



*Saturn, 2020-2024. Brock Johnson*

## September 2024

I'm sitting next to a quiet bay of Lake Ontario at a cottage in Prince Edward County, contemplating the end of summer and the upcoming RASC Victoria Centre season. The nights are getting longer. We're getting our normal activities, including the Astrocafe and the University Meetings, back up and running.

And our newsletter, Skynews, will go back to monthly editions. Please think of items for Skynews. If you do some astroactivity, tell us! If you took an interesting astroimage, share it! If you have been following some astronews, tell us about it. And if you have an astroquestion, send it to me and I'll try to get it answered.

*Randy, [pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca](mailto:pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca)*



*The Moon, Mars, Jupiter, and the Pleiades, from Prince Edward County, Ontario. 30-second exposure.  
Randy Enkin*



## President's Message

Our 27<sup>th</sup> annual Island Star Party on the weekend of August 9 to 11 at St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Saanichton has gone into the books as a success.

Like everyone else, I got in some good observing and looked at and through the various telescopes and cameras that were on the field at the star party. Observing highlights for me were the Lagoon Nebula and the Trifid Nebula in the southern skies.

I also had the chance to slow down a bit and enjoy dinner with fellow members of the Victoria Centre, all of them good friends. This year we enjoyed the generous portions available at the Prairie Inn.

Fellowship is an important benefit of our involvement in the Victoria Centre, and indeed in other organizations we take part in.

The value of the social aspect of our group was driven home to me earlier this year at the Victoria Film Festival, where I saw a film called *Join or Die*. The film follows Harvard political scientist Robert D. Putnam, best known for his 2000 book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*.

In the film, Putnam talks about the major decline from the number of Americans who take part in clubs and other social organizations. I'm sure that this trend is also being felt in Canada. The result of this trend is less social cohesion, greater polarization, and the crisis of democracy that afflicts both of our countries and many others.

"The places that have better government are the places that have a long history of social networks and social capital," Putnam said in the film. "Organization—connections with other people—is the *only* way you get big change."

I find his arguments persuasive. Here in the Victoria Centre we meet people who have their own life experiences and different views on many aspects of life. What we have in common is our love of astronomy.

I think I'm a better person for the people I've met here in the Victoria Centre and other organizations I belong to. And almost always we have good times together.

During the recent pandemic, we learned some hard lessons about the costs of social isolation.

With fall coming on, we can look forward in the coming months to more social activities at our monthly meetings at the University of Victoria, Astronomy Cafés at the Fairfield Community Centre and online, and observing sessions at the VCO.

While we are looking to the skies, the simple act of getting together makes our home planet a better place.

Chris Gainor, [President@Victoria.RASC.ca](mailto:President@Victoria.RASC.ca)

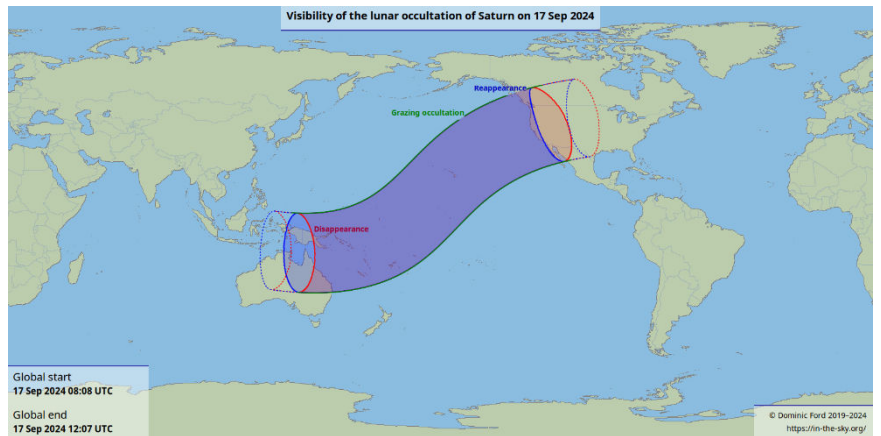
# Occultation of Saturn by the Moon, Sept. 17!

One of the most wonderful of astronomical events will be visible in Victoria between 4 and 5 in the morning of Tuesday, September 17. Every month, the moon sweeps by all the planets. I often mention these conjunctions in the Astro-Events page of Skynews, especially if the moons passes close to the planet. Every once in a while, we get a chance to see the moon actually block the planet, producing an occultation.

