



PeGASus

Newsletter of the

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada: Prince George Centre

Published: January to May & September to November.

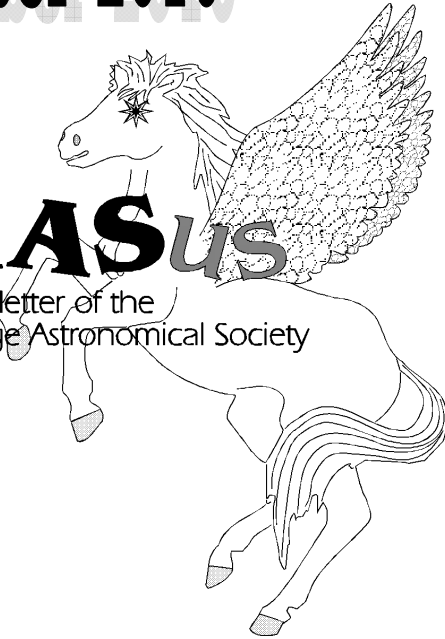
www.rasc.ca/princegeorge

December 2010

*Our pursuits are out of this world.
Our activities are astronomical.
Our aim is the sky.*

PeGASus

Newsletter of the
The Prince George Astronomical Society

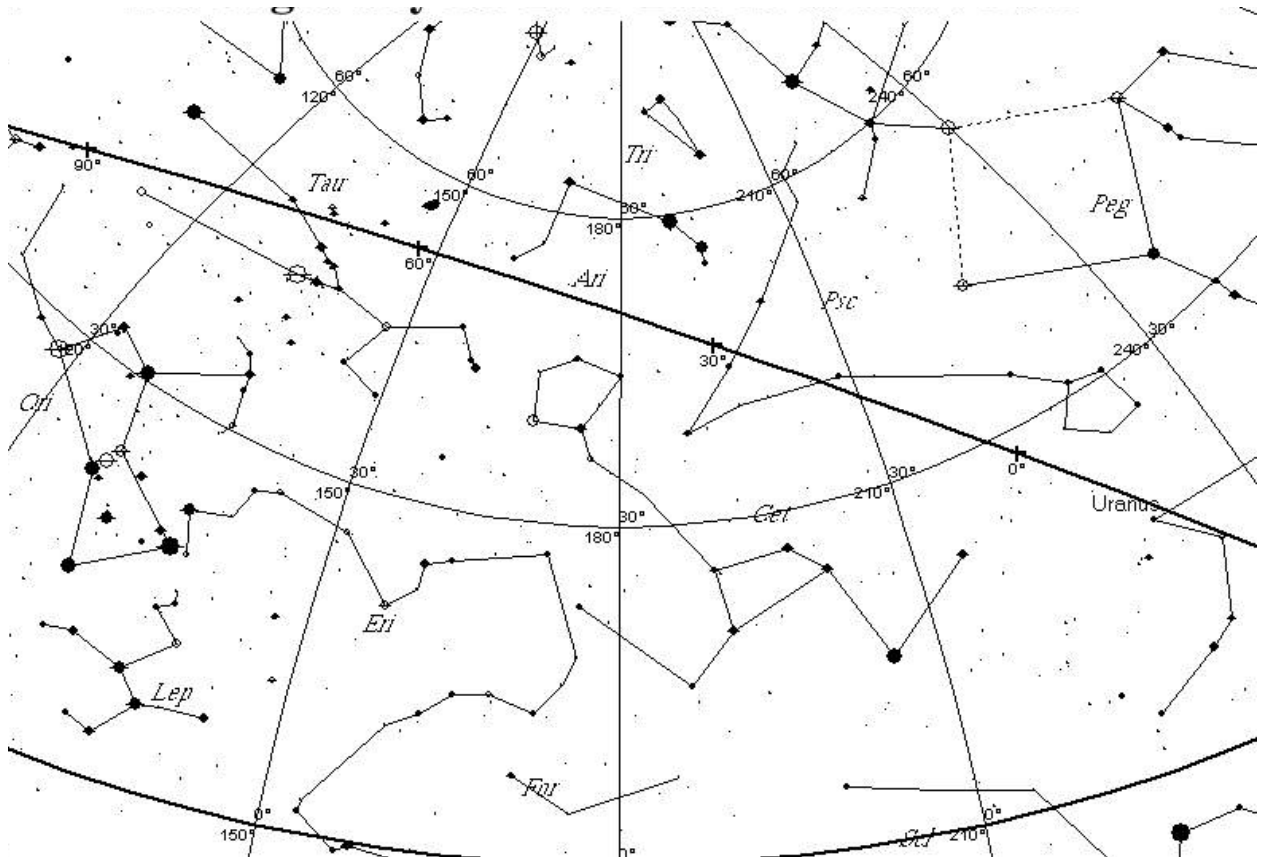


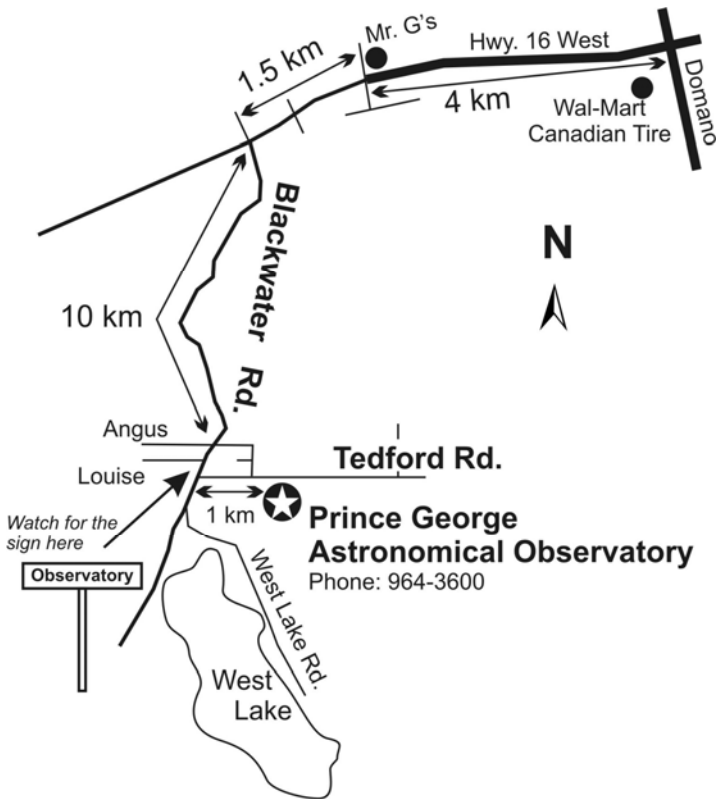
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The RASC: Prince George Centre
Annual Christmas Pot-Luck

Saturday December 4th 5:30 pm at the Observatory





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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

Deadline for the next issue is
January 21,2011

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Coming Events

*To Volunteer to help run an event please leave
 A message At the Observatory 250-964-3600*

Members Annual Christmas Dinner / December 4th , Doors open at 5:30 Dinner at 6:00 pm
At the Observatory

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>
Dec 13	Open House / Geminids	7:30pm	Observatory	Everyone welcome
Dec 20	Open House/ Lunar Eclipse	7:30pm	Observatory	Everyone welcome
Jan 8	Members Viewing / Clusters	7:30pm	Observatory	Members welcome
Jan 12	-Business Meeting	7:30 pm	--SpeeDee	Members welcome

For an up to date list of the Volunteer Schedule / meetings / classes visit our website in the MEMBERS AREA
www.rasc.ca/princegeorge

You probably noticed that there was no newsletter last month, at least I hope you noticed. Some months people are just too busy to take an evening to write an article for the newsletter. If I don't have enough material I can't send you a newsletter, but fear not, several good folks