

Nova Notes

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

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Partial Lunar Eclipse by David Koskin

FEATURING:

MAR / APR 2026

VOL 57 NO 2



AMATEUR ASTRONOMY MEETS RADIO - AMSAT 5

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Cover Images:

Main Image:

Partial Lunar Eclipse on 3 March
Canon T3i DSLR on a tripod: 1/15sec
sub at ISO-200, f/5.6, FL 220mm;
postprocessing with Photoshop
by **David Hoskin**

Thumbnail:

St. Croix Observatory
drawing by **Mary Lou Whitehorne**

Note: All photos and original works in this edition are the copyrighted property of the photographers, writers and artists. Permission to use any of their photos for other purposes must be obtained from the photographer.

From the Editor

I'm sitting on the doorsill of our patio under a blanket, a thick sweater and a warmed up Magic Bag.

The winter from Hades is determined to hang on and the temperatures are more January than March; but the celestial view is worth a little work to keep warm.



The constellations Canis Major and Orion are seen over a field in the Annapolis Valley in 2014. Photo by **John McPhee**

The beacon of cold nights, Sirius, shines due south at an angle of about 28 degrees. That's about the highest it ever gets in our northern skies.

It completely outshines the other stars in Canis Major, the Greater Dog. This constellation was identified as a celestial canine thousands of years ago by the Greeks and perhaps even farther back in Mesopotamia.

Besides Sirius, the "Greater Dog" includes Adhara, Wezen, Mirzam and at the tip of the cosmic puppy's tail, Aludra. I list the names because, well they're pretty cool names, but also because I had never taken the time to learn them. As the brightest star in both hemispheres, it's no surprise Sirius draws attention from its counterparts in Canis Major.

Above and to the right of the big dog, the constellation Orion, the Hunter, commands attention with his three-star belt and bright star Rigel marking his left foot. Unlike a lot of constellations, Canis Major and Orion don't require much of an imaginative leap to see the figures they're meant to represent.

The constellation above Orion, Auriga, is meant to be a charioteer. I see a poorly built house myself.

I've never had the urge to dig too far into astronomical mythology but years of observing have opened a window into the night sky that I can appreciate even with a brief session of doorsill

Continued on page 4

Upcoming Meeting Dates

May 9 (Note date change due to RASC GA)
Chris Gainor (Victoria Centre)
 How Engineers from Avro Canada
 helped put Astronauts on the Moon.

June 6 (tentative: Starfinder Program)

September 12

October 3

November 7- Finding Exoplanets (Blair MacDonald)

December 5 & AGM - John Badowski
 (the Fermi Paradox)

We are now hosting hybrid live/Zoom Members' Meetings. Halifax Centre meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month, except for July and August.

Come join us in-person in Room AT101 at Saint Mary's University or by pre-registering for the meeting on Zoom.

For information about the meeting and how to register for the Zoom session, please visit <https://halifax.rasc.ca/index.php/activities/rasc-events>

For past meeting replays, visit our YouTube Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/c/raschalifax>



St. Croix Observatory

Part of your membership in the RASC Halifax Centre includes access to our observatory, located in the community of St. Croix, NS. The site has expanded over the last few years and includes a roll-off roof observatory with electrical outlets, a warm-room, and toilet facilities. We welcome you to bring your own equipment or to use the Centre's 400-mm Dobsonian telescope, 100-mm binoculars, and the recently acquired SCT and gear for astro-imaging.

Enjoy dark pristine skies far away from city lights and the company of like-minded observers searching out those faint "fuzzies" in the night. Most clear Moon-free nights, you will find our keen observers out there! Announcements of members visiting SCO are made on the Centre's Discussion List. If you are not a key holder and would like to become one or need more information, please contact the SCO Manager, Tony McGrath, at scomanager@halifax.rasc.ca.

SCO is Open!

Go to our website (<https://halifax.rasc.ca>) for the latest SCO usage guidelines and conditions.



St. Croix Observatory
 drawing by Mary Lou Whitehorne

NOTE: As of Fall 2023, the building has lights again!
 (Thanks to Tony McGrath and Peter Hurley, the lights have been connected to 110v AC power.)

RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors, 2026

Elected	
President	Tony McGrath
Vice-President	Peter Hurley
Secretary	Judy Black
Treasurer	Gregg Dill
Director	Gerry Brosky
Director	Matthew Dyer
Director	David Hoskin
Director	Frank Logan
Director	David McMullin
Director	Vincent Vallee
Appointed	
Honorary President	Patrick Kelly
Auditor	David Chapman
Communications Committee, Chair	VACANT
Dark-Sky Preserve Committee, Co-Chair	Peter Hurley
Dark-Sky Preserve Committee, Co-Chair	Tony Schellinck
Education & Public Outreach (EPO) Chair	David Hoskin
Governance Committee, Chair	Judy Black
National Council Representative	Judy Black
Nominating Committee, Chair	VACANT
Nova Notes, Editor	Lisa Ann Fanning
Nova Notes, Copy Editor	John McPhee
Observing / EPO Chair	David Hoskin
St. Croix Observatory, Manager	Tony McGrath
Webmaster	Jerry Black

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2026!

Dark-Sky Weekend
 August 7-9, 2026

New Moon August 13, 2026

Nova East Star Party
 August 12-16, 2026



stargazing. Like other longtime members of our Centre, when I look up, I generally know what I'm looking at. The night sky remains a great joy, the stars familiar companions whether on a bitter night or a warm summer evening. (Yes I threw that in just to conjure the image of a warm summer evening.)

The RASC Halifax Centre has helped usher me and countless others into this level of celestial appreciation since the 1950s. The records of our centre's past make for fascinating reading. Michelle Lane has donated early 1960s issues of an early incarnation of *Nova Notes*, known then as *Galaxy*, which were owned by her husband David Lane. (See page 16)

The Centre continues to be at the forefront of public astronomical outreach in Nova Scotia with events such as Nova East and Dark-Sky Weekend in conjunction with Kejimikujik National Park.

Beyond that, the RASC Halifax Centre offers a slew of workshops, presentations and training programs to further its members' astronomical knowledge, as secretary Judy Black and president Tony McGrath's "news from the board" aptly illustrates on pages 16 and 18-19.

Astrophotography has evolved into an important facet of amateur astronomy, as evidenced by the amazing work of astrophotographers such as Blair MacDonald (see page 15.) I content myself with cellphone shots of Canis Major from my doorsill. But that's the beauty of our hobby. Even a quick look out the window on a cold winter night can yield a rewarding perspective on our fascinating universe.

