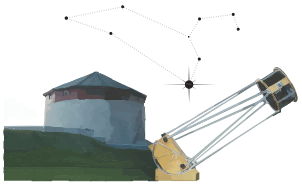
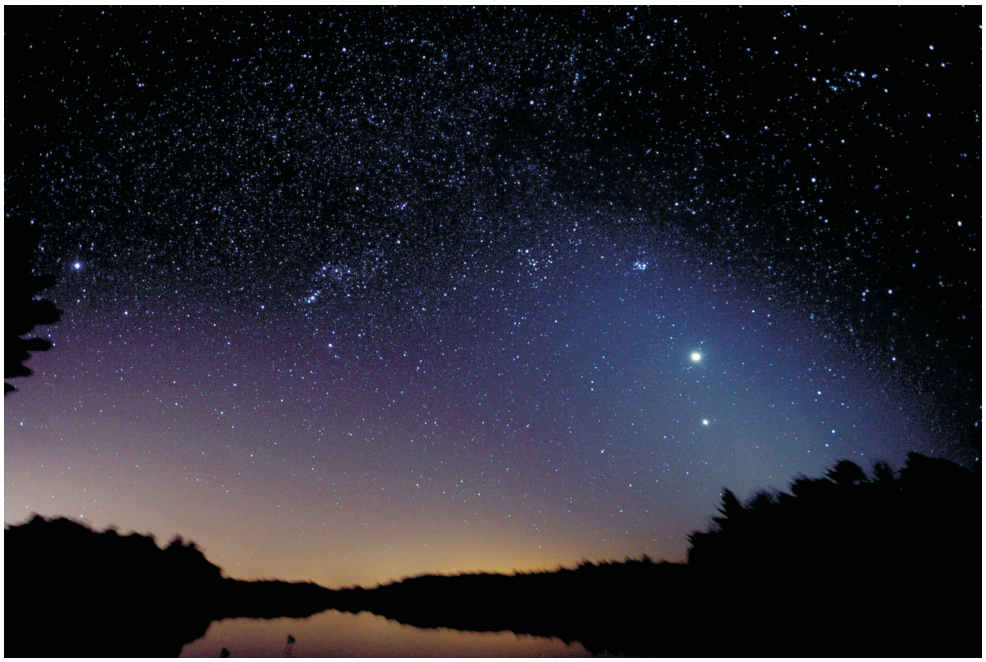
April 2012

Regulus

RASC Kingston Centre





Orion, Hyades, Pleiades, Venus & Jupiter, Zodiacal Light

Rose-Marie Burke *reports*: I did manage to drive back out to the lake after supper, headed down to the shore and set up the barndoor tracker. Orion, Taurus, Pleiades, Venus, Jupiter all lined up in better position than I had hoped they'd be, started rubbing my hands and cackling with glee, waiting for night to fall. Most of the shots were just long exposures of 30 seconds or less, then I finally had full dark and took a few shots with the tracker. I didn't see the zodiacal light, but it looks like it's showing up in a couple of the images. Details: Canon Rebel XT, 350D, ISO 400, f/4.0, 241 seconds, 10-20mm lens at 10mm. Timestamp (fixed) 20:54.

Upcoming Meetings

Saturday, April 14, 2012

Regular Meeting 7:30 p.m.
KAON 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 28, 2012

Astronomy Day 1–3 p.m.
Confederation Basin Park
(weather permitting)

Saturday, May 12, 2012

Regular Meeting 7:30 p.m.
KAON 9:00 p.m.

Meetings are held in Room 324 at Ellis Hall on University Avenue at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Our meetings are co-sponsored by the Queen's Physics Department and are open to the public. **KAON** (Kingston Astronomy Outreach Network) sessions are held at Queen's Observatory on the 4th floor of Ellis Hall.

In this issue:

Reports & Other Items

From Kingston Centre, the RASC, and Beyond...

More Archival Gold!

We know from mention in the Society's *Transactions* for 1895 (p.52) that the first meeting of the Lunar Section was held that summer, but no actual report was published. Recently, in the process of digitizing the Society's Minute Books (which formed the basis for the annual volume of *Transactions*), your editor was delighted to came across that report, preserved in its entirety as part of the minutes. Hooray! Naturally, that report forms this issue's *Blast From the Past*. Enjoy!

Still More Archival Gold!

Three centre histories have been added to the Society's Digital Archives:

- *Fifty Times Around the Sun* (Montréal, 1968): rasc.ca/fifty-times-around-sun
- *Sixty Years in Orbit* (Hamilton, 1969): rasc.ca/sixty-years-orbit
- *Earlier Years of the Edmonton Centre* (Edmonton, 1972): rasc.ca/earlier-years-edmonton-centre

These histories go back to 1918, 1909, and 1932 respectively, so they are a valuable record. **A. Vibert Douglas** is in the Montréal history from her pre-Kingston days.

