

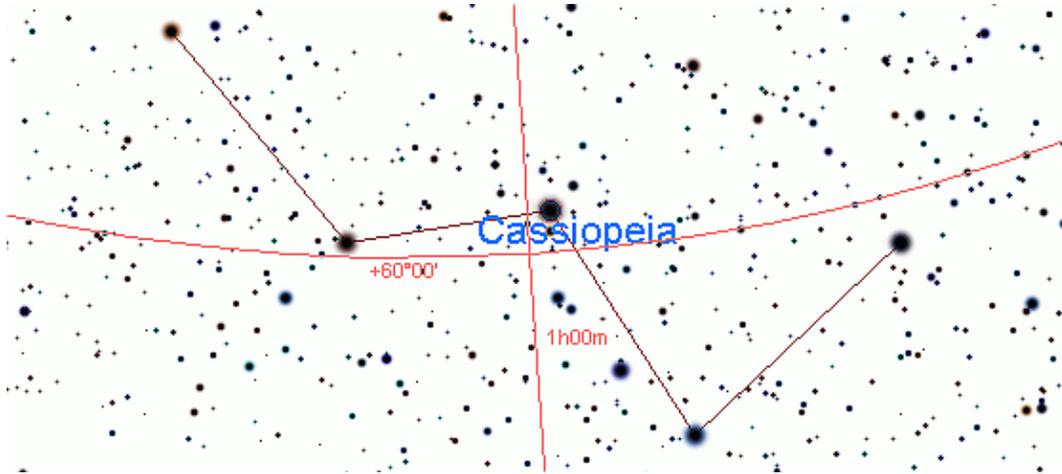
STARDUST

Newsletter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Edmonton Centre



January 2007

Volume 52 Issue 5



Queen Cassiopeia, mother of Andromeda, is high overhead in January. She boasted that her beauty and her daughter's rivalled the that of the nymphs. She paid for her arrogance: Poseidon flooded her homeland and Andromeda was to be sacrificed to a sea monster. Luckily, the hero Perseus happened to be passing by and saved her – in return for her hand in marriage.

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Centre Contact Information – *don't have too much faith in this list, there will soon be changes*
 If you do not want your email and/or phone listed here, please contact the editor.

Council Positions			
President	Orla Aaquist		
Past-president	David Cleary		
Vice-president	Krista Stefan		
Secretary	Luca Vanzella		
Treasurer	Cheryl Salava		
Co-Nat'l Council Rep	Bruce McCurdy		
Co-Nat'l Council Rep	Roy Ramdeen		
Councillor	Sharon Tansey		
Councillor	Alicja Borowski		
Councillor	Sheldon Helbert		
Councillor	Andrew Soon		
Councillor	VACANT		
Observing Group Chair	Larry Wood		
Stardust Editor	Michael Ward		
Portfolio Positions			
Archive Liaison	VACANT		
Astronomy Days Coordinator	VACANT		
Casino Manager	Franklin Loehde		
Equipment Director	Bob Jahrig		
George Moores Workshop Coord	Sherry Campbell		
Librarian	Shannon Austman		
Librarian (backup)	Vicki Huntsman		
Light Pollution Abatement Committee Chair	John Cliff		
Membership Secretary	Mark MacDonald		
New Member Advisor	Pat Abbott		
Outreach Coordinator	Dave Robinson		
Public Education Director	VACANT		
Public Relations/Promotion Officer	Shelly Sodergren		
Scope Rentals	Larry Wood		
Scope Rentals - backup	Roy Ramdeen		
Social Director	David Cleary		
Speaker Coordinator	Orla Aaquist		
Stardust Distribution	Mark MacDonald		
Web-site Administrator	Howard Gibbins		

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Stardust Articles to Stardust may be submitted by email to **mward@interbaun.com**. Submission deadline is the last day of the previous month (e.g. for the May issue submit by 30 Apr). Submit as MSOffice OR OpenOffice OR AbiWord OR plain text. Avoid use of fancy formatting, odd spacing, and strange fonts. Bold, italics, underline, and bullets are fine.

