



O.A.O.G. NEWS

Volume 49-2, February 2003

IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT OUR NEXT MONTHLY GABFEST...

The next OAOG monthly gabfest will be on Friday, February 7. Everybody is welcome to join in to meet the group and talk about all things astronomy. ****Please note the change in locations below****... From 5pm to 8pm --> We will be at the usual Harveys restaurant on the corner of Walkley road and St-Laurent blvd. From 8pm to 11pm --> We will be at the ***NEW*** Tim Horton's (corner of Lancaster and Walkley roads near the hwy 417 ramps). For a map to this new location, see...http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OAOG/files/Maps/Map_Tim_Hortons.jpg

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1) Message Regarding the Columbia Tragedy...

On behalf of the OAOG, our sympathies are extended to the families, friends and crew of the lost Columbia. Just as I was typing this newsletter, this email came through from NASA itself...

Feb. 4th, 2003: “At the dawn of the space age some 40 years ago, we always knew who was orbiting Earth or flying to the Moon. Neil Armstrong, Yuri Gagarin, John Glenn. They were household names--everywhere.

Lately it’s different. Space flight has become more routine. Another flight of the shuttle. Another visit to the space station. Who’s onboard this time? Unless you’re a NASA employee or a serious space enthusiast, you might not know.

Dave Brown, Rick Husband, Laurel Clark, Kalpana Chawla, Michael Anderson, William McCool, and Ilan Ramon

Now we know. Those are the names of the seven astronauts who were tragically lost on Saturday, Feb. 1st, when the space shuttle Columbia (STS-107) broke apart over Texas. Before the accident, perhaps, they were strangers to you. But if that’s so, why did you have a knot in your gut when you heard the news? What were those tears all about? Why do you feel so deep-down sad for seven strangers? Astronauts have an unaccountable hold on us. They are explorers. Curious, humorous, serious, daring, careful. Where they go, they go in peace. Every kid wants to be one. Astronauts are the essence of humanity.

They are not strangers. They are us. While still in orbit Dave Brown asked, jokingly, “do we really have to come back?”

No. But we wish you had.

The Science@NASA team, as does all of NASA and the world, extends heartfelt sympathies to the family, friends and colleagues of the STS-107 crew. Please see the NASA Home Page (<http://www.nasa.gov>) for more information on the Columbia Investigation.

2) Welcome Ken Whitnall in OCV...

...by Pierre Martin

On behalf of OAOG's Activity Coordinating Volunteers (OCV), I would like to welcome aboard our newest team member; Ken Whitnall!

Ken is an avid observer with a high level of enthusiasm toward OAOG. You will often find him setting up his giant C14 telescope at various observing events we have around the city. Over the past several months, Ken has demonstrated a willingness to voluntarily lend assistance to large numbers of public activities and events, and this on a regular basis. Ken has recently accepted to fill-in the gap in the OCV (along with the four other current OCV's Denis Legault, Michael Vasseur, Rock Mallin and Pierre Martin). I'm sure Ken will be a great addition to the organizing/coordinating of events, and group activities such as the upcoming International Astronomy Day 2003. A side note I wanted to mention... Besides OCV, we're very much aware of the many other active members in this group who also happen to be valuable contributors in one way or another. Kudos to all who give a helping hand to the group's events, and for making the spirit of OAOG what it is today. Look forward to many more good times together under clear skies!

3) OAOG t-shirts coming soon!!!

...by Pierre Martin

Just a short note to mention that we are currently preparing a completely re-design version of OAOG t-shirts and golf shirts. We are excited to announce that they will feature cool front and back graphic designs! As usual, they will be available in a variety of sizes. These items will be available to all interested in the near future. We will advise you of the costs, and when we'll be ready to start accepting orders.

4) Monthly Sky for February 2003...

...by Denis Legault

I just uploaded the Monthly Sky articles for February 2003. They contain observing information such as rise and set times for the Moon and the planets, the constellation they reside and sky activities for the Ottawa region. They are located under the Files side menu section under folder 'Monthly Sky' -> 'February 2003'. Here are the URLs
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OAOG/files/MonthlySky/February%202003/Solar%20System%20February%202003.doc>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OAOG/files/MonthlySky/February%202003/Sky%20Activities%20February%202003.doc>

The observing highlights for February are:

- 1- Jupiter is at its best for the year.
- 2- Venus gets close to large Messier objects in Sagittarius on the 4th and 11th.
- 3- Mars is near globular cluster NGC 6235 on the 8th and 9th.

5) OAOG Picture of the Month...