Harvey's & Astronomy

Longtime KC members will remember the many very enjoyable post-meeting meetings held at the Harvey's on Bath Road during the 1990s. A recent item in the *National Post* gives yet another connection between Harvey's and Astronomy: the very first one opened in 1959 at the corner of Observatory Lane and Yonge Street in Richmond Hill —right next to the DDO. As pointed out by **Eric Briggs**, it was Harvey's that drove the DDO to give up Observatory Lane as their entrance. You can read the history of this lane in the April 1975 *DDO Doings*: astro.utoronto.ca/AALibrary/dddoings.html

NC/KC Meeting Report: March 10

Susan Gagnon

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

March 10 was a very RASC day for me! During the day I eavesdropped on the National Council meeting held in Toronto. At the meeting I gave a brief overview to the faithful in attendance and these are the highlights. There was an extensive presentation by **Anna Naud**, a lawyer, secured by the National Executive to work out the implications to the RASC of the Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act. This federal act requires some change to the way the RASC and its Centres carry out their activities, and so demands by-law reform at both levels. This same lawyer will offer advice in the construction of the new by-laws at the National Level and when this is done the Centres will use this as a starting point to amend theirs. This whole business may lead to some significant changes in RASC, but they are not all bad. Several opportunities for change seemed to be more membership-centered if they are done right. The law came into effect in October 2011 and there are three years to have compatible structures in place. The National Exec has declared the 2013 GA as the date to unveil the new proposed by-laws to the membership for review and approval.

Other topics covered were the availability of transit glasses from the N.O. Once Centres have got their events organized they will place orders. All orders should be in by April 14 and an order form will be provided. Green lasers continue to be discussed and there is to be a notice on the Transport Canada website about legitimate astronomical use of the device. This apparently was agreed to some time ago but did not happen. The original contact at Transport Canada has been reminded and will follow up on this and other items. Our National Council rep **Brian Hunter** was also listening in from England and I am curious to hear his take on many of these items.

KC MEETING

Kevin took the floor to cover a series of short topics. Fall'N'Stars: what, when, and where. Kevin reminded us that this is the 13th year for this event, an event that some of us greatly enjoy. The weekend chosen this year is 14–16th of September with no moon! If you are not a camper you can reserve a spot in the

continues on page 3...

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Regulus Needs You!

ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS—full articles, or even just a couple of paragraphs are always welcome. Items are gratefully accepted on each and every day of the year! Send items to:

walter2 (at)
starlightccd (dot) com

or:

Walter MacDonald
PO Box 142
Winchester ON K0C 2K0

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Meeting/KAON Reports: 2012 March 10

Kevin Kell

The RASC Kingston Centre regular meeting was held in Ellis Hall at Queen's University Saturday night, 2012 March 10th at 6 p.m. Every room on the floor but one was in use as we arrived, with the Queen's Debating groups practicing. We moved down the hall from room 324 to 332 and went ahead with the meeting. As it turned out the groups left around 6:15 anyways.

Susan started with a quick rundown of the high points of the RASC National Council meeting that occurred earlier the same day.

Announcements

- astrocasm.com, the 1st Annual Canadian Astronomy Swap Meet and Banquet to be held on Saturday, June 9, 2012. Hosted by the RASC Hamilton Centre.
- The Queen's Astronomy CAVE Memorial Lecture: Thursday, March 29, 8:00 p.m. in Stirling Hall Theatre D. **Chris Impey** (University of Arizona) is this year's CAVE lecturer. His talk is titled "The Search for Life in the Universe—Are we alone in the Universe?" Admission is free, with refreshments following.

Kevin Kell (that's me) followed up with three PowerPoint presentations: the short one that is sometimes run prior to the start of the meeting (so visitors know they are in the correct room , one on Fall'N'Stars 2012 and a longer one detailing the last months' activities at Starlight-Cascade Observatory. That segued into the Lennox & Addington County plan to create an observing site at the Sheffield Conservation area parking lot, north of highway 41 out of Napanee, half-way between Kaladar and Erinsville.

Lastly we talked about plans for the Transit of Venus occurring on Tuesday June 5th, 2012, asking all present to continue to scout out good locations as we need to decide on a primary and a backup for the Transit Station event.

The turnout was small, with less than 10 members in attendance.

KAON Session

We held the March KAON session with the Queen's Observatory Open house last night from 7:30-9:00 p.m. EST. Dr. **Kristine Spekkens** (RMC) gave the 7:35-8:15 talk on "Cold Astronomy" to a crowd of 50-60 people. Some missed the talk and were out on the deck with us under intermittent and ever-changing cloud cover.

Doug Angle ran the Fitzgerald telescope and Terry Bridges ran the Queen's 8" LX-200 in manual mode. Nathalie opened up the dome for small group tours up there as well.

We had lots of great discussions with a lot of interested people and should see a few more attend our April RASC-KC meeting. We passed out over 40 Moon Gazer Guides.

Targets of opportunity were: Venus, Jupiter, Mars, M42 in Orion. The cloud cover was nasty at times. Before 7:30 we actually put the scopes away as we were expecting total cloud out, but then it cleared. It was cold.. maybe –5C with a good wind.

With great expectations of clearing after we got home to do some observing...it turned out to be too long a day. Even forgot that whole changing the clocks thing.

Thanks to all who helped out!

