

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada – Victoria Centre

# SKYNEWS



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## Winter Skies by John McDonald

President's Report  
Monthly Speaker  
New Editor  
Council Reports

**January Meeting**  
University of Victoria  
A104 Bob Wright Bldg.  
3800 Finnerty Rd.

## **On the Cover**

Moonlight illuminates houses and trees while Canis Major, Orion, Taurus and Pleiades shine in the sky overhead. Bright Jupiter can be seen between Taurus and Pleiades.

### **Details**

Date and location - 2013-01-03 at 1:00 am PST from Victoria BC backyard.  
Conditions Clear, 4 deg C with low humidity and no wind.  
Equipment - tripod mounted modified Canon T3i camera with 15mm Sigma lens.  
Exposure - 15s at f/2.8 and ISO 800.  
Processing in Photoshop

## **Monthly Meeting Lecture by Jillian Scudder – January 9, 2013**

### **Cosmic Train Wrecks: When Galaxies Collide**

Galaxy interactions create some of the most dramatic and photogenic objects in the Universe. These galaxies are going through a very tumultuous period in their lives, but how lasting are the changes these galaxies go through? Gillian will provide a review of the basic structure of an undisturbed galaxy and some of its key observable properties. We can then investigate how these properties change in a galaxy with a nearby companion, and what these changes can tell us about the internal workings of the galaxy. We are then presented with a series of new questions. How complex is the evolution of these properties as an interaction progresses? Is the current simple physical model sufficient, or do we need to nuance our model in order to understand recent observations? More fundamentally, are these extragalactic train wrecks fleeting moments in a galaxy's lifetime, or do the changes have long-lasting effects upon a galaxy? In this talk, Gillian will present new results that will help to answer these questions.

Jillian Scudder completed a Bachelors in Physics & Astronomy and French and Francophone studies at Macalester College in Minnesota. She is now a 4th year Ph.D student at the University of Victoria, working with Dr. Sara Ellison. Her research has focused on the impacts of galaxy interactions and mergers on the gas and internal dynamics of local galaxies.

## **President's Report**

Here's hoping for all of us and ours a happy and healthy new year, complete with dozens upon dozens of observing opportunities; opportunities which are traditionally completely lacking here in the months of October, November and December. This being a "new beginning," at least insofar as the calendar is concerned, it is a good time to remind ourselves of what lies ahead of us for the next two years, plus pat ourselves on the back a bit.

First is continuing public outreach. Our tent with telescopes set up in front has become a fixture at local events of all kinds. Name an event, a fair, a celebration, a hobby festival, and we are likely there,

## Royal Astronomical Society of Canada – Victoria Centre

a hard-core group of members gathered together by Sid and Sherry to share their enthusiasm for astronomy with the public. Our gathering last June in front of the BC Museum with a dozen telescopes to see and show others the Transit of Venus comes to mind. And not only are we on the street, and on summer evenings at the Centre of the Universe, or at UVic on Astronomy Day, we are in the classroom. Sid and Lauri and their school program boggle the mind. Throughout the school year they assist teachers with astronomy teaching and, if they are lucky, present night sky viewing events for students and parents. These outreach efforts are the almost the “soul” of our club.

Next is at least one ongoing “project:” John McDonalds’s plan to confront the issue of light pollution, and put it “on the front burner.” That is just where we have it. A committee led by Mark Bohlman has been involved in at least three major initiatives over the last two years: mapping light pollution throughout Victoria, providing input to the University of Victoria regarding the lighting of its new

sports complex and parking structure, and working with the Municipality of Oak Bay regarding the establishment of an Urban Star Park at Cattle Point.

Next are continued observing opportunities. Our own observatory is open to members at least once each week, weather permitting, with an impressive array of telescopes and other equipment. We host a Messier Marathon and a summer star party. We have, for the first time ever, an observing chair, Bill Weir.

To this already impressive schedule, plus our usual schedule of monthly meetings, complete with guest speakers, we have added, for summer 2014, hosting of the RASC National General Assembly, the year chosen to coincide with the centennial year of Victoria Centre. The event will be held at the University of Victoria. A committee is in place, led by Paul Schumacher.