- John McPhee

A Message from the President

As we move into spring, there's a sense of transition in the air — longer evenings, a hint of warmth returning and for many of us renewed opportunities to get outside and reconnect with the night sky. After a winter of dealing with an unusual amount of snow and ice, the arrival of spring feels especially welcome as we look forward to more moderate evenings and opportunities to observe the night sky.

Spring is also a good time to start looking ahead and planning your astronomy activities. At the Centre level, plans for upcoming SCO observing sessions, public outreach events and Nova East 2026 are taking shape. These activities are at the heart of what we do — not only enjoying astronomy ourselves but helping others discover it. For many people, their first look through a telescope is a memorable moment. Being part of that experience is not only a privilege, but great fun as well. I encourage all members, no matter what your level of experience, to think about participating. Over the past few months, we've seen strong participation at meetings and many interesting presentations. As we move into this season of renewal, I would like to encourage everyone to take part in some of the Centre's activities, such as our monthly meetings, SCO observing sessions and public outreach events. It is also a good time to think about attending Nova East. These are great opportunities that are open to all, so don't hesitate to invite a friend, family member or bring a guest. Finally, I'd like to thank all those who contribute behind the scenes — organizing, maintaining and managing. It is the efforts of these people that ensure that RASC Halifax Centre runs smoothly and remains welcoming and vibrant.

All the best,
Tony McGrath
President RASC Halifax Centre

Email the Centre Executive:
president@halifax.rasc.ca

***Nova Notes*: The Newsletter of the RASC Halifax Centre of the RASC PO Box 31011, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5T9**

Nova Notes is published five times a year, in February, April, June/July, September/October and December.

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the RASC Halifax Centre.

Articles on any aspect of astronomy and related activities will be considered for publication.

Amateur Astronomy Meets Radio - AMSAT

By Matt Paine

This is the time of year when change is upon us as the snow begins to melt, the Sun gets higher in the sky, and the winter night sky sets on the western horizon. This winter seemed different from past winters over the last decade or so being much colder and snowier. This is the first time in many winter seasons that snow is still covering the ground in early March.

Of course, as astronomers, we tend to love the long winter nights, gazing up at the winter sky for what seems like endless hours at a time. This winter though, those winter observing nights were colder than past winters, setting up an endurance to see how long one could last before the cold seeped in and it was time to pack up the astronomy gear to call it a night.

Amateur astronomers are a hardy bunch, but as I get older, I realize my time under the night winter sky gets shorter and shorter because I cannot endure the cold and wind as I once used to. But that has never stopped me or amateur astronomers from gazing up at the sky. Amateur astronomers simply adapt, find new parts of the hobby to learn and enjoy, or explore new night sky wonders from different parts of the world.

Now that I spend one to as many as three months a year during the winter months (December to March) in Florida with my senior parents, exploring parts of the southern night sky has given me renewed joy in winter observing. Albeit, observing the winter night sky in southwest Florida along the Gulf in shorts/T-shirt, surrounded by palm trees, seems a bit weird at times for this hardy New Englander. Plus, not having to deal with all of the associated problems that come with observing on those long cold winter nights (i.e. dead/frozen batteries, sticky mounts, and frozen coffee/hot coco), has given me renewed joy in winter observing again.

Now looking out my apartment window on this cold late March day, with the green grass slowly coming up and early buds on the trees, I am looking forward to the spring/summer night sky observing and Nova East in August.

Being a RASC Halifax member for 23 years, I recall this past winter being the least amount of time I have ever spent doing any type of winter observing. What winter observing I did do was rather simple, straightforward, and with the least amount of astronomy gear as possible. Usually, I only have my Takahashi Sky 90 refractor set up or use my trusty old Nikon 7x50 binoculars. Yes, one needs to always channel their inner Tony when observing the sky.

During one of my winter observing sessions just after Christmas Day in Florida, I started to wonder why my astronomy brain was confused at seeing constellations, galaxies, and stars in the night sky 20 degrees higher than my usual observing location south of Boston, Mass. I also noted seeing many more satellites in the night sky than I usually would at the time of night.

With Cape Canaveral located on the east coast of Florida, I can often see the winter launches of Musk's Starlink satellites into orbit from my winter observing location in Sarasota. This got me thinking about AMSAT.

You all are probably wondering what the heck is AMSAT? Numerous people today automatically think Starlink when you tell them or talk to them about radio satellites in space. Long before Starlink even existed there was AMSAT. Founded in 1969, the Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation is a non-profit organization based in Washington D.C. Founded to promote the design, building, and operating of amateur experimental satellites in space, AMSAT continues that mission 57 years later.

AMSAT is one of the oldest organizations promoting space and science education involving satellites. Numerous satellites launched by AMSAT and placed into orbit around the Earth, receive an OSCAR name designation. OSCAR is an acronym for Orbiting Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio. These AMSAT satellites are free to use by amateur radio operators on a variety of radio bands and modes. These include FM, Single-Side Band (SSB), Packet Radio, and Automatic Packet Reporting System (APRS) as well as digital modes.

Most AMSAT satellites are launched into low Earth orbit and today there are 18 active AMSAT OSCAR satellites in space. These AMSAT OSCAR satellites are launched into space by a collaboration among the builders of the satellites, various space agencies (NASA, CSA, ESA, Roscosmos), and commercial space contractors like Space X.

AMSAT OSCAR satellites have been primarily built by universities throughout the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Russia and Japan. Some satellites were even built by high school students.

I would encourage people to look at the AMSAT webpage (www.amsat.org) for a wealth of information on the organization, current projects, and the list of current operational satellites in orbit. This includes all of the radio frequency information on how to contact these orbiting OSCAR satellites, as well as telemetry data to see if the satellite will pass over your location on Earth. Also, the AMSAT website contains a current listing of ongoing projects and how to get involved with the organizati



(AMSAT, AMSAT Logo, March 2026, www.amsat.org)

So next time you are out observing the Moon, stars, galaxies, or planets and see a satellite pass overhead, just think for a moment that satellite may be an OSCAR AMSAT. You might be able to talk to that satellite and if successful, make a new friend with the person on the other end who receives your message. On this cold and windy day, I was not successful with my portable four-element Arrow Yagi antenna and Yaesu VX-7 handheld transceiver, but I will keep trying.