Upcoming Events, Meetings, Deadlines, Announcements

Regular Meetings – NOTE that dates are somewhat tentative at this point

Jan 8	7:30	Annual General Meeting + Regular Meeting	Jun 11	7:30
Feb 12	7:30		Sep 10	7:30
Mar 12	7:30		Oct 8	7:30
Apr 9	7:30		Nov 12	7:30
May 14	7:30		Dec 10	7:30

Council Meetings – NOTE that dates are somewhat tentative at this point and will depend upon where the meeting is held

Jan 30	7:30	EBA	Aug 27 or 28	7:30
Feb 26 or 27	7:30		Sep 24 or 25	7:30
Mar 26 or 27	7:30		Oct 29 or 30	7:30
Apr 30 or May 1	7:30		Nov 26 or 27	7:30
May 28 or 29	7:30			

Observing Schedule

TO BE ANNOUNCED

President's Report by *Orla Aaquist, for the last time*

By the time you read this, the Edmonton Centre will have a new Council, and I will be past president. The slate of prospective officers was posted in last month's issue of Stardust, and barring any surprise nominations from the floor (as far as I know, there has never been any in the history of the Centre), these are your new 'leaders' for the next year. On that list are 22 names. Two of the 22 have not served before on Council or in portfolio positions: Torri Massimo and Roxy Welter. Another seven on the list joined after January 2005, so have not been part of the main 'work force' of the Centre for a complete 2-year term. In particular, Roy Ramdeen joined Council in April of 2006, Andrew Soon and Sheldon Helbert became active on council one year ago, Michael Ward took over as Stardust editor in October of 2005, Cornelia Blunck became Deck Activities Coordinator on February of 2006, and Vicki Huntsman volunteered to be backup librarian last April. Hence, we have nine relatively new bodies holding front-line positions in our Centre's organizational structure. This means that over the last two years, 40% of the Centre's council and portfolio holders are 'new blood'. I am not sure how this compares to other two-year terms, but I am happy with this number. It means that new members are being recruited into the Centre's organizational structure, giving long-time volunteers a chance to 'retire'. I would like to see this same renewal rate continue because it is important for more members to become involved with the running of our Centre if we are to remain vital.

There is room for more of you to become active in the Centre's activities. If you look at the list of nominations posted in the December Stardust, you will see that there are some empty slots, and there are names that occupy two or more positions. For example, Torri appears under Membership Secretary and Stardust Distribution, Roy appears under National Representative and Scope Rentals, Bruce McCurdy is a Councillor at Large and Light Pollution Chair, and I (Orla) am Past President and Public Education Director. Since I have two roles on the 2007 council, both being voting positions, does this mean that I will have TWO votes? I THINK SO! This is a bit of a power coup for me, because as President I had no vote except in a tie situation, which never occurred during my term in office.

Over the last two years, a few members have retired or are retiring from primary roles within our Centre. Larry Wood is stepping down as Observing Group Chair and Scope Rentals, Shannon Austman is retiring as our Librarian and handing the 'books' over to Roxy, Sherry Campbell took a rest from Stardust Editor but is now returning (refreshed) as our new VP, Pat Abbott scaled back his Centre activity as Councillor at large last year but is staying on as New Members Advisor, Alicja Borowski and Sharon Tansey are taking a (short) rest from Council, Cheryl Walker (Salava) has handed over the reigns of Treasurer to Mark MacDonald and is 'temporarily' disappearing from active duty, John Cliff has handed over the Light Pollution Abatement Chair position to Bruce, Sherrilyn Jahrig has resigned for the second time from the Public Education Director position, and Richard Vanderberg retired permanently (or so he says) from Council at the start of 2006 after receiving the President's Award for Service to the Centre.

