars on the 14th. Dave then displayed the path of Ikeya-Zhang through Hercules in the upcoming week. We then got a rousing pronunciation lesson on the name of comet-hunter Yuji Hyakutake and were informed that Yuji Hyakutake had died recently.

Pat Kelly gave a very interesting and informative handbook talk based on

the Planets & Satellites section starting on page 168 in the Observer's Handbook. Pat started by explaining the Planetary Heliocentric Longitude table and pointed out the vast differences in the values between the inner and outer planets. He explained the Magnitudes of Naked-Eye Planets tables and differences in the magnitude curves and why Venus has that the odd dip in its curve. After that we got a Greek pronunciation lesson with special emphasis on nl-kE. Next Pat showed a slide displaying the range of distance-dependent apparent sizes for 7 of the planets. "Did you know that Uranus at it's biggest is equal to Mars at it's smallest?" Then Pat explained the diagram on page 171 of the Observer's Handbook and pointed out it can be used to predict conjunctions such as the ones we are having in April and May of this year. Pat finished by finagling Dave Tindall to do the next handbook talk.

In closing, Mary Lou informed us about next month's meeting and the return of "Who Wants to be a Gazer". And another rousing, fun-filled RASC meeting came to close. ★

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## June Meeting Report

*Paul Heath*

Our meeting was pounded to order by our President Mary Lou Whitehorne. She welcomed us to the Summer Solstice Meeting and asked if anyone had celebrated the event, say with an ocean swim (thought that was a New Years event??). After the membership spiel to the 30 in attendance, Mary Lou brought up Craig Levine to introduce the newest additions to our library.

*Deep Sky Wonders*, by Walter Scott Houston, *Messier Marathon Field Guide*, by Harvard Pennington, *The Night Sky Observers Guide Volumes 1 & 2*, by George Kepple & Glen Sanner

Craig asked that any member borrowing these books write a review for Nova Notes.

Mary Lou then introduced the Host of Who Wants to Be a Gazer, first VP Pat Kelly. Pat began by introducing our returning member Paul Gray. In order to see if he should be allowed to stay (in Canada) Paul completed a tongue in cheek Canadian Astro Quiz. After successfully completing the quiz, Paul was unofficially nominated as our next centre President.

Pat outlined the rules then rolled the dice for our First Contestant. He declined. Pat rolled again for our first contestant, he declined. Pat again rolled for our first contestant, past president David Tindall came forward. David correctly answered all ten questions, becoming the first contestant to do so. Although David used two lifelines and proved himself not to be a Trekie, he earned the RASC pin and attained the coveted Place Mat.

Pat rolled the dice for our Second Contestant, she declined. (A pattern seems to have been set). Pat again rolled the dice and young Justin Bishop came forward. Using all three lifelines, Justin got 6 questions before answering incorrectly, so he earned the RASC pin. Congrats Justin.

Contestant Three was new member Tom Meaghu. Tom used all three lifelines but correctly answered 7 questions before missing. Tom too earned the RASC pin.

Contestant Four was Andrea Misner. Through intense coaching and wide spread arm twisting, Andrea got 5 questions and earned the RASC pin. Another great Who Wants to Be a Gazer from Pat Kelly.

We adjourned for our break of high calorie treats and diet pop.

After the break, Pat d'Entremont did What's Up. Venus is still bright at evening twilight and Mercury is now an early morning sight near Aldeberan.

Summer triangle is now overhead. Pat and Dave Lane teamed up, with the aide of ECU, for a lively discussion on the cause of the Solstice, with Roy Bishop adding the 'low tech' support from the Handbook.

Dave Lane then made a brief talk on the RASC new observing program, Explore the Universe. There will be a prize draw for those that complete this observing program by next year. Dave also touched on the new Postal stamp that shows the St. Mary's Observatory on it.

Before David Tindall presented his handbook talk, Mary Lou outlined those doing presentations for our meetings in September (Paul Gray) and October (Mauna Kea team).

David's Handbook talk was on "Satellites of Planets", pg. 22-25. David reviewed the numbering order of the satellites and how the choice to number from the distance of the planet was made after 1851 and before 1948.

David Parsons then gave a brief update on Nova East, encouraging all to register early. All info has now been updated on the Centre's web page.

