

# SRynews



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

*This Month*

**Laura Ferrarese**

**Super-massive Black Holes and Galaxies**

Laura received her PhD in 1996 at Johns Hopkins University, working with Holland Ford on morphology and dynamics of elliptical galaxies. She then moved to Caltech for a postdoc, then to Rutgers, in New Jersey, where she stayed as an associate professor until September 2004, when she moved to Victoria's HIA. Here, she is a "senior research officer". Her research focus is the study of the shape and kinematics of elliptical galaxies and determining the "overall scale" of the Universe by measuring Cepheid distances to nearby galaxies.

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*On the Cover!*

**Local aliens**

Just when you thought it was safe to go out at night... David took this photo on one of those silly evenings at the Centre of the Universe that are populated by volunteers and other strange creatures.

*Photo by David Lee*



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*Contact Us On-Line*

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

**Victoria Council members:**

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**General Enquiries:**

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*President's Message*

I'm looking forward to April. Not only will the wildflowers be out, and some of my favorite birds will back in town after their winter vacation; I get to set-up my telescope at the Centre of the Universe!

A big part of the experience is the chance to show visitors the stars. To listen to the squeals of delight when they figure out that's really Saturn they're looking at; to help them discover where the Ring Nebula hides in Lyra; to be cloaked in their awed silence when they realize how long starlight from the Andromeda Galaxy has been traveling to reach them.

I also go to enjoy the company of our fellow amateurs that regularly set-up on the summit of Observatory Hill. It's an entertaining collection of people. Some, who are just starting out, are there to pick-up pointers on how to get the most out of their new telescopes. They don't realize that I get as much from them as they remind me what it was like to see M13 for the first time. Some come to test-out their new equipment—and I get the chance to tryout all the different types of telescopes my next scope could be. I get practical experience on the difference between long focal lengths and short; refractor and reflectors; Telrads and Rigel Finders; Go to and push to...

Most of all I go for the ghosts. In the silent spinning of the great white dome I'm reminded of all the astronomers that reached back into space and time to unravel the story of the Universe from this site. JS Plaskett and Pearce confirmed the rotation and size of our galaxy; McKellar discovered molecules (including organic ones) in interstellar space; Beals showed that interstellar matter is clumpy not spread evenly through space; and in the search for potentially hazardous near-earth asteroids the Plaskett Telescope has played a vital role.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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*Address Change? Information Incorrect?*

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E-Mail: [mempub@rasc.ca](mailto:mempub@rasc.ca)

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Postal Mail: RASC, 136 Dupont Street, Toronto, ON M5R 1V2, Canada

General enquiries: [nationaloffice@rasc.ca](mailto:nationaloffice@rasc.ca)

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The deadline for the next issue of *Skynews* is

**April 22 2005**

Get your *Skynews* early and in colour.

Tell Joe Carr ([vp2@victoria.rasc.ca](mailto:vp2@victoria.rasc.ca)) that you want to get *Skynews* online and we won't mail you a copy

## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA • VICTORIA CENTRE

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*(President's Message Continued from page 3)*

The creaking of the shutters doors of the Plaskett dome remind me of the squeals all the pajama clad kids that scrambled up rickety ladders to peer through the eyepiece of what was once the largest telescope in the world. Saturday public telescope viewing has been part of the DAO since the telescope's completion in 1918.

How many chances to you have to be part of history? Each Saturday I set-up my telescope I continue a tradition that began 87 years ago.

Feel free to join the fun yourself (if you don't already). Saturday public viewing (from 7 – 11 pm) begins in April and lasts until the end of October. If Saturdays don't work for you, the CU expands their night time hours to 7 days a week from May 21 to September 30.

Scott

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### *General Meeting Minutes*

#### **March 9, 2005at 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 pm with President Scott Mair presiding. 61 people attended.

**Welcome:** President, Scott Mair welcomed those present. Scott also welcomed two new members.

**Library and Telescopes:** Sid Sidhu informed members that the library would be open after the meeting. Scott mentioned that the new loan policies for all Centre equipment will be soon posted on the members section of the web-site.

