

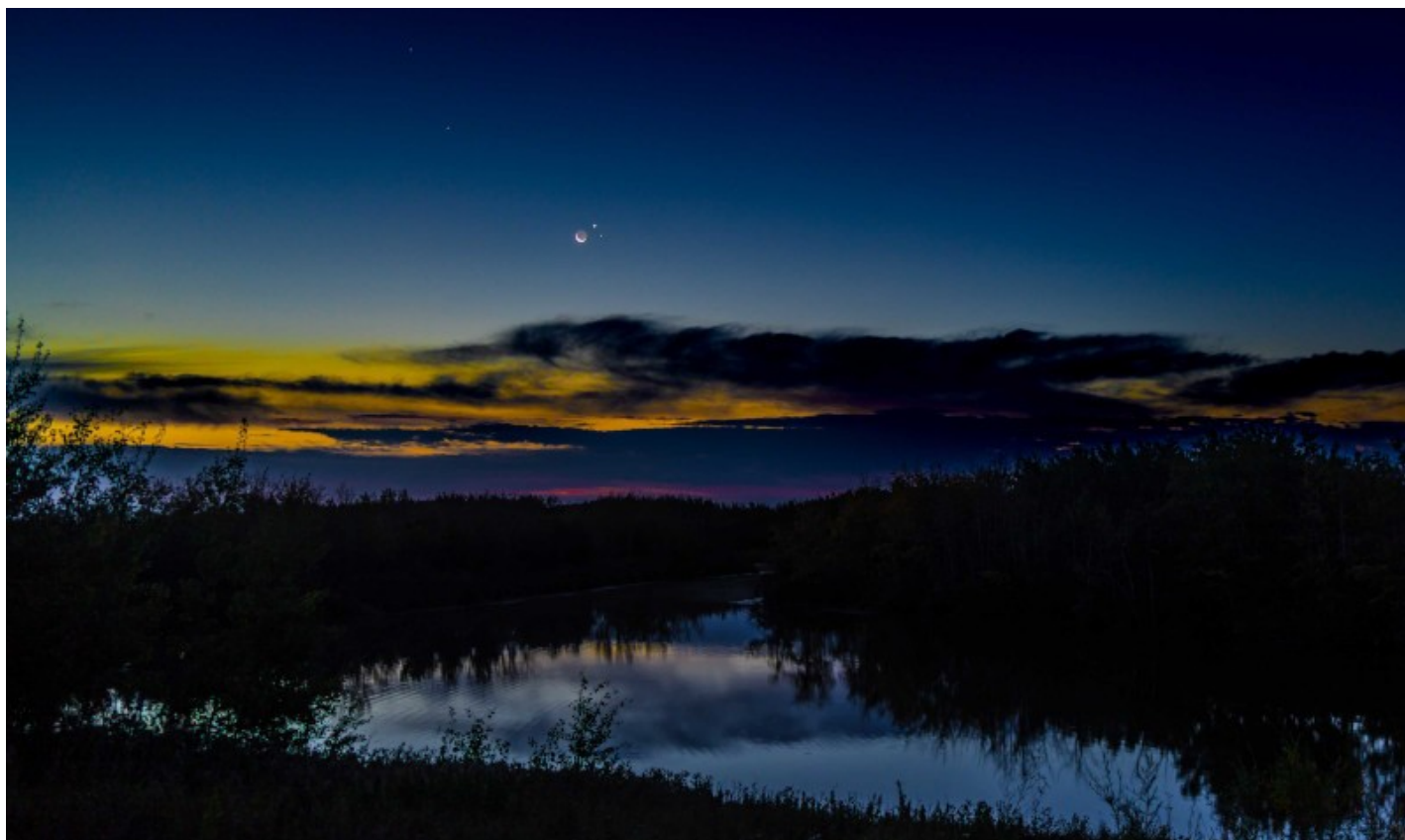
STARDUST

Newsletter of the
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Edmonton Centre



May 2026

Volume 72 Issue 9



The Moon, Venus, and Regulus. Image by Ray Wiens, 2026-09-19. See article, [page 5](#).

