



Michael Webb, Lunar Eclipse of March 13-14, 2025

April 2025

A year ago, April 8, 2024, many of us travelled across the continent to watch the total eclipse of the sun. Ours is a funny hobby, where we invest so much effort, time, and money, always knowing that we might be thwarted by clouds. But when everything works, it makes all the challenges worth it.

You know the story about the farmer who goes to a big astronomy equipment store and asks for the most expensive telescope. The salesperson explain that a 16-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain really isn't a good choice for a beginner, but the farmer won't listen to reason. In fact, he orders 6 of them! Why? He explains that his astronomer buddy assured him that there is always 2 weeks of rain after you get a new telescope, and the drought has been just awful this year.

I wish you all clear skies and working equipment now that spring has sprung.

Randy Enkin, pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca

President's Message



One of the beauties of the RASC is that there are so many different pathways we can take as members. Individual pursuits like observing and astrophotography, group observing, public outreach. Each of these can be its own journey, and will likely be a focus on future columns.

This time I'm going to reflect not on astrophotography itself, but on how the 'chase' of a target can create its own story. We are about to start 'galaxy season', meaning our placement in our orbit around the Sun has the nighttime sky looking outward away from the galactic plane. Once you get all the gas and dust of the Milky Way out of the way that leaves a lot of galaxies to look at.

Now, if you read my column last issue you can guess that galaxies have always had a special place in my heart. Unfortunately, they're faint, small, and impervious to most of the tricks that let amateur astronomers reduce light pollution. This typically means that the best tool to hunt a galaxy is a big telescope with dark skies. Other than my first years spent using an 8" SCT, my access to a galaxy-chasing tool kit has been through RASC Victoria. With company to be enjoyed along the way, some of my favorite outings have involved chasing galaxies.

We all start with different approaches. In my case astronomy and astrophotography opened up new world(s) to explore. I also grew up looking at Hubble images and remember being captivated by a picture of Stephan's Quintet; a group of interacting galaxies about 300 million light years away. It isn't a spring target, but it's what I always think of when my mind drifts to galaxies. I was only a few months into the hobby (and not even a RASC member yet) when I decided to make my first stab at the target. Of course, I ignored that they were small and distant by the standards of many Hubble pictures when I was making my grand plans. Using said 8" SCT, I managed to capture what was then an absolutely staggering 3 hours of data - I think it amounted to more effort than all of my previous image attempts combined. The result was noisy, faint, soft and required me to crop away 90% of the image, but they were there. I couldn't have been happier!

By 2010 I had joined the RASC and had what I could only describe as my dream opportunity - a RASC Plaskett night with clear skies in the right season for Stephan's. Unfortunately, a mechanical issue with the shutter scrubbed the data, and all I was left with was the tantalizing glimpse into 'what could have been'. Heartbreak in the back of my mind, I revisited the Quintet again with the 14" at the Victoria Centre Observatory (VCO). This time I forgot to flip a camera setting to turn off 4x4 binning and was left with low resolution monochrome data. At that point I threw in the towel and didn't come back for a few years. In 2013 I was back with