Rose-Marie: Right after the KAON session, and before I left, a fellow came over where Susan, Kim and myself were getting ready to leave to ask about hooking up a laptop to his telescope as he has neck problems and cannot view through the eyepiece for very long. Kim was able to give him a lot of information about hooking up a camera, Susan and I chimed in with tidbits. He was happy with the help and asked "How do I join you guys?" So Susan gave him a brochure and we all encouraged him to look at the website. We did what we could to encourage a prospective member.★

...NC/KC Meeting Report

...continued from page 2

longhouse where you will be a bit more out of the elements. You can book for the day or the weekend and there is a banquet you can sign up for. Check the Fall'N'Stars page for more details. It is pretty much a break-even event, so it remains quite affordable. **Kevin** and **Kim** are off this weekend to look over the Sheffield Conservation Area as an observing destination. The Lennox and Addington development group are promoting this as a dark sky destination and have received an endorsement from **Terry Dickinson**. Some of you may recall an astrophoto contest that they ran a couple of years ago promoting astronomy in the county. This development group is planning to pour a concrete observing pad near the parking lot there this spring. It is north of Erinsville, but below Hwy 7. Kevin also had a technology update at Starlight Cascade Observatory on the remote scope plan and several season-related issues of design. We also saw the latest all-sky camera improvements and some photos of the March 5th conjunction. We had a lengthy discussion about the plans for the transit and what we should look for in

continues on page 10...

Blast from the Past: First Meeting of the Lunar Section

G.E. Lumsden

THE LUNAR SECTION OF THIS SOCIETY, on the evening of Tuesday, the 2nd of July [1895], held its first meeting for the Summer in the grounds of the Toronto Observatory which had kindly been thrown open by the Director, Mr. **R.F. Stupart**, who, with the assistance of Mr. **W. Menzies**, and Mr. **F.L. Blake**, of the Observatory Staff, contributed, in a marked degree to the success of the night's work. The attendance of members and others was very gratifying and deep interest was manifested by everyone. In addition to the fine 6-in. Cooke refractor of the Observatory, which was available during the evening, the following telescopes had been set up on the lawn:—3-in. Wray, by Mr. **Andrew Elvins**; 3-in. Vion Frères, by Dr. **A.D. Watson**; 3-in. Bardou, by Mr. **Charles Foster**; 2-¾ in. Vion Frères, by Dr. A.D. Watson; 3-in. Bardou by Mr. Charles Foster; 2-¾ in. Vion Frères, by Mr. **Thomas Lindsay**; 72-in. focus glass of small aperture by Mr. **G.G. Pursey**; a 6-in. reflector, by Messrs. **J.R. and Zoe M. Collins**, who had made the instrument and stand throughout, and a 10-in. With-Browning reflector, by the undersigned.

Though the earlier portion of the day had been perfect for observational work, the sky, especially during the later afternoon hours, had become cloudy and hazy. Towards 8 o'clock, however, the sky cleared up and was in fair condition until observation ceased at 11 o'clock. The Moon, being in the eighth day of her age, was in an interesting phase and presented under most favourable conditions, many subjects for study and examination. To several of these subjects especial attention was paid, as they were selected types of characteristic lunar surface markings. Among these was Mare Crisium, as a typical sea, the Alps, as a typical mountain range, the Great Valley of the Alps, typical of those excoriations on the surface possibly indicative of the action of rapidly flowing water; Plato, typical of walled plains of the circular order; Copernicus, typical of the great craters with central mountains; Clavius, typical of vast irregular walled plains, containing craters, themselves of considerable size, and numerous craterlets; Theophilus, Cyrillus and Catherine, typical of great heights and depths and of crater-walls broken away on the side of seas by the apparent action of water, and last, but entirely as a popular optical illusion, the play of light and shade upon the hills fringing Sinus Iridum, so as to present the spectre commonly known as The Moon Maid, whose head is formed by Cape Heraclides.

Among other celestial objects examined were the planets Venus, whose polar-cap was shown by **Mr. Elvins** to those who looked through his telescope armed with a very high power, and Saturn, which was seen to good advantage, on telescope showing four moons. The Pole Star, Cor Caroli, Mizar and Alcor, Vega, Beta Cygni and other stars were shown by request. Among the visitors present, was **Mr. Saunders**, Professor of Physics in Hamilton College, and Director of the Smith Observatory, Clinton, New York, an Observatory possessing a fine equipment including three telescopes, one of them a 13-in. refractor. This Observatory was the scene of the labours of the **late Dr. Peters** who paid steadfast attention to sunspots for many years. Professor Saunders' object in visiting Toronto was to consult the magnetic records at the Observatory here, with a view to comparison being made between them and Dr. Peters' drawing and observations, for the purpose of ascertaining the relationship, if any, between sunspots and magnetic disturbances. The Professor's work being along the lines of investigation recently taken up by this Society in respect of earth currents, his conclusions will be awaited with some interest and may, it is hoped, in a short time, be communicated to the Committee on this subject.

The Toronto Magnetic and Meteorologic Observatory in its original location some time between 1855 and 1907. This view is looking northwest from where the front of Convocation Hall is today.

