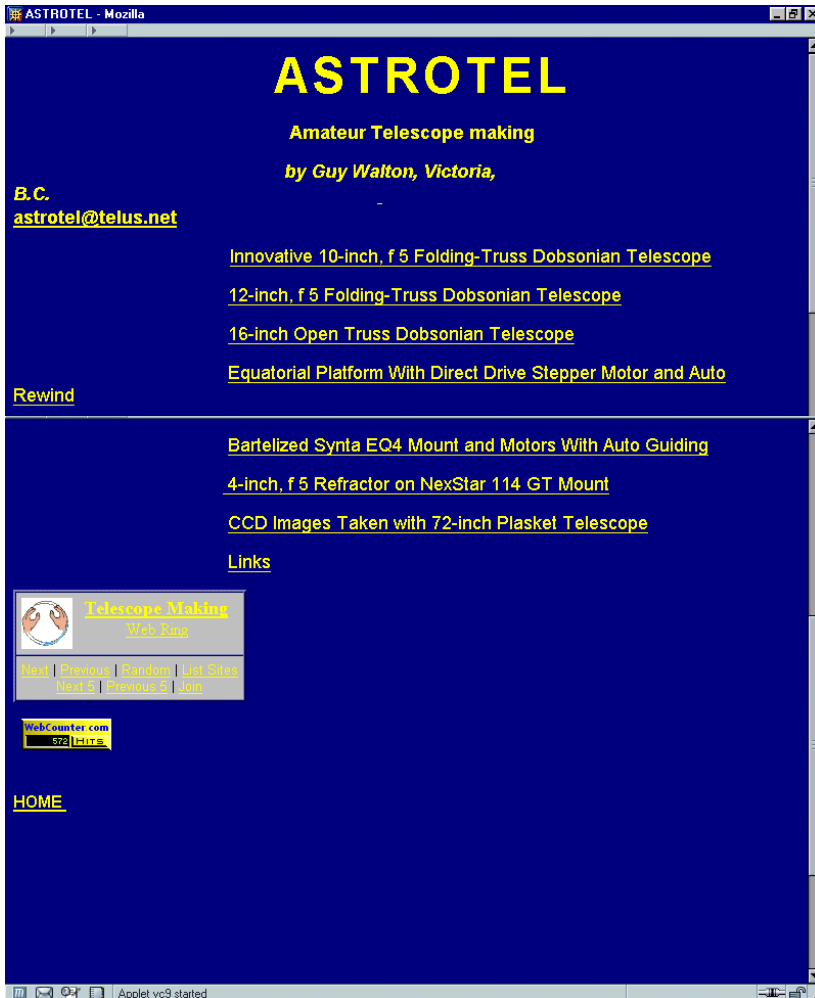


Web Page of the Month

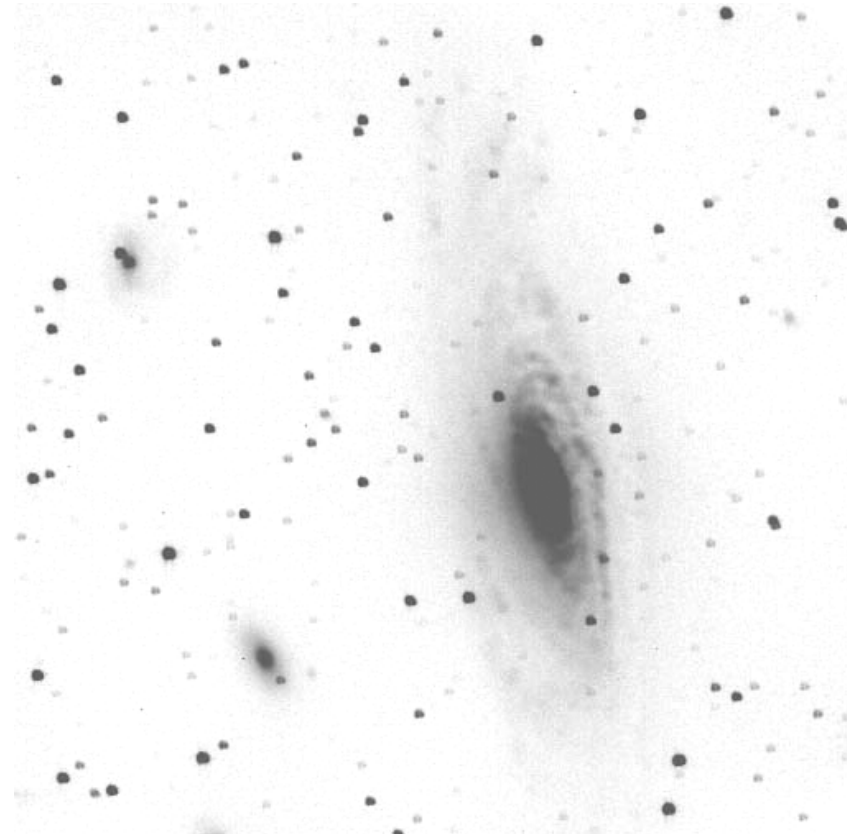


Our very own Guy Walton's web site.

Guy's web site features articles on his projects and has the links you need to get started on your very own project.

<http://www3.telus.net/astrotel/>

SKYNEWS



<http://victoria.rasc.ca/>

This Month

Don Morton

Astro Imaging

Don Morton retired in 2000 as Director General of the Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics of the NRC. He was born in Kapuskasing Ontario in 1933, grew up in Toronto, and joined the RASC in 1952! As a professional astronomer, he has worked in the United States, Australia and Canada making observations from space and from the ground, developing instrumentation and managing research organizations. Following his retirement in 2001 from Canada's National Research Council, he has continued with astronomical research as well as his longtime hobbies of mountaineering and model building.

Please come and join us for an evening of interesting slides on a life dedicated to astronomy.

Cover NGC 7331

It's difficult to believe that over a year has passed since dedicated volunteers had a chance to image with the Plaskett telescope. Here's beautiful NGC 7331. Note the fainter galaxies in the background.

Contact Us On-Line

Web Site: <http://victoria.rasc.ca>

Victoria Council members:

president@victoria.rasc.ca

vp@victoria.rasc.ca

treasurer@victoria.rasc.ca

secretary@victoria.rasc.ca

librarian@victoria.rasc.ca

nationalrep@victoria.rasc.ca

newmembers@victoria.rasc.ca

web@victoria.rasc.ca

General Enquiries:

info@victoria.rasc.ca

RASC Victoria Council

This Month

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1490 Thurlow Road
Victoria, BC V8S 1L9
380-6358
cgainor@islandnet.com