Dan's 2009 8-inch SCT image



Dan's 2010 VCO 14-inch image



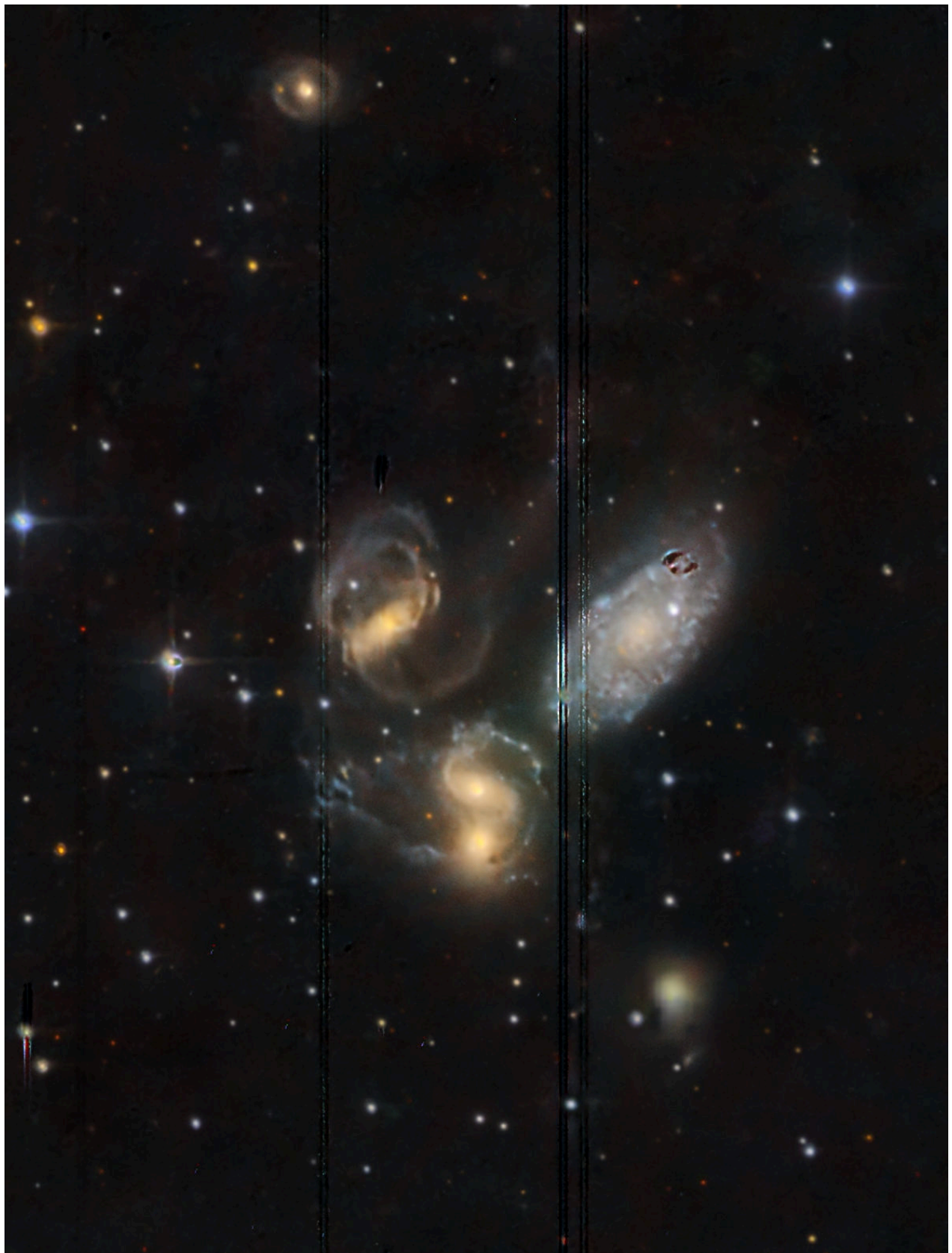
Dan's 2013 Televue 127 image

the 5" Televue 127is we had at the VCO. For the first time I could 'see' the target in colour, but the low magnification pushed the data to its limit and left me wanting more.

It wasn't until 2022 that I finally captured 'the shot' on a RASC Plaskett night. We sat on Stephan's Quintet for a total of just 40.5 minutes, but when you have a 1.8 metre telescope that's enough. A decade in the making (and still not Hubble) it might have been natural to feel a letdown at finally arriving. Instead, it had me energized for whatever my next visit to the target looks like. Perhaps it will be with our new 12.5" Ritchey-Chretien at the VCO. At least for me that's one of the joys of this hobby. Regardless of whether the focus is on observing or public outreach, we all have the chance to find ourselves out on a path with like-minded individuals that share enthusiasm for the night sky.

I hope everyone has a wonderful 'galaxy season'!