Every month, OAOG News features a photograph taken by one of our members. If you have a photograph you would like to submit for consideration in “OAOG Picture of the Month”, please send JPG file to <dob14.5@sympatico.ca> . This month’s photo...

“Globular cluster M22 in Sagittarius”

... by Denis Legault

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OAOG/files/M22.jpg>

This picture of the globular cluster M22 in the constellation Sagittarius was taken by local amateur astronomer Denis Legault in 2002. Denis used a MallinCam I video CCD camera through a Celestron C8 to achieve this image. What is especially impressive about this image is the fact that it was taken into severe light pollution conditions near the downtown core of the city of Ottawa (actual location was the Aviation Museum in Rockcliffe). Worse still, this object was low in the sky and facing directly into the most intense glow of the city core. Despite his many years of experience with star-hopping, Denis reported that he could not even see any of the stars of Sagittarius to the eyes alone. He was forced to rely on his telescope’s digital setting circles to zero-in on M22. Yet, a “live” view on a high-resolution monitor resolved this wonderful cluster into countless numbers of stars! And this with the least amount of effort!

6) New observing site for OAOG...

...by Todd Weeks

I just want to take a moment to announce that the OAOG has acquired permission to use a new observing site in east-end Ottawa. The site is the airfield belonging to the Stetson Flyers (www.stetsonflyers.com), a remote control aircraft club, and is located just off Boundary Rd. (map will be posted on our web site and Yahoo Group, already on Stetson Flyers web site). The site features 6.0+ magnitude skies, low horizons, a small

shelter, picnic tables, outhouse, and a locked gate. It is a 15 minute drive from the Harvey's where the monthly meetings are held and would be ideal for impromptu sessions in spring, fall, and winter, when a drive to Casselman seems too far. The site does have an abundance of mosquitos in the high summer months, but they seem to die down after midnight. It should be a nice place for all-night sessions or meteor showers. There are only a few requirements that must be met in order to use the site at no monetary cost. The combination to the gate will not be made available to the general membership of the OAOG. Instead, the OCV will all have the combination, as well as myself. Someone with the combination will have to be present during observing sessions and be the last one to leave. Proper site etiquette must be followed when observing at the airfield. Please clean up your garbage, respect the property, and no pets allowed. We have been asked to NOT set up on the runway. This should not be a problem as there is plenty of other space available. In return for this, they would be thrilled if we could set up for public star parties when they have some of their major events. I am planning to attend their Winter Fun Fly event on Sunday, February 23rd. I would be grateful to have the company of other OAOG members at this event with a variety of scopes to show the RC pilots.

7) Week for public sidewalk astronomy: February 7-17...

The next opportunities for sidewalk astronomy will be from February 7-17. That's when the Moon will be conveniently placed in the evening sky for public observing sessions; this last for about one week every month. We setup our telescopes to share the sky with the public at the Ogilvie road Chapters bookstore. Even with the light pollution of this location we enjoy close-up views of lunar craters, Saturn, Jupiter iridium satellites, the International Space Station, ect... Everybody is welcome to join us for sidewalk astronomy, with or without scope. Sharing astronomy with the public is tons of fun!

Watch our message board regularly for last-minute updates and exact times, and we look forward to seeing you... <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oaog/messages>

8) Special mid-winter OAOG gabfest: February 22...

Location : Wendy's Restaurant at the corner of Hunt Club road and Bank street.
time : 6:00pm

Road map of area... <http://makeashorterlink.com/?U16B26853>

This gathering is intended for both newcomers and group members. So if you're new to

the group, please feel free to drop by and say hello. Bring your observing reports, photos, astro toys and share observing stories (it's educational and it's fun). We have lots of fun!!!

Look forward to seeing you on the 22nd!

OAOG REPORTS FROM JANUARY, 2003

9) A Cold Sidewalk Session: January 14...

...by Pierre Martin

Well, i'd say that this was a pretty successful. A more simple laid back type of session as opposed to a real busy one. We had 4 scopes setup: 8" SCT, and dobsonians ranging from the 8", 10" and 14.5" sizes. Understandably, given the -19C temp (excluding wind-chill), we expected we wouldn't get much of a crowd. Yet between 6:30pm-9:15pm we still got about 60 people stop by! A small crowd compared to other sidewalks, but enjoyable. A few answered our invitations by a "no thanks" as they simply made a mad dash to get to their warm cars. I'm sure some people thought we were nuts to be out. However in most cases, someone would be happy to stop by, have a quick peek and chat for a bit. Many small kids, teenagers and also elderly people got a chance to see the rings of Saturn, Jupiter and the Moon. Most were thrilled to see Saturn for the first time.

