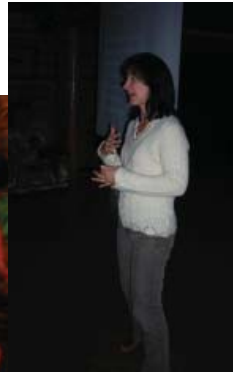


# skynews



## 2008 Rascals Star Party

We had clear weather for Friday night, and a choice of sucker holes on Saturday night. The speakers were interesting, lots of door prizes were given out, and it appears everyone had lots of fun!



Saturday night speaker Dr. Laura Ferrarese, NRC-HIA



Friday night speaker, Frank Younger



*on the cover*

## **Pinwheel Galaxy, M101**

by Guy Walton

Imaged Aug. 29/08 at the RASCALS Star Party on the Malahat.  
 Telescope and Mount: SW Equinox 120mm ED Apo Refractor on an EQ6  
 Mount autoguided with Orion SS Autoguider camera and PHD software.  
 Camera: Orion SS Pro Color, 6 megapixel.  
 Exposure: 14 Light Frames and 5 Dark Frames at 300 seconds each.  
 Processed with Maxim DL Essentials and PhotoShop

*this month*

## **Members' Night**

**September 10, 2008, 7:30 PM, Elliott Lecture Theatre, Rm 060, UVic**  
 Please contact Sid Sidhu if you have a presentation for Members' Night.

*Upcoming Events*

**Metchosin Days** - September 7, 10 am - 3 pm, Metchosin Municipal Grounds. Drop-by Metchosin Days and check-out the RASC's booth.

**Astronomy Cafe - Starts-up again!** September 8th, 7:30 - 11 pm (and each Monday through the winter), Fairfield Community Centre, 1330 Fairfield, Victoria. Call John at 250.480.0928 for directions and information.

**Monthly Meeting** - September 10, 7:30 pm, Elliott Lecture Theatre, Room 060, University of Victoria, **Members Night**.

**Astronomy Night in Fairfield** - September 15, 6 - 10 pm. A public outreach drop-in event sponsored by the Victoria Centre and the Fairfield Community Association. Displays, kids crafts, telescopes, observing.

**Victoria Centre Council Meeting** - September 24, 7:30 - 9 pm. 4th floor Astronomy Lounge, UVic.

*President's Report*

## **President's Message September, 2008**



The 8th Annual RASCALS Star Party held August 29-31, 2008 (<http://victoria.rasc.ca/events/StarParty/2008/Default.htm>) is now but a fond memory. We have staged this event each year for the last eight years at the Victoria Fish and Game property atop the Malahat. The weather for this year's event was the best we've experienced for several years; attendance was very strong; and I think everyone went away happy. I certainly enjoy myself at these events, and really appreciate having a star party that is so close to home. We had a terrific selection of door prizes to give away, thanks to Island Eyepiece and Telescopes, and our corporate supporters Pacific Telescope (Skywatcher) and Celestron.

Our speakers were excellent. Frank Younger spoke Friday evening on how to get more out of our telescopes. On Saturday afternoon, Bill Huot reviewed how binoculars can be used for astronomical observing. Dr. Laura Ferrarese described her work on super massive black holes, and how the upcoming surveys of the Virgo Cluster will advance our knowledge of how galaxies work. The enthusiasm that our speakers have for their respective subjects is something you have to be there to experience. Astronomy is such an interesting hobby (and vocation) - it provides us with endless enjoyment!

I would like to thank Bruno Quenville and Nelson Walker for organizing this year's event. The behind-the-scenes work involved in staging a star party is considerable. All our star party volunteers deserve our thanks, and the additional support from members of the Cowichan Valley Starfinders group is always appreciated.

The other big event that happened this summer was the Victoria Centre Observatory Official Opening held August 18, 2008 (<http://victoria.rasc.ca/observatory/Default.htm>). This opening ceremony marks the culmination of a project that took us a year and a half to complete, and is a dream come true for many of our members. I think it is especially significant to

our longer term members, who know that for decades an observatory to call our own was only an unfulfilled wish. We thanked everyone involved in this project, because without their support there would not be a Victoria Centre Observatory.

I was pleased to see so many people turn out for this informal event, and help us celebrate our achievement. As with the Star Party, Bruno Quennville was instrumental in seeing this project through to completion. As our Project Manager, it was his job to coordinate our volunteers, ensure materials were purchased and delivered, and he even brought lunch to our volunteers from the local Tim Horton's! The support of the National Research Council made this project possible, and our corporate partners donated significant amounts of materiel and labor without hesitation. This project is a credit to the astronomical community here in Victoria, and will serve our members and the public well over the coming years.