Dan Posey, President@Victoria.RASC.ca

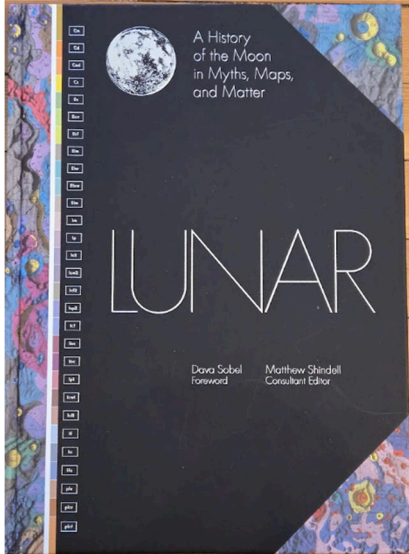


Dan's 2022 Plaskett image

Book Review: Lunar: A History of the Moon in Myths, Maps and Matter

(Note: Chris Gainor is editor of *Quest: The History of Spaceflight Quarterly*. He gave us permission to reprint this book review.)

“Lunar: A History of the Moon in Myths, Maps and Matter” Consultant Editor: Matthew Shindell, University of Chicago Press, 2024, ISBN: 978-0-226-83651-5, Pages: 256, Price: \$65.00 (Hardback)



For a body that plays such a big role in our lives, surprisingly little has been written about our Moon.

Its role in natural cycles and in helping create the conditions that make the existence of humanity possible are widely acknowledged but taken for granted. So is the Moon's presence in our sky.

In a period of four years starting in 1968, two dozen astronauts visited the area of the Moon, 12 of them reaching its surface. Since then, the Moon has been largely passed over by space programs as more distant targets beckoned robotic explorers. Today plans for humans to return to the Moon are mired in arguments from those who wish to send humans to Mars as soon as possible and bypass the Moon.

An example of the mixed state of knowledge on the Moon can be found in the history of the Apollo program. When Apollo began at the dawn of the 1960s, there was very little in the way of detailed maps of its surface.

Faced with the goal of landing humans on the Moon, NASA began supporting astrogeology studies at the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and soon its experts in this new field were put to work developing detailed maps of the side of the Moon visible to the Earth. The mapping project, which involved 22 scientists and cartographers, produced 44 detailed and beautiful maps from 1962 to 1974.

These maps, all reproduced in color, form the backbone of a well-illustrated and designed large format book that tells the story of humanity's interactions with the Moon starting with the myths at the dawn of history through to today's artistic visions of the Moon to plans to visit it again in the Artemis program.