have put their hand up and volunteered to help get the newsletter back on its feet. I've always felt quite strongly that volunteer work should not interfere with everyday life. So all those things that are using up your days have to come first, but if you find you have a little time to spare, I welcome input from everyone. This month I received two unexpected articles from members that I'm always glad to hear from. Vince Hogan, a long time member with our centre in fact I think he would be called a founding member. Vince now lives in southern BC but is still a member of our club. We can always hope that maybe someday he will decide to move back to PG—but not likely. The other article is un-signed, who is the On-line Astronomer? I'll not tell, but a hint "the On-line Astronomer is also our Asia correspondent. I am looking forward to hearing from both these gentlemen in the months ahead.

If you are one of the folks that stepped up and said you would lend a hand getting the newsletter back on its feet, may I suggest over the holidays check out the two articles in this issue and then visit our website and open the newsletter tab. There are some great articles in previous newsletters, we have some very clever people in this club and when they contribute articles the newsletter is really an interesting "read".

Merry Christmas to All and all the best in the new year.

Gil Self

P.G. Centre News

Hi all,

The mag 8.4 star HIP 23153 may be occulted over us at 22:07 PST on Dec 8 by mag 15.4 asteroid (1776) Kuiper. Looking at the asteroid shadow path, it is very close to us. We won't see the approaching asteroid, except maybe in the 24" scope, but we can set up ahead of time with any small scope and watch the star and at the scheduled time, we may see it blink out for up to 2.7 seconds.