With the help of many warm layers on me, I actually found the temperature quite manageable. There was almost no wind so the windchill wasn't all that bad. Only at the very end, my fingers were getting cool - sometimes I had to take out my big gloves and use the thin ones so I could reach to the hand screws on my scope.

As for the conditions, at the start the views were awful. So much that I could only get a decent image by using the lowest magnification. I suspect the combination of my mirror cooling down and some turbulence in the atmosphere were the main culprits. But near the end, the "seeing" got much, much better! Suddenly, the Cassini division was crisp and cloud belts around Saturn popped into view and had good contrast. Counted several satellites. The Moon at 167X was wonderfully detailed along the terminator. A large crater just rising from the edge was showing deep shadows - quite the sight! Unfortunately, clouds moved in much faster than expected and took away the fine planetary show above us. We packed up and those of us left at the end went to Tim Horton's. In all, 9 OAOG'ers came attended this session including Jean Dorais, Peter Fundarek, Ken Whitnall, Eric Torraca, Todd Weeks, Nick Edgar, Stefan Dobrev, Marion, and me.

10) Thrills and Chills on a Friday night: January 17...

...by Ron Stoltz

My first real night of observing since I picked up the rental scope from Claude last Sat eve. You all know the week its been - too cold or clouds moving in just in time to obscure the rising planets. So when the clear skies finally arrived, I refused to allow the the anticipated -30 wind chill be a deterrent. My strategy was to dig out my warmest parka and to focus on the planets. Since I was set up just outside my back door, I could come in whenever needed for hand and foot warming, hot tea, or bathroom breaks. I keep the scope locked up in an unheated garage, so this, combined with the modest 8" aperture, virtually eliminated cool-down time. With this scope, it takes only 5 minutes to assemble the tube in its mount, screw in the handles, attach the Telrad, flip off the top lid, and attach the eyepiece. At 7 p.m. in the darkness of my backyard, the sky was an awesome sight. The full moon had was still mostly blocked by my roof, and Saturn, Orion, M45 (Pleiades), and Sirius, stood out beautifully against the deep blue-black sky, even though I was aware of the moon shine casting a glow over the scene. Jupiter was not yet high enough to pay any attention to it. I used the Barlow that Claude Fairfield lent me (thanks, Claude!) to have a look at Saturn, first with the 20 mm eyepiece, then the 10 mm. The views were as good as any I have seen with this class of scope. There was no problem seeing the Cassini division between the A and B rings.

Next I dug out the 2" eyepiece that is now included with the rental. I easily found the Orion Nebula (M42). With this eyepiece, the 3 stars pointing into the core were plainly distinguishable, as was the dust cloud. The four stars making up the central "trapezium" appeared as one star, but you could see a lot of detail in the area around the nebula, and all the stars in that region were pinpoint sharp. The wider field of view also allowed me to capture the entire Pleiades cluster. This cluster is normally impressive enough in binoculars, but this view was nothing short of spectacular. I next swung the scope around to the moon, which was not over my rooftop, but I had to back away from this sight, as it was way too bright, even with just the small hole open in the lid.

After a tea and bathroom break, I decided to take my first look at Jupiter. I could make out the rings, and a couple of moons, but was disappointed not to be able to make out the shadow that was supposed to be created by one of its' moons. It still wasn't very high at this point (around 8:15). So I went back to M42 in Orion, this time with the 20 mm eyepiece + Barlow. This view clearly showed the shape of the dust cloud, and the 4 stars in the core were clearly separated and very sharp. Using the 10 mm eyepiece + Barlow really didn't reveal that much additional detail, other than in the dust cloud. M45 never ceases to be a wondrous sight, through any scope at any magnification. I'll never forget the first time I found it with this same scope over a year ago, You see something like this, or Saturn, and you know astronomy is going to be a life-long hobby.

I was pleasantly surprised that the wind didn't seem to be a factor, and allowed me to stay outside for longer periods than I had expected. My hands and feet eventually got cold enough that I had to take another tea break. A bit before 9 pm, I took another look at Jupiter. Still no shadows, but the moons were in a really interesting configuration, with the closest one appearing to almost touch the surface of the planet. There was also better seeing of the rings, at least I found it easier to get them in focus. Saturn was even better than it had been before. There was a 3-D appearance to the rings (shadows?), and the C-division was extremely sharp. I could also make out colour variations between the upper and lower halves of the planet, hues of yellowish-brown. At about 9:30 I decided to call it an evening, entirely satisfied with my observing for the night.

11) Observation report from Vanier: January 20...