Owing to a fine sky, the presence of eight telescopes, a large attendance and the interest manifested in the night's work, the first meeting of the Lunar Section may be regarded as both successful and encouraging. Indeed, so intent were those present upon the pleasures of observation, that a paper entitled "The Present Condition, and One Step in the History of the Moon," especially prepared by **Mr. Elvins**, had to be postponed for the purpose of being read this evening to the Society, a distinction it well merits as it deals with the subject in a popular vein and evolves a theory as regards the possible causes of the disappearance of water and air from the side of the Moon visible to us. The paper is herewith laid before the Society.

Respectfully submitted.
(signed G.E. Lumsden)
Director, the Lunar Section.

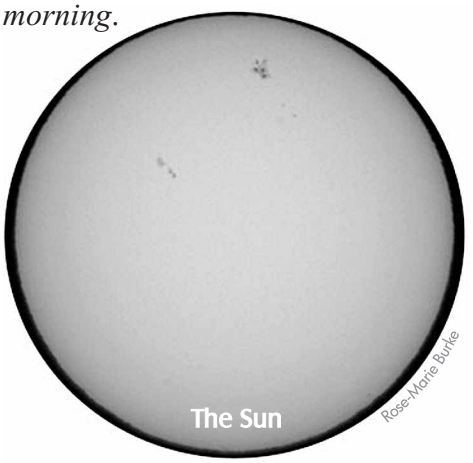
—from the APST 1895 Minute Book
rasc.ca/first-meeting-lunar-section-1895

Observing Reports: March

Various Members

MON/TUE, MARCH 5/6

Rose-Marie *and* **Kim** *observed the sunspot group AR 1429 which Kim reports has expanded since yesterday morning.*

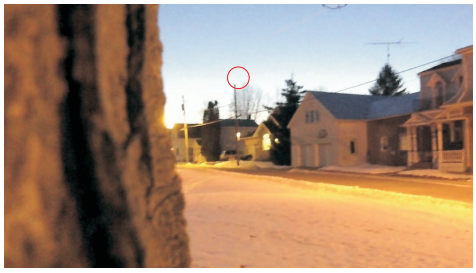


Kevin K: Kim & I went out with a couple of point-and-shoot cameras on tripods and did manage to capture the triplet of Mercury, Venus and Jupiter this evening. Lotsa Fun! (Mercury is in between the two large branches of the spruce tree on the lower right, just above the level of the bird feeder. [*Circled in red–Ed.*]])

We took several of Mars as well and were going to do Leo for Walter but the moon washed it out totally.

Walter: I saw Mercury around 18:30 tonight—this is the 2nd consecutive elongation of Mercury I've observed in 2012!

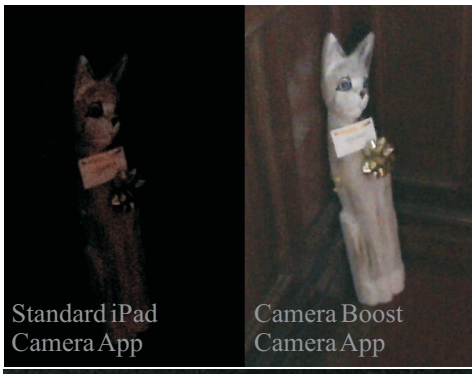
Today I bought an iPad app called *Camera Boost* which adds features like HDR, noise reduction, and (most importantly!) exposure times up to 1/3s. I was able to image Venus and Jupiter together in the sky, but there is no sign of Mercury (location circled) in the pictures I took—the sky was still too bright and there was not enough contrast for the iPad's crummy little camera to handle (I braced the iPad against a tree in lieu of a tripod for the Mercury shot).

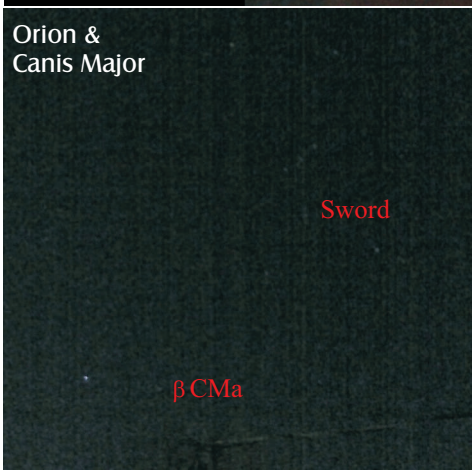


At 19:00 I went out again and imaged Orion. Stars were visible down to 2.0, and the sword was just visible. The photo was very noisy.

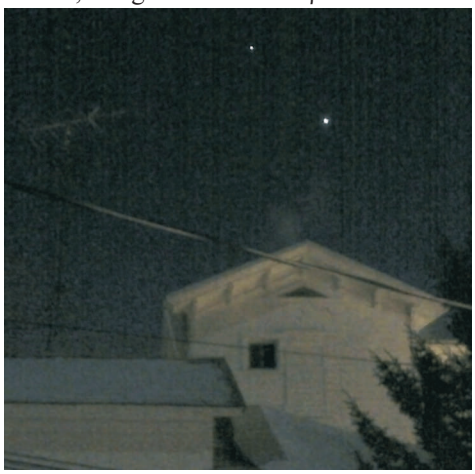
Certainly the iPad 2 cam won't be winning any awards ever! (This is not a surprise.) It's useful for some terrestrial imaging and for video chats (and getting photos of book pages, paintings, and medals at RASC national office!), but that's it.