Matt Paine
RASC Halifax Centre
United States Amateur Radio Operator – W1/AXB

A Brief Comparison of the Seestar S30, S30Pro, S50, and Dwarf II Astro Images

Presentation by Jerry Black

Images by Jerry Black, David Hoskin, Peter Hurley and Bob Russell

During the April RASC Halifax Centre meeting, Jerry Black, David Hoskin, Peter Hurley and Bob Russell shared images comparing the performance of the Seestar and Dwarf II smart telescopes, discussing their ease of use, image processing in PixInsight, and their value for public outreach.

The presentation covers the ZWO Seestar S50 (250mm focal length), the smaller S30 (150mm focal length), and S30 Pro (160mm focal length), and the Dwarf II smart telescope (100mm focal length).

Jerry discussed the transition of these devices from Alt-Az to Equatorial (EQ) mode, noting that EQ mode significantly improves tracking and allows for longer exposures.

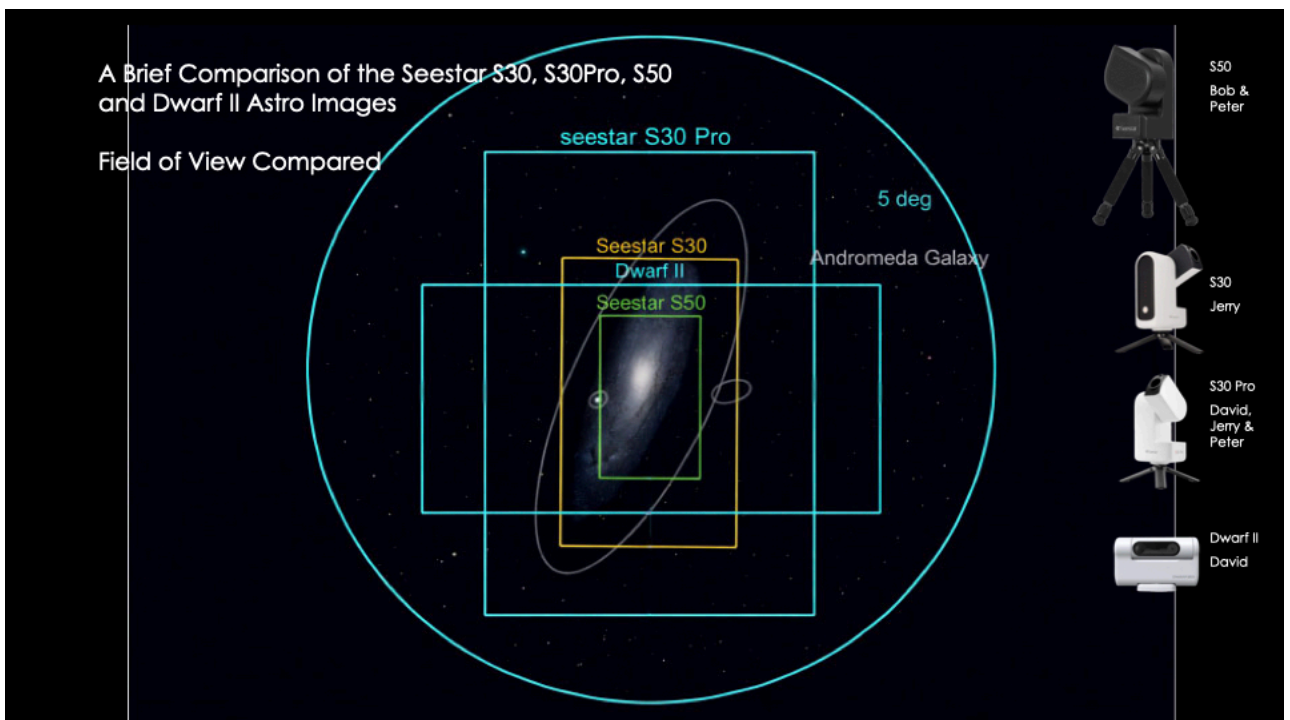
The impact of focal length and aperture on field of view and resolution was also discussed, as were processing techniques in PixInsight (using MAS and GHS stretches) and Stellar Studio to extract details from stacked images.

Common issues such as field rotation in Alt-Az mode, and the S50's tendency to reject frames due to mechanical tracking limitations were also noted.