**School Telescopes Report:** Sid requested that anyone interested in participating in the March 11 telescope viewing at Rogers School should contact him by email or phone if you wish to participate.

**Astronomy Day:** Sid gave a brief review of the Astronomy Day activities. Sandy invited members to make use of the volunteer sign up information in the most recent edition of Skynews. Scott Mair presented the Astronomy Day posters (thanks to Brenda Stuart for her efforts in producing the poster) and invited members to take copies and post them where possible.

**Treasurers Report:** David reported the balance for the Gaming Account is \$5700.00 and the General Revenue Account is in excess of \$3000.00.

**GA Meeting in May:** On behalf of David Lee, Joe reviewed some of the discussion occurring at the National level regarding the issue of fee increases. Joe encouraged members to review the discussion posted on the National web-site and to let their feelings be known at the GA.

*(Continued on page 5)*

## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA • VICTORIA CENTRE

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*(Continued from page 4)*

Joe also mentioned that David was developing a presentation on the Victoria Centre to be presented at the GA and any member wishing to contribute should contact David.

**Light Pollution Committee:** Scott reminded members that the centre is active in encouraging local government to reduce light pollution through the efforts of Bill Almond and Sid Sidhu. Bill will be stepping down from this responsibility and an invitation was extended to members wishing to be more involved in reducing light pollution in our communities to contact Sid.

**From the Floor:** Frank Ogonoski and Rich Willis announced the dates for the summer star parties (The Island Star Party 10th anniversary July 1 to 3, 2005; RASC 5th anniversary, on the Labour Day weekend) will be held at the Victoria Fish and Game Club. \$15.00 Single, \$20.00 Family and will include lectures, door prizes and a lot of good viewing. Guy Walton asked if they would be listed in Sky and Telescope and Rich confirmed that it would and that he was working to have them listed in other astronomy magazines.

Bruno Quenneville reminded members that regular Saturday star parties at the Centre of the Universe begin again April 2nd. All those wishing to participate are welcome.

**Evening Program:** Bruno reviewed the upcoming speakers and introduced Constantine Thomas, planetary scientist from the Institute of Ocean Sciences who gave a fascinating and detailed account of the results to date of the Cassini mission to Saturn.

**The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm**

*Scot Mair, recorder, for Li-Ann Dorrance*

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### *Star Party*

Great news! The 5th Annual (yes it's actually been 5 years) RASCal's Star Party will be held at the Victoria Fish and Game Club on Sept 2nd, 3rd and 4th 2005 (Labor Day weekend). I will be holding a Star Party meeting with-in the next month to start planning. Being on the long weekend should afford people from out of town to attend.

*More news soon! Rich*

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### *Web site*

Nowegian amateur Mikkel Steine's [www.messier45.com](http://www.messier45.com) is certainly worth exploring.

*John Cheng on the National RASC email list*

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## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA • VICTORIA CENTRE

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### *RASC Victoria Centre Library Loan Program Policy*

The Victoria Centre owns a large number of books, magazines, and maps for use by its members. These items are housed in the Centre library, located on the fourth floor of the Elliot Building at the University of Victoria. Members are strongly encouraged to borrow these items after regular monthly meetings.

#### **Conditions for borrowing items from the Centre's Library:**

- You must be a member in good standing of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Victoria Centre.
- You must notify the Librarian of any change of address or telephone number.
- Items borrowed must be returned at the next scheduled monthly meeting unless further arrangements are made.
- Items must be returned in the same condition in which they were when taken.
- A member abusing this policy will be denied further access to the Centre's library.

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### *RASC Victoria Centre Telescope Loan Program Policy*

The Victoria Centre owns a number of telescopes for use by its members. These telescopes range from a 60 mm refractor to a 500 mm reflector. Any member may borrow a telescope from the Centre for a period of up to one month.