Dave Chapman then spoke about the nominating committee for elected officials. Nominations for all positions need to be in to the committee before October's meeting.

Clint Shannon then informed us of the upcoming maintenance work party for our ST. Croix Observatory site. The exact time in July will be posted on e-mail.

Sidewalk observing sessions at the waterfront will be held in July and August. Exact dates to be forwarded on the list server. Before closing, Mary Lou encouraged all to come out to Nova East in August.

Our next monthly meeting will be held on September 20, 2002. ★

## Trials and Tribulations of a RASC Placemat Owner

*Pat d'Entremont*

I must admit, placemat envy took hold of me in a bad way at the June meeting of the Halifax RASC. Winning one however, was out of the question. Not only did I not get the toss of the dice at Pat Kelly's Who Wants to be a Gazer, but even if I did, I would have gotten turfed out, on or near the RASC pin threshold.

Sure, I knew that the Dallas Stars was the NHL team named after an astronomy object, but then that's a hockey question. The real astronomy stuff was much harder. Me, I found it quite plausible that Antlia could mean 'antler'. Well, it looks like an antler; look at any star map and see for yourself.

Nope. Winning one of those beauties was not in the cards for me. In fact, being present for two successive Gazer sessions, the only person I saw who ever made it to the top was PhD-endowed David Tindall. Poor letters-after-my-name challenged me wouldn't stand a chance. (Not that I hold any grudge against Dr. Tindall, mind you. In fact you'll recall that I'm lobbying to have December – which isn't named after anyone – named after him, and to henceforth call the holiday season Tindalltime. But I digress.)

Anyway, if I ever got on the hotseat, we'd have to rename it to Who Wants to be a Geezer. So I took the easy way out. I bought the coveted mat from Steve Tancock. Five bucks, tax included, and no hotseat embarrassment.

Next morning at breakfast time, being the day after the summer solstice, I took out my placemat and proceeded to demonstrate my vast astronomy knowledge to my wife and daughter.

Or so I thought.

"This curved line here is the ecliptic", I authoritaded. "It is the path the sun follows and is high in the sky around summer solstice time. Let's see now... End of June... Curved Line..."

"Hmmm. According to this, it's at its lowest. What's going on here? Wait! I've got it! This chart is for midnight. Right. The ecliptic is at its highest during the summer at noontime. At midnight, the reverse is true." Good recovery.

At dinner time, I glanced at my placemat, and there next to my side plate was Orion. Whoa! What's going on now? It showed Rigel as a red giant and Betelgeuse as a hot blue star. Ooops! Heh heh! Upside down.

The next morning, I found not one but two naked eye star clusters in Coma Berenices. Upon closer inspection, I realized one of them was a butter/toast crumb smudge.

And on it went for a week. There was the "Peach Nebula" in Perseus, the "Salt Cluster" in Hercules. I was finding more imaginary stuff on this darned sky chart than Percival Lowell ever found on Mars and Venus. Not to mention that I kept having to slide my dishes back and forth all the time to make any use of it. Not so bad on solid food days, but hell with soup. Folks, I don't know who came up with the idea of an astronomy placemat, but I'm not so sure it was such a great idea. Poor little newbies like me get confused very easily.

Oh, what the hey, I shouldn't complain. Now that I remember to check that it's not upside down, it does provide me with a place to reinforce my knowledge of the constellations and the major sky objects. And I do make new discoveries at most sittings.

Like this one: Did you ever notice that almost all constellations, with lines drawn to connect the stars, look like antlers? ★

# Nova East – Random thoughts on another great event!

*Pictures from Dave Chapman & Bill Thurlow.*

## Stand Up and Take a Bow!

*by Mary Lou Whitehorne*

Nova East 2002 must be the most successful Nova East that we have ever had. Bringing the event back to Nova Scotia from Fundy National Park in New Brunswick was definitely the right thing to do. What a great time! With something like ninety people in attendance, plus kids, dogs and lots of telescopes, there was no shortage of fun. One of the best things about the entire star party was that, even with all the activities in the schedule, it was still a very relaxed and easy-going weekend. Many people contributed to the success of Nova East and I want to thank them for doing such a wonderful job of organizing and hosting this year's event.