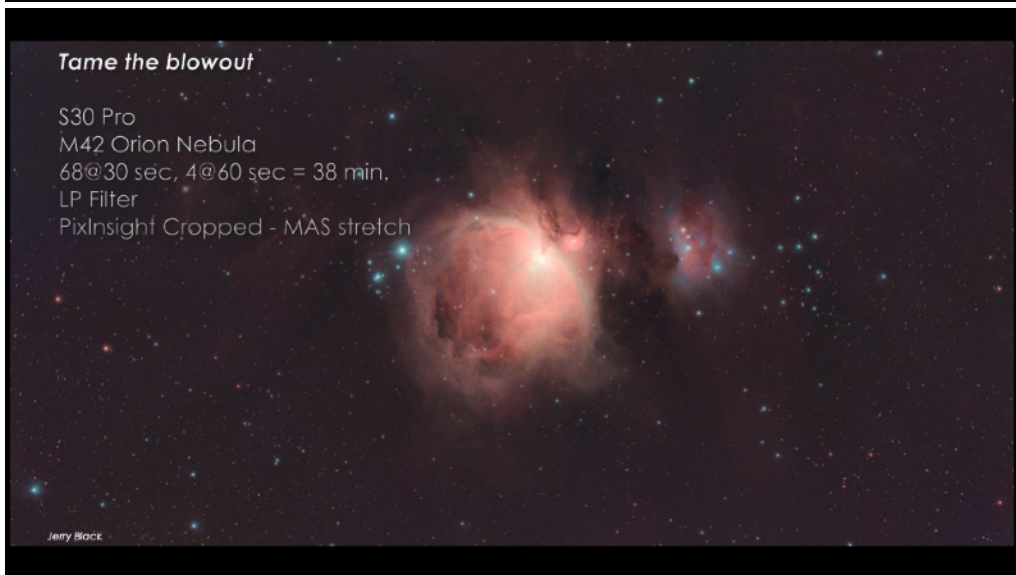
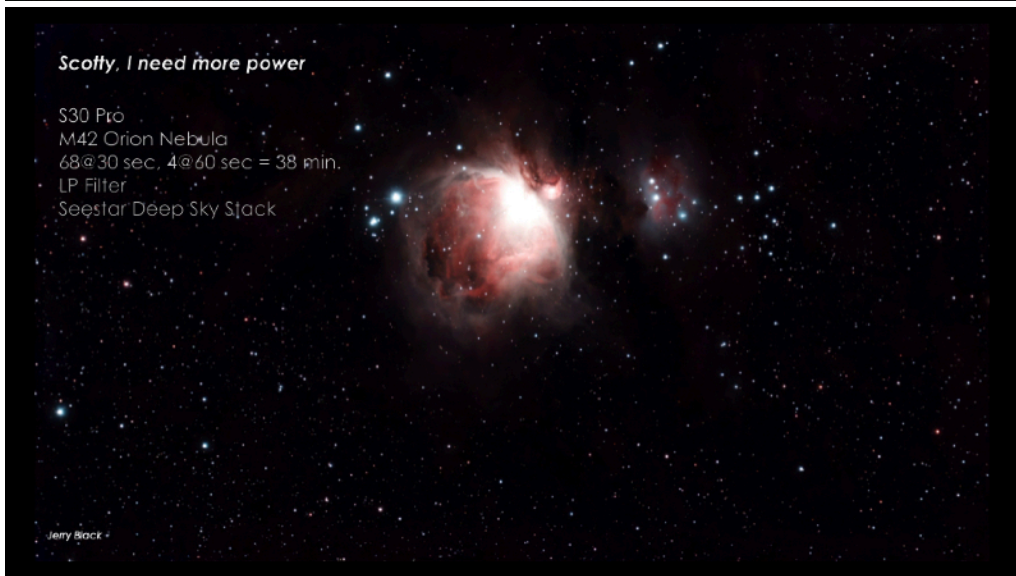
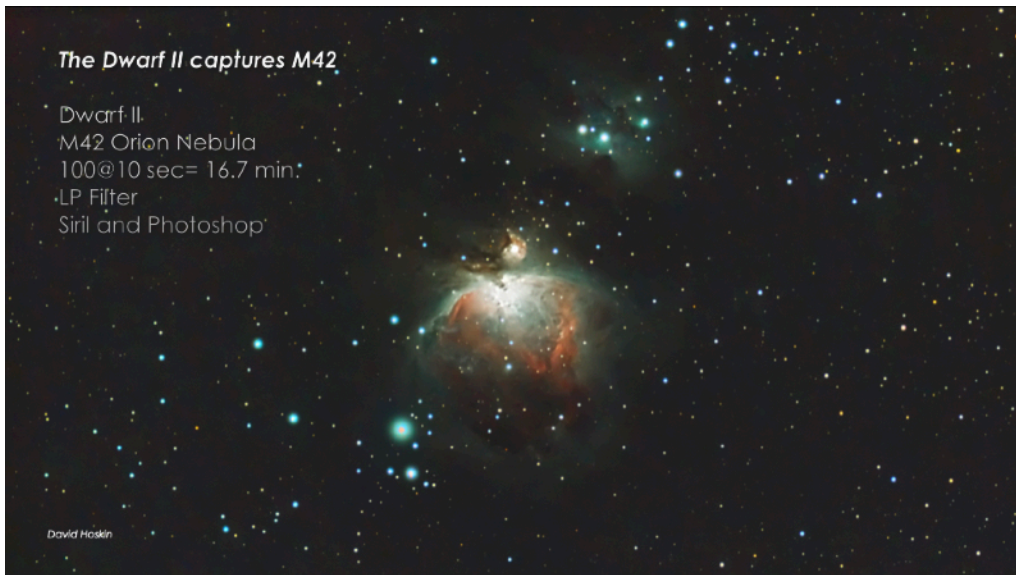
The primary benefit identified for these telescopes is their ability to bridge the gap between traditional eyepiece observation and high-end astrophotography, making them excellent tools for public outreach. Jerry noted that they allow multiple people to view the image as it develops on a screen, which is a major advantage over traditional telescopes.

The image below shows a comparison of the field of view of each of the smart scopes.

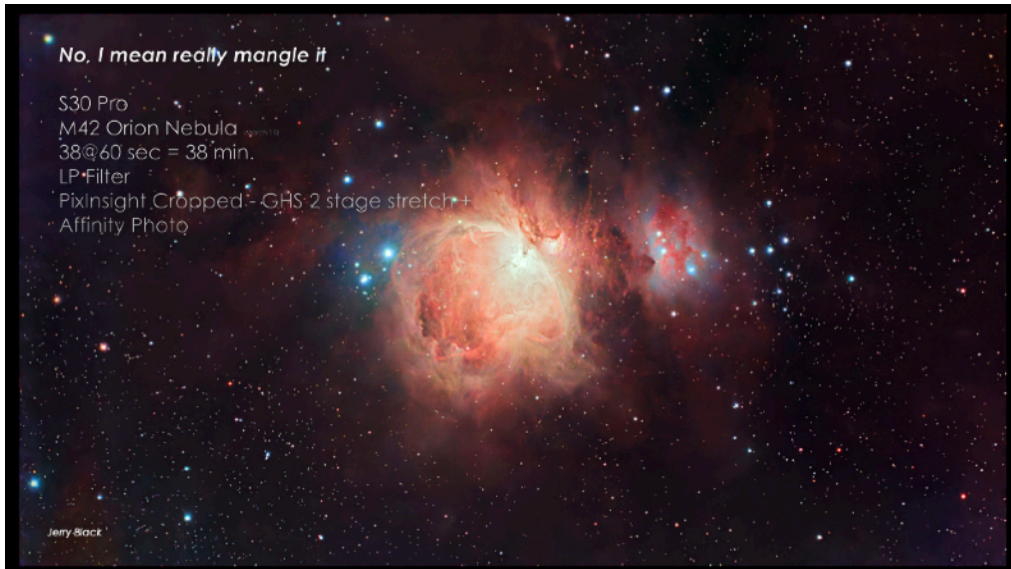
In the pages that follow, M42 is depicted, having used each of the scopes



A Brief Comparison of the Seestar S30, S30Pro, S50, and Dwarf II Astro Images (con't)



A Brief Comparison of the Seestar S30, S30Pro, S50, and Dwarf II Astro Images (con't)



