



Darren Delorme, Planet Parade Composition, January 18, 2025

March 2025

The next big event is going to be International Astronomy Day on Saturday May 3. We're just getting ready to organize the event but some important steps are already accomplished. The Royal BC Museum will be hosting the day-time event from 10 to 3. And in the evening, the Friends of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory will be inviting the public to the Centre of the Universe. We'll need lots of volunteers, at all levels of astronomical skill, at the museum. In the evening, the Friends welcome RASC volunteers to show off the sky with their own telescopes or using one of the several that are already there.

Astronomy outreach is fun and rewarding! People have a huge thirst to learn more about the objects in the sky and how we know about them. Share your knowledge. You might motivate somebody to go and learn more on their own. If they see sunspots, lunar craters, Saturn's rings, or a globular cluster for the first time, they might decide to get their own telescope. People will see our enthusiasm and enjoyment, and might even join our club!

Randy Enkin, pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca

President's Message



Being asked to step into the role of President for the RASC has put me into a reflective mood. Future versions of this column will likely feature ruminances on what the RASC means to new members, the incredible contributions the society has made to the community over the last 111 years, and the wonderful friendships we all benefit from being in a group of like-minded individuals.

Today, I'm going to focus on something unique to RASC Victoria, which is the opportunity to request a handful of nights on the 1.8 meter Plaskett telescope each year. These are of course graciously considered against other pressing scientific programs conducted at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO), but are offered for two purposes: to recognize the contributions of RASC Victoria members to public outreach that takes place at the observatory, and to produce

images that we can share during that public outreach and programming to capture the minds of a new generation of astronomers.

When I joined the RASC in my second year of university, with a head full of new questions from the latest astronomy course I was taking, I never imagined the result would be operating the historical telescope that seems to be visible from every north-looking angle in Victoria. Being able to share the wonder (and challenges) of that experience with RASC members and the public has been one of my deep joys of being a member of this group.

On a more fundamental level, the history of our centre and the history of the observatory are deeply intertwined. It's difficult to separate the existence of the Victoria RASC from the creation of the DAO as an earlier attempt for a society initially failed, and was only sustained when a renewed effort coincided with the announcement of the DAO. No other centre in Canada at the time was able to survive without the support of a local university. While Victoria College, a then affiliate of the University of British Columbia, would come along shortly, it was the presence of the DAO that allowed our centre to flourish. A century later and I strongly feel that is still the case, which makes the moments that we can share in using the telescope so meaningful.

We have opportunities this spring (next one March 29) to once again use the telescope to capture images and share them with the public. If it is clear, I hope RASC members will brew some coffee, pack a midnight snack, suffer some questionably comfortable chairs and be a part of this wonderful experience.

Dan Posey, President@Victoria.RASC.ca



Ex-President's Message

(Note: this letter was submitted on February 2, the last week of Chris' presidency.)



This month a new Council will take over the affairs of the Victoria Centre and move us into the second quarter of this century. Many of the people in the new Council will be the same as in recent years, but I will be moving on after having served my third year as president, albeit 20 years after my first two years in that post.

The new council will be chosen at our Annual General Meeting that will take place on Zoom on February 10. Two weeks later we will hold our annual Banquet at the Four Mile Pub. The new location and format for the banquet were established with a successful event last year, and I hope this banquet will brighten one of the colder times of the year.

Our Council met in January and I can report that preparations for events for later in the year, including Astronomy Day, our Summer Star Party and others, are well under way thanks to our volunteers on and off council. We've already held our first monthly members meeting and first Astronomy Cafes of 2025.

The incoming council will face challenges such as continuing the work of organizing our online storage of centre documents, dealing with the news that we must move our centre library, and creating a policy covering telescopes belonging to the Centre.

Much of this work got under way in the past year. Of course when we look back on 2024, we will remember the astronomical events. Many of us traveled east or south to see the April 8 total solar eclipse, and most of us were rewarded with clear skies and a memorable eclipse, contrary to the longer-term weather predictions. Barely a month later, our active Sun rewarded us with a rare and memorable display of the Aurora Borealis, and it was not the only Auroral display of the year in Island skies. In the fall, many of us also enjoyed seeing and imaging Comet C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS. As always, our members continue to produce dazzling images of distant objects in the sky.

In terms of our centre activities, 2024 was undoubtedly the most normal year we have enjoyed since the disruptions of the pandemic. We had a full year of monthly meetings and Astro Cafes, a successful Astronomy Day at the Royal BC Museum and the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, and an excellent Summer Star Party on the Saanich Peninsula on the grounds of St. Stephen's Anglican Church, along with outreach activities at the Saanich Fair and elsewhere.

The Friends of the DAO had a good year of star parties and other events, many of them with our help, and they are now working on freshening up the exhibits at the Centre of the Universe.