The Boost app improves on this—so it is definitely worth the three bucks I paid. The company that makes this app also has a "night vision" app for the newer iPhone camera—that camera is supposedly a big improvement on the older camera that my iPad 2 has. It would be interesting to see how big the improvement is. Anybody out there have an iPhone 4S and 99 cents to buy the app and try it out?





Above: The stars and sword of Orion are just visible, along with Sirius and β CMa.



Jupiter and Venus, in strong twilight and later in a dark sky. Both images were taken with an iPad 2 and *Camera Boost* app.

iPad images by Walter MacDonald

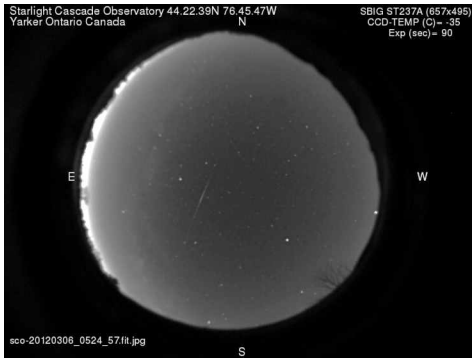
In low-light situations, the standard iPad camera app just ramps up the ISO rating rather than the exposure, whereas the *Camera Boost* app can actually do much longer exposures—up to 1/3s.

Interestingly the iPad camera app only gives 960x720 images (which is a 4:3 aspect ratio, so they won't appear "letterboxed" on the iPad's screen—I'm sure this is a **Steve Jobs** aesthetics thing), while *Camera Boost* gives the full 1280x720 image of the camera's chip. Neither app attaches any EXIF data to the image, which is strange since it seems like it would be an easy thing to do.

Those were the evening activities of Centre members. Kim, as usual, was also watching the dawn skies...

Kim: I was just out, to see the morning splendours, of which there is Scorpius and Sagittarius, but was looking for Saturn, oh yes, the Summer Triangle was there too.

I saw a satellite going south-to-north, and it flared at the zenith at ~05:18. I came inside and checked the Iridium passes, but nothing there matched what I saw.



Kevin K: The all-sky camera got it in the 05:24 image this morning. It was high near the zenith, bright, and had a long flare. HeavensAbove for our location shows only one candidate (Cosmos 1461).

Kevin F: Allowing for errors, it looks to be the SMOS satellite, catalog number 36063. The mission website is esa.int/esaLP/LPsmos.html. I will have to observe that one.

TUE/WED, MARCH 6/7

Rose-Marie: The only thing to see tonight was the lovely ring round the moon.

Canon Rebel XT, 10-22 lens at 10mm, ISO 400, f/4.0, 6 -second exposure.

THU/FRI, MARCH 8/9

Kim: It was totally cloudy when we went to bed, but I awoke at 4:00 a.m., my most precious time to go out and observe. I do love this time of the morning...the stillness of the night, the far away echo of a train whistle...you can hear the gentle breezes through the trees. Not to cold out either only -5C. The skies had cleared and the Moon was up, but I thought I could see a thin line of green, or maybe its because I didn't have my glasses on. I got dressed and went out to take some pictures, surely the camera could pick up some green. I am attaching an image, everyone take a look. I see it, but it might be wishful thinking. Then I took some images of Scorpius, Mars, the Moon, Saturn, Cassiopeia and Cygnus.

Rose-Marie: Damnable clouds! (Insert string of foul expletives here.) I kept poking my nose out the door, FINALLY saw a bit of clearing around 11:30. The only clear space was up the highway, and it didn't last long, but I did manage a couple of shots, one with a nice plume. This is cropped to remove the darned car with headlights coming at me, had about 2 dozen cars coming and going, why aren't these people home in bed??! (Shift workers are exempt from my wrath, but there can't be that many on our route!)

Photoshop levels were cranked up a bit. Shot settings: Canon Rebel XT 350D, 18-55mm lens at 18 mm, 800 ISO, f/ 4.0, 3 seconds.

While I was out there cursing the incoming clouds that further obscured my view of the auroras, I turned the camera the other way and took a shot of the full moon and heavy bank of clouds to the south.

I was tired and yawning, figured I'd go to bed and set the alarm for 2:30 a.m., see if the clouds had moved off and if any auroras left. As usual I set the alarm for *P.M.* Argh.

Clouds and full moon: ruining our astronomical fun on a regular basis.

FRI/SAT, MARCH 9/10

Rose-Marie: I was out earlier with the dog, saw that the sky was clear, got myself bundled up and headed out with the camera to try to get Venus and Jupiter with Orion. Good thing I bundled up, someone cranked up winter again. Brr, what a cold wind.

Canon Rebel XT, 10-20mm lens @ 10 mm, f/4.5, ISO 800, 21s.

SUN/MON, MARCH 11/12

Kevin K: It was gorgeous...warm with a slight breeze and no bugs. Took a bunch of comparison images of some of the favourites (yes, including Leo with no clouds!) with 15 and 64 second exposures.