The Heroes of the Moment are:

Gary Weber – organizer

Irene Moore – registrar

Dave Parsons – registrar

John Jarvo – door prizes and speaker (home observatory)

Norm Scrimger – park liaison

Pat Kelly – game show host

Paul Heath – kids activities

Dave Chapman – kids activities

Paul Grey – rocketeer

Dave Lane – speaker (Hawaii)

Steve Tancock – speaker - (17.5" dobsonian)

Sherman Williams – nature walk and obligatory crisis # 1 (car failure)

Michael Gatto – T-shirt designer extraordinaire / print materials

Craig Levine – comic relief

Clint Shannon – obligatory crisis # 2 (lost wallet & credit cards)

Everybody who shared their scopes with park visitors

The Campground Hosts (whose name I forget)

& THE WEATHER!!!

It takes a lot of people to put the party in the Star Party. Everyone at Nova East contributed to the event's success. Start planning now for next year which is sure to be at least as much fun as Nova East 2002. ★



## WOW!

*by Calum Ewing*

The Nova East 2002 star party was the first Nova East (and the first real star party) I have attended and I was blown away by how great an event it was. A big thank-you and congratulations to all the folks in RASC, MAG and NCAC who worked to pull this off. Unfortunately I did not find out who all the people were that were keeping things ticking



along, and that's a clear sign how well organized it was – it just rolled along smoothly with out any appearance of anyone pushing it along.

Thanks to Dave Lane, John Jarvo, Pat Kelly, Steve Tancock and Sherman Williams for the very interesting and entertaining talks and programs they provided. The participants make or break an event like this and Nova East is truly a great event. Everyone I talked to was more than friendly and eager to share their knowledge, ideas, scopes and time. The chance to try so many different sizes and types of scopes, eyepieces and finders was a great learning experience, too.

I will long remember the dozens of hoots and Wow!'s with each bright Perseid meteor and the sight of 100+ members of the public lined up at various scopes to view the wonders of the night sky was awesome. With the excitement with which dozens of kids greeted a well announced pass of the ISS directly over the park, you'd have thought it was going to touch down in the middle of the field!

I never did find out who on the organizing committee had to sell their souls to get two great night of clear (if a little dewey) dark skies, but thanks who ever it was. Well done and thank-you! ★

## Sharing the Views.

by Gary Weber

My favourite memory from Nova East 2002, is the two and a half hours I spent touring three young fellows through some of the evening's stellar highlights. Although Friday night was not "public" observing, shortly after dark three teenage boys appeared on the bench beside my 4 inch refractor. I was thinking that they will have a look at an object or two and move on, as I was not expecting their attention span to be very long. I asked what they wanted to see. One of the fellows said he wanted to see a "blue star". I put Alberio into the view and let each of them have a look. Comments like "Cooooool!" and "Wow" were heard from each one as they took in the view.

I continued the double star theme by moving to the double-double in Lyra with a short explanation of what we were seeing. First the single split, and then higher power to make the double split. Each of these young fellows was quite keen and seemed to be impressed and interested in the views. They were very well mannered, respectful of the equipment and asked interesting questions. I began to realize they weren't going anywhere soon, so introductions were made.

Over the next couple hours we shared views of a showpiece representing each type of object. The views were accompanied by a short discussion to provide some detail on just what they were observing. After the double double we continued on to M31, M81 & M82, M13, M57, the Veil Nebula (wide field with an OIII filter), M8 and finally the Double Cluster in Perseus. We compared a few views through an 8 inch SCT nearby. For many of the objects, each of the fellows would cycle by the eyepiece twice, being eager to soak up the views and look a little more intently as the explanations unfolded. We were having so much fun, I was disappointed when they said they had to go at about 1:00 A.M.

Saturday morning brought them back with the parents of one of boys. I learned that last year they had camped at Smiley's coincidental to the weekend of Nova East and had quite a good time at the public events. This year, they made a concerted effort to come back for the weekend of Nova East. While the boys were soaking up solar views, a few of us spoke with the parents about introductory books and the benefits of binoculars. A logical step given the level of interest displayed by the young fellows.

