



# Stargazer

RASC – Regina Centre Newsletter

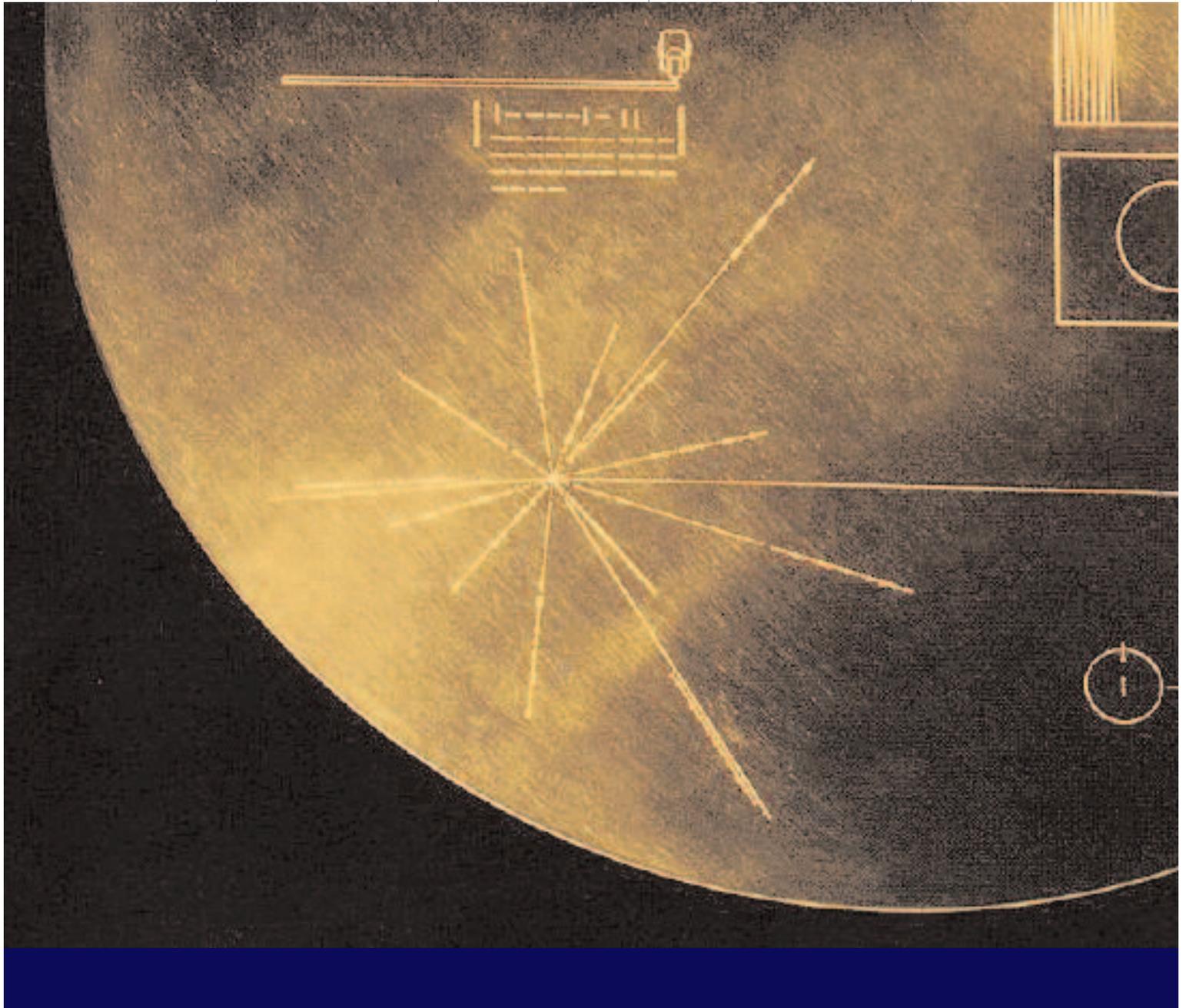
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## 2005-2006 RASC Regina Centre Executive

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Alden Foraie

### Vice-President

Carter Smith

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Jason Cosford

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Lee Beck

### Past President

Lorne Harasen

## Regina Centre Public Meetings

Public meetings take place at 7 P.M. on the 4th Friday of the month at the Saskatchewan Science Centre Imax Theatre Boardroom, 3rd floor.