Rose-Marie: I'm a little disappointed with some of my shots, the haziness and length of exposure made stars a bit fuzzy. I was playing with the 10-20 mm wide angle, the 50mm fixed lens, and the 18-55. I *just* managed to get Orion into the picture below; at lower left is the light from Kingston. As **Kevin** says, a bit hazy last night, I could feel the dampness after a while. This is the first night that I was able to keep my big gloves off most the time, just warming my hands in my pockets until that breeze started to pick up.

18mm, ISO 1600, f/3.5, 15s at 20:53 EDT

THU/FRI, MARCH 15/16

Kevin K: We had an unexpected clearing Thursday evening (in between storms) and popped outside to do some camera & tripod imaging and a little on the LX-200 with Meade LPI camera.

The Canon A540 shots turned out nicely (see a collection of six nights of Jupiter–Venus conjunction) at starlightcascade.ca...the Meade LPI not so much—it seems to be over-exposing tremendously after all that back and forth between it and Meade DSI drivers and software. Shots of Jupiter, Venus and Mars last night did not turn out at all. OK... that's it for Meade...Starlight Xpress' turn next!

Later, Kevin added to his report:
We had a wizbang lightning storm and nearby strikes Thursday morning...to the point the network connection to the observatory from the house failed. A quick check in the morning (unplug, replug cables in network switches at either end and a power cycle of the network switches failed to fix anything.

After getting home with more time to troubleshoot, I found that the network port (one of 8) on the inside-house switch was dead. Plugged the cable into another one and presto, the observatory was back online.

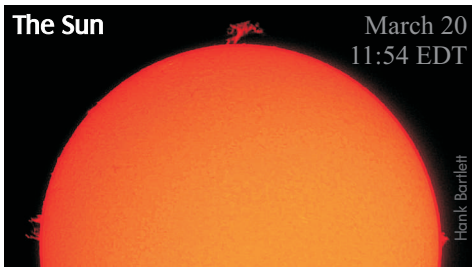
The moral of the story: buy network switches with more ports than you need at the present time.

SAT/SUN, MARCH 18/19

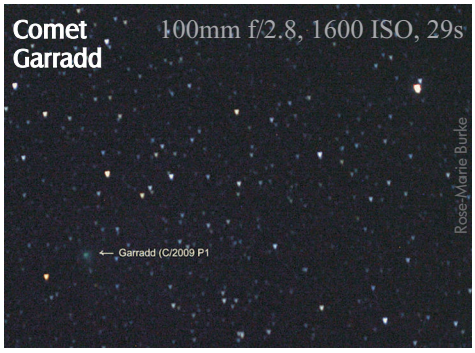
Susan: I rolled off the roof about 1 a.m. and put an eyepiece in to have a look at the comet [Garradd].

TUE/WED, MARCH 20/21

Hank: There was what I thought a rather interesting prominence on the Sun today. I managed to squeeze a few minutes of my lunch for myself and take this image.



Rose-Marie: I almost wimped out tonight, but when I realized that I was walking the dog in rubber slippers and denim shirt, told myself get out there. Hadn't played with the barndoor tracker in a bit. First I looked for Garradd with the binocs, no luck. So I trotted out back with tracker and camera, put on the 100mm lens, and had a go. Took several tries to turn the knob *just so* at the right speed to get a not-so-blurry shot, but I got it.



Kevin K: 1st day of spring observing...vernal equinox was around 1 a.m. but I did in fact sleep through that. Fantastic hot weather: 5th record-setting hottest day in a

row.. at least two more on the way. BBQ was required.

We spent 2 hours outside. It was nice and warm—almost too warm. But there were in fact mosquitos. What a downer. I needed long pants and shirts and a windbreaker and hat to keep them away. Luckily they are small and stupid mosquitos, like their larger cousins, the lawyer.

Kim went visual through the 20cm Dobsonian at Jupiter and Mars. Trying a few different filters we spotted the ice cap without too much problem.

I was out removing the Meade LPI camera and installing the Starlight Xpress MX716 camera on the Meade LX-200GPS 20cm SCT. After about 20 minutes of software installation, drivers, cables, etc, I had a thought...didn't I try this out a few months ago on a different Windows 7 computer? I did! Did it work then? No. Do I think it will work now? Hmm.. I guess not.

OK...I have now officially been through trials of the Meade LPI, DSI and Starlight Xpress MX716 cameras and have declared them all not to easily work if at all with a Windows 7 box of any type. Time to go looking for something new.

Hmmm...webcam? I have a Microsoft webcam that we use for videoconferencing and a program called HandyAVI for capturing video. I installed that, plugged in the webcam, and handheld it up to the eyepiece. I started capturing some images of Jupiter, Venus and Mars. In the end the software, hardware and drivers all worked. It was Kevin that did not set the correct settings on HandyAVI to get anything useful.

Time to move on. I have a few other USB cameras to try out this weekend...oh wait, it is going to be rainy and cloudy. OK, we'll set the up and test them inside.

In any event, to make the evening not a complete wash-out, the old camera-on-a-tripod trick got many shots of Jupiter, Venus and Orion.