Some people take accurate timings of these events, but for us, I think it would be cool to just see the star blink off and on.

Here is the info on this with finder charts. http://www.asteroidoccultation.com/2010_12/1209_1776_22500.htm

Don't worry if you don't bring a finder chart, we will have plenty there.

If it is clear that evening come on out and join us. If it is not too cold, we can make an enjoyable casual viewing evening out of it as well.

Doug

Members and Public Viewing

Geminids – December 13th, 2010

Lunar Eclipse – December 21st 2010

We have a couple of viewing events taking place in December. This is a great way to relieve the Christmas stress. Nothing calms a person down more than being out in the cold while its dark looking at the sky. The Observatory will open at 7:30PM (weather permitting) for both of these events.

We are starting the year off with a bang, Saturday, January 8th with a "Binocular Only" – "Open Cluster" Marathon (weather permitting). Sky-charts and binoculars will be the only equipment allowed (excluding hot toddies). The list of targets will range from a number of naked eye objects through 40mm, 50mm and larger aperture binoculars. We will have a number of the large sky-atlas charts available to aid you in finding the targets.

The clusters are organized and grouped in Constellations and then sorted by magnitude and include RA and DEC. This will be an "old-school" viewing at its basics. The complete list is downloadable from the "Prince George Center" web-site. We will be only targeting the winter constellations.

Blair Stunder

RVing to the Stars.

Bob and many other members of the club are pretty adventurous, traveling to far away places for solar eclipses, or to exotic locations where it is possible to see the night sky without automatically having to dress up like the Michelin tire man. I can only aspire to that level of enthusiasm, but nonetheless I've had many a fine night out thanks to my RV.

As a club member who no longer lives in PG I am a bit of a stranger to most of the people in the group. I got started with the club just as the present observatory was being built. I have always been at the enthusiastic but low tech end of the club, which meant I was perfect for shoveling gravel, pounding nails, and cutting down the Cottonwoods which once obscured part of the view to the west of the observatory. I've helped give public tours and lectures on behalf of the club. I can honestly say that I've had some of the finest evenings of my life at the observatory and enjoyed the company of some of the finest people around PG. When I travel I'm constantly amazed at the sophistication of the PG Centre in contrast to far more populated places where science should easily thrive.

As my wife Ann and I have spent 33 years traveling around in campers, a fifth wheel and now a small motor home we have had a chance to park in many places where a clear night sky is just a few steps away. I have a 30 year old Astroscan, which I can mount on a tripod, --or carry off to a nice viewing spot--and a 70mm scope, with a solar attachment for viewing the sun, which are both very portable, and easily fit under the bed! As well I have a really good pair of Celestron binoculars, with a tripod, made in the era when quality Japanese craftsman produced them; together they provide easy access to viewing, and you can bird watch with them too!

I'm not a sophisticated astronomer, but I'm enthusiastic, and I've tried to transmit some of that love of the night sky to others. When you are out camping people are in the perfect frame of mind to be introduced to the night

sky, no matter how old they are. The moons of Jupiter, or the moon itself, or Andromeda, or the many clusters easily available can make for a pretty fine evening of viewing. (For some reason people are always fascinated when I tell them that the Pleiades name in Japanese is *Subaru* and if you look on the front of the cars you will see a stylistic representation of the cluster! Maybe they just hope I'll stop talking!) Remarkably after being subjected to this for years and years, without getting really bored, Ann can give a snappy review of the constellations—Delphinus and Corona Borealis, are her favorites.

I was sorry to hear the centre's overnight trip to the hill south of Vanderhoof had to be cancelled because it is quite an enjoyable spot. Vanderhoof and the Nechako Valley throw up a surprising amount of light pollution, and PG is shining away to the east but it is a very accessible site. Your trip to Fort St James sounded like a real success. Perhaps the club might consider two other locations for an overnight summer star party. Morfee Mountain just north of Mackenzie is an excellent location, as a gravel road leads to the top where there are telecommunications towers. I was there one night in September, and when the sun went down I have never seen the Milky Way appear so suddenly overhead. The other site you might consider is Canoe Mountain in Valemount which at 8085 feet offers spectacular views during the daytime, with an unobstructed view in all directions as only nearby Mt. Robson is higher. It's a slow drive to the top, but not that hard, as I once saw a VW bus at the top. Canoe Mountain can only be easily driven to in July and August as snow is present for most of the rest of the year, and you have to be a bit careful, as there is 1000ft vertical drop at the top, which snowmobilers occasionally drive over to their death. However as you won't be drinking when you are up there that should not be a problem.

