



O.A.O.G. NEWS

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- 1) About this newsletter...

Welcome to the 7th issue of OAOG News. This email newsletter plus observing alerts, and reports are sent to all those who have responded to me. I am also mailing this newsletter to other friends. If at any time, you would like to be removed from this mailing list, please send me an email to let me know.

Your observing reports, observing tips and astronomy announcements are all welcome for OAOG News. Simply email your submissions to me and they will be included for next month's issue.

August promises to be a very busy month of observing sessions for us. With the warm clear summer nights, many opportunities lies upon us to go out and enjoy all the wonders nature has to offer. Lets hope the weather cooperates as it should be quite a memorable August!

2) REPORT: Foymount International Stargazing - July 10th, 17th...

We had a wonderful night at Foymount on July 10th. It was quite a success. We almost thought of cancelling the event as we tried to figure out the weather during the afternoon. But despite clouds, thundershowers and Rock Mallin protesting, we all went and had various telescopes (about a dozen) from binoculars to a 25inch Dobsonian. Denis Legault set up his innovative “portable” observatory. Upon arriving while still in daylight, we installed large signs (with “Foymount International Stargazing” and arrows) at various strategic locations near the roads. This attracted quite a few local people who wondered what all the fuss was about. Among them was numerous curious young teenagers who spent the entire evening at the telescopes, and were quite interested to learn more about the sky.

The sky cleared up completely at sunset and became pristine, with naked eye stars of magnitude 6.9 or 7.0. The best view was at the hill a little further south from the CBC antennas. The Milky Way was quite bright and well detailed all the way down into Sagittarius. Observing several deep sky objects with the various instruments on site was a big hit. We also saw a good handful of meteors, even one or two telescopic meteors! The seeing was fairly good but not nearly as ideal as it was during last May’s session. Surprisingly for the first time, it was a very dewy night. We finished by observing Jupiter in daylight (with improved atmosphere stability). By the time we finished packing up, the sun was coming up. After a nap, we headed back home still quite tired but satisfied for a very successful night.

A number of us were back at Foymount for the July 17th event. Unfortunately we were not nearly as lucky with the weather. The entire evening was spent under heavy cloud cover. An occasional light shower even had us scrambling to protect the telescopes! Despite such conditions, a few of us were patient enough to wait for a clear break that finally appeared after midnight. By that time, all our scopes were packed into the cars. Within minutes to our surprise, the sky cleared almost completely! With magnitude 6.9-7.0 stars above us, it was a fantastic and memorable view. So we just sat back to enjoy the sky for a while. Unfortunately, clouds were back within a little more than 40 minutes. This put an end to our partially successful night.

I would like to thank the following people (in no particular order) for their participation to either July 10th or 17th sessions:

Rock Mallin, Jason Mainville, Attila Danko, Mike Wirths, Denis Legault, Frank Bayerl, Gilles Chiasson and his wife, Jean Mantha, Bruce Clarke, Jean Janneteau, Richard Lalond, Rolf Meier, Linda Meier (and their son). I may have forgotten other

names as I know more people were present. In that case thanks to you too!

3) August Star parties at Mackenzie Point (Gatineau park)...

On the weekend of August 6, 7 and 8, the National Museum of Science and Technology will hold its evening public star parties at Mackenzie Point in the Gatineau Park. Rain or shine, volunteers with a number of telescopes will be present on site for displays and if weather permits, for an observing session. In case of poor weather, a large tent will be set up. Astronomy slides will also be presented. This event is free to everyone who wishes to volunteer. Please contact Rock Mallin for more details if you are interested to join us there.

4) Don't miss the popular Perseids...

Get ready for nature's spectacular display of fireworks! This August 11th and 12th, a colorful shower of "shooting stars" known as the Perseid meteors will pepper the night sky with a dazzling sky show. Conditions for this year's Perseids are the most favorable since 1996. This year, the new moon (total solar eclipse in Europe) will not interfere at all, so if your skies are clear, be sure not to miss them!

In reality, stars do not "shoot" nor do they "fall". These brief streaks of glowing light we see are caused by tiny dust sized particles slamming into Earth's atmosphere at over 60 kilometers per second! A few larger chunks will produce exceptionally bright meteors leaving behind the glow of long lasting vaporous trains. These are known as fireballs.

Meteors are easy to see. No telescope or binoculars are required, only your eyes! On any given moonless night, at least 5 to 10 meteors every hour are visible moving in random directions. However, these rates can increase by several times on a particular night, year after year. This is when we assist to an annual meteor shower. Such a phenomena is the result of Earth plowing through a stream of dust left behind by a comet. In the case of the Perseids, we see the remnants of comet Swift-Tuttle. All Perseid meteors encounter our atmosphere in nearly parallel paths. From an observer's perspective on Earth, the Perseids will appear to radiate from a single point in the sky. We name meteor showers after the constellation where they seem to radiate. In the case of the Perseids, meteors trace back from the constellation Perseus which is located low in the northeast evening sky. It's best not to look directly at the radiant. Keep in mind that meteors can and will appear anywhere in the sky.