Saturday night, just like someone rang a bell, they again appeared at my scope just after dark. I explained that we nearly exhausted the impressive showpieces through a 4 inch telescope and I encouraged them to move down the field and have a look through some of the larger scopes. Off they went in search of brighter views. I hope someone had as much fun with them as I did the previous evening. ★

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## Dewed – Where's my Dark Nebula?

by Keith Lowe

Last night was a fine start to Nova East but wow was it dewy. How dewy was it? Any more so and we would have needed scuba gear. Kids were wearing life jackets. At least mosquitoes don't swim. The seeing was good though and the limiting magnitude was 6.2 - 6.5. Conditions were much better 40° and above so I postponed my plans to knock off some Dark Nebula in Ophiuchus.

A new park street light was not in direct sight but was hampering the Eastern horizon somewhat. This was exacerbated by the lingering smoke from camp fires. Nonetheless, Paul



Heath nabbed M74 in that haze. I saw it too but I wouldn't have described it as a grand-design spiral! There was much more vehicle traffic than last year too. Even more annoying was someone doing rounds with a Coleman lantern (or was that some kind of portable fusion reactor). I guess he preferred to see 20' really well rather than the entire park moderately well. I was wishing there were mosquitoes out for a swim!

Dave Lane's talk on the Mauna Key trip was very interesting and funny. If he was try to instill envy in us with that slide show, well it worked! To paraphrase one of his opening quotes, "Mauna Kea is the best place on Earth for astronomy, at least where you won't get killed". We were left with our curiosities piqued about a few upcoming articles about the science done on the trip.

It was fun seeing a kid recognizing the ISS for the first time last night. We, the entire park and a few neighboring villages got to share in that moment :-)

Several of us brought in Uranus and Neptune and there was talk of going after Pluto. I think Pluto will be on the agenda tonight—weather permitting.

My "view of the night" would have to go to Michael Gatto bringing in the Crescent Nebula with a little help from Craig Levine's OIII. My UHC does nothing for this object but the entire nebula was conspicuous with the OIII (now I know

who's filter I'm going to borrow when I attempt Thor's Helmet again—which is another Wolf-Rayet nebula). Seeing the Helix for the first time was also memorable but it was low in the "gunk".

There were quite a few bright meteors in the wee hours but the count was less than expected. Tonight/tomorrow morning should be much better if the clouds stay away. ★

## Best Moments

by Dave Chapman

For me, this was the best NE ever (no reflection on the accomplishments of previous years). After a momentary panic over lost car keys (they're in the door lock, stupid!) I settled down Friday night for an enjoyable weekend: the description of the secret observing trip to Hawaii, and the promise of mysterious results to be revealed in JRASC; using a borrowed hairdryer to de-dew fogged optics; observing in "OP" scopes (Other People's); seeing the Milky Way again; going to bed late; up with the Sun; the infamous Astronomer's Breakfast; meeting Herbert from Annapolis Royal; observing the Sun through Roy's bino viewer (better than twice as good... amazing detail and structure); observing the detached prominence in Clint's scope; the fabulous Nature walk with Sherman; a cooling dip in the Meander River (swimming upstream and staying in the same place... the hydrodynamic equivalent of a gymnasium treadmill); taking a nap; playing my guitar; workshops (idea for next year: "How to Choose an Astronomical Spouse"); door prizes (none for me!); a brief Who Wants to Be a Gazer; observing sans dew; falling asleep waiting for the sky to clear; waking up too late to see the new comet; trying to sleep while listening to the all-nighters rant and rave; the final morning; off we go... I want to do it all over again! Sign me up for next year! ★

## First Timer

by Paul Heath

This was the first Nova East that I have been able to attend. I found it to be a most rewarding, although tiring experience. Perhaps next year we can omit the cow "alarm clock"!

Friday night's observing was wet to say the least. Despite this I was able to find M74, M77 and Mira. Comet Hoenig showed a definite core and Comet C2002-O6 was bright in the morning sky. The views of Saturn through Steve Tancock's scope were amazing.

Saturday's solar observing was great. The views of the sun through the variety of scopes was enticing, but the solar prominences in Roy's scope were simply amazing. The daytime views of Venus, Jupiter and Aldebaran were nice but when Roy showed us how to see Venus naked eye, that was awesome!

