

ORBIT

The Official Publication of the Hamilton Centre

RASC Hamilton Centre

April 2004

Volume 37, Issue 4

Message from the President

Well the weather is definitely changing! Hopefully we will have more and more clear skies to enjoy in the coming months.

The club has scheduled many events this spring and summer including Astronomy Day (April 24th), and sidewalk astronomy (first one is April 30th in Spencer Smith Park in Burlington).

Our annual Banquet is on Saturday May the 8th with Ivan Semeniuk being our guest speaker. See our website www.rasc.ca/hamilton for details and other events. I hope you can come out and participate/help with these events to make them a great success.

Astronomy is in the news again with the naked eye planet line up in the evening sky. If you haven't yet seen them go outside the next clear evening at dusk and look to the west. You

should be able to see mercury just above the western horizon looking like a moderately bright star.

Next up the ecliptic (the imaginary path the sun, moon and plan-

ets take around the sky) is Venus. It is so bright it looks

like an aircraft coming in for a landing. Just to the upper left is Mars, much fainter but reddish/orange in colour.

Almost straight overhead is Saturn (pale yellowish in colour) and then finally the bright object in the eastern sky is Jupiter. Have a look at these when you get a chance because it is the last time for a long time (*continued pg 2*)



Webcam image of Jupiter by Bob Botts, Shelley Watson, Doug Welch, Kevin Hobbs

Web Cam Imaging

Members are imaging by hooking up inexpensive PC-based Web Cams and adapting them to fit telescopes. Most web cams are priced from \$40 and \$150. The low cost units are usually based on a CMOS image sensor. The high end units use a CCD sensor.. For astronomical imaging, you need a CCD for lower noise and better low-light sensitivity. Members

use either a Phillips Toucam, which is out of production, or the Logitech Quick Cam Pro 4000. The 4000 is the only Logitech one with a VGA resolution CCD chip. Keep an eye out for deals on this camera, as they are available for between \$99 and \$129 on sale. Members will let you try them out, and have been having great results. Come out and give it a try!.

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Special points of interest:

- Meeting April 1
- Board Meets April 8
- Beginners' Observing Night April 15 & 17
- Astro Day April 24th
- Sidewalk Astronomy April 30th
- Meeting May 6th
- Annual Banquet May 8th, \$47.50!

Message from the President (continued)

that you will be able to see them all at once in the evening sky.

It is interesting to look at them all with a telescope and compare their relative sizes as seen from earth (and it's a good excuse to dust off that scope that might have been gathering dust over the cold winter months).

Speaking of telescopes, the Centre's new scope has been ordered and should arrive late this summer. We have lots of decisions to make regarding its use and will be looking for input from all of our members.

To facilitate this part of the May general meeting will be devoted to discussing the new scope and its uses and to develop

policies and plans.

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas please come out and share them with the club. Remember this is your club but you have to participate if you want to help direct its future.

Thanks,
Steve Barnes



Optical Guidance Systems Ritchey-Chretien Telescope
To learn more, see:
www.opticalguidancesystems.com

Forum: A New Way to Share Information and Help!

I have started up a new online forum as mentioned at the March general meeting. Here you can find areas for all kinds of astronomy subjects to chat and share information. You must sign up on the forum and wait for the administrators to determine if you are a member or associate before you will be allowed to post messages, until then you can read anything posted.

One of the highlights of this forum is an online calendar that can be added to by members.

There is a code of conduct for our new forums that I am sure all will agree is reasonable. Be civil and understanding of other

people's differences; no personal attacks, no using the forum for commercial profit, and try to help others with questions. Please feel free to contact me about the forums.

Les Nagy, V.P. RASC Hamilton Centre
lnagy@thelightages.com.

Visit the forum site at:

<http://www.atsi.ca/rascforum>

March Madness in the Hamilton Centre

March has been a very busy month at the Hamilton Centre. On Saturday March 20, we hosted a very successful Messier Marathon at the Leslie V. Powis Observatory. The weather did not quite co-operate in the manner we had hoped for. We had approximately 17 members attend. All had participated in a potluck dinner, which was enjoyed by everybody. We then enjoyed watching the movie "Contact" starring Jody Foster. We were also entertained by a truly astro-



Shadow transit by Bob Botts with Toucam, 2.5x barlow, 12" SCT

nomical movie "Solar Max". I believe everyone had a great time socializing and talking astronomy with fellow members. A comment was made that we should do this again in the fall, and the reply was why wait so long. Thanks to the people who brought food. Thanks should also go to Les & Colin who installed the audiovisual system at the observatory. This is a great addition for our education programs.