Rose-Marie: I took a few wide angle shots as the fog thickened. You can see the layer of ground fog. I was surprised that the lenses didn't fog over while I was out there; it was my lungs that didn't care for the dampness and sent me indoors.

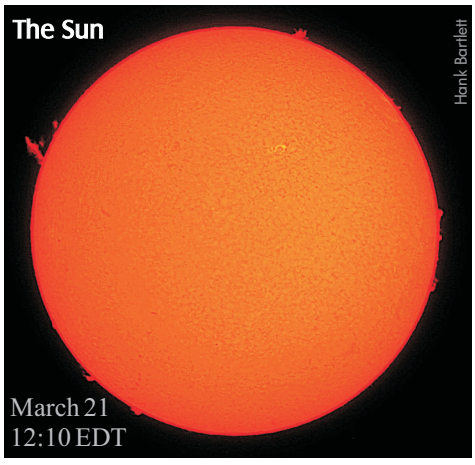
Image details: Canon Rebel XT, 13s, f/3.5, ISO 1600, 18mm, on Tues/Wed, March 20/21 at 22:23 EDT.

WED/THU, MARCH 21/22

Kevin K: Another great night outside... We could only spend about 30 minutes due to getting home so late from other meetings. But it was warm and clearer than normal. We went after the supernova in M95 (within a couple of degrees of Mars) as well, but could not positively identify visually what should have been a magnitude 13 star.

We did some visual observing with the 20 cm Dob. Even that low in the atmospheric muck it was great to see Saturn again.

Hank: I actually went out observing tonight, yes I opened the observatory and spun the 9¼ around to Venus, Mars, Orion and briefly hunted (unsuccessfully) for Garradd. All in all it was nice to be out and what a great night. I even took a few prime focus images with the DSLR of Venus & Mars. Now if I just had a 22cal to shoot out some lights I would go out more often. Below is a solar image from lunchtime.



SUN, MARCH 25

Mark Kaye: I can find the Moon and Venus without any trouble and with careful scanning, Jupiter is a very difficult target three degrees south of the Moon. This is without optical aid. All are easy targets in 7x50 binoculars. I found Jupiter first without knowing where exactly to look, then verified with the binoculars.

Hank: A million years ago humans were in awe of the wonders of the night sky, especially such alignments. Here we are with all of our knowledge and technology and still we can be awe struck, sure we do not see it all in the same terms but the beauty of it all has never grown old. How far we have come and how little we have gone.

Rose-Marie: A couple of times last night there were small clouds drifting over the moon while I was shooting, and plenty of aircraft flying

over-head. Got some funky lights in one of the shots.

I was really ticked off when I was pointed low on the horizon, and while my eyes were wandering around I spotted a flaring satellite overhead. No time to get the camera shifted, too bad, because it flared quite brightly.

Mark: Funky is not the usual word that I employ when aeroplanes ruin a perfectly good exposure, although the word does share some letters...

MON/TUE, MARCH 26/27

Kevin K: The triple Venus-Jupiter-Moon conjunction last night was phenomenal. We popped outside between 19:00 and 21:30 for a few minutes at a time, watching the skies get darker and the three shining ever brighter.

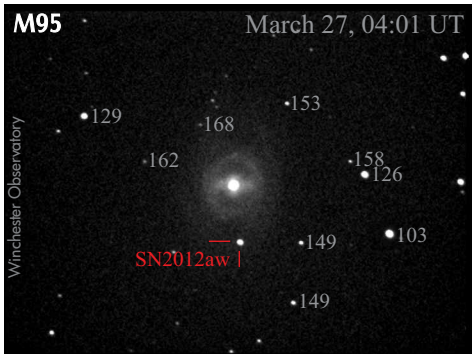
Walter: I spotted the Moon and Venus at 16:30 today. It was unbelievable how easy Venus was to see naked eye, thanks to the proximity of the Moon. I showed my cousin and a neighbour, both of whom were surprised you could see Venus in daylight.

It was a cold and gusty night, so I dropped And and Per from the start of the imaging run to avoid pointing the dome NW. The all-night run bagged 181 variables. The nights are getting shorter, and my plan stopped at the brink of Lyra, so a bunch of vars were left undone.

A new AGP 8x video card has restored the observatory computer to good health, and I even got a bump in resolution up to 1280x1024.

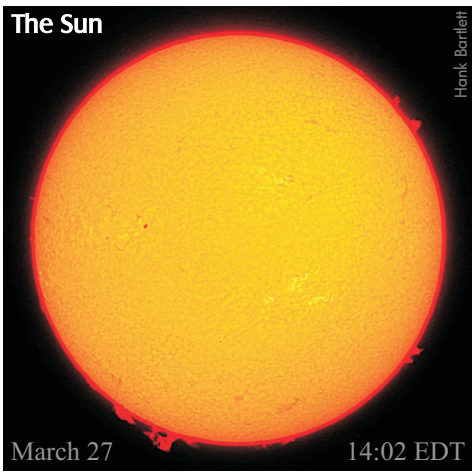
I stopped the run briefly to image SN2012aw in M95. The supernova is around mag 13.2 so should be visible visually in modest telescopes.