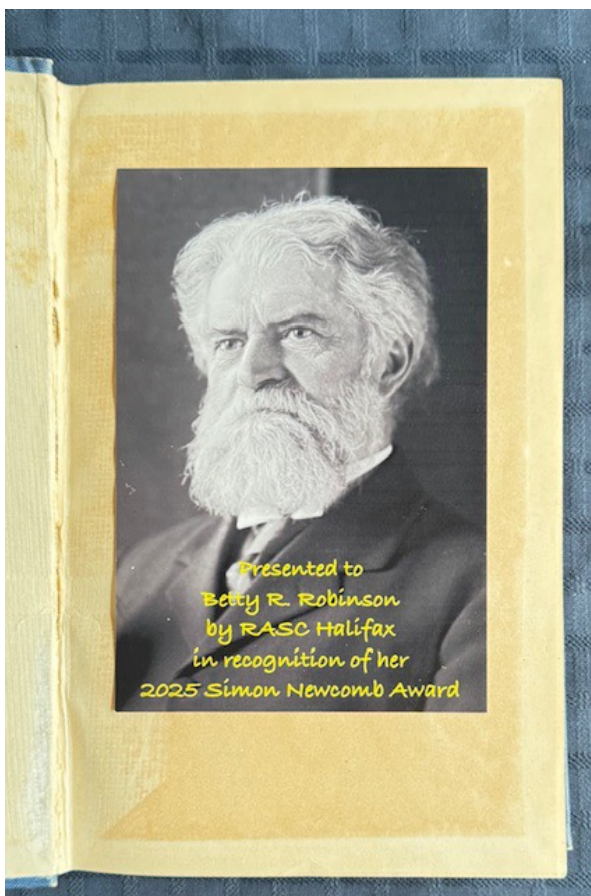
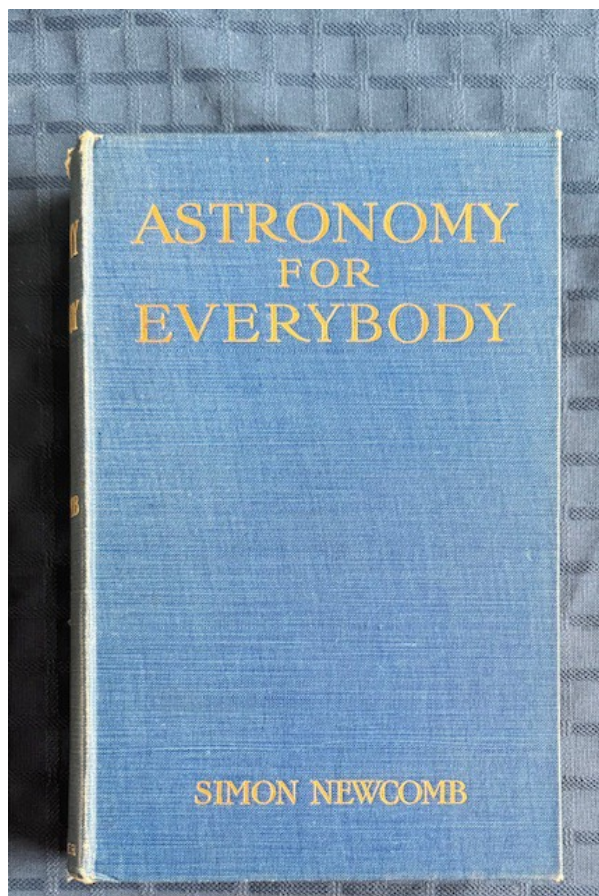
Halifax Centre Presents Simon Newcomb Award Winner, Betty J. Robinson with Gift

By Dave XVII Chapman

Simon Newcomb (1835–1909) was born in Nova Scotia, then moved to the USA, eventually becoming the Director of the US Naval Observatory in Washington DC. He wrote countless articles and books popularizing astronomy—you could say he was the Carl Sagan of his time. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Newcomb

In 1978, the RASC created the Simon Newcomb Award for popular astronomy publishing, with significant input from RASC Halifax Centre. It has been awarded to RASC Halifax members five times. <https://www.rasc.ca/simon-newcomb-award>

In addition, and quite unofficially (when we think of it) the RASC Halifax Centre presents a copy of one of Simon Newcomb's books (if we can find one). Recently we sent such a book to Betty J. Robinson of RASC Mississauga, in recognition of her 2025 SNA. <https://rasc.ca/sites/default/files/Betty%20Robinson%20Simon%20Newcomb%20award.pdf>



Judy Black (with permission) obtained the book from Roy Bishop's library and I took care of the rest. I posted it Tuesday and it arrived Friday! Naturally, Betty was surprised and delighted to receive this gift and expressed her deep gratitude to our Centre.

Members' Universe

Food for the Soul: The Poetry of Paul Heath

An Eye Alone

~ Paul Heath

I sat alone, my legs locked, steady,
It was quiet, only a low buzz and hum.
The gentle touch of wind upon the trees,
Once a peaceful sound, now isolating.
Without touch, the whirl swings my eye.
These staging swings, now only a brief glimpse
Of a gentle glow, now distant behind glass walls,
Once proof of peaceful unity, now isolation.

I am set rapid now, then left standing alone.
But I remember.
Remember,
When my feet were set with care,
When my eye was aligned, patiently, precisely,
When hands, with delicate touch tracked my eye,
When his warmth, in solitude was peace,
When darkness fell and he remained.

And then the wires came.

A gentle glow perfused the darkness
Quiet taps replaced delicate fingers touch,
Wires now my Eye controlled.
Then soft taps into distance faded, and wired clusters grew.

Darkness stretches longer now,
Isolation has claimed the peaceful solitude,
Wire bound distance controls my eye.
No warmth, gives peace to the stillness,
No touch to gently guide.

I still sweep the vast expanse, still track its measured shifting
Still gather its faint memory, but do not hold it close within,
And alone, I remember,
A delicate touch, a warm solitude.

Comet Hyakutake, Saint Croix Observatory

March 25, 1996

By David Chapman



Once or twice in a lifetime
A comet blazes in your sky
If you are lucky.
You don't see it coming
But suddenly it's there
If you care to look.
Others ply their earthly lives
Never looking up.
And then it's gone
As quickly as it came
Leaving only memories
Perhaps imperfect impressions
Altering you just a little.
Its passing is grieved, giving way
To anticipation of the next
If you are lucky.