There are, of course, a small army of members NOT on the 'list of officers' who have volunteered their time during the last two years. It is difficult for me to acknowledge everyone because I have not been that good of a president and kept track of every name at every activity. Members that 'appeared to me in a dream' last night are Alister Ling, Murray Paulson, David Roles, Frank Florian, Roman Unyk, Warren Finlay, Dwight Hansen, Robert Rolf, Doug and Joan Hube, Wayne Malkin, Gerry Van Dyke, Arnold Rivera, David Prud'homme, Mike Noble, Donna-Lee May, Kevin McCurdy, Janet Couch, Harris Christian, Denis Boucher, ShirLee Adamson, Barry Arnold, Guy Almberg, Scott Henderson, Ed Newcombe, Terry Nonay, Mel Rankin, Owen Salava, Mark Zalick, Jnani Cavee, and now I see that I started an impossible task, and I am tired of naming names. I also realize that I do not know many of these folks as well as I should.

The outgoing council accomplished a great deal over its two-year term. (1) After considerable effort, we finally re-acquired our charitable status, a process started by the previous council headed by David Cleary. (2) Thanks to the Bylaws Committee (Krista Stefan, Richard Vanderberg, Cheryl Salava, and Franklin Loehde), the editing prowess of Luca Vanzella, and my ability to walk down

to Alberta Corporate Registry office, we now have a set of new and improved bylaws. (3) Due mainly to the effort of Dave Robinson and Roman Unyk, we have acquired a 10 year sublease for an observing site at Black Nugget Lake, where we will have heated washroom and storage facilities and possibly the home of the Black Nugget Lake Observatory. (4) The Light Pollution Committee, headed by John Cliff, hit pay dirt last spring when the Alberta Government, Alberta Parks and Parks Canada agreed to declare 300 square kilometres of land east of Edmonton as a Dark Sky Preserve. (5) Thanks to the fortitude and inspiration of Sherrilyn Jahrig and her cohorts, the Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve was inaugurated on September 3, 2006 in an inspiring declaration ceremony. In going over the past agendas, I note that the Centre has also done the following: reinstated our membership cards, elected Doug Hube as honorary president of the Centre, instigated an annual executive meeting between TWOSE and RASC Edmonton Centre, through the efforts of Warren Finlay we have a letter of agreement to use the Shaw Lake Day Use Area within Lakeland Provincial Park, we held another successful George Moores Astronomy Workshop last April (thanks Sherry et. al.), we ran a very successful Casino last May (thanks Franklin), and finally we are on the verge of formally re-establishing a formal Memorandum of Agreement between the Centre and the Edmonton Space & Science Foundation.

During the last two years, we have had some excellent guest speakers present at our regular meetings. Starting in February of 2005, Dr. Chris Herd from the University of Alberta spoke to us about Martian Geology, and the following month we heard about Neutron Stars from Dr. Vahid Reznia. In May, Dr. Adrian Liggins from the Edmonton Rocketry Society showed us how to get into space, and the year (2005) ended with Andrew Lowe talking to us about asteroids (October) and Dr. Robert Hilts giving a presentation of the Chemistry of Titan in December. During the first three months of 2006 we had three outstanding guest speakers in succession. Our National President, Peter Jedicke educated us about neutrinos and astronomy, Chris Gainor enlightened us on the Avro-Apollo Connection, and Jamil Ragep from the University of Oklahoma corrected us on many misconceptions that we have about Islamic Astronomy. Following five members' nights, Scott Young, our current National President, made a surprise visit in

December to give a talk on *Pluto Versus the Ice Dwarves: Conflict at the Ragged Edge of the Solar System*.