Vice President: Bruno Quenneville
477-2257
brunoq@shaw.ca

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Sidney, BC V8L 4Z8
656-2396
lroche@shaw.ca

Secretary and Recorder:
Li-Anne Dorrance
lidorrance@aol.com

Honourary President:
George Ball

Librarian & Telescopes:
Sid Sidhu
J.S._Sidhu@telus.net
Past President and
National Representative:
David Lee
479-5187

David_Lee@telus.net
Skynews Editor: Sandy Barta
Website Editor: Joe Carr
Email list: Joe Carr
web@victoria.rasc.ca

Members at Large:
Bill Almond, Jim Hesser,
Ed Maxfield, Frank Ogonoski,
Blair Pellatt, Colin Scarfe,
Rich Willis

New Members Liason:
Sandy Barta

NEW!



Astronomy Cafe

At Bruno Quenneville's
2019 Casa Marcia Crescent,
Victoria, BC.
Call 477-2257 for more information or
directions.

Newcomers are most welcome.
Come and enjoy!

Feb 18

Back by Popular Demand
Every 3rd Wednesday
Astro Imaging at
Bill Almond's

354 Benhomer Drive
478-6718

Feb 25

Council Meeting

7:30 pm

Uvic, Physics and Astronomy Lounge
Everyone welcome

Feb 27

New Observer's Group
At Sid Sidhu's:

1642 Davies Road (off Millstream
Lake Road) at 8:00 PM.
Call 391-0540 for more information or
directions

Mar 10

March Meeting

7:30 pm

Uvic, Elliott 060

Yes, We post important,
timely, member-related
news to our email list.

Online information about the RASCVic
and Skynews email lists:

<http://victoria.rasc.ca/>
click on: 'Members Only'

Observatory tie

If anyone is interested in having a hand cross-stitched "Observatory tie" like Jim Hesser was wearing at the RASC annual dinner please contact Mary-Clare Carder at 380-3838 or Carders@telus.net



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President's Message

The Victoria Centre Council is dealing with many important issues that relate to our great past, and more importantly to our future.