#### **Conditions for borrowing an instrument:**

- You must be a member in good standing of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Victoria Centre.
- You must notify the Director of Telescopes of any change of address or telephone number.
- The instrument must be returned to the Director of Telescopes within one month of receiving it, unless further arrangements are made.
- Members must take the care necessary to avoid damage when transporting and using the Centre's instrument, and must return the instrument in the same condition in which it was received.
- Any member abusing this policy will be denied further access to the Centre's instruments and equipment.

*RASC Victoria Centre  
Data Projector & Astrovid Camera  
Loan Program Policy*

The purpose of this equipment is to promote Astronomy among a sector of the community with physical disabilities who would otherwise have difficulty participating fully in enjoyment of the night sky.

**The following priorities will be applied when we lend the Data Projector:**

- Astronomy for People with Disabilities.
- Monthly meetings.
- Astronomy Day/Star Parties.

**The following priorities will be applied when we lend the Astrovid Camera and accessories:**

- Astronomy for People with Disabilities.
- Special observing sessions, such as lunar eclipses, meteor showers, occultation timings, etc.

**Conditions for borrowing equipment:**

- You must be a member in good standing of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Victoria Centre.
- You must notify the Chairperson of the loan program of any change in address or telephone number.
- The equipment must be returned to the Chairperson, when so directed.
- Members must take the care necessary to avoid damage when transporting and using the Centre's equipment and must return the equipment in the same condition in which it was received.
- Any-member abusing this policy will be denied further access to the Centre's instruments or equipment.

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*Cool links  
from the RASC National email list*

ADOS—Optical Design Software (shareware):  
<http://www.diginaut.com/shareware/ados/screen.htm>

From the University of California-Berkeley Astronomy Archives:  
COSMOS IN A COMPUTER. Start with the Cosmic Mystery Tour  
<http://archive.ncsa.uiuc.edu/Cyberia/Cosmos/CosmosCompHome.html>



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### ***Utterly Alien***

There's a planet in our solar system so cold that in winter its nitrogen atmosphere freezes and falls to the ground. The empty sky becomes perfectly clear, jet-black even at noontime. You can see thousands of stars. Not one twinkles.

The brightest star in the sky is the Sun, so distant and tiny you could eclipse it with the head of a pin. There's a moon, too, so big you couldn't blot it out with your entire hand. Together, moonlight and sunshine cast a twilight glow across the icy landscape revealing ... what? Twisted spires, craggy mountains, frozen volcanoes?

No one knows, because no one has ever been to Pluto.

"Pluto is an alien world," says Alan Stern of the Southwest Research Institute in Colorado. "It's the only planet never visited or photographed by NASA space probes."

That's about to change. A robot-ship called New Horizons is scheduled to blast off for Pluto in January 2006. It's a long journey: More than 6 billion kilometers (about 3.7 billion miles). New Horizons won't arrive until 2015.

"I hope we get there before the atmosphere collapses," says Stern, the mission's principal investigator. Winter is coming, and while it's warm enough now for Pluto's air to float, it won't be for long. Imagine seeing a planet's atmosphere collapse. New Horizons might!

"This is a flyby mission," notes Stern. "Slowing the spacecraft down to orbit Pluto would burn more fuel than we can carry." New Horizons will glide past the planet furiously snapping pictures. "Our best images will resolve features the size of a house," Stern says.

The cameras will also target Pluto's moon, Charon. Charon is more than half the size of Pluto, and the two circle one another only 19,200 kilometers (12,000 miles) apart. (For comparison, the Moon is 382,400 kilometers [239,000 miles] from Earth.) No wonder some astronomers call the pair a "double planet."

