



O.A.O.G. NEWS

Volume 84-1, January 2005

***** ANNOUNCEMENT *****

SPECIAL NEW YEAR OAOG GABFEST! "BRING YOUR ASTRO-TOYS NIGHT!"

Join us on Friday evening, January 6 2006 for a special edition of the OAOG Gabfest! If you've recently received new astro-toys, whether it is a new telescope, a special accessory for astrophotography or anything else astronomical, please bring it along at Tim Horton's for show and tell. It's not only educational, it's fun! At the same time, if you have any questions or would like to have some feedback or assistance, OAOG members will be happy to assist. All you have to do is show up! Joining OAOG is absolutely free, and everyone is always welcome. Please join us for the annual group photo too. Scroll to item #3 of this newsletter for more details, directions and maps. Hope to see you there!

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WHAT'S NEW

1) Happy New Year!

... by Pierre Martin

I would first like to wish all a very Happy New Year! As we open 2006, your OCV (OAOG's Coordinating Volunteers) will be meeting up soon to finalize this year's new schedule of activities. We do not yet have all the details, but we will post it soon. You can count on it being another busy and exciting year of astronomical activities to satisfy all tastes.

A quick preview...

We will continue to hold our monthly public sidewalk astronomy sessions at the Silver-City Shopping Plaza (at City Park Drive) in close-cooperation with Chapters and RioCan Property Management. These sidewalk sessions remain among our most popular activities, as much for OAOG members as it is for members of the public.

This Spring will present two possible dark sky weekends to hold a Messier Marathon Event, where it becomes possible to see nearly all 110 Messier deep sky objects in a single night! This is a rare occasion to view the night skies of every "season" in the span of a few hours. If you've never tried a Messier Marathon, you should - it's loads of fun!

Mark your calendars... International Astronomy Day will be held on May 6, 2006. Stay tune for details on this all-day astronomy extravaganza, where we bring astronomy to the people. This is our largest gathering of the year (in 2005, we had 57 telescopes of many types and sizes setup all at once, and an attendance of about 2500 people!). We hope for an even better showing this year, so don't miss it!

We will also have dark sky public star parties at Beckwith Park (near Carleton Place) among other locations. And for those who crave the darkest, most unpolluted skies possible, pristine sites such as Foymount and Reserve Faunique La Verendrie continue to be available (see <http://www.oaog.ca/observ.htm>). Stay tune to our YahooGroup discussion group (see: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oaog/>) for details on impromptu outings, to learn exactly when and where people will be heading out observing. Whether you have only simple inexpensive binoculars or a fully computerized large telescope, you are most welcome to join us anytime!

Lastly, there should be some interesting astronomical events to watch for, including a

potentially bright comet, Mercury transiting the Sun in November, and an excellent return of the Geminid meteor shower. Then, there is always a chance for surprise auroras - who knows what the Sun has in store for us?

Here's wishing lots of clear, dark skies for 2006!

2) Monthly Sky articles for January 2006

... By Denis Legault

The Monthly Sky articles for January 2006 are now available. They contain observing information for the Ottawa. It includes the time when astronomical night starts and ends, how much time per night can deep sky objects be observed without the Moon in the sky, the constellation where the main solar system objects are located and the rising and setting times for the Sun, Moon and planets.

The observing highlights for January 2006 are:

1. Venus shows a thin crescent phase in the early evening sky at the beginning of the month and a thin crescent phase in the early morning sky at the end of the month.
2. Saturn is at its best for 2006.
3. The Quadrantid meteor shower.

Here is the direct link:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OAOG/files/MonthlySky/January%202006/>

UPCOMING OAOG EVENTS

3) Next OAOG Get-Together: January 6

Everybody is welcome to join in on Friday January 6 to meet the group and talk about all things astronomy. 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 tons of fun).

From 5:30pm to 8pm, we will be at the Harveys restaurant on the corner of Walkley road and St-Laurent blvd.

From 8pm to 11pm, you can find us at the Tim Horton's (corner of Lancaster and Walkley roads near the hwy 417 ramps) for a great gabfest. We will be there rain or shine. For a map, see...

<http://www.aoag.ca/timmys.htm>

4) Public Sidewalk Astronomy at Chapters: January 5-16

The next window for public sidewalk astronomy will be from January 5-16. 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. Weather and volunteer availability permitting, we setup our telescopes once or twice every month on the parking lot of the Silvercity Shopping Plaza next to Chapters (Details: <http://www.aoag.ca/chapters.htm>) to share the sky with the public. Enjoy stunning close-up views of lunar craters, the planets Mars, Venus and Saturn, and lots more!