On Wednesday March 24, a Web *(continued pg 2)*

March Madness in the Hamilton Centre (continued)

Cam Workshop was held at the Leslie V. Powis Observatory. The presenter was Roger Hill who has a lot of experience with photographing using a Web Cam. Eleven members and non-members attended. The observatory was full. There were tables set up with at least ten laptop computers. Roger had prepared CD's containing freeware software and examples that were used to demonstrate the different techniques of processing images. Steve Barnes, our noted astrophotographer assisted Roger by showing us a few of his own tips in creating some of his spectacular images. It was a great evening, sharing a little more knowledge on web-cam imaging.

On Friday March 26 a small group of RASC Members met at Chapters Book Store in Ancaster. The idea was to set our scopes up outside and show the night sky to patrons of the store. Once again the weather did not cooperate for us. However we

did come prepared. President Steve put together an excellent talk, with a visual presentation using his laptop computer and the club's new digital projector unit. Approximately 30 people watched the presentation and had questions for us. Ken Lemke arranged advertising for the Chapters Event in the Hamilton Spectator and CHML radio station. The result was a half page article featuring our President Steve Barnes, and a live radio interview with him. Great work Ken, and many thanks to Steve for representing our club so well. I hope April is as productive as March.



Hamilton Centre now has a NEC portable digital projector.

Ontario Trillium Foundation

The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided the Hamilton Centre with a beautiful wood plaque outlining the contribution. We have displayed it prominently in the main meeting area of the Observatory, for everyone to see.

The plaque says: "Investing in Communities 2003. The Province of Ontario and The Ontario Trillium Foundation are proud contributors to building healthy, caring and economically strong communities by supporting projects that improve the quality of life." It includes the names of the Premier, Minister of Culture, and Chair



The Ontario Trillium Foundation Plaque at the observatory

of the Foundation. The foundation awarded a grant to our organization based on a proposal submitted in 2003 under the guidance of the prior board. The current board is responsible for implementing the proposal, and so is purchasing the equipment specified in the proposal (or its nearest equivalent, as approved by the foundation). We are committed to working with the Trillium Foundation to improve education and quality of life in the Hamilton area. We need your help to implement this plan. Come to our May meeting to discuss the next steps.

Double Star Project, Scope Loaner, For Sale Items from Mike Spicer

Two years ago the Hamilton Centre's Double Star Project was successful in getting members out developing their observing and recording skills. New members who may not have a copy of the 2002 Double Star Handbook may have one free of charge by contacting Mike Spicer at the address below.

Thinking of buying your first telescope but wondering what kind to get? Try a beginner's night at the observatory, or ask Mike Spicer about his "loaner" 5 inch telescope, which are easy to set up and very easy to use. Mike is offering newer members of our club one of these telescopes to try out for a month or so. Mike also has a number of eyepieces and barlows for sale at

\$29.95, and a new TAL 6" Newtonian telescope with clock drive on a solid equatorial mount for \$895.

Mike Spicer, DeBeneEsse2001@AOL.com, (905) 388-0602.

Beginners Observing Group

Third Thursday and Saturday of each month.

Contact Ken Lemke by e-mail at cfs@worldchat.com (day time) or klemke@worldchat.com (night time or week-ends). His phone number is 905-634-5168 (day time) or 905-639-5127 (night time and week-ends) or Gary Colwell at glcolwell@rogers.com

April 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Meeting	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 Board	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 Beginner	16	17 Beginner
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 AstroDay
25	26	27	28	29	30 Sidewalk	

Schedule of Events

- Meeting—April 1
- Board Meets—April 8
- Beginners' Observing Night—April 15 & 17
- Astronomy Day—April 24th
- Sidewalk Astronomy—April 30th
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- Meeting—May 6th
- Annual Banquet—May 8th

Observatory Keys

It's time to refresh yourself on the Observatory procedures. At the April general meeting, the treasurer, John Williamson, will be issuing new keys as we have completed the annual lock change.

All Members are entitled to use the observatory, but if you wish to have a key so that you are not dependent on others to open and close up, there are a few simple requirements.