As I step down as president, I want to thank Council for being energetic, enthusiastic and reasonable in their dealings with matters brought before them, and I hope that Krista will be as lucky as I. As indicated above, the old council dealt with many significant issues, and they brought most of them to completion; however, there are still a few issues to be dealt with, and there are constantly new issues appearing above the horizon. (1) During my term as president, the notion of supporting a Youth Group was mentioned numerous times, but no one seems to be willing to take this in hand. (2) Establishing a lasting and useful observing site at Black Nugget Lake will likely become a major concern to Council once annual maintenance costs for snow clearing and power appear in our books. In order to spend Casino funds on this venture, Gaming approval of many aspects of our activities at this location must be obtained, particularly if we decide to build an observatory. (3) Our Dark Sky Preserve must be nurtured. Having had a 300 square kilometre area declared as a Dark Sky Preserve is a wonderful achievement, but this something about which only a few Edmontonians are concerned. Most residents want more light, not less; so we have simply started a 'war', but we have not won it. Already the Light Pollution Abatement committee is involved with TWOSE to set up responsible lighting surrounding the Coronation Park area, and we are involved with lighting in new developments east of Edmonton. (4) Our new bylaws are not perfect, and someone is bound to notice significant shortcomings, so we will need to monitor procedures and policies to see if they match our mandate. (5) Finally, as our Centre moves into the future, we need to react to the needs and desires of our membership. During my term as president, I think that Council placed a lot of emphasis on Centre business and little on the membership's wants, and some of this attitude was transferred to the regular meetings. I still think that it is necessary for Council to retain this focus; however, the regular meetings should be members' interest first (astronomy) and business last.

For the last day or so, while composing this last message to you, I have searched for some sort of wisdom, some clever words with which to end my term. I did not find any.

Edmonton Centre Awards for 2006

1. The President's Award for Service to the Centre

Cornelia Blunck has not been a member for as long as most recipients of this award, but she has done an incredible job volunteering at the observing deck. When we could find no one to take over the scheduling of volunteers, Cornelia stepped up to the task. Moreover, she always volunteers to help at Centre activities such as Astronomy Day, George Moores Astronomy Workshop, and the BHDSP declaration event. This year's President Award is accompanied by a special prize of a slightly used telescope donated to the centre by Hans Frueh who asked us to find the telescope a good home.

2. The Observer of the Year Award

Andrew Soon is relatively new to our Centre and has quickly gotten involved with centre activities by helping out at the observing deck, joining the OPC, and volunteering to sit on council. Since joining the Centre a few years ago, he has purchased himself a Meade RCX400 12 inch and started observing binary stars. He gave a presentation at the September 11th meeting

on observing binary stars and the techniques he uses to determine separation and position angle. His dedication to the task and amazing progress in such a short time makes him an ideal choice for the observer of the year award.

3. The Angus Smith Award for Excellence in Telescope Making and Design

Not awarded in 2006

4. The Bryce Heartwell Memorial Award for Astrophotographer of the Year

Wayne Malkin has produced some wonderful astrophotographs in the last two years. His presentation on astrophotography at the June 12 meeting of this year made him an obvious candidate for this award. If you are in doubt of his astrophotography skills, visit his website:

<http://www.pbase.com/wmalkin/profile>

5. The George Moores Memorial Award for Excellence in

Public Education

DSP Committee, led by **John Cliff**, was instrumental in creating the Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve and leading a public awareness campaign focused on light pollution. It was John's initial contact with Parks that started the ball rolling. The original committee includes **John Cliff, Sherrylin Jahrig, Bruce McCurdy, Warren Finlay, Scott Henderson, Orla Aaquist, Paul Campbell, Howard Gibbins, Dave Robinson, and Rick Huziak**.

6. The Franklin Loehde Award for Project of the Year

Sherrilyn Jahrig went above and beyond dedication to the Centre when she volunteered to organize the Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve declaration ceremony and celebration of September 3, 2006. This project followed very tight time constraints, and she overcame many obstacles dealing with government agencies. There is no question that she deserves this award and our deepest appreciation for a job well done.