Everybody is welcome to join-in for sidewalk astronomy, with or without scope. Sharing astronomy with the public is tons of fun! Watch our message board (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aoag/>) regularly. Typically, if the weather looks like it will cooperate we will post a final "GO" or "NO-GO" by 1pm on the day of the event...

We look forward to seeing you!

DECEMBER'S HIGHLIGHTS

5) Early Morning Saturn: December 3

... by Chris Cloutier

Well I woke up at 6.00 a.m to find that we had some clear skies outside. So I rushed out on the deck and put my 4.5" newtonian outside to cool down a bit and wanted to find saturn. I grabbed my compass and pointed to SW and seen there was a couple of small spots and pointed my finder on to it and there it was, Saturn.(First pick) Finally I seen it

for the first time. The best part was that my wife told me that if i ever get Saturn in the eye piece to wake her up and show her. So I did. I guess she wont be sleeping in this morning? :) We were both thrilled to see it.

I also wanted to thank Claude Fairfield and Greg Quelle, for the great info they gave me at the last gabfest. Also thanks for the door prize of the Nightwatch Book I received. It definitely went to a good home. Hopefully I can meet a few more people next time.

6) SCOPE REVIEW #1: WO Zenithstar fluorite doublet

... by Allen M

Hello all,

http://www.william-optics.com/wowebs/prod_tel/zsfd80/features0.htm

I bought this scope for astrophotography and for grab and go. It is quicker to setup and use than my 150 MAK and can be used with an alt-az mount (which I have to get ... photo tripod for now).

I had it delivered to work and got home and unpacked and set it up pronto (good thing there were no radar traps on the way). The fit and finish is superb, as expected, and I think it is a beauty. It is a showpiece bit of a collector's item (serial number and 10th anniversary issue stamped on the scope). It is a very sweet looking scope. But its optics are equally superb, especially for visual work. The optics give you (me) a 'wow' right away. Very sharp, very clear and absolutely no colour whatsoever (as expected). The two speed focuser is a major luxury (I wish my MAK had one). If the clear sky holds up till later I will look at more stuff in and around Orion, the Pleiades etc. For now I only observed the moon for a few minutes (ug me hungry, must kill food, eat now). I only used my new SWAN 25mm ocular which with this scope (f6.9) it gives 22.2x and at 72 degrees AFOV an overall field of 3.24 degrees (I'll use my binoculars if I want more). I have read that the SWANs are pretty decent and I will give them a better workout later. For now on the moon they proved to be very crisp, no colour, no flares, no ghosts ... very well made I would say. Some star field testing will give me a better idea of their edge characteristics, but so far I am pleased. Considering how bright the moon is I saw no flares or ghosts so they seem to be very well baffled as is the scope. The SWANs are fully multicoated on all surfaces and I think they will be very nice for wide field views with a bit of magnification.

So far a two thumbs up for WO!

7) SCOPE REVIEW #2: New Life for a Tasco 11TR

... by Gord Acorn

Hi Everyone,

Just wanted to let you all know I've finally had first light with my Normand Fullum re-figured primary in my Tasco 11TR. Most of you have probably seen this classic "department store scope" from the 80's at one time or another. They were frequently seen in camera shops, the Sears catalogue, etc. sporting their bright red tube and EQ mount.

This was my first ever telescope and I've held onto it for sentimental reasons more than performance. In fact, it had a *lot* of short-comings as did most of these scopes. Under-mounted, terrible eyepieces and accessories, and often not so great optics. I thought mine actually had a decent optical-train until I had Normand undertake bringing it up to a premium spec. It turns out it was a pretty dreadful mirror!

But not so anymore!!!

I sent it off to Normand in late October. It was finished and ready to go about a week ago. This included the checking of the old figure, reworking and testing, re-coating and finally a bit of time just to make sure the new coating went on properly with problems occurring afterwards. Normand pays incredible attention to detail and goes out of his way to get things as perfect as possible. And it DOES make a difference.

I drove down to Hudson to see him and pickup the mirror, along with drop off my 10" to have the same work performed. Normand is a very nice fellow. He gladly took the time to answer all my questions and show me some of his beautiful work. Honestly, pictures just don't show the true beauty of his woodworking skills. WOW!

I got back to Ottawa and got the mirrors back into the scope with an ok collimation by about 10:30 Monday night. It was still clear enough to see stuff, even though the transparency was only average to poor and the seeing was just bad. I just had to try the thing out.