Participating in two such significant events over the summer has made 2008 memorable for me as your President, however it is time for me to step down and become your Past President. My two year term is over when our Annual General Meeting is held this November. I have enjoyed leading Victoria Centre, and took pleasure in meeting so many of you. I'm looking forward to resuming a lower profile as your Webmaster, and devoting a bit more time to my family. Nominations are open for several positions on our Council, so please seriously consider volunteering some of your time to support our Centre over the next year or two. Succession is always a time when we are a bit apprehensive, but it is also necessary to ensure an organization remains healthy and vital. Please contact any current Council member, should you have questions or want to volunteer. You can do a little or a lot, but please participate!

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*observers group*

RASC Victoria Centre and the NRC have signed a License to Use Land Agreement which gives members of Victoria Centre expanded access to NRC property on Observatory Hill.

If you are a member in good standing of Victoria Centre RASC, consider yourself an "active observer", and wish to take advantage of this opportunity, please send an email to the 1st or 2nd Vice President. More information on this program see: <http://victoria.rasc.ca>

## ***A Google for Satellites: Sensor Web 2.0***

If you could see every satellite passing overhead each day, it would look like a chaotic meteor shower in slow motion.

Hundreds of satellites now swarm over the Earth in a spherical shell of high technology. Many of these satellites gaze at the planet's surface, gathering torrents of scientific data using a dizzying array of advanced sensors — an extraordinary record of our dynamic planet.

To help people tap into this resource, NASA researchers such as Daniel Mandl are developing a "Google for satellites," a web portal that would make requesting data from Earth-observing satellites almost as easy as typing a search into Google. "You just click on it and it takes care of all the details for you across many sensors," Mandl explains.

Currently, most satellites are each controlled separately from the others, each one dauntingly complex to use. But starting with NASA's Earth Observing-1 (EO-1) satellite, part of the agency's New Millennium Program, Mandl and his team are building a prototype that stitches these satellites together into a seamless, easy-to-use network called "Sensor Web 2.0."

The vision is to simply enter a location anywhere on Earth into the website's search field along with the desired information types — wildfire maps, vegetation types, floodwater salinity, oil spill extent — and software written by the team goes to work.

"Not only will it find the best sensor, but with proper access rights, you could actually trigger a satellite to take an image in the area of interest," Mandl says. Within hours, the software will send messages to satellites instructing them to gather the needed data, and then download and crunch that raw data to produce easy-to-read maps.

For example, during the recent crisis in Myanmar (Burma) caused by Cyclone Nargis, an experimental gathering of data was triggered through Sensor Web 2.0 using a variety of NASA satellites including EO-1. "One thing we might wish to map is the salinity of flood waters in order to help rescue workers plan their relief efforts," Mandl says. If the floodwater in an area was salty, aid workers would need to bring in bottled water, but if flood water was fresh, water purifiers would suffice. An early and correct decision could save lives.



Map shows locations of wild fires

Large Incidents - August 22, 2003

Terra (MODIS, Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer)

Aqua (MODIS)

MODIS Active Fire Map

Fire precisely located using MODIS data

Earth Observing 1 (Advanced Land Imager and Hyperion instruments) tasked to acquire image data

Data downlinked and processed to enhance vegetation and exactly define burn area. Resources deployed to highest risk areas.

Thus far, Mandl and his team have expanded Sensor Web 2.0 beyond EO-1 to include three other satellites and an unmanned aircraft. He hopes to double the number of satellites in the network every 18 months, eventually weaving the jumble of satellites circling overhead into a web of sensors with unprecedented power to observe and understand our ever-changing planet.

To learn more about the EO-1 sensor web initiatives, go to <http://eo1.gsfc.nasa.gov/new/extended/sensorWeb/sensorWeb.html>. Kids (and grown-ups) can get an idea of the resolution of EO-1's Hyperion Imager and how it can distinguish among species of trees—from space at [http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/eo1\\_1.shtml](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/eo1_1.shtml).

[www.islandeyepiece.com](http://www.islandeyepiece.com)  
Ph: 743-6633

# Island Telescope

## Science Emporium

107-2690 Mill Bay Rd (near Thrifty's)

**New Location Opening May 2008**

Telescopes, Spotting Scopes, Binoculars  
Science Kits, Globes & Posters, Dinosaurs  
Sea Creatures, Educational & Kinetic Toys  
Microscopes & Magnifiers, Rocks & Minerals

*address change? information incorrect*

**Contact the National Office**

**Telephone** - 416.924.7973 or toll-free in Canada 888.924.RASC  
**Fax** - 416.924.2911  
**Email** - [nationaloffice@rasc.ca](mailto:nationaloffice@rasc.ca)  
**Post** - RASC, 136 Dupont Street, Toronto, ON M5R 1V2  
**General enquiries** - [natonaloffice@rasc.ca](mailto:nationaloffice@rasc.ca)

*contact us on-line*

**Web Site** [www.victoria.rasc.ca](http://www.victoria.rasc.ca)  
**New Members** [newmembers@victoria.rasc.ca](mailto:newmembers@victoria.rasc.ca)  
**General Inquiries** [info@victoria.rasc.ca](mailto:info@victoria.rasc.ca)

*Centre of the Universe*

**Fall Hours**

At the beginning of the new school year, we will be changing our public hours to accommodate visits by school groups.