Researchers believe that Pluto and Charon were created billions of years ago by some terrific impact, which split a bigger planet into two smaller ones. This idea is supported by the fact that Pluto and Charon spin on their sides like sib-

*(Continued on page 9)*



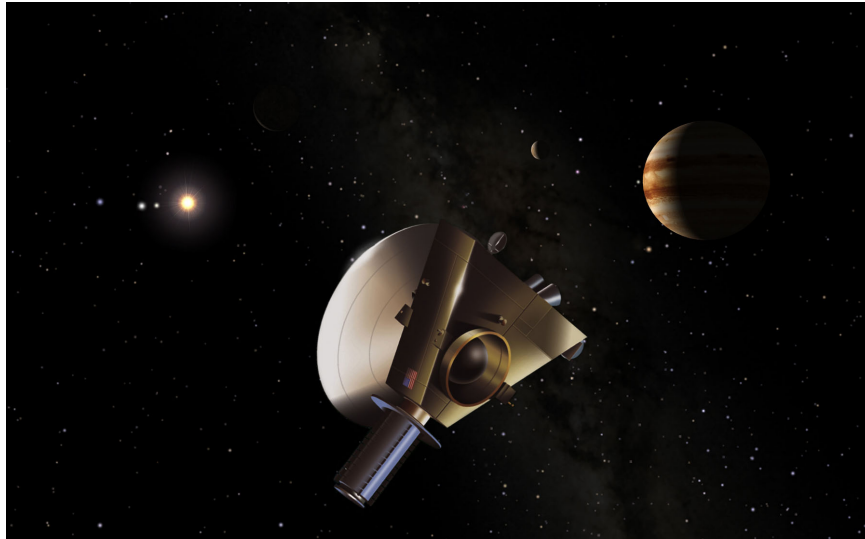
*(Utterly Alien continued from page 8)*

ling worlds knocked askew.

Yet there are some curious differences: Pluto is bright; Charon is darker. Pluto is covered with frozen nitrogen; Charon by frozen water. Pluto has an atmosphere; Charon might not. "These are things we plan to investigate," says Stern. Two worlds. So alike, yet so different. So utterly alien. Stay tuned for New Horizons.

Find out more about the New Horizons mission at [pluto.jhuapl.edu/](http://pluto.jhuapl.edu/).

Kids can learn amazing facts about Pluto at [spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/pluto](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/pluto).



New Horizons spacecraft.

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

*2005 GA —Oranagan*

**Victoria Day long weekend—May 19-23 2005**

<http://www.rasc.ca:8080/rasc>

Everyone should be receiving their RASC Annual Report shortly. Inside you will find a Proxy Form for this year's General Assembly. Those of you that subscribe to the RASC National Email Distribution List will have noticed a lively discussion on member fee increases. Much of the Society's income has been derived from its publications that are sold to the US market. With the rising Canadian dollar, this has substantially changed our income. Reducing costs of publication by going electronic with the Journal has been suggested. Fundraising and voluntary donations have also been suggested.

The motion, as of this writing, is as follows:

Moved that the membership fees of the Society be changed as follows:

- Ordinary members—increased from \$50 to \$55
- Youth members—increased from \$31.25 to \$34.25
- Life members—increased from \$1000 to \$1100

The new fees will become effective at such time as determined by the Executive Committee, but no later than required by the by-laws."

Note that the exact wording and additional considerations will not be available until you receive it in the Annual Report. You may be able to access it from the 'Members Only' section of the National Office's website <http://www.rasc.ca> once the mailing is underway (I believe it will be posted there at that time). I encourage everyone to consider the issues surrounding the motions and supply me with your signed proxy form indicating how you wish me to vote if you will not be attending the GA.

*David Lee*

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*2005 GA —Our Participation*

RASC Victoria Centre is planning on a short presentation of our activities at the GA in Kelowna. Please let me know if you have any suggestions for what we could cover. So far, I have:

Saturday Nights at the Centre of the Universe  
Astronomy Café                      Astronomy Day at the RBCM  
Pearson College                      School Telescope Program  
Sidewalk Astronomy                  Crescent Moon Kayaking  
Special Events

*David Lee*

## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA • VICTORIA CENTRE

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### *Centre of the Universe*

The Centre of the Universe is now into our Summer Season, which means evening openings!