...by Rock Mallin

Last night was cold. But I managed to observe and ccd image M42. Despite the cold, the views were not that good. At one point during the evening, visual was passable. Later on, conditions improved slightly. M 42 is an interesting object to observe as it has many areas observable within the core of this fine nebula. Beginners may find interesting to observe the structure and the outer region it present. Using only as small as a 4.5 inch aperture, a wealth of details are easily within the reach of all telescopes regardless of aperture. Using ccd imager, permits a higher level of resolution not obtainable with the eye. But looking through a telescope visually at M 42, permits a 3 dimensional view not possible with ccd imager. Although M 42 contains colors when viewed through larger aperture, it can reveal an unprecedented amount of details.

The more frequent some one observe M 42, the more details and information can be seen. Night after night, this celestial wonders never cease to amaze me even after all these years of observing. I seem to be able to see and observe certain details I though I have never seen before. Talking notes can be an idea an observer may want to do. M 42 is an object that requires many nights and many observing session to understand it structure, and to be able to recognize certain features not seen before. To many, M 42 is a simple wonder of the night sky to look at. But to a dedicated beginner or advance observer, this object will remain one of my favorite on my list. One advantage of observing M 42, it can be seen from the city without going outside of town in search of dark sky.

Last night, I observed with new people. Anyone who wish to come over to observe at my observatory, get in touch with me. I would be pleased to have anyone interested in astronomy and interested in observing. Thanks to Celine and Doug Savard and their 2 kids for sharing some fine moments in my sky polluted back yard observatories. We began observing at about 7:15 pm until 10:15 pm... It was cold! but fun!

12) Fireball sighting: January 23...

...by Claude Fairfield

I saw that meteor .. a real fireball it was. At 7pm or so, from North Kanata, looking straight East, saw it go from low Northwest to lower Southeast, bursting at mag -4 to -6, with a dust trail visible for several seconds in spite of the Ottawa sky glow to the East of me. In fact, I had been following a low aircraft whose lights were pointed at us, then saw this bright light going for it like a missile, then thought “what’s this - they’re going to crash...”, then it lit up and broke up before it reached the aircraft. I say “reached” knowing that if it was a meteorite it was much higher than the aircraft, but just appeared as though it was headed for it.

13) Winter observing at Casselman: January 29...

...by Pierre Martin

Well, I’d say the get-together at Casselman went pretty well! Felt good to see a good dark sky again, and a good turnout of OAOG’ers. A total of 8 people came out including Garth Rayburn, Denis Legault, Luc Coulombe, Raymond Lalonde, Patrick Lalonde, Randy Legault, Eric Torraca and myself. Because of time restraints, I decided that I’d only bring my binos and an accessory case. After all, Denis brought his 14” Discovery dob. Denis and I arrived at Casselman near 8pm, and already some people were setup. The sky looked impressive the moment I stepped outside. Winter Milky Way quite distinct, and Orion was looking beautiful. Estimated limiting magnitude about 6.3 which was better than expected considering the snow. Noticed a weak aurora present low in the north. The “seeing” (air turbulence) was very mushy at the start. Planets were mushy, but the deep sky looked promising.

A few highlights from this session...

- M42 the Orion nebula was a gorgeous sight through all the scopes present. We tried the Pentax 21mm on the 14” scope, and fine details into the core and I thought I could detect some faint hint of reddish color? Also, Eric had a lovely low-power view in his home-made 8” dob.

- SAW THE RASPBERRY NEBULA IC418!! In Denis’s 14” scope with a 5.2mm Pentax, the small planetary in Lepus was starting to show a good round shape (no wonder it’s tough to find at low powers). In averted it was a blue green object, but direct vision I could start to detect a reddish hue!

- Globular cluster NGC185 in Columba! Yep, Denis did it again... managing to catch this object only 4 degrees from the true horizon!! You’d swear that the dob was looking into the ground!! And yet, the cluster was plainly visible with a concentrated core and fuzzy edges from unresolved stars. Cool!!!

- Open clusters M37 in Auriga was a wonderful view in Raymond's 13" scope. Myriads of pin-point stars all across a wide field of view.

- Near 10pm, the "seeing" suddenly got much better! The planets Jupiter and Saturn snapped into crisp focus. We could see several bands and festoons on Jupiter. The highlight for me was Saturn - it was really impressive to see in Denis's 14" and also in Luc's 8" scope. The 3D effect was enhanced with the shadow cast into the rings. Cassini division crisp all the way around, bands on the planet and several moons.