At our most recent council meeting, we officially named Bill Almond our Centre Historian and accepted his proposal to celebrate our Centre's 90th anniversary at our March members' meeting.

For our future, council decided to proceed with plans to expand our outreach efforts by purchasing imaging and projection equipment to better show the wonders of the universe to our members and to the general public.

Council is also working on some important questions that certainly interest many members, and we want to have your input. Our Honorary President, George Ball, is generously offering his astronomical equipment to the Centre, and we are in the process of looking at this equipment and deciding how best to use it.

Much of George's equipment is attached to a permanent mount in his observatory. If we are to use this astronomical equipment, we will have to move it to another permanent site.

While council is considering storing this astronomical equipment for a time, we need to have some discussions about a permanent observation site for the centre. Two possibilities are to locate these telescopes at the DAO or at Pearson College, but these two locations have downsides as well as upsides.

Many members have talked about setting up a new observing site wholly owned or controlled by the centre. If we are to have such a site, we have several important issues to deal with.

First is the question of purchasing a site. If we take this route, we will have to raise money, and that will involve a major commitment of time and effort by

(Continued on page 4)

The deadline for the next issue of *Skynews* is

February 28 2004

Get your *Skynews* early and in colour. Tell Lauri, our Treasurer, that you get *Skynews* on line and we

President's Message Continued

many members. Choosing a site involves many thorny questions including price, convenience of access, and the quality of sky in the area.

Then there are questions such as site security, and the management of observatory construction and operation. These will involve ongoing commitments of time and work by members. And solutions will require a strong measure of good will, because the answers to these questions will not please everyone.

We will keep members in touch with our decisions about George's equipment. All members of council want to hear whether or not you believe that this is the time to begin work on a new Centre observatory, or whether we should consider other alternatives.

Chris Gainor



90th Anniversary

On March 6, the Victoria Centre will be 90 years old. Council has decided that our regular March meeting on March 10 will honour this milestone with a special lecture by our Centre Historian, Bill Almond. As well, we will have cake and coffee in the meeting room to celebrate this anniversary.

Bill is a past president of our Centre who is writing the history of the Victoria Centre. Last fall, he was the recipient of the Newton-Ball Award for his service to this Centre.

The Victoria Centre held its founding meeting on March 6, 1914, and the following month, the national council of the RASC welcomed the new Centre to the fold.

We urge all members to join us at this anniversary meeting. We are extending a special invitation to the staff of the DAO and the faculty and students of the UVic Physics and Astronomy Department.

Chris Gainor

Address Change? Information Incorrect?

Telephone: (416) 924-7973 (toll-free at (888) 924-RASC in Canada)
Fax: (416) 924-2911
E-Mail: mempub@rasc.ca Website: www.rasc.ca
Postal Mail: RASC, 136 Dupont Street, Toronto, ON M5R 1V2, Canada
General enquiries: nationaloffice@rasc.ca

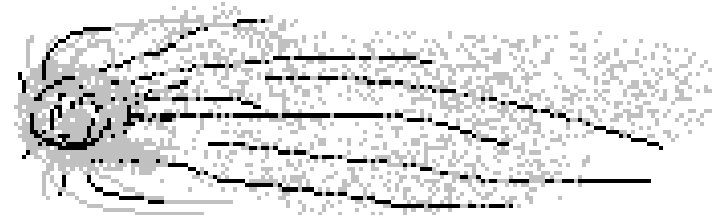
Malahat Range

On the way over the Malahat the other day, I stopped in at the fish and game site to confirm the procedure for RASC members to use the facility. There is a new caretaker by the name of Jim Goddard who seems like a nice guy and very sympathetic to our use of the site. If you want to put this in the newsletter, here's the drill:

Call the fax/info line at 478-2411 for the upcoming schedule. Our observing field is the shotgun range. If there's nothing scheduled, send a fax informing him that you're coming. Include a contact number in case it's not OK to come up. If you don't hear from him, show up before the gates are closed at dusk. Self register at the board below the caretaker's house; the user fee is \$10 per person. Check in with Jim and let him know if you're staying overnight or going home.

There is a security light on a pole in the middle parking lot - this has a switch about ten feet up that can be turned off with a stick. Jim will turn off any lights in the clubhouse. If he's not there when you arrive, just go ahead and set up and he'll catch up with you later.

John Adlington.