Going from warm inside to cold outside of course left me with lots of tube currents to contend with. Anything above low power was bad and even that wasn't stable between the currents and poor seeing. Still, focus snapped to tight star images and everything just seemed sharper.

My first target was M45 at a nice low power view of 36x using a basic 25mm Plossl. Incredible! In a scope with good optics and a wider FOV, the Pleiades are a beautiful

sight. I find it takes good optics to really bring the distinct blue in the bright stars. With the new mirror the colors were just jumping out at me! Very visible contrast between the black background and the blue stars.

Orion and M42 were next. I wasn't expecting much considering the brightness of the sky and it being only my 4.5" scope. Man was I wrong. Put simply, contrast rules!

I've never seen that much detail in this scope, and in fact I can say that it's the most detail I've ever seen in M42 from this site using any of my scopes, period. Not as bright overall as my bigger scopes, but oh the detail.

The nebulosity seemed to extend very far out in wisps. The inner part was a textured pattern of lights and darks with some having very sharp boundaries. And the color, very distinctly green, something I've never been able to say for sure I've been able to see until now. And this is was not a good night, I'm in the burbs, Orion was right in the glow of the city, the neighbors all had their lights on, and the scope had only been out for a few minutes. WOW!!!

I said when I started out, this scope is intended to be a 4" apo-refractor killer. I'm pretty certain it's going to be!

I waited a few more minutes to try to get a planetary view, but thermal issues were still present. Mars was showing a nice sharp disk, but the surface details were not consistent enough to see much. I didn't bother pushing the power very high either as it would have been just empty magnification.

Last night however, thermal problems were not present due to the scope being stored out in an unheated shed. The conditions were even worse last night with even the transparency being very poor. Limiting magnitude was about 2 and stars were twinkling even overhead.

Still, I put the scope on the moon and the view was spectacular! I had no problem running the power up to 225x. The whole moon was shimmering in the unsteady air, but the sharpness of the crater edges along the terminator was immediately obvious. This view was again better than any I had seen before with this scope at this power on the moon. Before the image would tend to get softer as the power went up. No softness now, all features had hard edges to them. Small features seemed to have details within them.

With the view so nice, I just had to move onto Mars. Still at 225x, the disk was large enough to make surface features a decent size to view. Most striking I think was the beautiful colors. I wasn't using a filter at this point and in addition to the orange hue with darker markings, a blue/white haze seemed very noticeable on one side. I believe these are clouds?

I added a w23 filter to pull out the dark features a little more and was impressed. The image was easily holding it's own against the best I have seen this year using my 10". Still greatly affected by seeing and now a steady stream of fast moving clouds, but during short moments the view was nice. I actually think I liked the view more with the natural tone and other colors seen when not using a filter.

At this point the clouds pretty much became solid. With nothing more to see, I packed it away for the night.

I'm soooo excited with the results and I can't wait to get it under some even decent skies. The deepsky view of M42 was incredible, I just have to start hitting some other objects.

For anyone out there with a newtonian, you have to give this service some serious thought. I can't tell you enough how worth it it is. The performance is as good as any comparably sized apo-refractor and the cost is only a small fraction. Every scope design is a compromise. But, bang for the buck, a newtonian with good optics can't be beat.

A big Thank You to Normand Fullum for the amazing finish he put on my mirror. I'm sure I'll be equally pleased with my 10". Now to see what it will do under good skies with those new TV eyepieces!

Thanks for reading!

8) December's sidewalk session at Chapters: December 8

... by Pierre Martin

A quick report on the sidewalk session...

OAOG'ers attending ... Ken Whitnall, André Tremblay, Colin Banfield, Todd Weeks, Mitch O'Brien, Luc Coulombe, Gord Acorn, Joe Silverman, Greg Baggs, Greg Quelle and myself.

A nice variety of instruments that included ... 20x80mm binos on parallelogram, Carton 80mm spotting scope, TeleVue 85mm refractor, Tasco 4.5" newtonian (with refigured Fullum optics), Skywatcher 4.7" refractor, homemade 8" dob (Fullum optics), 10" Sky Mentor dob, Celestron C14 and NSS 14.5" truss dob.

It was, as always, a fun session! The public attendance was much lower than usual, and it seemed a very quiet night in the parking lot. We had at most around 50-75 people stop by. It was a pretty cool and humid night too. I initially debated setting up the 14.5"

due to the clouds that suddenly came out of nowhere, but fortunately, it cleared up and remained that way till the end. The seeing was poor, and limited the views to low or mid-power at most. Mars showed only a few faint features, while the Moon looked good at low power. I was quite impressed with Greg's new 38mm eyepiece. I didn't think it would work with my scope and that it'd be too low power, but it produced a very crisp, sharp Moon! Very nice!