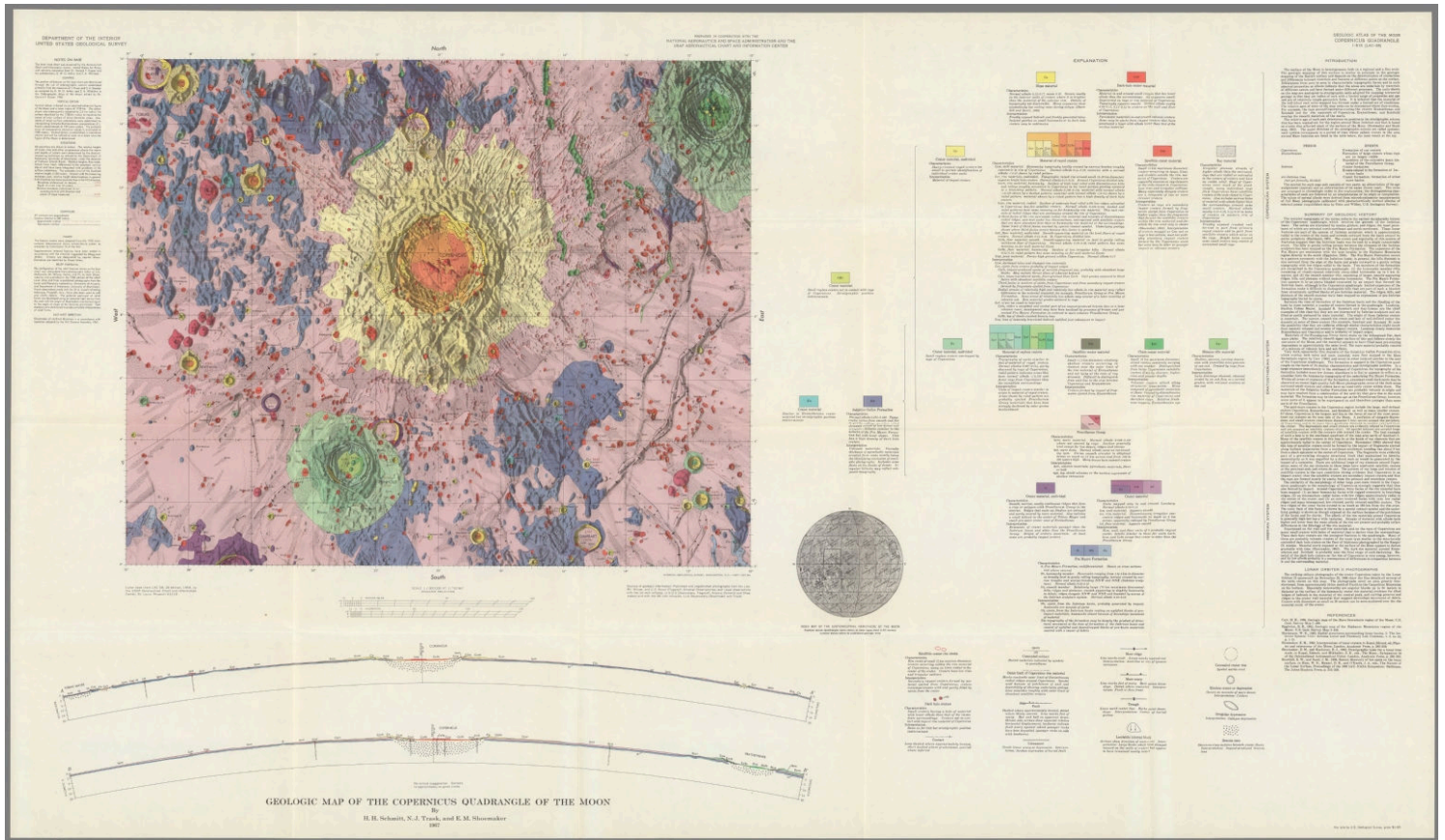
Starting with a foreword by esteemed science writer Dava Sobel, Smithsonian Institution curator and historian of science Matthew Shindell has assembled a set of essays of the many and varied human interactions with the Moon by a number of authors to accompany the 44 maps created by the USGS.

The result is a book that is not only enjoyable to look at and refer to, but is also a cultural and scientific history of the Moon as we humans know it. There is much for readers who have any interest in the Moon.