Request

As I slowly chew my way through the Centre's history based on old local records and the RASC's Annual Reports, there's a puzzling discrepancy...as most of you already know, what's missing are photographs. There are almost none at all, which makes me wonder whether anyone in the Victoria Centre even owned a camera for 50 or 60 years! I checked out the library at the DAO but, naturally, their pictures are mostly professional ones made at the time the Plaskett scope was built and a succession of their top brasses. Sid says there are no photos in his files. Fortunately, our more recent history is well documented, which brings me to the point: It would be great if **any** Centre pictures in your possession could be given or emailed to me for perusal and possible use. Content info with dates, places and names is very important, if it's available, as is other Centre memorabilia concerning special events, etc.

Bill Almond

Upcoming Meetings

March 10 2004

Our March meeting will be an evening of celebration—it's our Centre's 90 Birthday. Mr. Bill Almond, Member at Large and our society's historian will deliver a special presentation showing highlights since 1914. We will serve coffee and birthday cake. The meeting will be in Room 060 of the Elliott Building as usual.

April 14 2004

The April meeting will be held at the Centre of the Universe, Dr. Jim Hesser and the Centre of the Universes' new manager, Jacqueline Porter, will present a rundown of this coming season's programs at the Centre of the Universe.

May June and beyond

Mr. John-Willis Ellinson and his wife Sarah, both teaching at Uvic, have offered to meet with our members. Both John and Sarah are Astronomers and their experiences in England, Chile, etc. should prove to be most interesting, SteveCortin, RASC member, has prepared a visual presentation on Cosmology and Astronomy. More on these coming soon.

Astrophoto Contest

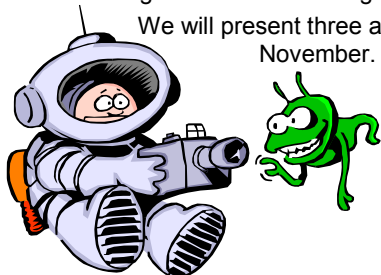
At our January meeting, members night, I announced that we would be having an Astrophoto Contest.

The format can be film, digital, web-cam or CCD. Please send all of your pictures to Bruno, the Vice President.

The deadline is October 15th. Send as many pictures as you wish—there are no limits to the number you may submit. By September, a Council review committee will begin to review the images.

We will present three awards at our Annual General meeting in November.

Bruno Quenneville



General Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2004 at UVic

The Regular Monthly Meeting of the Victoria Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, which took place at the University of Victoria, commenced at 7:30 p.m. with President Chris Gainor presiding. Around 50 people attended.

Welcome: Chris Gainor welcomed everyone.

Chris spoke of recent events on Mars, including the Spirit Rover.

Library and Telescopes: Sid Sidhu informed members of the new library rule that members return overdue books before borrowing any others. The new books that were presented at the last meeting are now available in the library, which will be open after the meeting. Sid also mentioned that so far 25 schools have booked for the school programs this year but that none were planned for this month. Sid announced that Astronomy Day will be held on April 24 at the Royal BC Museum with new and exciting exhibits and asked that any interested volunteers contact Sandy Barta. He mentioned that ideas on how to spend the money from the BC Gaming Commission will be discussed at the next council meeting. Lastly, Sid mentioned that new members could borrow the center telescopes to try different types before deciding which telescope to buy.

Council Meeting: Chris announced that the next council meeting would be held on January 28 at 7:30pm in the Elliot Building 4th Floor Lounge. Members are welcome to take part.

Notices: Chris informed the members that www.spaceweather.com has published the Moon Halo photo taken by Joe Carr and reproduced on the cover of Sky News. Chris also informed members that Guy Walton had an article published in the February issue of Sky & Telescope.

Treasurers Report: Lauri Roche reported the account total is \$9273.09, that this account earns no interest and loses \$5.00 a month if the BC Gaming Commission money is not spent. Lauri mentioned that the annual dinner lost \$300.00, which is comparable to other years. The 2 page report will be posted on the website. Lauri answered questions informing members it would cost \$39.99US (~\$54.00 CDN) to renew Sky and Telescope Magazine, and that no reduced rates were offered for Astronomy Magazine. Lauri mentioned she could order more calendars and they could arrive in 10 days.

New Members: Visitors and new members at the meeting were welcomed by Chris and asked to join the group for coffee on the 4th floor.