Under clear and dark skies well away from most city lights, observers can expect to see from 60 to 100 meteors per hour. The highest rates can be expected in the early predawn hours of August 13th. As the night goes on, meteors will gradually become more

frequent as the Earth turns directly into the incoming stream of dust. Perseids can also be seen in smaller numbers for a few nights before and after the peak. With so many meteors visible, is there any chance that some may actually reach the ground? The answer to that is a definite no. As meteor showers originate from comets, the particles are known to be too fragile to survive the fiery entry in our atmosphere. They usually disintegrate at heights of 80 to 110 kilometers.

I am presently organizing an informal all-night observing session for everyone interested to view the Perseids on Wednesday Aug.11th and/or Thursday Aug.12th. The location has not been confirmed yet, but would likely be at a fairly dark sky site well away from most city light pollution. If you might be interested in attending these sessions, please let me know and I will send you updates with more details.

5) Museum of Science and Technology; Perseids public program...

On Tuesday August 10th, the National Museum of Science and Technology will hold its public Perseid meteors program. This evening includes illustrated talks with slides. Weather permitting a star party will go on outside near the museum's 15inch refractor, the largest telescope of its type in Canada. A number of smaller telescopes will be provided by volunteers. Public attendance to the Museum program requires reservations in advance; please contact the Museum. For volunteers, please let us know if you would like to help out.

6) For more information about the Perseids...

Here are some very useful web sites with detailed information on the Perseids and meteor observing. Also, with a few basic knowledge of the sky, it is surprisingly easy to record meteors for scientific purposes. To find out how, have a look at the following:

The North American Meteor Network <<http://web.infoave.net/~meteorobs/>>

American Meteor Society <<http://www.amsmeteors.org/>>

International Meteor Organization (more advanced information) <<http://www.imo.net/>>

You'll also find more information about meteors in general on the OAGG

"Meteor Section" web site <<http://members.home.net/observers-group/MeteorData.htm>>

7) August 13th RASC Public Star Party...

The Ottawa Center of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) has something to fascinate everyone, young and old. On Friday, August 13th, join us as we will attend the RASC's Public Star Party at Pinhey's Point (north Kanata near Ottawa). Different telescopes of various sizes will be present. Enjoy views of star clusters, nebulae, and even galaxies. For more information, call (613) 830-3381. To learn more about the Ottawa Center of the RASC and how you can join, have a look at their web site: <http://ottawa.rasc.ca/>

8) Other observing activities...

A handful of people have mentioned that they are planning to return to Foymount for an all-night stargazing session on Saturday August 14th. The Foymount site offers superb dark skies for all kinds of observing. Because of a busy schedule on that particular weekend, some of us will be unable to attend (myself included). For that reason, this will be only an informal event and on a "go as you wish" basis. If you would like to observe at Foymount, please let us know, and we will give you exact directions on how to get there.

9) Web site updates...

Here are the latest updates to our web site. These updates should be mostly complete within a few days. To visit our site, go to: <http://members.home.net/observers-group/>

- The latest meteor data from Pierre Martin
- Sidewalk Stories updated
- Information about the Perseids
- August Star parties in the "Where We Are" page
- Repaired broken picture from Pierre's photos
- Table layout placed back for "Upcoming Sky Events"
- A few graphics updates

10) Our next meeting: Friday August 6th...

You are invited to join us at our informal meetings, if you wish to meet us and share ideas!

The OAG holds its monthly meetings on every first Friday of each month. Our next get-together will be on August 6th, at 6:30 PM. Location is at Burger King on St-Laurent Blvd, near the Museum of Science & Technology. Our meetings are very informal. We simply gather to chat and discuss our past/upcoming activities. We then head off to the RASC meeting held at 8:00 PM at the Museum's auditorium. The RASC have their meeting open to the public as well. Everyone is welcome. Please send us a note if you need more information.

Hope to see you out there! Clear skies to all for August!

11) Contact information...

Ottawa Astronomy & Observers Group :

e-mail :observers-group@home.com,

Phone : (613)-741-1612 Mon - Sat 10:00am - 9:00pm Sun 12:00pm -5:00pm

Other Contacts Within The Group...

Jason Mainville :

e-mail : jmainville@home.com, Phone : Mon - Sat 10:00am - 9:00pm

Rock Mallin :

e-mail : adave@cyberus.ca, home : (613)-749-7592 Tues - Fri 10:00am - 4:00pm

Pierre Martin : e-mail : dob14.5@sympatico.ca

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Is produced by Pierre Martin, Jason Mainville and Rock Mallin