Happy trails.

The online astronomer

The internet. An endless thread of facts, ideas, information, opinions, stats, data, pictures and everything you can imagine. And some stuff that you can't, yet, imagine. It's seemingly endless, and therein lays the problem when you want to learn something new, or find a reliable place to call home. To use the internet as an educational tool is difficult unless you know where to look.

My day starts with coffee and a few science-based blogs, the news and a nice long bike to work listening to podcasts. It took me a while to find places that had not only enough information, but that had information that was up to date, accurate, opinion free and fact-based. And entertaining – it has to be entertaining. But I did it. I found some.

To find our place in the cosmos we have, mostly, turned some of our time to the internet. I would like to share with you some of the highlights that I have found, rely on and, in all honesty, can't wait to sink my teeth (ok, eyes and ears) into when it comes to astronomy. If any of these resources can help you, give you a bit of entertainment and information or simply lead you to places that do, I'm glad to share. Here, then, are three of the first places I would like to share:

Blog: Bad Astronomy

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/badastronomy/>

He's not just a blogger – he's a scientist, skeptic, lecturer, author of two best selling books and, above all, one of the most passionate supporters of science and astronomy out there. This blog is a fast paced and enjoyable journey all that is astronomy. He's an expert and an amateur all at once. Everything from debunking pseudo-science and the mythology of the night sky (astrology, fake moon landing, face on mars...) to hard core astronomical discoveries and what they mean to you, me and the world we live in (pulsars, gamma ray bursts, newly discovered planets, asteroids, NASA...) this blog is written so well that it reaches a wide range of readers, appealing to both those new to astronomy and those who have been around the astronomical block a few times! It's all about what's going on in our universe, what we know about it and what we are learning everyday. The point – to share the wonder of the universe through a scientist's eye. You'll see amazing images of galaxies, planets, Earth, the Moon, get links to interviews and read commentary on everything

astronomical. Updated multiple times a day, you can't get fresher than this. Or more reliable. Or more fun!

Podcast: Astronomy Cast

<http://www.astronomycast.com/>

Your hosts on this podcast are exceptionally well versed in all things astronomical, from our voyages to the cosmos from the Apollo, Voyager in the past to all our recent mars, moon and asteroid activity, and everything to do with the universe itself. Fraser Cain from Vancouver & Dr. Pamela L. Gay from Southern Illinois University take us on, in their own words, "a weekly facts-based journey through the cosmos". Learn about the science *behind* the science of astronomy and planetary science. They weave facts into a wonderfully enjoyable story – bedtime stories for the astronomically inclined!

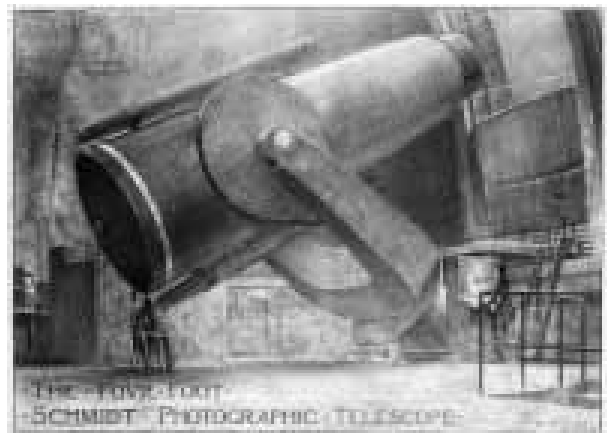
It's an insiders conversation on all things astronomical that is so well done and so well written (well, spoken!) that it is hard to stop at just one podcast...but they have their entire archive online so find a topic and grab a cup of coffee and start learning. Or, do what I do...and take a few jogging in the morning and let them blast away while I cook dinner (with a whole whack of other podcasts that I'll share in further newsletters!). With episode titles such as "How are missions chosen?", "The Mysteries of the Galaxy", "Coordinate Systems", "Multiverses", "Inside the Atom", "The History of Astronomy" and many, many others, you can easily see that there is enough substance for everyone's tastes!

Video Link: Death by Black Hole

<http://fora.tv/2008/02/19/>

[Neil_DeGrasse_Tyson_Death_by_Black_Hole#chapter_02](http://fora.tv/2008/02/19/Neil_DeGrasse_Tyson_Death_by_Black_Hole#chapter_02)

You will just have to watch this – and trust me you want to watch anything you can that this man is involved with. I won't give away any of the secrets, but get ready to re-think your spaghetti dinner!