Although technical improvements at the Victoria Centre Observatory were punctuated with a computer failure last fall, our technical committee has restored full functions there. In 2024 our centre website underwent its most extensive upgrade in years. We also have ongoing activities like our Special Interest Groups.

in Victoria as seen through the eyes of John S. Plaskett, the founder of the DAO and along the way, our centre. It should be completed later this spring.

In the meantime, I offer my thanks to everyone who made this past year a great one for the Victoria Centre, and I look forward to seeing more of you going forward as together we continue to explore the universe!

Chris Gainor



Year established: 1914

Membership: 224

The RASC Victoria Centre began its twelfth decade in 2024 with a full year of activities that largely moved beyond the shadow of the pandemic earlier in the decade. The centre hosted 103 events with more than 10,000 in-person Galileo moments and 29,000 on-line Galileo moments.

On February 12, the centre held an on-line Annual General Meeting which saw the election of this executive and council:

President: Chris Gainor

1st Vice President: Dan Posey

2nd Vice President: Kirsten Pedersen

Treasurer: Doug Hardy

Secretary: Oliver Robinow

Past President: Randy Enkin

Directors: David Lee, Myles Morrison, Jeff Pivnick, Lauri Roche, Alex Schmid

Two weeks later Centre members gathered at the Four Mile Brew Pub for our Annual Dinner, which marked a successful return to a venue where we had last gathered in the 1990s.

By then, our regular Monday night Astro-Café sessions had got under way and continued through the year, except for breaks on holidays and for the summer months. There were 27 Astro-Cafés in 2024, with an average attendance of 32 people. Astro-Cafés are hybrid events, with many people gathering at the Fairfield Community Centre and a larger number joining on Zoom.

While Astro-Cafés are usually informal chat meetings, they often feature special guest speakers. On April 8, with many Victoria Centre members dispersed around Eastern Canada, the U.S. and Mexico for the total solar eclipse, many compared notes that evening on a special Zoom Astro Café event. Astro-Cafés are all available for viewing on the RASC Victoria Centre YouTube Channel, along with other centre events.

2024 was the first year since 2019 with a full schedule of 7 monthly meetings at the University of Victoria.

Two Special Interest Groups met regularly during the year, including the Getting Started in Astronomy SIG coordinated by David Lee and the Astrophotography SIG coordinated by David Payne.

Ten major observing sessions took place at the Victoria Centre Observatory on Little Saanich Mountain, and highlights included sessions for Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS in October and an Auroral display that month. The VCO telescope's main computer was replaced, and other important maintenance work was done. Centre members had access to the Plaskett Telescope at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO) for four nights, but the weather cooperated only on August 3.

The Friends of the DAO had a very successful year in 2024, selling out most of its Star Parties, hosting thousands of students up at the Centre of the Universe and in schools, inviting people from cruise ships to visit with special tours in the evenings and meeting its mission of bringing the adventure of Astronomy and Space Sciences to a wide audience. The FDAO depended on RASC members to host the Welcome Table and to share their knowledge of the night sky in a variety of roles for Star Party nights.

There were 22 Star Parties in 2024 ranging from our January Games Night, to May the 4th Star Wars, Dinosaurs, Climate Change and Galaxy Mergers. We hosted International Astronomy Day, a Telescope workshop with RASC members presenting information and helping with setting up equipment, VOX in the Stars in September and finally the Winter Solstice Waffle Breakfast.

International Astronomy Day was celebrated on May 18 with a full slate of activities during the day at the Royal BC Museum in the heart of Victoria and in the evening at the DAO and the Centre of the Universe. More than 800 members of the public were reached in the various activities and talks during the day, and public interest was encouraged by the major display of Aurora Borealis the previous weekend.

The Island Star Party took place August 9 to 11 at St. Stephen's Church, in Saanichton. The Victoria Centre took control of this venerable event in 2024, after 26 years of sponsorship by our friends in the Cowichan Valley Starfinders. There were about 20 telescopes of all different shapes and sizes set up, and all their operators were very generous with their time and experience for the enquiring public.

Other major public outreach activities included participation in the 2024 Beaveree in June and the Saanich Fair on the Labour Day weekend. Over the three-day fair, 20 volunteers made contact with more than 2,300 members of the public.

Later in September, Bill Weir and Kirsten Pedersen of the Victoria Centre took part in the Huu-Ay-Aht First Nation Dark Sky pilot for a possible Dark Sky Festival in the nation, whose lands are located in the Barkley Sound region on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, at the entrance to Alberni Inlet. Bill presented the Nation with a gift of an 8-inch telescope, eyepieces and literature on behalf of our Centre, the DAO and a private donor.

At year's end, Sid Sidhu was given the centre's highest honour, the Newton-Ball Award. Over his 40 years of activity in the Victoria Centre, Sid has held almost every job there is to do and is especially known for his work on public outreach. With this award, Sid is the first person to win the Newton-Ball Award a second time.