Other News: Jim Hesser announced the hiring of a New Manager for the Center of the Universe. Jaclyn Porter is from Ontario and has experience in marketing. She was the Chief Interpreter in Yoho National Park, she worked for Heri-

(Continued on page 6)

General Meeting Minutes Continued

tage Canada reviewing grant applications, she ran a private business, and owned 65 llamas.

Bruno Quenneville introduced participants for the **evening program**

Members were treated to a 20-minute video on the recent lunar eclipse filmed by **Doug McCormick**, a retired camera man for CTV who now lives on the Gulf Islands. To view his still shots visit www.dvstills.com or www.oceanfootage.com. He has also produced a one-hour DVD set to music.

Joe Carr presented his images of the recent Moon Halo and entertained numerous questions on camera type and set up, exposure lengths, and processing of the digital images.

Brian Robillard displayed his colourful red and green digital images of an Aurora from last November, and images of the recent eclipse of the moon. He also entertained questions and mentioned using the camera self timer to steady the camera if the remote is no where to be found!

David Lee has written an article on how to take eclipse shots which is available on the website.

Blair displayed two astrophotos created by his daughter Andrea. He mentioned how important it is to spark an interest in children in astronomy through public outreach programs and asked that any volunteers interested in sidewalk astronomy contact him.

Bruno presented the back to basics approach to astrophotography. Amazing results may be achieved by using simple, inexpensive technology. A manual camera with a T-ring and a T-ring adaptor can be set to the prime focus on the telescope with a roll of 400 ASA film. A focus aid on the viewfinder can magnify the view to aid in focusing. When processing the film the subject matter of the film should be mentioned and the film should not be cut. Often scans to disk of the images are available as well as the prints. Resources include books, online newsgroups and Bill Almond's astrophotography.

A photo contest will be announced at a later date with the winner awarded a prize at the AGM.

John Adlington passed around 4 photos of the moon.

The meeting ended at 9:03pm

*Li-Ann Dorrance
Secretary / Recorder*



Saturday Night (Jan. 24/04)

Many thanks goes out to Bill Weir and Guy Walton for their efforts and enthusiasm in making the nighttime observing sessions at Pearson College Observing the nighttime wonders using Jack Newton's legacy "the Nomad" telescope is an experience which all our members should try and experience!

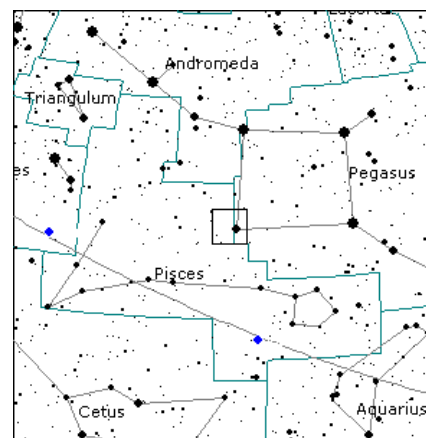
Saturday night's session was no exception. Memorable sites for me were: The Great Nebula in Orion—the veins of gas and the myriad of very tiny young stars mixed within the nebula look like diamonds; Messier 46—with its "companion" planetary nebula (in 3D); the planet Saturn—equatorial belts, the elusive crepe ring—floating in a "sea of stars "; the planet Jupiter—I "swear" that you could detect the Jovian Storms which form the equatorial belts; Messier 82—the VERY peculiar nucleus—was riveting; Messier 51—the delicate pinwheel arms floated in the eyepiece.

This was a night to remember! It can't get much better than this!

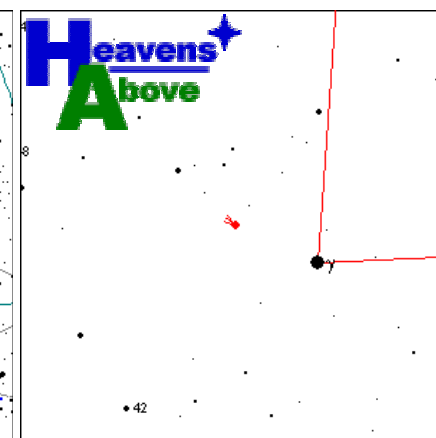
Thanks Bill and Guy

P.S. Comet LINEAR(C/2002T7) is alive and well in Pisces and if you know where to look you can see it with bino's.