## Ways to contact the club

### By e-mail:

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Please leave a message.

### By mail:

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### In person:

Come to one of our public meetings.

### On the web:

[www.ras.sk.ca](http://www.ras.sk.ca)

*Stargazer* is the publication of the RASC Regina Centre and is published bimonthly.

Article submissions may be sent to the editor by e-mail ([editor@ras.sk.ca](mailto:editor@ras.sk.ca)) or given to a member of the Executive to forward.

# Club calendar

| October  |  |
|----------|--|
| 6        | Kalium Observatory open to the public 8 P.M. – 10 P.M. |
| 20       | Kalium Observatory open to the public 8 P.M. – 10 P.M. |
| 28       | Public general meeting.                                |
| November |  |
| 3        | Kalium Observatory open to the public 8 P.M. – 10 P.M. |
| 17       | Kalium Observatory open to the public 7 P.M. – 9 P.M.  |
| 24       | Public general meeting.                                |
| December |  |
| 1        | Kalium Observatory open to the public 7 P.M. – 9 P.M.  |
| 15       | Kalium Observatory closed                              |
| 29       | Kalium Observatory closed                              |
| January  |  |
| 5        | Kalium Observatory closed                              |
| 19       | Kalium Observatory open to the public 7 P.M. – 9 P.M.  |

# President's message

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by ALDEN FORAIE

**W**OW, HERE IT IS FALL AGAIN. I am astounded that a year has passed already since I took on the role of President of RASC – Regina Centre. And what a year it has been. Mars Rovers Spirit and Opportunity and Mars rovers as well as the Cassini probe continued to send us amazing pictures of their adventures exploring planets and moons in our solar system. The New Horizons probe is on its way to Pluto even though its not officially a planet anymore and the space shuttle is flying again, even carrying a Canadian astronaut.

Closer to home work has progressed on the Father Lucien Kemble Memorial Observatory out at the club's dark site to the point that the next step will be to mount the pier on the newly poured pile. With a fresh coat of paint on it the observatory is looking sharp again. A special thanks to Dave Barrie for all the time and work he puts into cutting the grass and watering the trees at our dark sky observing site at the club's dark site. We all appreciate your efforts Dave!! The SSSP was again a big success and big thanks go out to Darcy, Vance and all the others who helped make it work. This year was the 10th anniversary and although I have not been to them all I think they just keep getting better every year. The Leader Post did a great story on the star party, hope you all had a chance to read it. Speaking of newspapers, in Yorkton, James Edgar is taking his love for the night skies and writing to the next level by having a astronomy column published in numerous Saskatchewan newspapers.

We have another Astronomy fair coming up this

fall. We have not done one of these for a few years but in the past they have been VERY successful. Key to this success was big time involvement from club members as help is needed doing all kinds of things. If you would like to do a presentation that would be awesome but people are also needed to all the other support roles from welcoming visitors to manning a telescope for public observing.

In October we will be having fall elections for executive and director positions. Needless to say new blood is always welcomed and needed. Taking a leadership role in some of the astronomy related activities we all enjoy can be very rewarding and I encourage you to take off your shy face and step forward!! At our October meeting we also are planning to vote on a new time and date for our monthly meetings. This is seen as somewhat of a big deal as the club has been having the meetings on Friday nights for decades. October will be an important meeting for this and the elections so I encourage you all to attend.

I would also like to extend my personal thanks Ron Haughey and Darryl Dormuth for all the time they spend in the Kalium observatory. Thanks as well to Chris Anderson for the great looking newsletter he's been producing.

Fall is a great time for observing with darkness falling early, relatively warm evenings and crisp clear skies so be sure to get out and enjoy the harvest moon and other sites. Wishing you all sunny days and starry nights.....

# The adventures of Thuban and Polaris in the Cypress Hills

by ALDEN FORAIE, MIRIAM MARTIN & NICOLE DANCEY

**I**N MAY OF THIS YEAR Norm Leier and I went to Cypress Hills to do a crash course in astronomy for the park interpreter staff. In August I returned to Cypress Hills for the annual SSSP. As Regina Centre hosts the public observing and the park interpreters would be working with us this was a great opportunity to see my 'students' in action.