Certificates of Appreciation were given to Jill Sinkwich and Chris Purse, and to Joe Carr, who this year completed a major upgrade of the Victoria Centre website. Brock Johnston and Randy Enkin won Awards of Excellence in Astro-Imaging and Astro-Sketching, and honorable mentions went to Dan Posey, Zen and Renee Dedekind, Mike Nash, and Joe Carr.

A note from our Newton-Ball Recipient:

There is nothing quite as special as being honoured by your peers. I say "thank you" to the Council for giving me the Newton-Ball award (again) and I share it with all who (too many to mention here) have worked with me over the years. Thanks to all.

It was great to visit and receive congratulations from so many friends at the 4Mile – some friends of long standing and some new. The RASC has given me years of enjoyment and I am sure there will be more to come.

Sid Sidhu

Top winner astro-photo – Brock Johnston for his 5-year collage/composite of Saturn images



The selection committee thought that getting just one planetary image of Saturn of this quality is difficult to get. Collectively, with five pictures put together in this composite, it showed a tremendous amount of work, dedication and great patience. The Saturn sequence also showed consistency and progression. Consistency of quality over time, but also progression in the skills and planetary imaging techniques of the imager over time. Not only does the picture tell a story about Brock and the development of imaging skills, but the composite also conveys how planetary imaging can contribute to greater understanding of the nature of planets. A truly exceptional and outstanding piece of work.

(You can see all the Honorable Mentions and Award Winners, along with commentary by the selection jury: Kirsten Pedersen, Dave Payne, and John McDonald, at <https://victoria.rasc.ca/2025-awards-dinner/>)

RASC Victoria Centre Speakers Bureau

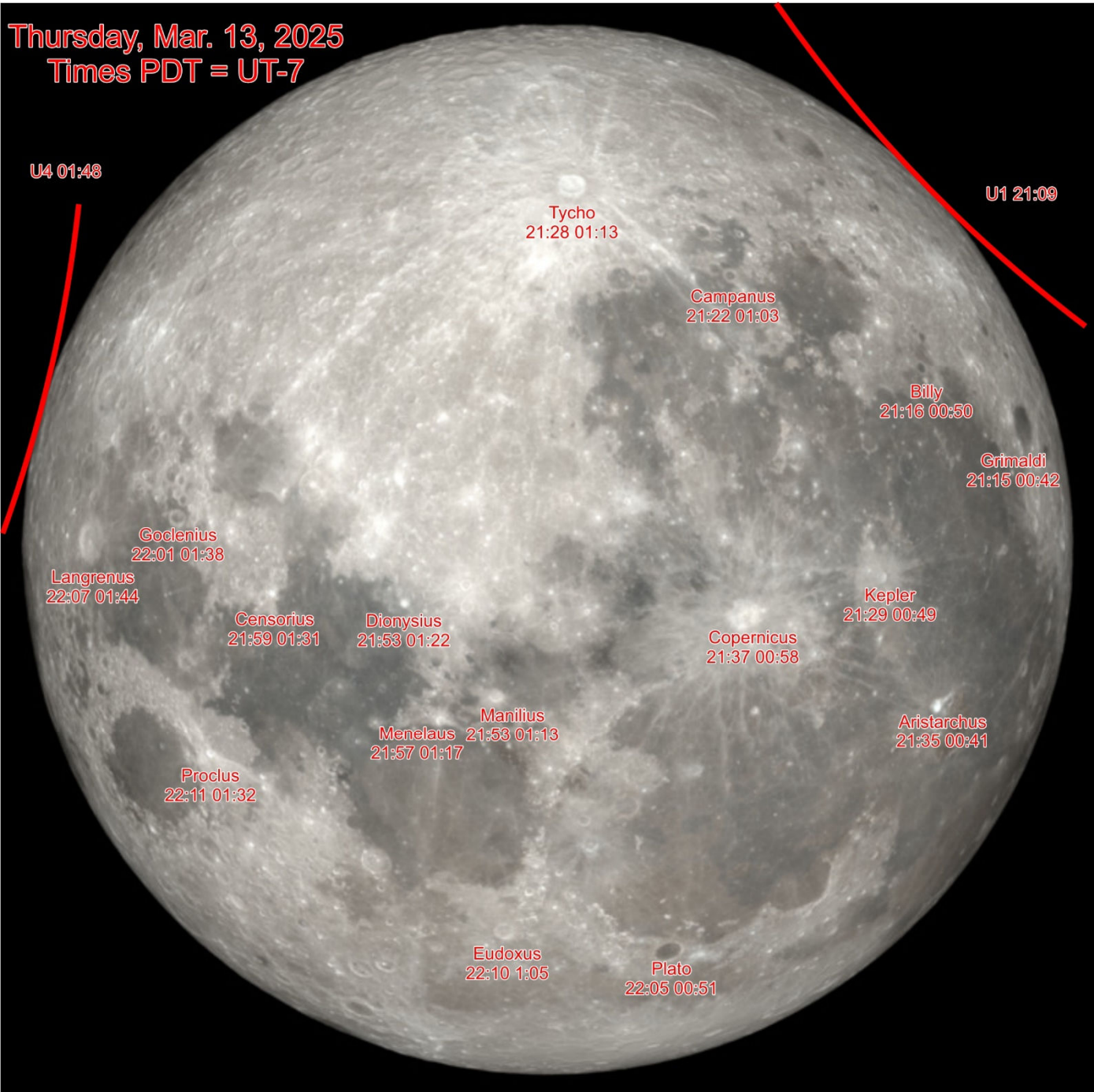
RASC Victoria Centre is developing a speakers bureau to accommodate requests from the public for astronomy based presentations. We've had the privilege of enjoying many presentations that would be suitable on our weekly AstroCafes. We hope those individuals will come forward.