While the effort to keep all of these balls in the air may tax even the considerable dedication of our most enthusiastic members, there is more. At a minimum, we must renew Lauri’s efforts to increase membership and our efforts to help members earn RASC observing certificates.

I have doubtless temporarily forgotten some project or initiative (for example the technical committee’s ongoing effort to enable the VCO for remote operation), but, even so, plenty of work lies ahead. Our reward is a club that we can be proud of, with a long history, that enjoys a fortuitous connection with a university, an observatory, and an institute of astrophysics and what have turned out to be some of the most active astronomers in the world. We are lucky indeed.

*Nelson Walker*

## **Membership Report**

Dear RASCals,

Here are my reports for January 2013 for general information:

**Membership:** Dropped: 2  
**New and Returning:** 2  
**Reinstated:** 1  
**Renewed:** 6 (*thank you!*)  
**Net change:** +7  
**Upcoming expiries:** 11 (*please renew promptly!*)  
**Total from the Membership List:** 163

**Liaisons:**

**HIA/CU:** Nothing from Eric (CU), Clyde (HIA) reminds us to drive carefully on the Hill with winter driving conditions upon us.

**Transport Canada:** N/A

**Plaskett:** This from Dave Balam: "I did manage to get some imaging nights in 2013A. Unfortunately, they are all on week nights. The CU has a weekend in imaging mode in mid-February."

I have asked Dave if we could have any of the weeknight imaging sessions, but have not heard back. I've also asked Russ Robb again about his offer of letting us observe with the UVic 32", and have not heard anything back either. At the risk of being a pest, I will ask Dave and Russ one more time in the coming weeks.

That's all for January!

Sherry (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President)

**THOUGHTS ON THE NEW YEAR**

When Nelson approached me and asked if I would like to take the job of editor for our Skynews, I panicked a bit. Online publishing was something completely new to me. Assured of good support and some software to help me with the transition from a Mac program to Microsoft Word on PC, I said Yes. But....I have to confess. This is not my first time editing a newsletter. Back in the early 1980's, I headed up a monthly newsletter for an organization with about a hundred members. I had an electric typewriter at home and did the news and articles on 4 to 6 stencils. Then....they were run off - copied on a hand-cranked contraption called a Gestetner machine! (*hands up if you remember what THAT is!*) The ink had to be spread evenly on the roller; oozing its way through the typed letters on the stencil onto the special paper. On the last Saturday of the month I had friends helping out with the copying, sorting and stapling of the pages – not to mention the washing-up of black ink from our hands before tackling our dinner of pizza and pop. Decades later, much has changed and now I'm about to experience a new learning curve....

A torch has been passed from capable and knowledgeable hands. Many thanks to Malcolm Scrimger for the wonderful and creative work with Skynews over these past three years. I have big shoes to fill. There's much to look forward to in 2013. Re-visiting our favourite NGCs and Messiers, planet

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada – Victoria Centre

conjunctions, a comet or two - and of course, heightened solar activity and a chance of seeing auroras in our skies. Check out the Victoria Centre's website for Sherry Buttner's [presentation](http://victoria.rasc.ca/Default.htm) <http://victoria.rasc.ca/Default.htm> – [Aurora Borealis – An Introduction to the Northern Lights](#). Valuable tools and information are there - to guide us in our search for these gorgeous displays.... Happy 2013 to all – and Clear Skies !!

***Diane Bell***

Skynews Editor

**Council for 2012 / 2013**

Past President: Lauri Roche [pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca](mailto:pastpres@victoria.rasc.ca)

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**Members at Large:** Bill Almond, Jim Hesser, Alex Schmid, David Lee, Li-Ann Skibo, Paul Schumacher, Matt Watson

**ASTRONOMY  
CAFÉ**



**Astronomy Cafe:** Held every Monday at Fairfield Community Centre - 1330 Fairfield Rd, Victoria, at 7:30pm to 10pm Call Malcolm at (778) 430-4136 for directions and information. New comers are especially encouraged.



**New Observers Group:** Hosted by Sid Sidhu, 1642 Davies Road, Highlands. Call (250).391-0540 for information and directions.



**Email Lists** Observer / CU Volunteers / Members

Contact Matt Watson to subscribe. [admin@victoria.rasc.ca](mailto:admin@victoria.rasc.ca)

Next month's meeting is Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 PM. Speaker to be announced.