Until the long weekend in May, we will be open every Saturday night. We will be open every night of the week for public observation from the May long weekend through to the end of September! Join us weekly for special events and themes throughout the summer months! Also, in the evening, our programming will be expanded to include Science Shows in our gallery and Product Demonstrations. Please note we will be implementing a new night-time fee, listed below. Our annual passes are a great value—by purchasing one, you will have entrance to any or all of the evenings we are open:

April 1 to May 20:	10:00am – 6:00 pm (Sunday to Friday) 10:00am – 11:00pm (Saturday)
May 21 to September 30:	1:00pm – 11:00pm, 7 days a week (closed in the mornings, except for private group tours)

#### Admission Rates

Daytime:	Adults \$9.00 Seniors/Students (13 to 18 or with card) \$8.00 Youth (4 to 12) \$5.00 Children under 4 with parent FREE Families \$23.00
Nighttime (7 to 11pm)	Adults \$12.00 Seniors/Students \$10.00 Youth (4 -12) \$7.00 Children under 4 with parent FREE Families \$31.00
Annual Passes	Adults \$25.00 Seniors/Students \$21.00 Youth (4 -12) \$15.00 Children under 4 with parent FREE Families \$65.00

Don't forget about:

David Lees' Astrophotography course, Thursday May 5th and Thursday May 12th, 2005 from 7 to 10 p.m. The cost is \$89+GST (\$79+GST for seasons pass holders), and class size limited to 30.

Summer Space Camps (in July and August) for kids ages 6 to 13

To register, and for more information, call the Centre at 363-8262.

*Clear skies and happy stargazing!*  
Cassie



## LOOK UP You Won't be Disappointed

Friday 2:00 to 5:00 pm set up

### Astronomy Day Schedule

8:30 - 10:00	Set up
10:00 - 4:30	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC Walk Through the Solar System Displays, Ecliptic Calendar, Posters, etc.
10:00 - 4:00	Telescope Making Workshop Astro-imaging Workshop Amateur Astronomer's Booth
10:30 - 4:00	Ask the Professional Astronomer Booth
11:00 - 3:30	Children's Activities
11:00—11:15	Star Lab: Tour through Space and Time
11:00 - 4:00	Solar Observing: RBCM court yard
11:30 - 12:15	Multimedia Presentation
12:30 - 1:15	Wizard of the Stars
1:30 - 1:45	Star Lab: Tour through Space and Time
2:00 - 2:15	Star Lab: Tour through Space and Time
2:30 - 2:45	Star Lab: Tour through Space and Time
2:45—3:15	Wizard of the Stars
2:45 - 3:00	Star Lab: Tour through Space and Time
3:15 - 4:00	Multimedia Presentation
7:30 - 11:00 pm	<b>Night Sky at the Centre of the Universe</b>



#### *Upcoming Meetings*

May 11  
June 8

Peter Jedicke, President, RASC  
Russell Robb, U Vic

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## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA • VICTORIA CENTRE

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### *Night Sky Viewing at Schools*

Do you want to help with our school outreach program? Do you want the opportunity to learn about astronomy in a fun, non-intimidating atmosphere?

April 18	7:00pm	Willows School (2290 Musgrave Street)
April 19	7:00pm	Braefoot Elementary (1440 Harrop Road)
May 12	7:30pm	Royal Oak (4564 West Saanich Road)

Let Sid know you are willing to help out with his school program.

Phone: 391-0540  
Email: [sid\\_sidhu@shaw.ca](mailto:sid_sidhu@shaw.ca)

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### *Grant Success!*

The Education Committee received a grant from the federal government's PromoScience program

[http://www.nserc.gc.ca/promoscience/recipients\\_e.htm](http://www.nserc.gc.ca/promoscience/recipients_e.htm)

The grant will cover the expenses of creating a French-language version of *Skyways*, our curriculum-enriching handbook for teachers. A French-language *Skyways* will be a great service to everyone who teaches astronomy in Canada's francophone community, particularly at the public school level.

Thanks and congratulations go to Mary Lou Whitehorne, Chair of the Education Committee who created the original English-language *Skyways*, and to Scott Young, Second Vice-President. Mary Lou and Scott collaborated on writing the proposal to PromoScience. A successful grant application is always something to be proud of!