Blaire Pellatt



Coarse finder chart
(60° field-of-view, stars to mag. 6.5)



Fine finder chart
(5° field-of-view, stars to mag. 9.0)

All data valid for local time 10:57:32, 08 Feb (UTC 18:57:32, 08 Feb)

<http://www.heavens-above.com/>

Report from the C.U. Continued

Mars has been in the spot light over the past month with the success of the NASA rovers. Wonderful pictures are being sent back daily from "Spirit" and "Opportunity". Mars can still be viewed over Victorian skies in the West. Look for the orange star above the horizon around 8 pm. While you are looking for Mars, you will run into Venus. The amazingly bright "Evening Star" just above the western horizon, is our closest neighbour. Right now, Venus is the brightest object, other than the moon, in the night sky. To continue planet watching, look high to the southeast to discover a triangle of yellow stars. The two stars perpendicular to the horizon are Castor and Pollux, the heads of the Gemini twins. The third "star" is actually the planet Saturn. Jupiter, the king of our solar system, can also be seen shining brightly just above the eastern horizon. Turn your binoculars, or a small telescope, towards Jupiter and you will be able to see four of Jupiter's 61 moons. The Galilean moons, Io, Europa, Callisto and Ganymede, shine brightly beside Jupiter.

Look to the south at 8 pm to see the large hourglass of Orion the hunter. Just below Orion, you will find a very bright yellow star. This is Sirius, the brightest star in our skies. Sirius sits in the constellations Canis Major, or the big dog. Towards the east you will see a sign that spring is on its way. Just above the eastern horizon, search out the giant backwards "question mark". This is the head of Leo, the lion, a spring constellation. In the northeast, the Big Dipper is still standing on its handle. Use the upper two stars in the bucket to draw a line towards the west and you will run into Polaris, our north star. As you watch the sky over an evening, you will see this star stays still while all the other stars rotate around it.

Clear skies and happy stargazing!
Cassie



Astronomy Cafe

Yes, the Astronomy Cafe is moving back to Victoria! Bruno Quenneville, Vice President, will host an informal get together at his home every Monday evening from 7:30 till ?? Bruno's address is 2019 Casa Marcia Crescent, Victoria.

Bruno's house is located in darkest Gordon Head off Ferndale Avenue. His place is a little difficult to find so check your city map.

You'll enjoy coffee, good cookies and great friends. We'll have a few scopes on hand and will do some viewing when conditions warrant. Everybody welcome. Note, I do plan on taking a pause in July and August. Phone me at 477-2257 if you have any questions. **Clearer skies ahead.**



Flying in Formation

You can almost see the tabloid headlines now: "Mid-west farmer spies UFO squadron flying in formation!" "First signs of imminent alien invasion," the subtitle will read.

If only this fictional farmer had been keeping up with NASA's Space Place column, he would have known better. The string of white dots moving in formation across the pre-dawn sky were satellites, not alien spaceships.

Beginning next year, a series of challenging, high-precision launches will insert four satellites into orbits with just the right altitude, position, and orbital inclination to follow in lock-step behind NASA's Aqua satellite (launched in May 2002). Scientists have dubbed this squadron of satellites the "A-Train." Along with Aqua, the celestial parade will include Cloudsat, CALIPSO, PARASOL, and Aura.

In April 2004, NASA will launch CloudSat, an Earth-observing satellite with unique cloud-measurement abilities. These measurements will fill an important role in our understanding of global climate change, making long-term climate change scenarios more accurate and dependable.

So why bother flying in formation? By passing over the same swath of land within seconds or minutes of each other, the satellites will give scientists snapshots of essentially the same scene using a total of 14 different measuring instruments. CloudSat alone carries only one: a millimetre-wavelength radar sounder.

This sounder-the first of its kind put into orbit-lets scientists see a vertical "slice" of the atmosphere that shows clouds, water, and ice between the ground and 30 km altitude, with a vertical resolution of 0.5 km. Even by itself, this instrument would provide an important and unique view of Earth's atmosphere, since the accurate portrayal of clouds is one of the glaring weaknesses with current simulations of climate change.