The public observing is held in the tennis courts just down the road from the main star party at the Meadows. As dusk fell and we were getting our equipment set up the crowd grew rapidly. It looked like it was going to be a busy evening!! As it turned out Friday night could not have been better with incredible sky conditions.

The roles of 'tour guides of the stars' for the park interpreter staff was taken up by Miriam Martin a.k.a. Mimi and Nicole Dancey. In a word the work they have done over the summer developing a night sky program can only be described as AWESOME.

They each play the role of a star, with Mimi as Thuban and Nicole as Polaris. They must be seen in full costume to really be appreciated. I know where Polaris is and why it is a 'famous star' but I must confess at the time I had no idea where in the sky Thuban was or what this stars significance was. As I was supposed to be these peoples mentor I wasn't about to show my ignorance at the time. So for those others who don't know the history of Thuban it was once the North star before Polaris took over this role (more on this later). An impressive bit of

digging on Mimi's part and a great story and info to add to their public program!

The public observing went over great. Thuban and Polaris did a wonderful job showing off Cypress Hills pristine night skies. Their costumes and enthusiasm drew a steady group to where they were set up with the parks new 20x80 binoculars and 10 inch dobsonian.

It was exciting to reflect on what had been happening in Cypress Hills over the past few years. This was the 10th anniversary of the SSSP. Since that first gathering of excited amateurs at this site some remarkable



milestones have transpired. The SSSP is now one of Canada's premier astronomy events. A comet was discovered at one party. The location of Cypress Hills Inter-Provincial Park has been made into North America's largest dark sky preserve. As of 2006 the park added public observing of the summer's night skies to the list of great nature activities for park visitors to enjoy.

It was a great feeling watching Mimi and Nicole do their new 'thing' as the last time I had seen them they were trying to aim the telescope at a street light down by the lake, as it was too cloudy to see a single star. Now here they were talking and showing off the skies like a couple of pros!! I knew from their excitement and work they put into this summer's program that it should make for a good story. I asked Mimi and Nicole if they could share a few of their thoughts and details of how the park's first summer of public observing went. Once again they surpassed my expectations and both sent me some great, from the heart, writing. It was too good to edit so here is their story in their own words.....

**Mimi (Thuban):**

Astronomy has always been on my list of things that I wanted to learn. But that list ended up somewhere in the bottom of my junk drawer. When Cypress Park was designated a Dark Sky Preserve in 2004, I looked at my boss, Melody Nagel-Hisey, and said, "I suppose I'm expected to learn astronomy now?" She nodded.

It wasn't until 2006, though, after the park acquired a 10 inch telescope, that astronomy suddenly reared its starry head. This spring, I only knew four constellations – the Big and Little Dippers, Cassiopeia, and Orion. I knew what an aster was but not an asterism.

Thankfully, Norm and Alden from the RASC in Regina came out in May to give us a crash course in astronomy and, in particular, how to use the park's new telescope.

The telescope baffled me initially. I'm rather slow technically and need to do something repeatedly to get it into my head. It took awhile but when summer ended I felt comfortable around the telescope. Technicalities aside, in May, I wasn't too concerned about the rest of it. I've been an interpreter for 20 years; I've had to learn everything about these Hills – geology, flora and fauna, cultural history, and so on. How hard could learning some constellations be? WELL!

I bought a couple of books and was blown away when I first started to read up on the stars. Most of what I had been taught in school had evaporated a long time ago. Words like nebula and globular clusters were not in my vocabulary. Luckily, my co-worker Nicole, a very brave and confident girl, decided she would do astronomy for three of the June public programs. (N.B. Most of our interpretation in the spring is directed towards school groups but we do Saturday public programming in June). Anyway, Nicole realized long before me that she knew nothing and spent a lot of her own time putting some information together so she would know something for these programs. When July rolled around and we were faced with doing our first big program together, I was really unprepared. How little I knew embarrassed me and so I spent lots of evenings at home looking up at the sky while everyone else was in bed. I also put aside all other reading material and read astronomy books.