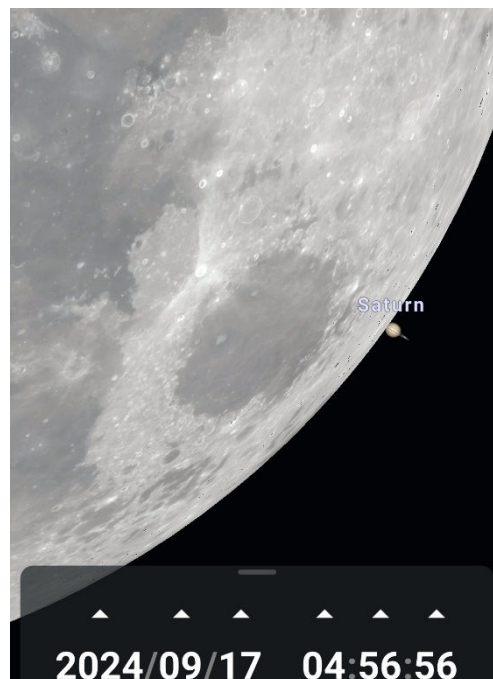
“Conjunctions” and “occultations” are two types of “syzygy”. I mostly mention this word because it is so delightful to say and to spell. Technically, as syzygy takes place when two astronomical objects share the same right ascension. If the difference in declination at syzygy is smaller than the angular size of the larger object, then we have a “transit” when the smaller object passes in front of the larger (think of one of the Galilean moons passing in front of Jupiter), or an occultation when the larger object passes in front of the smaller (think of the moon in front of any of the planets). That means an annular solar eclipse is a transit, while a total solar eclipse is an occultation.

The last lunar-planetary occultation that I had the opportunity to observe was with Uranus on October 12, 2022. Several of us were emailing as it happened comparing observations and timing. If we have clear skies during the morning of September 17, let’s do it again, but with the spectacular planet Saturn!

There was a similar event across Europe and North Africa on August 21, and the images are beautiful. Check out Enkin’s Daily Moon on Facebook and Instagram, Moon3272 to Moon3276 for some examples.



The following are screen shots from Stellarium, using Victoria as the observer’s location:



The occultation is taking place 15 hours before the time of the full moon (19:34 PDT), so we’ll see Saturn disappear behind the unlit dark western rim of the moon, high up in north. Then it will reemerge out past the Mare Crisium, as the moon is getting low (~10° above the horizon) and the sky is getting lighter. Sunrise will take place at 06:64.

Please, please, please, let the sky be clear that morning!




*25hr Moon, shot  
with an ancient  
iPhone to one side  
of 15X70 Celestron  
binoculars,  
Bill Weir*



*SH2\_157 Lobster  
Claw Nebula  
Captured 9.6  
hours of NB data  
Aug 9-10 2024.  
Ron Fisher*

## September Astro-Events

Aug. 31 to Sep. 2	Saanich Fair. We <u>need 4-5 volunteers at each 9:30-13:00 and 12:30-16:00 shift, Sat. Sun. and Mon.</u> Tear-down and transfer Mon. 16:00-18:00. Please contact Marji Welchframe, marjie@victoria.rasc.ca
Sept. 1	1859: Richard Carrington and Richard Hodgson observe the first solar flare in recorded history. The next night, there were huge auroral displays and geomagnetic anomalies – bigger than May 8 this year!
Sept. 2	New Moon, 18:55 PDT
Sept. 5	Venus 1.2°N of Moon
Sept. 6	1966, first Star Trek episode (The Man Trap) aired
Sept. 7	19:30 Star Party at the Centre of the Universe. Volunteers appreciated to staff the RASC table and demonstrating telescopes.
Sept. 9	19:00 Welcome back to the first AstroCafé of the season! Hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom.
Sept. 10	First Quarter Moon, 23:05 PDT
Sept. 11	19:30 University of Victoria RASC Meeting and Speaker!! Jess Speedie, “The Wombs of Pregnant Stars” Bob Wright Centre, Lecture Theatre A104 Followed by Coffee, Cookies and Conversation in the Astronomy Lounge on the 4th floor of the Elliot Building. Alex Schmid will open up the Centre RASC Library which is located in this lounge.
Sept. 13	1959, Luna 2 reaches the Moon
Sept. 16	19:00 AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom.
Sept. 17	1764: John Goodricke  1789: William Herschel discovers Saturn's moon Mimas Saturn 0.3°S of Full Moon. Occultation visible in western N. America and Australia.

## Royal Astronomical Society of Canada – Victoria Centre

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Sept. 22	Autumn Equinox, 05:44 PDT
Sept. 23	19:00 AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom.
Sept. 24	Last Quarter Moon, 11:50 PDT
Sept. 30	(No Astrocafé. Spend the time learning about Indigenous Astronomy) 1880: Henry Draper takes the first-ever photograph of a nebula (the Orion Nebula M42)

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