Our public hours in September:

- Tuesday through Thursday – 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Friday & Saturday – 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

**School Bookings**

Teachers and parents, please call the centre at 250-363-8262 if you would like to book a school program for your class.

**International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009)**

2009 is the International Year of Astronomy and marks 400 years since the first use of the telescope by Galileo Galilei for astronomical purposes. For more information about Canadian involvement in IYA, go to: <http://www.astronomy2009.ca/>

**The Sky This Month**

- Sept. 2 Mars, Mercury and Venus set with the moon just after sunset
- Sept. 7 First Quarter Moon / Jupiter stationary
- Sept. 12 Venus and Mars appear close in the sky just after sunset
- Sept. 15 Full Moon
- Sept. 21 Last Quarter Moon / Autumnal Equinox
- Sept. 29 New Moon

In the fall, you will find the Big Dipper fairly low in the sky towards the north. Our summer constellations like Boötes and Hercules will also be found lower in the sky, closer to the horizon. Fall's most dominant constellation, Pegasus the Flying Horse, is visible towards the southeast. To see Pegasus, look for the big square in the sky.

Cygnus the Swan, also known as the Northern Cross, is still high up in the sky. If you can locate Cygnus, you will have also found the Milky Way, as the Swan appears to fly right through the Milky Way.

*VCO opening*

The Victoria Centre Observatory (VCO) was officially opened on August 18th, with RASC members, corporate partners, and NRC staff helping to celebrate this milestone in Victoria Centre's history. All the participants and volunteers that made the VCO a reality were thanked by President Joe Carr and Project Manager Bruno Quenville. A special commemorative award was presented to Jim Hesser, Director of the DAO - a key supporter of the project from within NRC.



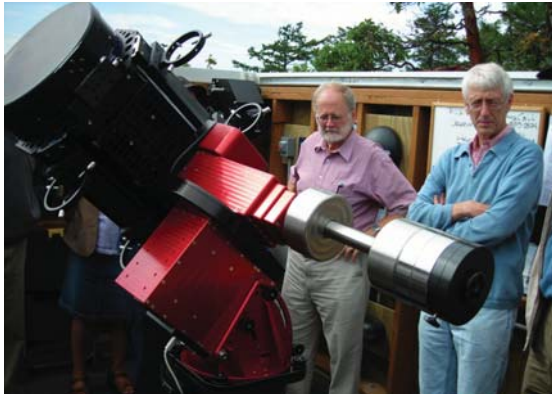
"Today is an historic occasion for Victoria Centre, since in its long history this is the first observatory that Victoria Centre can call its own. The project would not have completed on time and under budget without help from our corporate partners, generous donations of funds and labour from Victoria Centre members, and especially without the goodwill and support from the National Research Council. Victoria Centre members put their hearts into this project, and can be justifiably proud of the result. Thank you everyone!" - Joe Carr, President, RASC Victoria Centre

**Thank you!**

Thank you to our two vice presidents, Sid Sidhu and John McDonald for the significant amount of work they have put into this project.

Thank you to Bruno Quenville, who volunteered to be our Project

Manager for building the observatory, and who's enthusiasm for the project has infected us all.



Director of DAO and HIA Director General

Thank you to all our volunteers, who gave freely of their time and talents. A project such as this brings out the best in people, and so many of our members genuinely wanted to help out. Please have a look at our Online Photo Gallery to see our volunteers in action: Victoria Centre Observatory Construction.

Thank you to Geoff Jones, a member who opened his house to the Technical Committee, so testing of the Paramount ME, computer systems and weather station could take place in town. Geoff's generosity enabled the Committee to complete their work in record time.

Without these folks' efforts and dedication, this project would not have completed on time.

A special thank you must be offered to all our corporate supporters, who donated their time and materials (either outright donations, or by offering us discounts), estimated to be worth over \$4,000:

- Software Bisque
- Slegg Lumber
- Lumberworld
- Home Depot
- Harbour Door
- Shanahan's Building Supplies
- Camosun College - welding
- Victoria Powder Coating
- Depend-a-Dor
- Emerson's Lock
- McLaren Electric



Bruno and Home Depot donor

RASC victoria council

this month

monday nights

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New Member Liaison

Bruno Quenville  
newmembers@victoria.rasc.ca

Astronomy Cafe

Fairfield Community Centre,  
1330 Fairfield, Victoria  
7:30-11pm

Call John at 250.480.0928 for directions and information. New comers are especially welcome. Come and enjoy!

ASTRONOMY  
CAFÉ



second wednesday of the month

Monthly Meeting

7:30 PM, Elliott Lecture Theatre,  
Rm 060, UVic.

as sky and interest dictate

New Observers Group

Hosted by Sid Sidhu.  
1642 Davies Road, Highlands.  
Call 391-0540 for information and directions.

by email

Observer/CU Volunteers/ Members email lists

Contact Joe Carr to subscribe to these email lists for important, timely, member-related news.