Our public program for the summer was conducted at Lookout Point. In July, it doesn't

get dark until after 11 pm. Our program started at 10 p.m. While the sky darkened, we talked about the importance of Dark Sky Preserves and CHIPP's designation as such, light pollution and how to combat it, the history of telescopes, how the rods and cones in our eyes work, the 88 constellations and their designation, expected behavior around the equipment. We also handed out sky charts and red cellophane for flashlights and explained how to use the sky charts.

Initially, we focused on Jupiter and the double star in the Big Dipper. Our numbers of people per program from May to September are 17, 17, 6, 27, 93, 38, 43, 19 = 260. The program with 93 people was overwhelming. The line-ups were so long we only managed to show them two things. After every program, once the public left, Nicole and I stayed out to find other things. When I found the M13 cluster for the first time we whooped and hollered and high-fived. It was so exciting!

We did not do astronomy every week. We worked it into the weeks where the moon was not too much of a factor and around all our other programs. We were blessed with clear skies almost every night (drought factor) and only had to deal with smoke haze and the occasional cloud. Next year we will do it once a week and learn to use the other eye pieces and moon filter. People loved looking at the moon and seeing the satellites around Jupiter. We love to hear all the ooh's and aah's coming from people as they see something for the first time.

As the summer progressed our program evolved. It became darker sooner and it was quite interesting doing a program in which all the participants are not seen only heard. We put together a skit-like introduction, too, which set

the tone of the program. Here it is.

(We wear headbands with glow-in-the-dark stars on them)

Nicole – Welcome to the Land of Living Skies!!! (very dramatic of course... as I tend to be)

M – Saskatchewan skies are alive not just during the day but at night, as well. Alive with nebulas and galaxies. Shining with Red Giants and white dwarfs. Twinkling with heroes and monsters, queens and kings. And teeming with animals – like the two bears and the dogs that are chasing them; a beautiful swan, an elegant dolphin, a gigantic snake and even a lynx and a hare. Some of the stories of how they came to be in the heavens are still with us; others have been lost in the mists of time. But remembered or forgotten, clearly visible or only imagined, we are in the best place in North America to take it all in.

Nicole – Oh and why is that?

Mimi – Because you are now in the largest Dark Sky Preserve in North America. Which reminds me of a saying: The skies are painted with unnumbered sparks. They are all fire, and every one doth shine.

Nicole – Wow, that's profound. Did you come up with that?

Mimi – Nope. My friend Will Shakespeare did.

Both – [point red flashlights in our face]. Hello. I am Polaris (Nic). And I am Thuban (Mimi).

Polaris – We are stars!!! (Big dramatic bow)

Thuban – Hold on Polaris. We are just two of the thousand billion stars that are in our home galaxy, The Milky Way. I won't even go into the tens of billions of other galaxies that each holds billions of other stars. Remember that, Polaris.

Just because the constellations in this galaxy move around you now does not make you the centre of the universe. In fact, I don't really think there is a centre.

Polaris – You're only jealous because 4000 years ago the constellations used to revolve around you.

Thuban – In fact, the Egyptians oriented their temples to me.

Polaris – But no longer.

Thuban – I cannot help that the Earth's axis and by extension, the celestial poles, shifts position over time. Once I was the polestar but now it is you.

Polaris – (Big voice) YES, I am the North Star!!!

Thuban – Whatever!!

Hi, I'm Nicole/Mimi. (and on we go with the program)

\*\*\*\*\*

We really enjoyed the programs later in the summer because it became darker sooner so we did more in-depth constellation tours using the awe-inspiring, audience-wowing, coolest-tool-on-earth LASER pointer. People really enjoyed these tours, lying on their blankets around us and taking a magical mystery tour to learn all about Perseus and Andromeda, Hercules and Aquila, Cygnus, Bootes etc. We showed them how to land mark using their sky charts and the Big Dipper to find Polaris (and Thuban), Arcturus and a few other common stars and constellations. We received great reviews for our astronomy program. After the last one in September, I talked to a couple the following day who had come to it. It was their

first time in the Cypress Hills and their first time looking through a telescope. They told me they plan to come back to the park next year and come to our astronomy program.

