

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA - KINGSTON CENTRE
AND THE
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY ASTRONOMY CLUB
MID-DECEMBER, 1977

Greetings! Happy observing at the time of the Winter Solstice. May the longest nights of the year provide you with ample opportunity for celestial observations!

Planets And Messier Objects

Recently while observing planets I was drawn to observing Messier objects, and perhaps other members of our centre have been doing the same thing.

Jupiter has been very close to M35. With 16-power binoculars I can see very clearly numerous stars in this spectacular Open Cluster in Gemini, and I would urge others to use binoculars to find this beautiful cluster.

Mars which is now brighter than it has been in a long time is fairly close to M44, another Open Cluster, the once called Praesepe or the Beehive Cluster. A person does not need any optical aid to see this cluster, but binoculars makes this famous object really spectacular. It will be interesting to observe the retrograde motion of Mars in the sky in respect to M44 and other nearby stars, over the next few months.

Saturn, which has been close to Regulus for a couple of months, takes us a little further eastward in the sky to several Messier objects that are not quite so bright. In close proximity are three galaxies, M95, M96, and M105. It will take instruments better than binoculars to see these three objects, but they are worth looking for if you are observing Saturn in the next few months, and during that time, its retrograde motion, also, may be observed, in respect to the star, Regulus. I have found that these two bright objects make good astrophotographic configurations when the moon is also in that part of the constellation, Leo.

It's a good time to combine planetary and Messier observing.

Aurora Reports

I recorded seeing two auroral displays last month. This month there were two displays seen by David Levy. The first one, after 12:25 a.m. E.S.T. on December 1st, was quite spectacular, and the second one, between 2:00 and 2:30 a.m. on December 11th featured an arc and a rayed arc toward the north.

Sunspot numbers and auroral activity seem to be increasing. If you see any displays, record your sightings and the time.

Browsing Through The Handbook

Many of you have perhaps browsed through the 1978 Handbook already. Besides noticing the amount of new information available, you may have been struck by two items: firstly, that 1978 is a very uninteresting year for eclipse observers who wish to remain at home in eastern Canada (Forget it; nothing!) and secondly, that it is an excellent year for lunar occultations of bright stars. There is an occultation of none other than Aldebaran during every month of the year except one. In July there are two! All but two of these occultations are listed as visible in North America. On these occasions, when Taurus is above the horizon during the night, there should be many chances for occultation photography. A morning occultation of Venus next December may also be interesting to observe and photograph.

Have You Read

1. the articles on the "Tunguska blast" and on why planets have rings in the latest issue of Astronomy magazine (Contact Doug to borrow our centre's copy of the magazine)?
2. the article about Dr. Gerhard Herzberg in Weekend Magazine (Dec. 10/77)?
3. the plethora of mixed reviews for the movies "Close Encounters" and "Starship Invasions"? (Whatever that may mean)
4. that Star Wars has become the all-time box-office attraction (Too bad, "Gone With the Wind", and "Jaws"!)?
5. that Fred Hoyle's latest paper suggests that many of man's diseases are coming to us from outer space? It's the dust from the tails of comets crossing the earth's path."
6. that Isaac Asimov and others are angry over the many U.F.O. movies? (Whatever that means!)
7. that U.S. President Jimmy Carter's "U.F.O. sightings" of several years ago have been calculated to have been the planet , Venus?

Is Anyone Interested In An Excursion?

If you are interested in a Saturday trip to the Planetarium, within the next two months, please see Doug, or Sue, or me. A group outing may be organized. (State your choice of date).

To all the members of the Kingston Centre of the R.A.S.C.:
Have a very happy Christmastime!
Leo.

P.S. Don't forget to save the next page.

See you at the meeting on Tuesday!
(Bring your interesting astronomy books.) *h.v.*

1978 Schedule

Here is the schedule of probable main features for the forthcoming meetings. Please keep this page in a place where you can refer to it.

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Probable Main Attraction</u>
Dec. 20/77	- a slide presentation - book and pamphlet display
Jan. 10/78	- display of non-book material (projects, photos, equipment, slides, etc.)
Jan. 24/78	- <u>The Comet of 1861</u> - a talk by David
Feb. 7/78	- <u>The Astrolabe: Its History and Use</u> a talk by Leo
Feb. 21/78	- <u>The I.A.U. and its triennial congresses</u> - a talk by Dr. Douglas
Mar. 7/78	- <u>Observing Variable Stars</u> - a presentation by David Levy
Mar. 21/78	- Election of officers for next year - semi-public <u>Moon Observing Night</u> (weather permitting)
Apr. 4/78	- <u>The Ephemeris: How An Amateur May Use It</u> - a talk by Leo
Apr. 18/78	- Discussion of " <u>Summer Plans, 1978</u> "
May 2/78	- open
May 16/78	- open
May 30/78	- open
June 13/78	- open
June 27/78	- open