Members' Universe: David Hoskin's Universe



Comet C/2025 R3
Seestar S30 Pro: 4min (24 x 10sec subs in Alt/Az mode); postprocessing with Seestar App. Photo by **David Hoskin**



Markarian's Chain
Touptek ATR2600C camera, Optolong L-Pro filter, Orion ED80T-CF triplet refractor, SkyWatcher EQ6R mount: 43 x 6min guided subs; postprocessing with Siril and Photoshop. Photo by **David Hoskin**



Messier 47
Seestar S30 Pro: 84 x 10sec subs in Alt/Az mod.; postprocessing with Seestar App. Photo by **David Hoskin**



Messier 106
Seestar S30 Pro: 124 x 30sec subs in EQ mode; postprocessing with Seestar App. Photo by **David Hoskin**

Members' Universe: David Hoskin's Universe



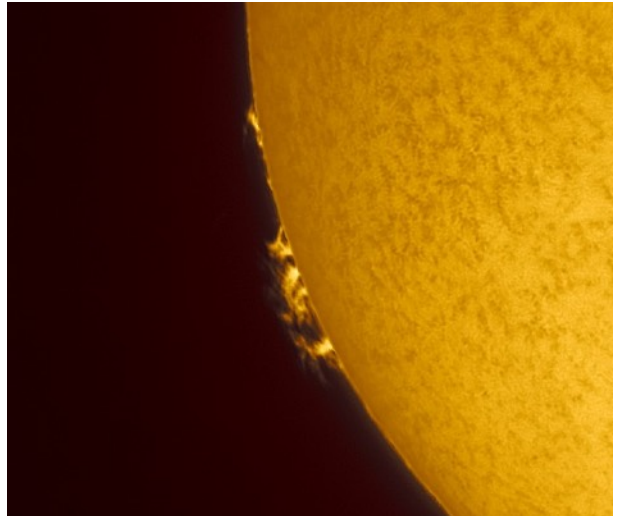
NGC 1545 and NGC 1528 (M&M Double Cluster)
Touptek ATR2600C camera, Optolong L-Pro filter,
Orion ED80T-CF triplet refractor, SkyWatcher EQ6R
mount: 24 x 4min guided subs; postprocessing with
Siril and Photoshop. Photo by **David Hoskin**



First Quarter Moon on March 25, 2026
Dwarf 2: 40 x 1/400sec at gain 0 in Alt/Az mode;
postprocessing with Stellar Studio and Photoshop.
Photo by **David Hoskin**



Sunspots on March 3, 2026
ZWO ASI533MC camera, Baader solar filter, Celestron
150mm f/5 reflector, SkyWatcher EQ6R mount: 120 x
4.88millisec at gain 110; postprocessing with Registax
and Photoshop. Photo by **David Hoskin**



Solar Prominence on April 28, 2026
Player One Apollo-Mini M camera, Lunt 40mm solar
telescope, SkyWatcher EQ6R mount: 100 x 6.06
millisec at gain 200; postprocessing with IMPPG and
Photoshop. Photo by **David Hoskin**

PUZZLE CORNER – COMETS

WORD SEARCH

By Lisa Ann Fanning

Solution will be in the next edition of *Nova Notes*.

L	F	D	O	-	H	J	D	G	L	-	N	P	L	H
O	N	H	G	J	A	N	-	B	J	D	E	E	O	Y
V	K	H	A	L	L	E	Y	L	G	O	O	R	E	A
E	Q	H	R	H	E	E	N	H	C	N	W	I	G	K
J	C	-	E	J	-	M	A	D	O	A	I	H	J	U
O	S	G	Q	B	B	K	I	P	B	T	S	E	B	T
Y	F	-	D	M	O	V	O	F	J	I	E	L	L	A
K	S	U	P	J	P	C	I	R	P	C	E	I	E	K
T	S	K	H	M	P	N	H	M	B	F	B	O	C	E
T	A	M	A	F	N	D	L	A	K	I	B	N	H	J
M	I	J	S	W	I	F	T	-	T	U	T	T	L	E
I	C	E	-	P	A	N	S	T	A	R	S	-	H	E
G	J	D	J	G	H	N	D	I	F	H	A	M	O	C
S	H	O	E	M	A	K	E	R	-	L	E	V	Y	E
Q	A	-	J	T	A	I	L	I	-	C	R	-	C	D

Answers to Last Edition's Puzzle

D	S	X	K	V	B	B	V	S	Y	Y	B	A	E	
W	B	S	P	I	C	A	X	V	N	A	R	'	K	Z
'	P	J	W	I	Z	P	U	E	X	B	T	D	S	A
X	*	I	L	'	E	S	U	R	U	T	C	R	A	R
O	M	D	U	E	'	U	N	N	A	T	A	X	*	D
N	S	X	Q	Z	O	E	X	A	V	H	N	D	J	Y
I	'	C	L	A	V	I	*	L	N	Y	C	W	L	H
U	P	J	X	I	L	U	G	A	H	V	E	I	A	I
Q	G	W	H	V	S	U	L	U	G	E	R	*	'	O
E	N	E	S	E	*	F	S	L	R	J	Y	S	S	F
Y	E	O	T	C	I	T	P	I	L	C	E	L	P	X
B	O	O	Q	'	T	O	E	M	Q	B	*	H	R	'
O	O	O	G	U	V	I	R	G	O	Y	C	X	I	C
B	S	I	W	K	E	W	I	K	U	'	S	R	N	R
T	Z	R	O	J	A	M	A	S	R	U	T	I	G	O

March 7, 2026 RASC Halifax Centre Meeting:

(42 attendees)

To watch a replay of the meeting, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKVN8U6EcgA> on the RASC Halifax YouTube Channel.

Welcome - David Hoskin

RASC Halifax Director, Observing / EPO Chair and program emcee David Hoskin welcomed everyone to the monthly meeting, shared the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement and read the Centre's inclusivity and diversity statement and reviewed the Agenda.

David Hoskin - Photo Montage

David presented photographs from Centre members Jerry Black, Gary Burgess, Paul Gray, Andrew Hassler, David Hoskin, Blair MacDonald, Fiona Morris, Norman Schneiderman, and Kathy Walker.

Special Guest - Blair MacDonald, Halifax Centre - *An Astrophotographer's Skies*

The meeting's main presentation was done by Halifax centre member and astrophotographer extraordinaire Blair MacDonald. It was the latest in a series of talks he's done this year on amateur astrophotography from the basics for beginners to technical seminars for more experienced photographers.

He began by explaining his astrophotography setup, which is built around a Skywatcher Esprit 120 from SkyWatcher, "an excellent telescope for imaging, if anyone ever gets the opportunity to pick one up."

He's moved on from DSLRs and now uses a ZWO ASI2600 colour astrophotography camera. "It all rides on a way-too-heavy Celestron CGX-L mount," Blair said.



Blair MacDonald presents *An Astrophotographer's Skies*.
Photo by David Chapman

"I say way too heavy because I have to carry it into St Croix (observatory). But it does have the advantage that when the wind's blowing at 10, 15, 20 kilometers an hour, I still keep imaging. " The final crucial component is a mini-PC computer that runs the whole system.