But this cloud data is even more valuable when combined with measurements from the other satellites in the A-Train-for example, air temperature, trace gases, and radiation into and out of the atmosphere. Scientists can then see connections between, say, temperature and the resulting behavior of clouds. A better understanding of these connections is one of the most sought-after goals

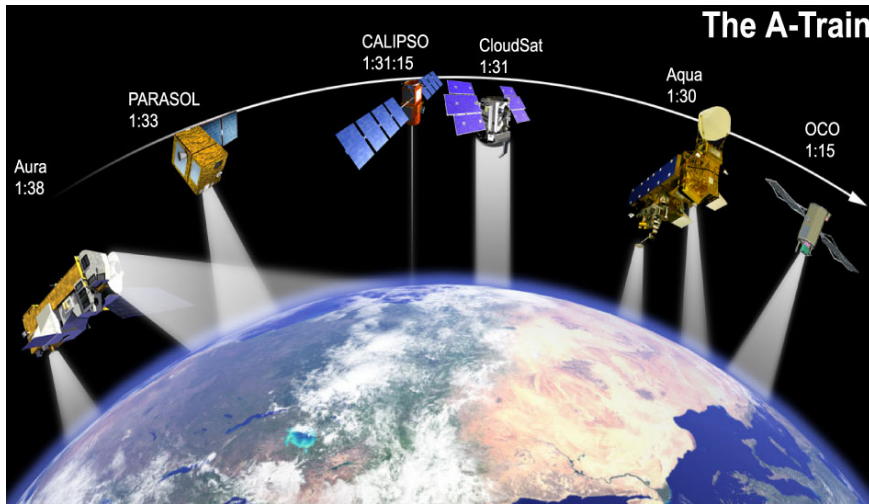
(Continued on page 8)

The Space Place Continued

of climate research, because changes to global cloud cover would, in turn, have a feedback effect on global temperatures.

The real story of this satellite squadron may not make the tabloid headlines, but at least there's evidence that the imminent threat of climate change is real, which is a lot more than you can say for alien invaders!

Learn more about CloudSat and the A-Train at cloudsat.atmos.colostate.edu . Kids (and grownups) can do interactive cloud picture scrambles and learn "Cloudspeak" (the names of different kinds of clouds) at The Space Place, spaceplace.nasa.gov/cloudsat_puz.htm .



CloudSat, to be launched in November 2004, will take its place as part of the "A-Train" of satellites flying in formation to take closely timed snapshots of essentially the same scene using a total of 14 different measuring instruments.

Some great places to send kids (and adults who like to play like kids!):

Blast off to a Mars Adventure at: http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/mars_rocket.htm

Tails of Wonder (Stardust) at: <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/stardust/index.shtml>

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Report from the Centre of the Universe

Hello everyone!

I hope you are enjoying this wonderful February! Here is what's coming up at the Centre of the Universe!

The Centre is open Tuesday to Saturday 10 am to 5:30 pm. We offer great programming during the day, so come up to join us! Also, don't forget about our school programs! Check out:

http://www.hia-ihc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/cu/teacher_e.html

We are pleased to offer our introductory astronomy courses at the Centre of the Universe. Winter Skies, a three evening course, runs on February 16th, 23rd and March 1st, 2004. We will introduce you to the winter sky and focus on many aspects of our solar system. For more information, please visit:

http://www.hia-ihc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/cu/astr_e.html

To register, please call the Centre at 363.8262

The Centre of the Universe is pleased to host our "Saturn—the Real Lord of the Rings" event on **Saturday February 21st, 2004 from 7 to 11 pm**. As part of NASA's Saturn Observation campaign, we will explore the wonders of Saturn including the history of Saturn exploration and the upcoming Cassini mission which will arrive at the ringed planet in July. We will focus our small telescopes on Saturn as well as other beautiful winter objects. Please note, we do not have access to the 1.8 m Plaskett telescope this evening. Visit:

http://www.hia-ihc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/cu/saturn_e.html

and

<http://soc.jpl.nasa.gov/index.cfm> <<http://soc.jpl.nasa.gov/index.cfm>

for more information! I look forward to seeing you all there!

The Sky This Month: February 2004

February 2	Groundhog Day
February 6	Full Moon
February 13	Last Quarter
February 14	Valentines Day 20
February 20	New Moon
February 27	First Quarter
February 29	Leap Day

2004 is a leap year! Leap years are needed so that our calendar is in alignment with the Earth's motion around the sun. Most people think of a year to be 365 days. Actually, a year, or the time it takes the Earth to make one complete orbit around the sun, is 365.25 days! Every four years, a "Leap Day" must be added to synchronize our seasons with the calendar. The practice of adding a "Leap Day" was introduced back in 46BC by Julius Caesar.

(Continued on page 10)