Are you interested in participating in this type of public outreach but have not done so yet, let your interest be known and we could help you towards participating in this program.

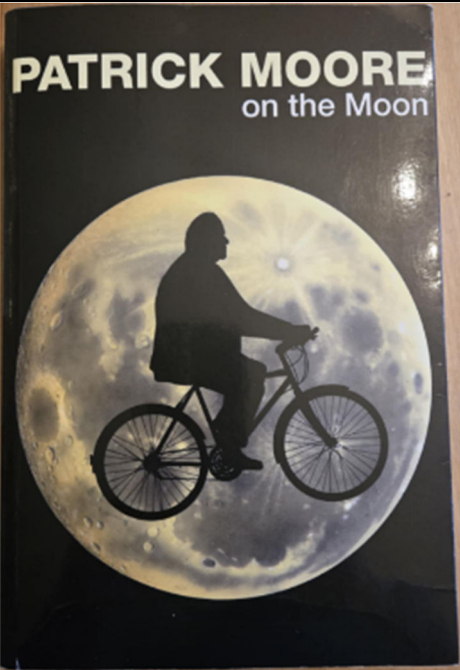
This is your chance to express your passion for astronomy to the general public. Please contact david@victoria.rasc.ca.



Eclipse Crater Timing on March 13

Citizen Science opportunity! Given clear skies on March 13, we can make important measurements to help solve a 200-year-old mystery. Get your mobile device to call out the seconds with an app like “Ticking Clock” and record when the earth’s shadow crosses prominent craters, using the diagram below that I prepared from the table in <https://skyandtelescope.org/observing/useful-projects-for-a-lunar-eclipse/>.



March Astro-Events (Pacific Standard Time = UT-8)

Mar. 3	AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom
Mar. 4	<p>Patrick Moore, prolific amateur astronomer, born 1923</p> 
Mar. 6	<p>08:32 First Quarter Moon</p> <p>Joseph von Fraunhofer, developer of the achromatic lens and inventor of spectroscopy, born 1787</p>
Mar. 10	AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom
Mar. 12	<p>19:30 University of Victoria RASC Meeting Tess Grindlay, on the Europa Clipper Mission 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.</p>
Mar. 13	<p>TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE!!!</p> <p>Penumbral Eclipse begins 20:57:28</p> <p>Partial Eclipse begins 22:09:40</p> <p>Full Eclipse begins 23:26:06</p> <p>Full Eclipse ends 00:31:26</p> <p>Partial Eclipse ends 01:47:52</p> <p>Penumbral Eclipse ends 03:00:09</p>
Mar. 14	<p>Pi Day</p> <p>Albert Einstein, born 1879</p>

Mar. 16	<p>Caroline Herschel, discoverer of many nebulae and comets, born 1750</p>	
Mar. 17	<p>AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom</p>	
Mar 20	<p>1:02 Vernal Equinox</p>	
Mar. 22	<p>03:30 Last Quarter Moon</p>	
Mar. 23	<p>William Draper takes the first astronomical photograph, of the moon, in 1840</p>	
Mar. 24	<p>AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom Eugene and Carolyn Shoemaker and David Levy discover Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 at the Palomar Observatory in 1993.</p>	
Mar. 25	<p>Christiaan Huygens discovers Saturn's largest moon Titan in 1655. Harold Ewen and Edward Purcell in 1951 discover the 21-cm radio radiation from cold hydrogen in the galaxy</p>	
Mar. 29	<p>02:58 New Moon. 94% Partial Solar Eclipse in Labrador Observing Night at the Plaskett Dome (See the President's Letter!)</p>	
Mar. 31	<p>AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom</p>	

Director Positions	Name	Email
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