*Clear skies, Peter Jedicke, President*

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## FOR SALE Skywatcher Reflector Telescope

This telescope is less than one year old and has been carefully looked after.  
Asking \$450.00

Aperture 130 mm  
Focal length 900 mm  
DEC & RA clock motor drives  
EQ 3-2 equatorial German mount  
25 mm and 10 mm Possl eyepieces  
2 x Barlow  
5x24 finder scope

For more info call Geoff Jones

Phone: (250) 592-2264 or  
email: [gburrett@shaw.ca](mailto:gburrett@shaw.ca)



## **WANTED!**

By the Victoria Observing Site Selection Committee

## **LAND!**

Do you have a half acre of useless (rocky?) land with

- ☆ no lights
- ☆ road access, and
- ☆ low horizon all the way around?

Do you know someone who does, and who would be willing to sell or lease the area to RASC-Victoria?

If so, please contact Dave Bennett, Site Selection Chair, at

[dgbennett@shaw.ca](mailto:dgbennett@shaw.ca)

or by telephone at (250) 727-9509

*THANK YOU!*

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## **Island Eyepiece and Telescope**

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## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA • VICTORIA CENTRE

### RASC Victoria Council

### This Month

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Second Vice-President  
Joe Carr

Treasurer: David Griffiths  
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Secretary and Recorder:  
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Members at Large:  
Bill Almond, Jim Hesser,  
Ed Maxfield, Frank  
Ogonoski, Blaire Pellatt,  
Colin Scarfe, Rich Willis

New Members Liaison:  
Sandy Barta



### *Astronomy Cafe*

At Bruno Quenneville's  
2019 Casa Marcia Crescent,  
Victoria, BC.  
Call 477-2257 for more information or  
directions.  
Newcomers are especially welcome.  
Come and enjoy!

April 20

### *Astro Imaging*

**Third Wednesday of the month**  
**if it's clear at**  
**Bill Almond's**  
354 Benhomer Drive  
478-6718

April 22

### *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

### *Astronomy Day*

April 16  
Royal BC Museum  
Centre of the Universe



May 11

### *May Meeting*

7:30 pm  
Room 060, Elliott Building, UVic

**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'

Web Page of the Month

HOME	ABOUT THE SOCIETY	JOIN US!	CONTACT
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THE CLOUD APPRECIATION SOCIETY

**How to Join**  
THE CLOUD APPRECIATION SOCIETY

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Lennie's no April fool...  
[more](#)

  
[Cloud Gallery](#)  
We like cloud photos...  
[more](#)

[Gavin's TV Shorts](#)  
The first of the four,  
about his trip to  
Australia... [more](#)

[Cloud Talk](#)  
Cloud chat, and  
nothing but... [more](#)

  
[Attention All](#)



Photo © Bob Jagendorf

## HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

At *The Cloud Appreciation Society* we love clouds, we're not ashamed to say it and we've had enough of people moaning about them. [Read our manifesto](#) and see how we are fighting the banality of 'blue-sky thinking'. If you agree with what we stand for, then [join the society for a minimal postage and administration fee](#) and receive your very own official membership certificate and badge.

**Joining the Society:**  
Membership to the society costs just £1.66 + postage. This has been worked out as the minimum possible fee to cover our expenses. [See here for a scientific diagram showing how the fee was arrived at.](#) It means that membership in the UK costs £1.87. Membership is now open to people living outside of the UK too. To see how to join, and find out how much postage costs for your country, go to the [Membership Page](#).

Being a cloud lover and an astronomy lover could produce a year round hobby...

<http://www.cloudappreciationsociety.org/>

The Cloud Appreciation Society believes that "clouds are Nature's poetry" and, therefore, "pledges to fight 'blue-sky thinking'." Find out about the latest cloud related news and events. The website offers a forum for users to ask cloud-related questions and communicate with other cloud enthusiasts. Anyone in the UK can join the society for free and membership will soon be expanding to other areas of the world. Check out the fascinating pictures in the cloud gallery. Individuals can also contribute their cloud photographs to the continually growing collection.