"It's quite convenient, especially at our cottage, because you can just remote desktop into that (computer), do everything from inside the cottage, avoiding all the mosquitoes."

Blair showed the meeting a series of photos that he's taken since last summer at his "Backyard Observatory" in Bedford and his cottage in Cape Breton.

Most featured deep sky targets such as the Double Cluster in Perseus, the M92 globular cluster in Hercules, the Crescent Nebula in Cygnus and the Fireworks galaxy on the border of the Cepheus and Cygnus.

He also showed a couple of wildfire-smoke enhanced sunsets taken with his DSLR.

Blair went into detail about the components and features of the deep sky objects in his photos and also showed the group HR (Hertzsprung-Russell) diagrams that he created using a tool in the Pixel Insight astrophoto processing software. An HR graph illustrates the individual properties of stars in a cluster such as apparent magnitude, radial velocity, main sequence age and surface temperature.

Paul Heath - Food for the Soul - *An Eye Alone*

Paul presented his latest poem, *An Eye Alone*, which can be read on page 11 of this edition of Nova Notes. The poem was inspired by objects in memory, such as cars, telescopes and buildings.

News from the Board presented by presented by Judy Black, Secretary of RASC Halifax Centre

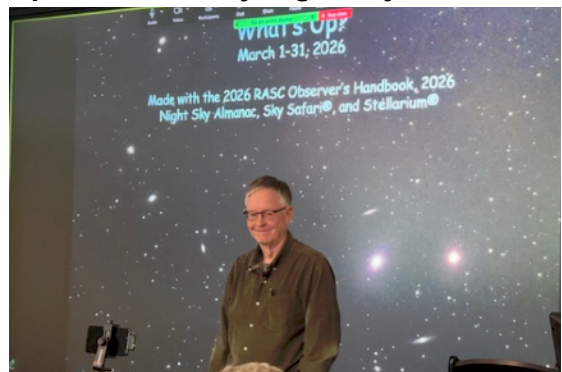
- The Centre's secretary Judy Black presented the news from the Halifax Centre's board of directors. She encouraged all centre members to help in any way they can to support the centre, whether through participating in public outreach events or projects such as the spring clean-up at Saint Croix observatory.
- Speaking of the observatory, Judy noted that \$20,170 has been raised toward the St. Croix Observatory Property Endowment fund in memory of David Lane. While the matching campaign is over, you can still contribute by emailing treasurer@halifax.rasc.ca or buying a photo print in the Astro-Imaging sale from contributors Blair MacDonald, Jerry Black and Jeremy Kuzub.
- Judy also encouraged members to read the centre's newsletter *Nova Notes* and gave a shout-out to editor Lisa Ann Fanning and copy editor John McPhee for their work on the bi-monthly publication.
- The stock of back issues of the centre's newsletter was recently boosted by a donation by Michelle Lane of Dave's old copies from the early 1960s when the publication was called *Galaxy*.
- Judy also reminded members of the centre's upcoming Dark-Sky Weekend at Kejimikujik National Park from Aug. 7 to Aug. 9, and Nova East at Smiley's Campground August 12 to 16.
- Judy outlined the many other programs and events underway or in the future include free training on the Stellarium astronomy software for all Halifax centre members,
- RASC awards, which recognize outstanding contributions by a member of a specific local centre and the national RASC astro-imaging and observing awards.
- The next members meeting will be held May 9, which will include a feature presentation by Chris Gainer from Victoria Centre on how engineers from Avro Canada are contributing toward the effort to put people on the Moon again.
- A schedule of all RASC activities is available on our website <https://halifax.rasc.ca>.

David Hoskin (EPO/Observing Chair) - What's up in the January Night Sky

David reviewed highlights of the March sky. He noted the longer hours of daylight especially after the coming of Daylight Savings Time on March 8. He advised members to confirm their go-to telescope settings have adjusted to DST. Some setups don't do this automatically.

He highlighted the Sun, the Moon, and targets needed to check off for Explore the Universe, and when they can be viewed. He also highlighted planetary positions, zodiacal light, constellations, stars (including double and multiple), and deep sky objects.

Each month, you can find David's presentations on the homepage at <https://halifax.rasc.ca>.



David Hoskin presents *What's up in the March Sky?*
Photo by David Chapman

April 11, 2026 RASC Halifax Centre Meeting:

(32 attendees)

To watch a replay of the meeting, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcgfnbjk7So&t=322s> on the RASC Halifax YouTube Channel.

Welcome - David Hoskin

RASC Halifax Director, Observing / EPO Chair and program emcee David Hoskin welcomed everyone to the monthly meeting, shared the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement and read the Centre's inclusivity and diversity statement and reviewed the Agenda.

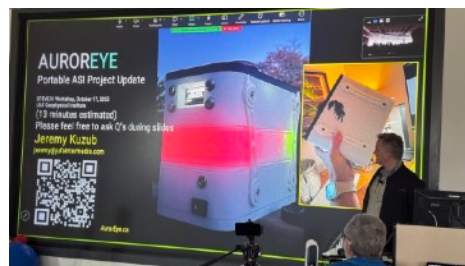
David Hoskin - Photo Montage

David presented photographs from Centre members Jerry Black, Michael Boschat, Barry Burgess, Jeff Donaldson, Lisa Ann Fanning, David Hoskin, Blair MacDonald, Chris Turner and Kathy Walker.

Member Presentations-

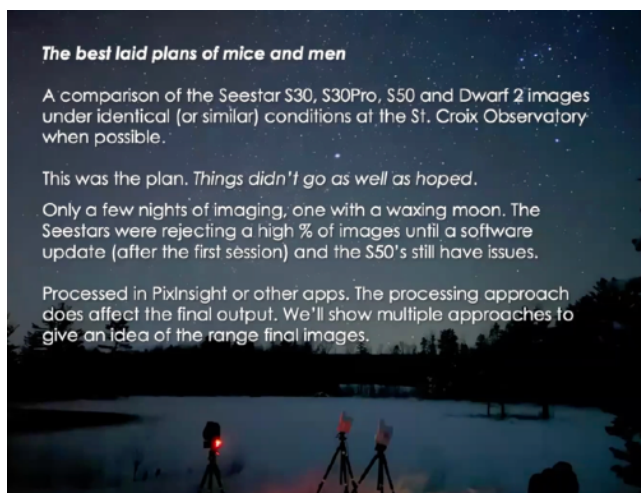
Jeremy Kuzub - Citizen Science Aurora Borealis

Jeremy presented AurorEye — a custom-built user-friendly camera unit adapted to capture the aurora and help aurora chasers get involved in science projects.