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| Council Positions | Name | email @ edmontonrasc.com |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
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On the web <https://edmontonrasc.com>
<https://www.facebook.com>
<https://twitter.com/EdmontonRASC>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/edmontonrasc>
<https://groups.io/g/astro>

Stardust submissions: Submit articles by email to the editor (see above). Please include STARDUST or RASC in the subject so your email doesn't end up in the spam bin. Submission deadline is the 2nd Sunday before the monthly meeting; see following page for dates. Any standard document file type is acceptable (MSOffice, OpenOffice, LibreOffice, et al.) but plain text is preferred. Do not layout and format your article. Your labour will only be discarded. Submit clearly identified images/graphics as separate files, do not embed them in the document; indicate captions and references to them within the text. Do not consider your article successfully submitted until you receive a confirmation email from the editor.

MEETINGS

- Admission is free, and everyone is welcome to attend, member or not.
- Follow the signs from the main entrance.
- Edmonton Area Astronomy Discussions: visit <https://groups.io/g/astro>
- Public meetings are in-person AND on-line
- See <https://edmontonrasc.com/meetings/>

| Meetings | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2026 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| Regular | 12 | 09 | 09 | 13 | 11 | 8 |
| Observing Grp | 20 | 24 | 24 | 21 | 26 | 23 |
| Council | 26 | 23 | 30 | 27 | 25 | |
| | | | | | | |
| 2026 | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Regular | | | 14 | 5* | 09 | 14 |
| Observing Grp | | 25 | 22 | 20 | 17 | 15 |
| Council | | | 28 | 26 | 30 | |

* Indicates a date moved due to statutory holiday.

Regular Meetings - free and open to the public

The RASC Edmonton Centre meets on the second Monday of each month, from September to June; if that is a holiday, it is the first OR third Monday. See above. Meetings are held on-line and in the Zeidler Dome at the [TELUS World of Science – Edmonton](#), 11211 – 142 St, Edmonton. Meetings start at 19:30 and are typically two hours. If you want time on the agenda, contact the [President](#).

Council Meetings

Council meetings are held on-line and start at 19:00. Any member of RASC Edmonton Centre is welcome to attend. To request a link to the meeting, contact the [President](#).

BLACK NUGGET LAKE OBSERVATORY: RASC Edmonton Centre operates the Black Nugget Lake Observatory (BNLO), a dark sky observatory at [Black Nugget Lake Park](#), 70 km south-east of Edmonton. The facility consists of an Observatory housing the 32" Unyk-Drew Telescope and a heated Visitor Centre. Access to BNLO is available to authorized RASC Edmonton Centre members. Also on site is the 18" Barry Arnold Memorial Telescope for use by authorized RASC Edmonton Centre members. For details on viewing opportunities and authorization to access BNLO, visit <https://edmontonrasc.com/bnlo/>.

YOU MUST APPLY FOR ACCESS TO BNLO: For details, visit <https://community.edmontonrasc.com/?q=members-area/bnlo>

President's Report by Clayton Knoll

With May upon us we are finally seeing clear skies for a change. From January to April clear skies were few and far between. I hope everyone has a chance to get out to do some observing and imaging soon.

April saw a few activities for outreach. April 1st was the Artemis launch party at TWOS. RASC had an information table set up with a television to watch the launch live. April 18th, we did an inventory of the storage locker.

April 23rd there was a screening of the film *Physics for Poets* at TWOS. RASC Edmonton Centre hosted a reception

after the movie for a greet and meet. All the cast and crew were there and RASC Edmonton was recognized as a sponsor of the movie. Eight members of our society were actors in the film.

April 25th was international Astronomy Day. Again, RASC EC had an information table set up and we spoke to around 100 interested visitors. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate and the observatory was not open. Keep checking our volunteer website for possible future outreach events.

That's it for this month. Clear Skies.

Observing Group Report by Murray Hunt and Alister Ling

Welcome to visual astronomy!

We invite all observers to learn about the night sky and the equipment used to study it.

In-City Observing

Six of us got together to view the **10-day old Gibbous Moon** and observe the Lunar Straight Wall in Mare Nubium.

BAMT – the Barry Arnold Memorial Telescope (18") (see *Figure 1*, below)

Great News! Thanks to **Barton Satchwill**, the 18" BAMT is fully refurbished and ready for use. I am planning to offer a **BAMT training course** this summer during the BNLO Operator workshop in August (probably Sunday the 16th) and a 2nd course 1 day during the Northern Prairie Star Party.

- **Limited spots are available**, so contact **Murray Hunt at mhunt4549@gmail.com** to secure yours.
- **No cost, but membership required.** The in-person course (1 hr demo, 1 hr practical) is necessary to become authorized to use the BAMT.