To be a keyholder, you need to be a centre member for at least the previous year, you need to sign a simple one-page agreement, and you need to have completed an orientation tour of the facilities and be familiar with the proper use of the

buildings and equipment. This helps ensure site safety and insurance requirements.

We ask all keyholders to participate, on a voluntary basis, in the general maintenance and upkeep of the observatory buildings and grounds. This translates into cleanup, repair, and lawn mowing, and expected participation in the occasional work party, which usually means part work and part picnic. Not all work is physical labour, sometimes it's a matter of organizing books, or sorting stuff. The annual key fee is \$24.00 (prorated where applicable). Keys are to be returned at the January general meeting at

which time keys for the following year will be available.

If you are unable to attend the April meeting, feel free to contact John to make arrangements.



It's time to exchange your key.

Annual Banquet Excitement

Get your tickets now! For only \$47.50 per person, you can have an entertaining night on the town, hosted by the Hamilton Centre. We are sure to have great prizes, fine food and drink, and a good time for all.

Special Guest speaker is world famous science media guru Ivan Semeniuk. Ivan is the host of Discovery Connection, and "Skylights", the weekly astronomy column on *@discovery.ca*

Last year we had a great deal of fun, many spouses and partners attended.

Many commented on how was it possible to have that much fun for under \$95 per couple or less than \$50 per person.

For tickets, contact John Williamson or Steve Barnes.

If you have items worthy of a door prize, by all means, let the committee know.

Previous events have seen generous donations of suitable gifts for men and ladies, ranging from bath and beauty to books and beyond.



John, Kevin, Ken, and friends having a great time at the 2003 Banquet

Keeping in Touch

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A Star Passes On

Members familiar with the AAVSO (www.aavso.org) will be saddened to hear of the passing of one of the leading lights in variable star observing. Well known scientist Janet Mattei, PhD, passed away after a long



AAVSO Members log thousands of observations

battle with Leukemia. Janet was the Executive Director of the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO), and was highly respected by officials at NASA and other space related agencies. Her high en-

ergy and enthusiasm was infectious on all who interacted with her. She will be missed by the Astronomical community. Many Hamilton Centre members past and present have corresponded with Janet over the years, and have participated in projects she helped spearhead.



RASC Hamilton Centre

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We're on the Web!
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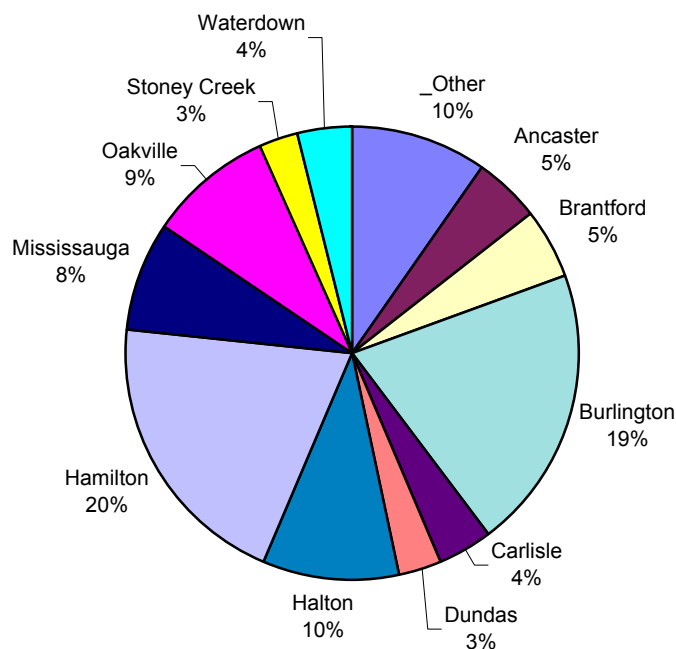
● For the Advancement of
Astronomy and Allied Sciences

Member Mix

The Hamilton Centre has a diverse mix of members. The chart to the right shows that there are a wide mix of members centred around the Hamilton and Burlington area.

This is a non-scientific chart, where outlying areas have been combined into an "Other" category.

Youth members make up less than 10% of our membership. As part of our outreach and education program, we can grow the Youth membership in the Hamilton area.



Have you borrowed books, videos, or equipment ?

Its time to clean out your closets and bring it back for inventory.

- Rob Bodner, Librarian