- Clown face (Eskimo) nebula NGC2392. Nice planetary in Denis's dob. Bright central star surrounded by a puff of gas. The clown-face pattern was just visible, I believe, with averted vision.

All in all, a nice evening... although wind chill picked up at the end and it felt a little icy to the feet and hands (-16C plus windchill).

14) What to do if it's -20C or colder...

...by Cathy Hall

Having done quite a number of cold sessions over the years, I wanted to emphasize - especially to newbies on the list - that <not> going out in -30C is not 'wimping out'. In fact, it is quite prudent.

If you are dressed properly, I have found that observing all night at about -20C (with no wind) can be quite enjoyable. What is appropriate attire? Something along the lines of the following: full long johns, then a 'polar plus' layer top and bottom, then a down parka and fully lined snow pants... wool socks, coupled with boots rated to at least -20C (if you put in -40C liners) that have lots of toe wiggle room... very carefully chosen arctic gloves, or several pairs of mittens... and a wool balaclava with parka hood overtop. Add a couple hand warmer units for your pockets. That will be sufficient in -20C.

If the windchill drives it colder than that, then it is not really recommended to go out. Exceptions include - observing from inside an observatory where you are sheltered from the wind, or observing with some sort of a wind shield to really block the wind.

If no shelter is available, and the windchill is -30C or worse, you better have a darn good reason for going out - as you are risking a variety of things such as frostbite, drive battery failure and dew heater failure for your scope, and car problems. There better be a meteor storm, or a deluge of lunar impacts, or a comet impacting Jupiter, or the best auroral storm of the decade, or a supernova, or another Comet Hyakutake. Actually, there are probably a number of reasons to go out at -30C... but you get the idea.

What are other options? Well... if you're really feeling photon-deprived on a bitterly cold

night, try observing out your window. Don't laugh. Comets have been found by persons looking out windows. Now... it helps if you have an unfrosted window.. and single pane windows are better, less bending of the light. But... you can, in a pinch, look at planets out the window, and the moon, and you can do lots of variable star estimates out the window... and you can see comets, and satellites, and the International Space Station...

Anyway... just wanted to comment. Enjoy your observing - but be careful out there!

15) Next OAOG Get-Together: Friday February 7...

You are invited to join us at our informal monthly group get-togethers! The next OAOG monthly gabfests will be on Friday, February 7. Everybody is welcome to join in to meet the group and talk about all things astronomy...

From 5pm to 8pm , we will be at the usual Harveys restaurant on the corner of Walkley road and St-Laurent blvd.

From 8pm to 11pm , we will be at the *NEW* Tim Horton's (corner of Lancaster and Walkley roads near the hwy 417 ramps). For a map to this new location, see...

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OAOG/files/Maps/Map_Tim_Hortons.jpg

These gatherings are intended for both newcomers and group members. So if you're new to the group, please feel free to drop by and say hello. Bring your observing reports, photos, astro toys and share observing stories (it's educational and it's fun). We have lots of fun!!! Hope to see you all on Friday!

16) 8" Aperture Telescope Rental Program...

The OAOG's high-quality 8" SkyWatcher Dobsonian telescopes are available for rental! The cost is 20\$ for two weeks. Please note that we'll only accept cash. No credit card or checks please. The rental package includes the following:

- 8" aperture telescope assembly (tube is 44 1/2" long - F/6 - 1200mm)
- two springs hold the scope on its base (no need to balance)
- crayford focuser
- 20mm eyepiece (modified long-eye-relief Kelner) for 60X power
- 10mm eyepiece (modified long-eye-relief Kelner) for 122X power
- Telrad finder (for quick and easy aiming)
- Star maps designed to be used with the Telrad.

- eyepiece holder and base has carrying handle
(This telescope is completely non-profit to OAOG.)

Claude Fairfield is looking after the telescope rental program. All interested individuals and families are welcome to contact Claude by email at <claudef@rogers.com>.

17) Contact information...

O. A. O. G.
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Web : <http://www.oaog.ca/>
Web discussion list: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oaog/>
Phone : (613) 749-7592 (Tues-Fri during normal business hours)

To reach the OAOG's Coordinating Volunteers (OCV), simply send an email to ocv@oaog.ca

The OAOG's five Coordinating Volunteers are...

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18) About This Newsletter...

This monthly email newsletter is sent to all those who have responded to me. We are also mailing this newsletter to other friends. If at any time you would prefer not to receive these emails, simply send a message at <dob14.5@sympatico.ca> with your request.

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O...A...O...G.....N...E...W...S

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Astronomy & Observers Group (Observateurs astronomes d'Ottawa-Gatineau)

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