Next Observing Group Meeting: Tuesday, May 26th at 7 PM. Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88413533001>

The main topic will be the **BNLO – the Black Nugget Lake Observatory**. We will have 2 guest speakers to talk about the facility and the Northern Prairie Star Party to be held there in September.

Contact: Email observing_group@edmontonrasc.com to reach Murray Hunt and Alister Ling for any questions, comments, or topic suggestions!

NOTE: All in-city observing sessions/cancellations will be announced on Astro list and on Facebook.

Once a month, we try for darker skies within an hour or so drive on moonless nights (Friday or Saturday if at all possible).



Figure 1. The Barry Arnold Memorial Telescope. Image by Luca Vanzella.

The Northern Prairie Star Party (NPSP) 2026 update by Susan and Rick Bramm

NPSP 2026 will run from **Tuesday, September 8 to Sunday, September 13, 2026**, with most of our group activities planned for Friday, September 11 and Saturday, September 12. It is being held at the Black Nugget Lake Park camp ground located about an hour's drive south east of Edmonton. The camp ground is also the location of our Black Nugget Lake Observatory. Bring your sense of wonder for stargazing under seriously dark skies (Bortle Scale 3).

Planning is well underway. Preliminary information on speakers, registration opening day, T-shirts, programming and volunteering is found the NPSP website <https://edmontonrasc.com/northern-prairie-star-party/>

For the detailed report on last year's 2025 NPSP, see <https://edmontonrasc.com/stardust/stardust202510.pdf>

REGISTRATION

All attendees are required to register online through the NPSP Registration page on the NPSP website. Whether you are coming out only during the day for the Friday and Saturday programs or camping for up to five nights **PLEASE REGISTER**, and **DO IT EARLY** to ensure that you get the campsite you want. This will assist us immensely with our planning.

Registration opens on **Monday, May 25 at 9 A.M. on the NPSP website: <https://edmontonrasc.com/northern-prairie-star-party/>**

The **final deadline** for registering (attendees, campsite and T-shirt) and payment is **Tuesday, August 25, 2026**.

CAMPING

RASC Edmonton Centre has booked the northern part of the Black Nugget Lake Park campground for use by star party event attendees from Tuesday, September 8 at 4 P.M. to noon on Sunday, September 13, 2026. **This includes sites 58 to 75 and Group Site 9.**

Campsites will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

PROGRAM PLANNING UPDATE

1 – 3 P.M.: Astroimaging: From Start to Finish

In response to feedback received from last year's attendees, we are organizing a workshop by RASC members who use a variety of astronomy and photographic equipment to capture various types of celestial objects – and employ different image processing techniques. More details will be available soon.

4 P.M.: Clayton Knoll – Green Laser Certification

This one-hour session is designed for outreach volunteers who wish to take the course or are renewing their certification (required every three years). Limited to 12 participants. The workshop addresses the regulatory and safety aspects governing the use of green laser pointers. Please let NPSP organizers know that you wish to be put on the list.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SPEAKERS

We will have three presentations on the afternoon of Saturday, September 12 at 1:30, 2:40 and 4 P.M. More details will be posted shortly.

1:30 P.M.: Dr. Brian Martin, RASC Edmonton Member and Professor Emeritus, Physics and Astronomy, The King's University, Edmonton, Alberta will be comparing the science portrayed in three great science fiction books with what the James Webb Space Telescope is currently revealing.

2:40 P.M.: Dr Yangyang Shen, Assistant Professor, Department of Physics, University of Alberta will speak on "Auroras: Their History, Nature, Physical Drivers, and Space Weather Impacts."

4 P.M.: Geoff Robertson, long-time RASC Edmonton Centre member and executive volunteer will discuss the Artemis II mission - the historical background, the mission and possible next steps.

T-SHIRTS

The 2026 NPSP T-shirt (see page 6), designed by Rick Bramm, celebrates the successful 2026 Artemis II lunar flyby mission that took place from April 1 to 10, 2026. The T-shirt features a background comprised of the Orion constellation with the mythical Orion the Hunter holding the Orion spacecraft and the iconic Artemis II crew photo of the far side of the Moon. We are confirming prices and will have that information when the registration opens.