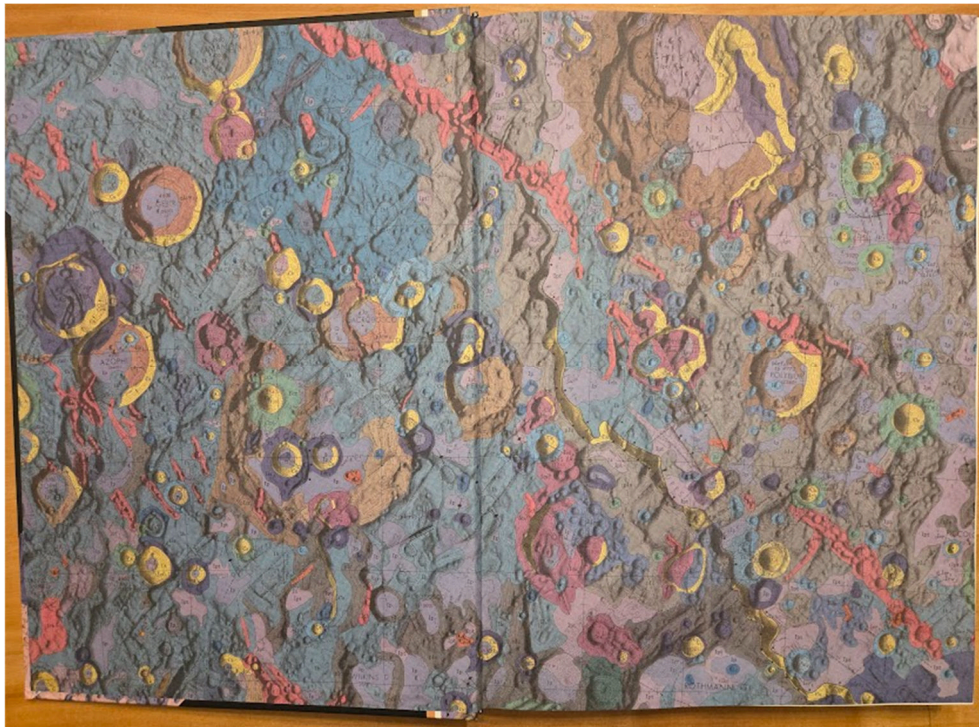
Topics range from the Moon and Astrology, the Moon and 'Lunacy,' how the Moon governs tides, how various cultures view the Moon, the Moon in cinema and other visual arts, to feminine views of the Moon and many aspects of the history of the exploration of the Moon by telescope and spacecraft.

For those who are interested in the history of spaceflight, the maps show where various robotic and crewed spacecraft have landed, and the essays provide information on the various spacecraft. Astronomers can use the maps to help plan their observations and better appreciate them afterwards. And of course much of the historical information in the book concerns astronomers' views of the Moon over the years.

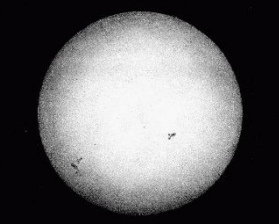
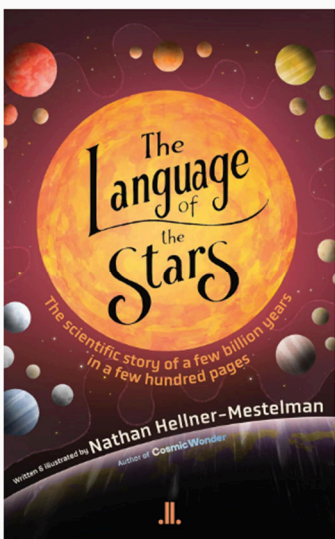
All in all, *Lunar: A History of the Moon in Myths, Maps and Matter* provides a beautiful and useful addition to anyone's library on astronomy, spaceflight history, and cultural history.

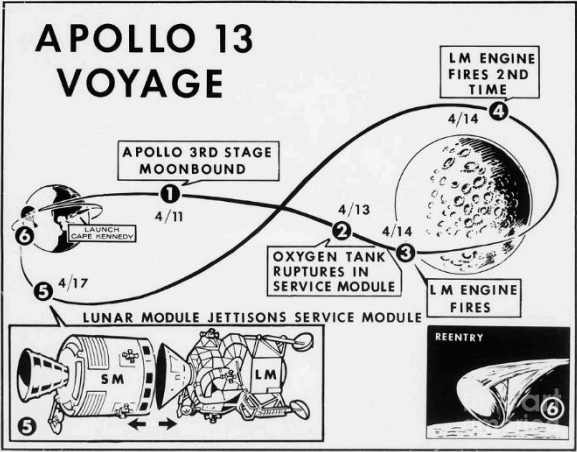


Geologic Map of the Copernicus Quadrangle of the Moon, U.S. Geological Survey, by Schmitt, H.H.; Trask, N.J.; Shoemaker, E.M., 1962.