Saturday evenings observing can only be called busy! There was a tremendous crowd for the public viewing. The ISS pass really got everyone pumped. I sent an e-mail to the ISS to thank them for their timely pass (*see below*). Although the clouds sent many to bed early, it led a few of us to an extended and eclectic conversation, until the stars and meteors returned at 2:30 A.M. There were many on hand to see us recover Comet C2002-O6 just below Saturn.

The talks both evenings were lively and informative. Saturdays youth program only drew 5 participants. Those there were enthusiastic. The sundial and toilet-paper-solar-system activities kept their attention until the sun sent them to the swimming hole where most of the other youth were.

I think the best part of Nova East was the enthusiasm and good will of the participants. It was great to finally put faces to e-mail names. I am looking forward to next year's Nova East. ★

Hello to the Mission Five Crew,

This is not a question, but a Thank You from the Members and Visitors of the 16th Annual Nova East Star Party at Smilies Provincial Park near St. Croix, Nova Scotia, Canada.

We would like to thank you for joining us at the beginning of our Public Viewing Session held on Saturday August 10th/2002. Your  $-0.7$  magnitude appearance at 21:47:37 Atlantic Daylight Savings Time, was eagerly awaited by the approximately 200 members and visitors of the Nova East Star Party.

Your bright appearance from the WNW was heralded by great excitement from those gathered. As you climbed above us to Alt. 77 / Az. SSW there were many comments on how easy you were to see, how fast you were traveling. Your sudden fading and disappearance into the earth's shadow at 21:52:18 at Alt. 27 / Az. SE was met with applause and wonder!

Over all the excitement of your visit to Nova East Star Party was a tremendous start to our Public Viewing Session. Those gathered to look through the many types and sizes of optical telescopes present were hyped and eagerly awaited the further wonders that they would see at Nova East.

On behalf of the sponsors of Nova East, the Halifax Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada / the Minus Astronomy Group / the Nova Central Astronomy Club and Smilies Provincial Park, I would like to thank you, sincerely, for the invigorating and timely visit to our 16th Annual Nova East Star Party.

With gratitude, Paul Heath

Member of Halifax Centre RASC, August 11/2002

# The St. Croix Observatory

Part of your membership in the Halifax RASC includes access to our observatory, located in the community of St. Croix, NS. The site has grown over the last few years to include a roll-off roof observatory with electrical outlets, a warm-room and washroom facilities. Enjoy dark pristine skies far away from city lights, and the company of like minded observers searching out those faint fuzzies in the night.

## Members' Night

Every weekend closest to the new Moon there is a Members' Night at St. Croix. The purpose of members' night is to attract members from the centre to share an evening of observing with other members. It's also a great night for beginners to try out different scopes and see the sky under dark conditions. For more information or transportation arrangements, please contact the Observing Chairman Dave Lane at 826-7956. *Dates for Members' Nights for the following few months are:*

**Fri. Sept 6th**  
*(rain date Sat. 7th)*

**Fri. Oct 4th**  
*(rain date Sat. 5th)*



## Directions from Halifax

*(from Bayers Road Shopping Centre)*

1. Take Hwy 102 (the Bi-Hi) to Exit 4 (Sackville).
2. Take Hwy 101 to Exit 4 (St. Croix).
3. At the end of the off ramp, turn left.
4. Drive about 1.5 km until you cross the St. Croix River Bridge. You'll see a power dam on your left.
5. Drive about 0.2 km past the bridge and take the first left (Salmon Hole Dam Road).
6. Drive about 1 km until the pavement ends.
7. Drive another 1 km on the dirt road to the site.
8. You will recognize the site by the 3 small white buildings on the left.

## Become a St. Croix Key Holder

For a modest key fee, members in good standing for more than a year who have been briefed on observatory can gain access to the St. Croix facility. For more information on becoming a key holder, contact the Observing Chairman Dave Lane at 826-7956.



*Here's Clint Shannon and Andrea Misner keeping the observatory looking ship-shape at a recent, well-attended work party. Photo by Craig Levine.*

## Adventures at the SCO.

By Midnight it was all clear with average transparency and seeing. Chalk one of for ClearSkyClock, though it was even better than what it was calling for.

I soon realized that, "hey, I have the 17.5 to myself!" I also soon realized that I can't find dog doo without a Telrad. I couldn't even find Vega or Lyra! I guess there are disadvantages to memorizing Telrad charts as opposed to star hopping patterns. Time to unpack my XT10.