Check the NPSP website for more information and updates. Of you have questions, please talk with one of the members of the NPSP Planning Team or email npstarfest@shaw.ca

Northern Prairie Star Party 2026

Edmonton RASC
Black Nugget Lake



The 2026 NPSP T-shirt, designed by Rick Bramm.

Explore the Universe Wrap Up by Murray Hunt

All the resources needed for the **EtU program** are available from the RASC Canada web-site. Over the last 8 articles, we have covered over 90% of this program. In this final article of the series, I will address some of the “leftover” bits.

The Solar System

- The solar system consists of our Sun and all objects that orbit it (planets, asteroids, comets).
- **Jupiter, Venus, Mercury:** During the first 2 weeks of June, these 3 planets will be visible in the West sky shortly after sunset. See **Figure 1**.
- **Saturn and Mars:** visible in the East shortly before sunrise, also during the first 2 weeks of June (not at their best, but visible nonetheless).
- **Planetary motion:** draw a sketch of a planet (Jupiter is good) and adjacent-looking bright stars for reference – the full sketch only needs to be drawn once. On subsequent days, add the changing position of the planet.

Double Stars

Double stars in Capricorn, Corona Borealis, Cepheus, and Canes Venatici are now visible in the night sky.

Deep-Sky Objects

“Deep-sky object” is a catch-all description for **Open Star Clusters, Globular Clusters, Nebulae, Planetary**

Nebulae and Galaxies. Some outstanding ones that are visible in Spring/Summer skies are M5 and M13 – two great globular clusters. See **Figure 2**.

If you are working on this program, let us know as we can structure observing sessions to include EtU targets and be ready to review your observations. I can be reached at observing_group@edmontonrasc.com

I wish you the best as you **Explore the Universe!**

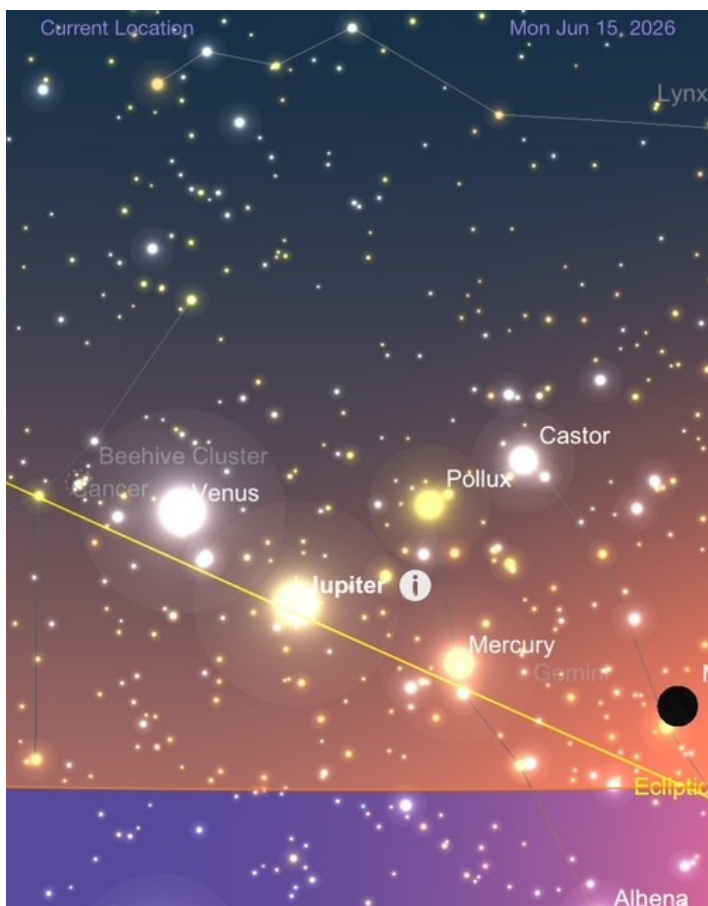


Figure 1: Jupiter, Venus, Mercury just after sunset, 2026-06-15. Image from Safari 6 Pro.



Figure 2: Messier 13, globular cluster in Hercules, taken with the author's SeeStar S50, 2026-05-08.



Fig 01 Standing in the shadow to avoid blindness. The day before perihelion, I had a clear sky to give it a visual attempt, with a rooftop's edge to hide the Sun.