Just before 10pm, we packed up. Thanks to everyone who showed up and for the good company!

9) Geminid meteor shower report: December 14

... by Pierre Martin

Well, the meteor watch was a great success!!!

Observing for almost 10 hours (9pm-6:30am) under a Full Moon out at Boundary road, with the temperature at -20C (-25C windchill) in the morning. What did I get for this? Lots of nice meteors of course, both observed and photographed!

I was running a camera (Canon 300D) all night. Multiple exposures were then stacked together to produce this digital composition of Geminid meteors, taken on December 13/14 2005. I was even fortunate enough to catch one of the mag -4 fireballs! Photo details: Canon 300D with 35mm f2 lens, 800 ASA. See... <http://tinyurl.com/8zrqe>

Thanks to Chris Cloutier and Greg Baggs for the company.

10) New Image of M43: December 30

... by Rock Mallin

Since September 2005, this night was the third night I could do some limited observing and imaging from my location in downtown Ottawa. Humidity was 85% and the corrector plate of the telescope had solid ice on it. In general, not the best evening to observe or image again. Lately the surroundings of my observatories has been getting worst and worst. New project has gone up near my place at 500 feet away with new super high power lights. This is getting annoying.

None the less, I managed to capture M43. Inspired by Robert Ray of Texas which has managed to capture the same object with his dobsonian in Texas and a MallinCam PRO

Dob, I did the same image in color. I used a 16" SCT with a focal reducer at F/3.0. The camera is a MallinCam Color Video CCD, the capture device was the new upcoming MallinCam USB-2 digital adapter for computer. I took 10 BMP stills and coadded them in RegiStax 3.0, and did something different this time. I made a Luminance frame from converting the original color images to black and white using Photoshop and a made a separate layer from it.. The image was captured inside my house via a wireless system hooked up to the MallinCam output from my observatory at 100 feet away to inside the house on a special receiver. I kind of like that, its a lot warmer that way! Here's the links to it.

http://mallincam.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/m43_16cw3.jpg

Or click on the main page at:

<http://mallincam.tripod.com/id24.html>

MORE INFO...

11) 8" Aperture Telescope Rental Program

The OAOG's high-quality 8" SkyWatcher Dobsonian-style telescopes are available for rental! The cost to have one for a period of three weeks is only 20\$. The complete telescope package includes:

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

Dennis Reny is now looking after the telescope rental program. For more information and for bookings, please contact Dennis by email at <telescope@oaog.ca>

12) OAOG Mallin*Cam II Observing System Service

Who is it for?

Great for those who would simply like to try out the Mallin*Cam II on their own telescopes at home to see how it might help them improve their observing projects. Excellent tool for public outreach programs. For anyone who is demonstrating telescopes and astronomy to those who may have difficulty looking through a traditional eyepiece. The system will allow you to observe electronically with any telescope. You do NOT need a GOTO scope, or tracking. The Mallin*Cam II observing system will give the equivalent visual effect of a three-fold increase in scope aperture.

The system is now complete and includes:

- B/W Mallin*Cam II camera and power block (NB: this is not a colour camera, nor is it the Mallin*Cam Pro!)
- Cables that connect directly to a B/W Monitor (supplied)
- f3.3 focal reducer (strongly recommended, and can be used with any scope)
- a deep cycle 12V marine battery
- Power inverter (if needed) to allow powering the camera and monitor by the supplied 12V battery (However, if using the system in your backyard, the simplest method is an extension cord plugged into the house electrical supply to power both the monitor and the Mallin*Cam II!).

The OAOG Mallin*Cam II Observing System is available for rental for a period of two weeks at only \$20. We can show you how the system works. It really is not difficult! OAOG: This is YOUR Mallin*Cam observing system! Take good care of it!

For further information contact: Simon at shanmer@nrcan.gc.ca or simon.hanmer@sympatico.ca (home: 232-7049 - work 992-4704) or Rock Mallin at adave@cyberus.ca (work: 728-9197).

13) Contact information

O. A. O. G.
Ottawa Valley Astronomy & Observers Group
Observateurs astronomes d'Ottawa-Gatineau

Web: <http://www.oaog.ca/>

Web discussion list: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oaog/>

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

Ken Whitnall: kwhit@sympatico.ca
Shane Finnigan: sfinnigan@sympatico.ca
Todd Weeks: stormcrow@rogers.com
Pierre Martin: dob14.5@sympatico.ca
Denis Legault: denis.legault@oaog.ca

14) About This Newsletter

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

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