Nicole and I waited impatiently for the SSSP to begin. On Thursday of their arrival, we and the CHIPP, Alberta interpreters prowled around in the dark Meadows campground and poked our eyeballs at many different telescopes and saw so many more things. I want to thank Vance and all the astronomers (faceless and nameless though most of you are in the dark) for your patience and generosity for showing us the skies that night.

Friday night, Nic and I completed our last campfire program of the season. (A no fire campfire due to the fire ban.) Nicole was dressed as the fire with a flame wig and yellow coveralls. I donned a glittery gold wig. The theme of the campfire was the Dark Skies so we also put on our Polaris and Thuban head bands. Dressed as such, we showed up at the Tennis Courts to assist the SSP with the public viewing night. The public viewing was busy and fun and from there we went to Meadows to the "Regina Corner" to stare through the telescopes of Alden Foraie, Norm Leier, Kevin Gallant and Paul Meyer. They showed us so many more things and we thank them for the fantastic education.

The astronomy program has become my favorite. It is an enormous amount of work – there is so much to learn – but that is one of its charms. It provides people with a view of the skies that many never get and brings to many their first awareness of light pollution. The Cypress Hills skies are pristine and I know how lucky I am to work here and live nearby. I can't go out at night anymore without looking up and

feeling thrilled that I now know more than four constellations. What's the best thing about learning astronomy this summer? I now have my own awe-inspiring, audience-wowing, coolest-tool-on-earth LASER purchased at the SSSP to help me teach my 10 year old daughter the night sky. Does this make me a star-geek? If so, I'm proud of it.

### Nicole's Thoughts: (Polaris)

Well, where do I begin? Thuban didn't leave much for me to say... she's always trying to steal the starlight, even though everything now revolves around me!!!

Things in the Cypress Hills are wonderful!! We just finished our last astronomy program of the summer on Sunday night and it was another incredibly dark night. It was our BEST program yet... under crystal clear skies!! After the program and after the moon had set, Mimi and I had time for a picnic under the stars... a Milky Way picnic... and it was incredible!! It was a wonderful chance to reflect on the summer days and nights gone by...

I was working in Regina this past winter, when I first heard that our park had purchased a telescope and binoculars. I was really excited, but realized that I knew nothing about burning balls of gas and dust, shapes of stars overhead or whether or not there is life out there. Well, I still don't know if there actually is 'life' out there, but I do know that we are in the Land of Living Skies and that as we look up, open our imaginations and dive into the depths of the universe, we realize that the skies above are more alive than anything I've ever known... and that's also how this summer has made me feel.

It all began in early May, when Alden Forai and Norm Leier came to the Cypress Hills to

show us a thing or two (or five thousand) about astronomy. They had worked long and hard on a manual called 'A Crash Course in Astronomy & Observing'... I very quickly dubbed this manual my bible. The first night they were with us was excellent, because although the skies were cloudy, they showed us how to set up our equipment, taught us the difference between an eyepiece, a finder scope and a rigel-quickfinder, how to collimate a telescope and many other things. We were all very excited and hoped afterwards that they weren't offended by our seemingly contagious laughter because we owned something called a Big Barlow. They also stayed with us for a second night, but neither Mimi nor I could make it out with the group.

Well, needless to say we very quickly set up an Interprovincial exchange with Joan, Tyler (our practicum student), myself and the Cypress Hills-Alberta interpreters who were in much the same situation as we were. Yep, we were expected to deliver astronomy programs real soon to the public... and I still had never actually used the telescope or even set it up by myself. Well, after two wonderful nights of viewing at Horseshoe Canyon in Cypress Alberta and Lookout Point in Cypress Saskatchewan, I had decided that I was going to hold my own astronomy programs for my Saturday events in June. Yep, Tyler was finished at the end of May and Joan was away, but I was going to deliver public astronomy by myself with our telescope and binoculars!!! I was on an astronomical mission!

So, after that point I found a new sense of determination within and began to study... my 'bible,' constellation books and other astronomy info. I found star charts on the internet and thought surely people would be impressed by that... even if I couldn't tell them

much else. I began to create a collection of constellation cards... giant flashcards really, with a whole lot of information on them. As park interpreters, it is our job to gain a general understanding of everything and deliver it to people in an interesting manner. So, I began to learn some mythological stories along with the names and shapes of constellations and tried to remember the names of some of the brighter stars in the sky.