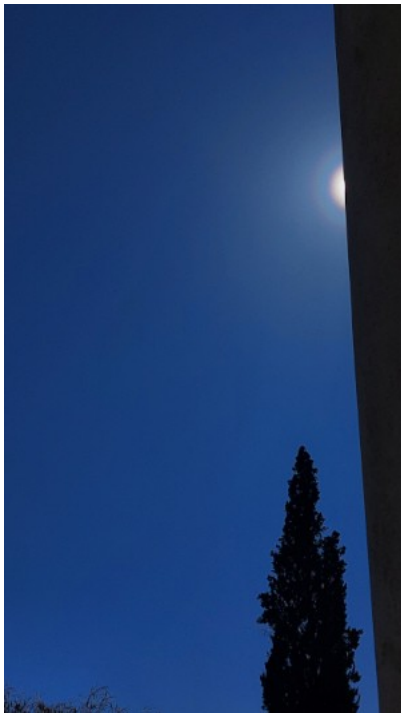


Fig 02 A pollen corona. All I could see was a tight, circular glow, expanding outward in classic colour order. This is created by light diffracting around the tiny pollen grains. No comet in this brighter, low-contrast sky, but then I wasn't expecting it any more.

Comet news broke fast in early January with the discovery of a potentially large sun grazer, perhaps becoming visible in the daytime and projecting a notable sword into the evening sky shortly after April 6th, the way [Ikea-Seki](#) did in 1966.

Arriving each year, dozens of fragments from a disrupted massive comet a thousand years ago fry in the Sun's heat. The handful in a century that survive are usually classed as "Great". Would [C/2026 A1 \(MAPS\)](#) be one? Early indications implied a near Ikea-Seki performance and lots of fingers were crossed knowing well that comets don't do what humans want.

[Nicolas Lefaudeux's](#) fantastic website showing animated GIFS of dust and gas tails of historical and future comets had 6 what-if scenarios, from dissolving through to great.

<https://hdr-astrophotography.com/>

A week before perihelion it looked like it would not be a daylight one, but we had to wait to be confident. As MAPS came into the field of the solar coronagraphs of spacecraft, it was holding together but not brightening as hoped. Oh well.

The experts told us we should expect to see debris, dust ejected on the way in, pushed far enough outward by the solar wind to have escaped atomization. Some comets of the last two decades had enough material to be seen as a headless comet post close approach, but the geometry of our viewing angle and smallness of MAPS won't create anything visible. Next time?!

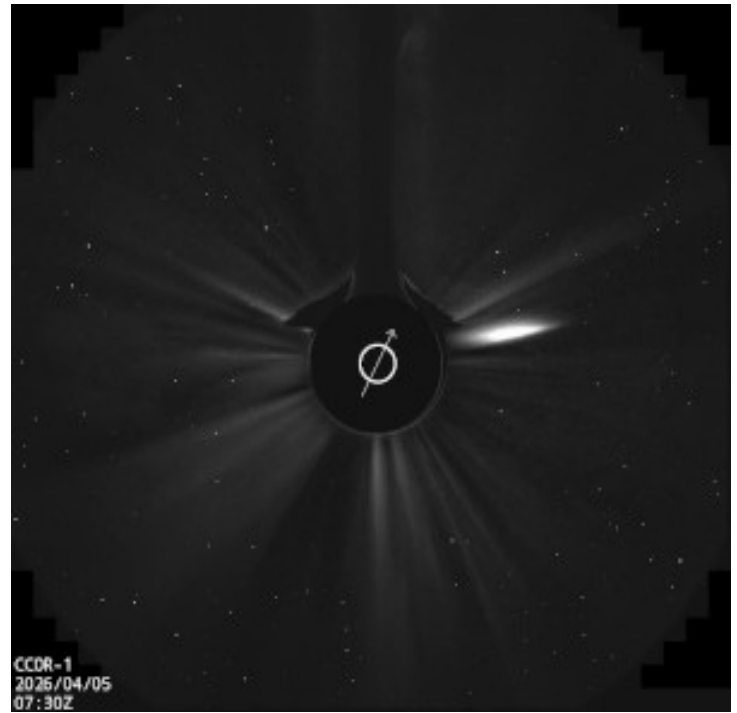


Fig 03 CCOR A diffuse spray of dust is visible to the right of center. Source: US Naval Research Laboratory. <https://ccor.nrl.navy.mil/> . The mailing list featured some analysis that said the nucleus had disrupted just before disappearing behind the occulting disk.



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