Observer's Report by Larry Wood, for the first and last time this year

This past month produced evenings where the conditions were quite good so several members took advantage and headed out of the city to chase some faint fuzzies. I know Jnani Cevvel and Mike Noble were out on almost every good night, and I believe Warren Finlay was also able to get out. Jnani is working on the Herschel list while Mike has some good photos to show for his efforts. Massimo Torri, and Wayne Malkin also have some great photos to show, while Paul Cambell has some images of his solar observing that are interesting. To see these photos go to: <http://gallery.ed-astro-wiki.org/index.php>

I made it out to the dark site on two occasions. On Dec 19 Sharon Tansey joined me and we had decent conditions with a chance to view some nice objects. Some of them are:

- a. Comet Garradd (C/2006 L1) – a nice 1.5' diameter, diffuse glow, with a little brighter center.
 - b. NGC 1535 @ 360x -- a small bright PN with some nice ring structure and a hint of a central star.
 - c. NGC 1999 a reflective nebula @ 360x with a very interesting dark lane imposed on it.
 - d. IC 2149 @ 360x – a small p.br. PN with ring structure.
- Also viewed Comet Faye

Then I was out again on Dec 21 along with Ross Sinclair and his family, Dave Boyd and Jnani. We were looking at NGC 1999 again, only this time in Jnani's 20" scope @ 400x – a great view that showed the dark lane as a clover leaf surrounded by nebulosity (all be it very faint on the outside edge).

Both of these nights were enjoyable outings. The Space Shuttle was up during this period and I was fortunate to be able to see it on three occasions as it preceded the ISS in its orbit around the Earth.

Observing opportunities for this month. All times are MST

On the morning of Jan 15 at 7:58 a.m. the Moon will occult the mag 2.8 star tau Scorpii. The disappearance will occur against

the bright limb of a 26 day old Moon. Unfortunately the Sun will rise before the re-appearance of the star.

On Feb 3 at 7:32 the Full Moon will occult the bright star Regulus (alpha Leonis). You will need a good western viewpoint to see this event as it ends with the pair only 5° above the horizon. On the evening preceding this event the Moon will be close to Saturn. As we get further into the New Year, Venus will begin to dominate the evening sky as it rises out of the Sun's glow.

On Feb 7 at 2:58 a.m. the Moon will occult the mag 4.8 star psi Virginis

The beginning of February will see Mercury and Venus visible in the west in the early evening. Mercury will be at greatest eastern elongation on Feb 7 so will be visible low in the WSW sky (7° below and to the right of Venus), just after sunset.

Saturn is nearing solar opposition so it will be visible all night for the next couple of months.

There are two lunar occultations this month that are well placed for Edmonton. They are:

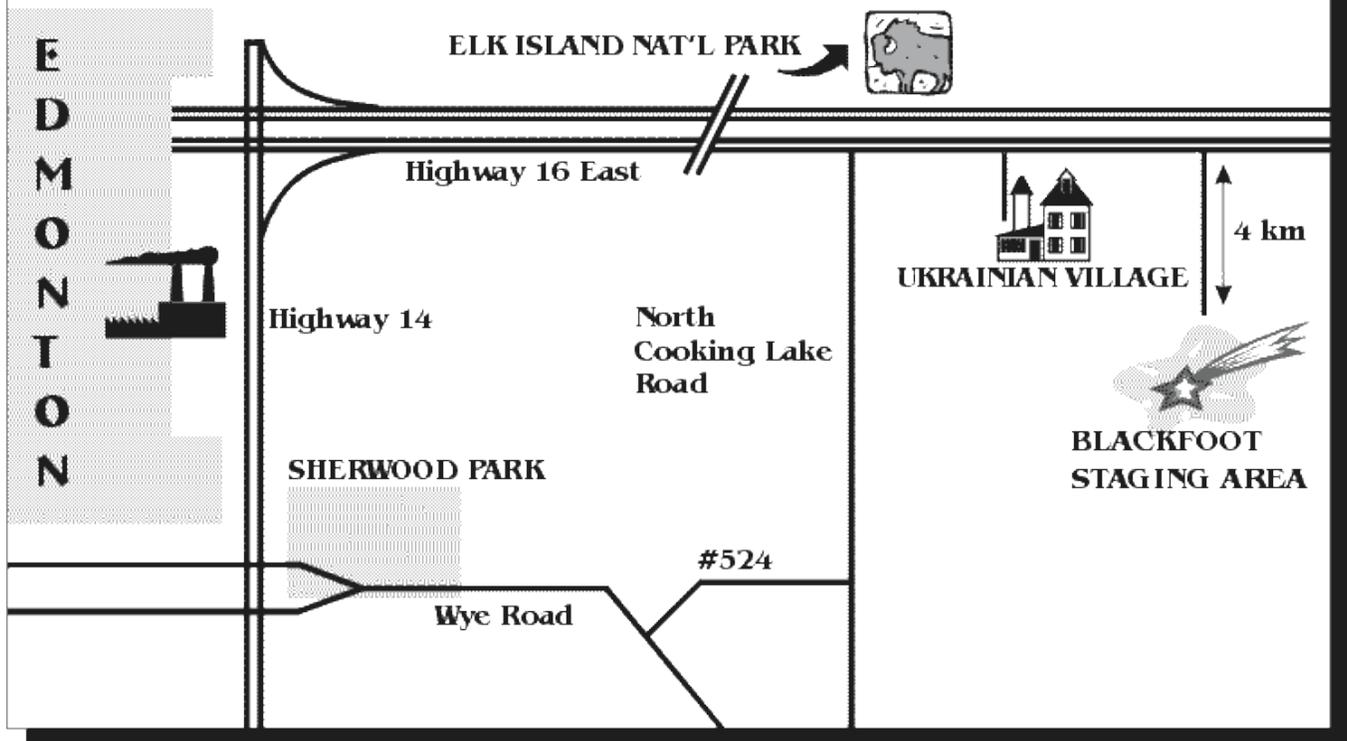
- a. On the morning of Tuesday Jan 9 @ 2:04 a.m. the mag 12.7 Asteroid Arachne occults a mag 11.8 star. The drop in magnitude is 1.3 and should last for 11 seconds.
- b. On the evening of Sunday Jan 14 @ 9:57 p.m. the mag 15.8 Asteroid Elinor will occult a mag 9.8 star, for a drop of mag 6.0 for 1.8 seconds.

There are three other possible occultations for the keen observers that will want to see them all.

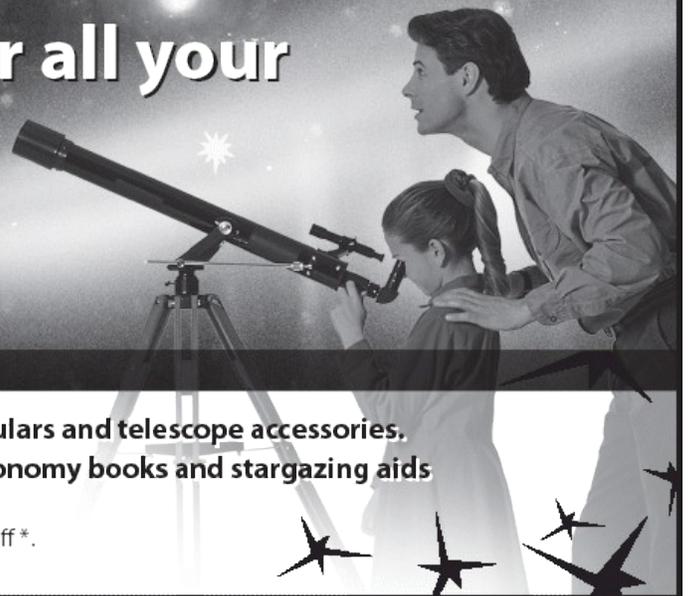
Now I told you last month that that was the last report I had to present. I lied. This is my last one. The new observing guru isn't in place until January 8 so I am expected to keep typing. It hasn't been too bad except maybe for the last few months but I will gladly pass to chore on to some new suc*** errr coordinator.

Keep looking up – at the clear skies.

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