Member Jeremy Kuzub presents AurorEye
Photo by David Chapman

Jerry Black, David Hoskin, Peter Hurley and Bob Russell Comparison of Seestar and Dwarf II Astro Images



Jerry Black presented the group's images taken with "Smart Scopes" Seestar and Dwarf II and processed in different ways. The results are both intriguing and quite beautiful.

A more thorough review will be presented at Nova East 2026. (Including some of the other Features beyond Stargazing: Milky Way (Wide field), Solar system and Scenery modes.

Visit pages 7-9 for more information and a comparison of images of M42.

Tony McGrath presents Judy Black with the RASC Service Award

Judy Black was formally presented with the RASC Service Award given to a member honouring members in good standing who have rendered substantial, well-defined service to the Society or a Centre for an extended period of time.

Judy Black - Astronomy Humour, *Funny you should ask*

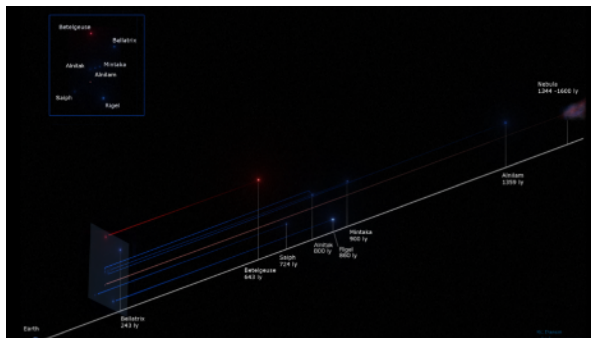
Judy Black has been collecting cartoons for years. She talked about the benefits and best practices of using humour when presenting. She also presented some delightful examples of humorous pieces.



Judy Black receives the RASC Service Award
Photo by David Chapman

Paul Heath - *Suns in the Room*

Paul presented his topic, *Suns in the Room*, which talked about presenting “perspective” in the classroom by using balloons to demonstrate relative sizes of stars aka Suns.



David Hoskin - Upcoming Outreach Opportunities

- Halifax Centre will have a table and display at the Discovery Centre on April 25, 2026. Weather permitting, there will be solar observing outside of the main door and telescopes on the boardwalk for evening viewing.
- A future “pop-up” is being planned at Harry DeWolf Park in May. Stay tuned for details.
- The centre received an email from Tom Calderwood affiliated with the American Association of Variable Star Observers Citizen Science project looking for participation - using photometers to measure changes in brightness in Alpha Cygni variable stars.
- If anyone is interested, please contact David Hoskin.

News from the Board presented by Tony McGrath, President of RASC Halifax Centre

- Some opportunities have come up for folks looking to get involved -
 - St Croix inventory report - someone is needed to summarize the inventory report data to be presented to the board.
 - Also, opportunities for shadowing various centre positions to see if you are interested in volunteering for specific positions.
- David Lane SCOPE fund is at \$25,170. The matching campaign has concluded, but donations are still being accepted.
- Astrophoto Sale in support of the SCOPE Fund - The RASC Halifax Centre has Astro Images for sale through Atlantic Photo Supply with shipping or pickup at Atlantic Photo in Burnside. 8x12" or 16x24" prints may be ordered. Images may be viewed and ordered through [this link](#).
- The January / February edition of *Nova Notes* is posted to the website. The current issue is full of information. Tony gave a shout-out to editor Lisa Ann Fanning and copy editor John McPhee for their work on the bi-monthly publication. The deadline for submissions for the March / April edition is April 18.
- Dark-Sky Weekend is coming up August 7-9, 2026 at Kejimikujik NP & National Historic Site. Note, camping bookings open February 11th. If you would like to volunteer, contact Peter Hurley, Vice-President.
- Nova East Star Party is August 12-16 at Smileys Provincial Park. Suggestions for sessions are welcome, please reach out to Judy Black, Secretary.
- Reminder: RASC Awards deadline for submission for 2027 is December 31, 2026. Visit <https://rasc.ca/rasc-awards> for more information.
- Don't forget to review the available Observing and Astroimaging certificate programs as well. Information for Observing Programs can be found at <https://rasc.ca/certificate-programs> Information on the Astroimaging Certificate, visit <https://rasc.ca/astro-imaging-certificate>.

- The next RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors meeting - May 2, 2026
- RASC National Council meeting - April 26, 2026
- The week of April 13-20 is International Dark Sky Week (April 17 is the New Moon, observing will be occurring at St. Croix Observatory.)
- Save the Date for the RASC General Assembly - May 2 - 3, 2026. It will be virtual once again.
- Canadian Space Agency manager of science, astronomy and planetary exploration missions, Pierre Langlois, will be addressing the Kitchener-Waterloo Centre which will take place on May 8 at 7:00 p.m. ET. Information will be on the list about how to participate.
- The next member and public meetings:
 - The May 2 Public meeting is rescheduled to May 9 (due to the RASC GA) Chris Gainor, speaker.
 - June 6 (Starfinder Program)
 - September 12
 - October 3
 - November 7 - Finding Exoplanets (Blair MacDonald)
 - December 5 (AGM)

David Hoskin (EPO/Observing Chair) - What's up in the April Night Sky

David reviewed highlights of the April sky.

He highlighted the Sun, solar activity, the Moon, and targets needed to check off for Explore the Universe, and when they can be viewed. He also highlighted planetary positions, constellations, stars (including double and multiple), meteor showers and deep sky objects.

Each month, you can find David's presentations on the homepage at <http://halifax.rasc.ca>.



Save the Dates!

Save the Dates: Observing at SCO

Members may be found observing at the [St. Croix Observatory](#) on almost every clear, dark night. Once a month, we encourage members and their guests to congregate at SCO, at which time new members are particularly welcome.

Members are advised to sign up to the [email discussion list](#) to keep up to date on gatherings of fellow observers.

The proposed dates for the Friday observing nights at SCO in 2026 are May 15, June 12, July 17, Aug. 14, Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 6 and Dec. 11.

Check the email discussion list or our website (halifax.rasc.ca) for changes in schedule.

<https://halifax.rasc.ca/index.php/observing/observe-with-us>



St. Croix Observatory drawing by Mary Lou Whitehorne