Kevin K: Here's one 15 sec exposure looking down the driveway. It was too cold to stay out long. We took more images of Mars (every clear night as well) to get a motion-through-Leo effect later on. But then



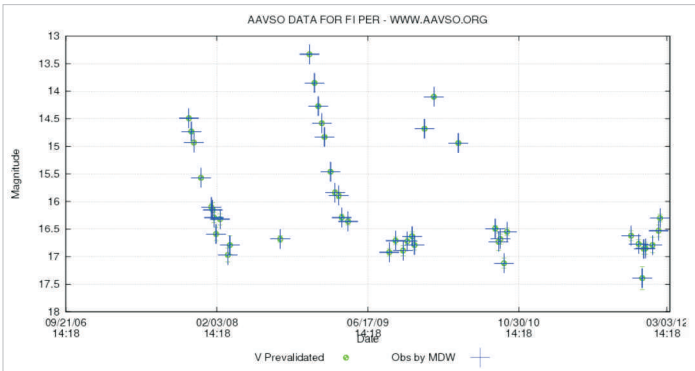
I also went around to the front of the house to try to escape the wind for a couple of shots and it was even colder and windier.

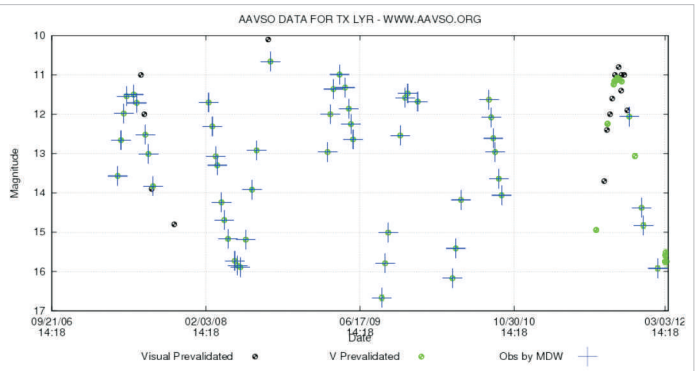
On the good news side, the weather station wind speed sensor is back up and running after almost two weeks down. I suspect the two large wind storms on March 3rd and 7th contributed to the general battering it took.



...Observing Reports

Various Members





Walter: Don't ask me how, but FI Persei and TX Lyrae wound up in my variable star monitoring program even though the AAVSO had no charts for them. What to do? I decided to just keep on imaging them and wait for the AAVSO to catch up. That has finally happened, so this past winter I gathered all the images and did the photometry. The results are the nice light curves you see above.★

A dream! the astronomic years
Patrolled by stars and planets bring
Time led in chains from post to post
Of the all-conquering Zodiac ring.
—Edwin Muir

...continued from page 3

...NC/KC Meeting Report

a suitable horizon. The sunset for the date should be at 277° to 303° (WNW). We are all keeping an eye out for a long empty foreground; over land or water is not an issue; if buildings and trees are far enough away the view should not be affected that much. Or…go for elevation. This is one event that we should not need to travel too far for. One concern is the introduction of the Public Event factor. While we want to make the public aware of the event and how to observe it, it is also a special event that members should be able to enjoy, especially since it will be, for us, a 'last chance to see' event. Other general announcements are listed below. (By the way, 20% of general membership at the meeting were new members!)

The Cave Lecture is on March 29th at 8 p.m. in Stirling D. **Chris Impy** of the University of Arizona will speak on "The Search for Life in the Universe." He is regarded as an excellent speaker, with many teaching awards to his credit.

The Kingston Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Science Fair prize has been provided as usual for an astronomy-related project. The judging will be carried out by one of the pool of judges that will be on hand. **Terry Dickinson** will be the keynote speaker and **Melanie Hall** (past Queen's Observatory Coordinator, now with NMST) will also speak to the grade 7s and 8s. In a conversation with someone involved with the event, I commented that the workday scheduling of the event precluded our participation. While this was acknowledged as unfortunate, keeping the event from spilling into the weekend greatly increased student participation. Children are too busy on weekends. I will spare you the editorial here.

On March 24th the **Kingston exec** will spend the day together working out some ideas for ways to improve the Center. We will probably also look to the future task of by-law reform and Centre insurance issues. There was a general invitation to offer topics to be discussed.

We have been invited by the **Kingston Field Naturalists** to provide a bit of entertainment for the BioBlitz on Amherst Island June 15/16. The event begins in the afternoon on the Friday at 3 and will end the following day at 3 p.m. The Astronomy session would take place on Friday June 15th at 10:00 p.m. Camping space and outhouses will be available. The ferry does not run through the night. The blitz in BioBlitz is the counting of all available species within a 24hr period. Generally greater diversity indicates a healthy environment. E-mail me if you are interested in participating. They are firming up their plans soon.

AstroCASM: Hamilton Centre is organizing a big swap meet for astronomical gadgets! Google "astrocasm" and get the details. The date is June 9th, which is a Saturday. There will be a banquet in the evening with **Terry D**. as speaker! It will be held at the Holiday Inn. Contact them soon if you would like a booth to unload your own stuff. There will also be retailers there. Purchase your ticket early and get a break on the price. This sounds like a terrific one-day event!★