My first two programs in June were scary for me, but went well. I soon realized that people were completely amazed and breathless, at simply seeing Saturn and Jupiter through the high-powered binoculars and telescope. I made laminated stars that I handed out to people. On one side of each star was an astronomy-related name and on the other side was a fact related to astronomy, dark sky preserves, light pollution etc. I began my program by using these stars as an introduction, icebreaker and a way for me to remember what the heck I should talk about. Each person introduced themselves as their astronomy name and then told us about their interesting astronomy fact. I filled in the gaps with extra info.

I have to admit that Mimi and I have come a long way from those days. I will never forget how excited we would get after an astronomy program, when the two of us would stay to try to find more 'cool stuff.' One of my favorites early-on was Albireo, the beautiful gold and blue double star in Cygnus.

Being that I live in the park during the summer, I was always trying to get other summer staff to come out with me to practice. I'll always remember the night of August 12th when I finally convinced 8 other park staff people to go

on a night hike with me. What an amazing evening. We hiked the Highland trail and enjoyed the meteors of the Perseid meteor shower on into the night. As we rounded the far end of the trail and came to the bridge where the stream flows gently underneath, we all lied down to get a better view of the night sky. Of course they all laughed when I happened to have a backpack on with three big astronomy blankets... they didn't laugh long after I decided to share them. They were all amazed as I began to work my constellation magic and share much of what I had already learned to that point. It was that night that I decided that I definitely needed my own personal 'awe-inspiring, audience-wowing, coolest-tool-on-earth ever LASER!'

Well, it was around that time of the summer when I was really getting the itch to find more things in the sky and even cooler stuff with the telescope, but I was kind of nervous to go out to Lookout Point by myself and sit there as cougar bait... or worse yet, tourist bait (just kidding). On more than one occasion, other park staff had agreed to go out with me, but then 'got tired.' I eventually dug deep, as only Polaris could, and worked up the courage to sit out at Lookout Point by myself and practice my constellation tours. The next night, I found the courage again and set up my telescope and practiced finding new things. It was then that I found the Ring Nebula and the Dumbbell Nebula for the first time. I was sooooo excited and found it very exhilarating to be out there by myself under the vastness of the sky and actually be able to find a few things all by my lonesome.

Finally, the SSSP arrived. Mimi and I had been waiting all summer! I was so excited. Thursday night, after the incredible First Nations

Astronomy presentation at the amphitheater, we went out to the Meadows and joined the Alberta interpreters (as Mimi already mentioned). I ended up camping out there with them after drooling over all the cool stuff that many of the astronomers had been showing us. I couldn't sleep that night. I have slept under the stars many times before, but this time my eyes just wouldn't close. It was as if I had been hypnotized by the stars.

The rest of the weekend was truly amazing. Helping with the public star gazing nights was awesome, but the highlight for me, by far, was on Saturday night when I set up our park telescope in the Regina corner of the Meadows. I stayed throughout the night and saw many new things. All the guys were so incredibly supportive and helpful all weekend long!! I was continually impressed by the Regina gang and Richard Huziak at how helpful they were. They were excited at how excited I was and were all very eager to show me more. I found M81 & M82 for the first time by myself, as well as the Veil Nebula, Wild Duck cluster, the ET cluster (among others) and even a few that I had worked on by myself such as M33 the Triangulum Galaxy. I was in awe as the night progressed, one hot chocolate after another. I was amazed by the blue snowball and many other awesome objects. One of my favorite things ever, was seeing Orion's Nebula for the first time in my life through Vance's telescope... and then actually looking at it through our own telescope as well. What an incredible sight... one I hope never to forget! Well, that was not the end of the night. I soon heard an alarm clock going off, and a man emerged from one of the tents off in the twilight. He informed me that he was awake to

watch Venus and Saturn rising together. What an incredible sight it was... the two planets framed by the tops of the Lodgepole Pines!!! Well, eventually I found my bed in my little camper just after 7:00am.