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

April 2	Fizeau and Foucault take the first photograph of the sun, 1845	
April 3	Happy Birthday RASC Victoria Centre!!! 111 Years since founding	
April 4	Apollo 6, 1968 23:15 First Quarter Moon	
April 6	Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair. Open to General Public 13:00-16:00	
April 7	Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair. Open to General Public 10:00-12:30 19:00 AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom	
April 8	<p>At Bolen Books (Hillside Mall):</p> <div>  </div> <div> <p>Nathan Hellner-Mestelman Tuesday Apr 8th, 2025 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM</p> <p>We are delighted to welcome back science author Nathan Hellner-Mestelman to Bolen Books for the launch of his new book, The Language of the Stars!</p> <p>Following the huge success of his 2024 release, Cosmic Wonder, Nathan returns with another mind-expanding journey through the forces that shape our existence. From molecules to modern society, this book explores the reasons we're alive in this universe—along with every cosmic force trying to end us. Ever wondered what atoms, cells, people, refrigerators, the universe, and beer have in common? Join us on April 8th to find out and support this rising literary talent!</p> <p>This event will be in conversation with CBC's Bob McDonald.</p> </div>	

April 12	<p>21:22 Full Moon</p> <p>Yuri Gagarin, first human in space, 1961</p>
April 14	<p>19:00 AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom</p> <p>Christiaan Huygens, first to explain Saturn's strange appearance as due to "a thin, flat ring, nowhere touching, and inclined to the ecliptic", and so much more, born 1629</p> <p>Apollo 13, pericyynthion, 1970</p> 
April 16	Apollo 16 liftoff, 1972
April 17	Apollo 13 splashdown, 1970
April 20	<p>22:35 Last Quarter Moon</p> <p>Surveyor 3 lands on Moon, 1967</p>
April 21	<p>NO ASTROCAFE! Easter Monday</p> <p>Apollo 16, Orion, lands on the moon, 1972</p>
April 24	Hubble Space Telescope launched, 1990
April 25	Jim Peebles, Canadian cosmologist and Nobel laureate, born 1935
April 26	Shapley-Curtis debate on the nature of the "spiral nebulae", 1920
April 27	<p>Karl Jansky first public announcement of discovery of radio waves from the center of our galaxy, starting the field of radio astronomy, 1930</p> <p>Apollo 16, splashdown, 1972</p> <p>16:31 New Moon</p>
April 28	<p>19:00 AstroCafé hybrid meeting, in person at the Fairfield Community Centre, or on-line on Zoom</p> <p>Eugene Shoemaker, Astrogeologist who trained astronauts how to understand the geology of the moon, born 1928</p>

Director Positions	Name	Email
Past President	Randy Enkin	pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca
President	Dan Posey	president@victoria.rasc.ca
1 st Vice President	Kirsten Pedersen	vp@victoria.rasc.ca
2 nd Vice President	Kevin Bertles	vp2@victoria.rasc.ca
Treasurer	Doug Hardy	treasurer@victoria.rasc.ca
Secretary	Oliver Robinow	secretary@victoria.rasc.ca
Member at Large	David Lee	david@victoria.rasc.ca
Member at Large	Melissa Tupper	
Member at Large	Jeff Pivnick	
Member at Large	Lauri Roche	lauri@victoria.rasc.ca
Member at Large	Alex Schmid	librarian@victoria.rasc.ca
Committee Positions		
Telescopes Loans	Sid Sidhu	telescopes@victoria.rasc.ca
Schools Program/FDAO Liaison	Lauri Roche	schools@victoria.rasc.ca
Light Pollution Abatement	Dave Robinson	
Webmaster	Joe Carr	web@victoria.rasc.ca
Librarian/UVic Liaison	Alex Schmid	librarian@victoria.rasc.ca
SkyNews Editor and Astrocafé Coordinator	Randy Enkin	pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca
Membership Coordinator	Chris Purse	membership@victoria.rasc.ca
National Representative	Bill Weir	nationalrep2@victoria.rasc.ca
National Representative	Lauri Roche	nationalrep@victoria.rasc.ca