This is an example of the planning that often goes into preparing for a club event or viewing session. Members put considerable effort into making sure the planned event will give our members the best possible conditions to view an astronomical opportunity. The Clear Sky Clock link at the bottom of the page is worth a visit, it is showing the average weather here for the last five years. If you have any suggestions, if you would like to participate, or if you would like to add to this discussion please contact Glen g_harris@telus.net

Gil

In response to two members' comments regarding a lunar marathon in 2011, I've provided some information regarding possible viewing dates. Of the 8 dates shown, there are 7 conflicts with previously scheduled observatory events though You'll note that the moon is very high in the sky on all dates.

DATE	TRANSIT ALTI- TUDE DE- GREES	MOON- RISE	MOON TRANSIT	MOON- SET ND=NEXT DAY	PERCENT LUNA- TION	CONSIDERATIONS
Friday 2011/01/14	56	11:37	20:02	04:39 ND	72	No Observatory functions scheduled, objects viewed on 2010/04/23
Saturday 2011/01/15	58	12:13	20:55	05:45 ND	81	NOVA 1, objects viewed on 2010/04/24
Friday 2011/02/11	57	10:09	18:43	03:26 ND	55	Open House
Saturday 2011/02/12	59	10:50	19:37	04:25 ND	65	NOVA 3
Friday 2011/03/12	58	08:47	17:28	02:13 ND	38	Open House
Saturday 2011/03/12	59	09:35	18:21	03:05 ND	50	First Quarter, NOVA 5
Friday 2011/04/08	59	07:33	16:16	00:59 ND	24	Open House, objects viewed on 2010/03/20
Saturday 2011/04/09	59	08:28	17:09	01:43 ND	33	NOVA 7

The down side to having a marathon at the same time of year as the four previous marathons and restricting viewing to Fridays and Saturdays is that 2011/01/14-15 would be the same as viewing on 2010/04/23-24, and 2011/04/08 would be the same as 2010/03/20. Bearing this in mind, the February, March, and April 9 dates would be the ones to consider if you wanted to view 'new' regions of the moon. Mind you, with my memory, it would all be new to me.

If you want to become totally confused about which date(s) to choose, follow this

<http://www.cleardarksky.com/clmt/c/PrncGrgOb1BCct.html#ObservingConditions>

to Clear Sky Clock's 5 year historical weather data for Prince George.

Glen Harris
RASC Prince George Centre Secretary

Want to join the RASC Prince George Centre?
Fill out the form below and mail it in to the address at the top of the form.



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New Membership Application - Canada

Prince George Centre

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Membership in the RASC includes one issue of the annual *Observer's Handbook*, six issues of the electronic edition of the *Journal* of the RASC and six issues of *SkyNews* along with benefits that your Centre may also offer.

APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Prince George Centre). I understand that personal information is collected and used according to the Society's Privacy Policy available at www.rasc.ca/privacy.shtml and that my membership is subject to the bylaws of the Society and my Centre if applicable.

I am/was a member of the Society, please, if necessary, reactivate my membership. RASC ID (if available): _____

RASC Membership Dues (Prince George Centre)

Choose one:

- Society Membership (Canada) including a Centre Fee of \$27.00 REG \$74.00
- Society Youth Membership (Canada) including a Centre Fee of \$13.70 YTH \$41.00

Youth memberships are available to applicants who are less than 21 years of age at the time of application. Please provide your birth month and year: ____ / ____ (mm/yyyy).

National Publications (includes member discounts, taxes, shipping and handling)

- Printed and mailed **Journal** (one year subscription, 6 issues, includes GST/HST) \$18.98
- Beginner's Observing Guide** (includes GST, shipping & handling) \$25.67
- Observer's Calendar 2011** (includes shipping & GST/HST as applicable) \$22.34

Note: All members are entitled to receive the *Journal of the RASC* via electronic download (PDF). To receive the print edition, please choose the Printed and Mailed option above.

Membership Options (Prince George Centre)

The Prince George Centre's newsletter PEGASUS is a benefit of membership in the Centre. Please choose your preferred format (electronic or printed and mailed) below:

Pegasus Delivery: Electronic Printed and Mailed

Members of the Prince George Centre can invite members of their family to join them as Associate Members for only \$5.00 per family member. Associate Members enjoy all Centre benefits while sharing one National Membership.

Centre Option(s) (see note above) **Code** **Fee**
(Please provide the names of your associate members below separated by commas) \$5.00
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Payment Options

- On-line at <https://secure.rasc.ca> Card #: _____ Exp: ____ / ____
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**Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Prince George Centre**

AKA the Prince George Astronomical Society

Phone: 964-3600
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