Paul Evans was glad to be able to check out his new mono-pole / binocular set-up and judging by the objects that I heard him reeling in, I can attest that it must work very well. Gary had his Stellarview setup for some rich field viewing – 4.6° field of view. Early on, with an OIII filter in, Gary showed us the entire Veil Nebula in one view—very nice! Not long after we got to see the entire North American Nebula in one view—also very nice! I got a few Messier's done and then decided to go after my first targeted Dark Nebula. I was studying B86 earlier and thought that it would be an easy find next to NGC6520, and it was. The cluster and dark nebula were a nice, conspicuous pair in a rich star field. Seeing how easy that dark nebula was, I thought I would go after B72, The Snake Nebula, but struck out. On to M24 where I developed even more appreciation for this object(s) incredibly rich field. I was going back forth across the field in awe. I saw a somewhat faint fuzzy within it which I later identified to be open cluster NGC6603. I also observed 2 more dark nebulas which I wasn't counting on. They were Barnard92 and Barnard93.

After that I knew that M16 was the only Messier I had left to complete my list. I observed it several times last year but was not going to record it until I saw its nebulosity; though I don't believe that is a requirement for the Messier list. Hmm, like last year I cannot see its nebulosity, but I didn't have a UHC last year. With the UHC in, the nebula is more prominent than the cluster. There it was—my last Messier and a fine DSO to end on! – Keith Lowe

# Meeting Announcements

Halifax Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada



## September 20

Steve Tancock of Steve's Astroworks will inform and entertain with a short presentation on some of the rigs and jigs that he has built in the course of his work on a variety of different telescopes. When it comes to building and testing amateur scopes, there's always more than one way to skin the cat!

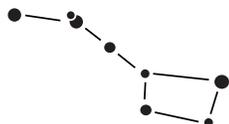
Paul Gray, now repatriated from the US, will present a video review of the events at Nova East 2002. His presentation is sure to bring back all the fun of the star party, so be prepared to laugh.

There will also be time for a few short "My Impressions of Nova East" comments from the membership, for anyone who wishes to share their experience with the rest of the Centre.

## October 18

Dr. Francis LeBlanc, President, Moncton Centre will be our guest speaker through the RASC Speaker Exchange Program.

The topic of Dr. LeBlanc's presentation has not yet been determined, but there will be opportunity to engage in discussion about the workings of Moncton's newly-formed Centre of the RASC.



Meetings begin at **8:00 P.M.**

*Members of the general public are welcome.*

All members—but especially new ones—are invited to come to the meetings 20 - 30 minutes early to participate in our new informal "Meet and Greet". It's a chance to ask questions about astronomy, the RASC, memberships, or to just say hello.

Room 176 Loyola Building  
Saint Mary's University *(See Map Below)*

*The Halifax RASC*

*Executive meetings*

*begin at 7:00 P.M.,*

*and members are*

*welcome to attend.*



### Halifax RASC Executive 2002

<i>Honorary President</i>	Dr. Roy Bishop	
<i>President</i>	Mary Lou Whitehorne	865-0235
<i>1st vice-president</i>	Pat Kelly	798-3329
<i>2nd vice-president</i>	Steve Tancock	465-4092
<i>Secretary</i>	Craig Levine	852-1245
<i>Treasurer</i>	Paul Evans	423-4746
<i>Nova Notes Editor</i>	Michael Gatto	453-5486
<i>National Representative</i>	David Lane	826-7956
<i>Librarian</i>	Dr. Michael Falk	422-5173
<i>Observing Chairman</i>	Dave Lane	826-7956
<i>Councilor</i>	Clint Shannon	889-2426
<i>Councilor</i>	Dave Chapman	463-9103
<i>Councilor</i>	John Jarvo	897-0529

### Meeting Location

Meetings are held every third Friday of the month, except for the months of July and August. Meetings take place in room 176, Loyola Building (#3 on map) at Saint Mary's University.

1. McNally
  2. Sobeys Building
  3. Loyola Academic Complex
  4. Loyola Residence
  5. Patrick Power Library
  6. Science Building
  7. Burke Building
  8. Bookstore
  9. Alumni Arena
  10. The Tower
  11. Rice Residence
- P = Parking