Needless to say, the next day at work, was a little slow. I realized that I have become a part of something wonderful. When I was standing in our campground washroom, staring at the cement floor and I could swear I saw the ET cluster staring back at me!! I'm pretty sure he winked at me too!

Well, my summer here in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park – Saskatchewan is winding down, but my adventures under the night sky in the hills are not over. I just found out that I got a fall/winter interpreter position on the Alberta side of the park!!! I'm pumped!

Well, I wanted to say thank you to all of you who have supported us and helped us in so many ways. Without you, we would not be where we are today, and all the people who have raved over our programs this summer, would not have been able to take home their cherished family memories under the night sky in the Cypress Hills. As Alden has recently confirmed for us, we feel that we are a part of something really special and we hope to continue to share what we know with many people for years to come. Please look us up, if you're ever visiting either the Saskatchewan or Alberta sides of the Cypress Hills. Clear Skies to You All and take care!.

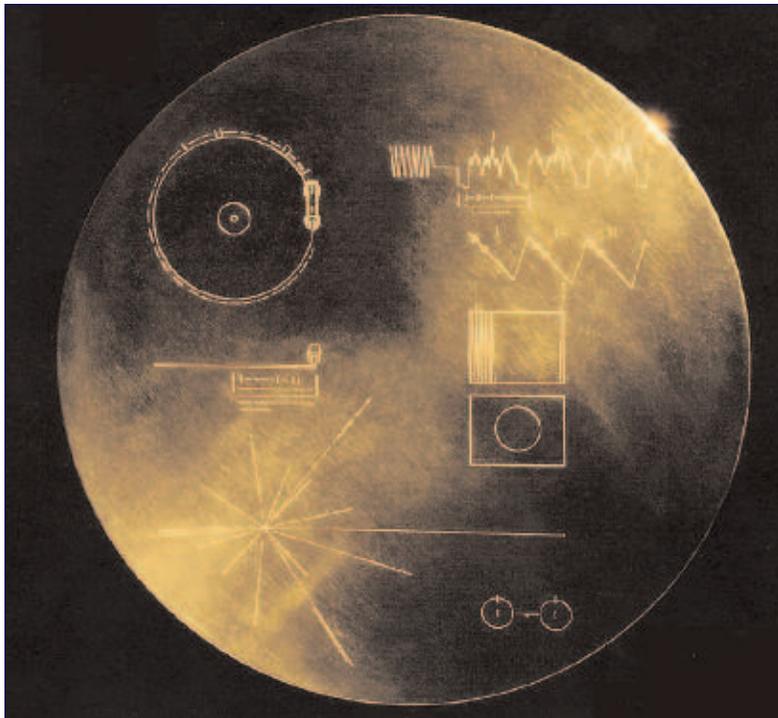
# Staggering distance

by DR. TONY PHILLIPS

**T**ONIGHT, WHEN THE SUN SETS and the twilight fades to black, go outside and look southwest. There's mighty Jupiter, gleaming brightly. It looks so nearby, yet Jupiter is 830 million km away. Light from the sun takes 4.3 minutes to reach the giant planet, and for Earth's fastest spaceship, New Horizons, it's a trip of 13 months.

That's nothing.

Not far to the left of Jupiter is Pluto. Oh, you won't be able to see it. Tiny Pluto is almost 5 billion km away. Sunlight takes more than 4 hours to get there, and New Horizons 9 years. From Pluto, the sun is merely the brightest star in a cold, jet-black sky.



In case it is ever found by intelligent beings elsewhere in the galaxy, Voyager carries a recording of images and sounds of Earth and its inhabitants. The diagrams on the cover of the recording symbolize Earth's location in the galaxy and how to play the record.

That's nothing.

A smidgen to the right of Pluto, among the stars of the constellation Ophiuchus, is Voyager 1. Launched from Florida 29 years ago, the spacecraft is a staggering 15 billion km away. It has traveled beyond all the known planets, beyond the warmth of the sun, almost beyond the edge of the solar system itself.

Now that's something.

"On August 15, 2006, Voyager 1 reached the 100 AU mark—in other words, it is 100 times farther from the Sun than Earth," says Ed Stone, Voyager project scientist and the former director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "This is an important milestone in our exploration of the Solar System. No other spacecraft has gone so far."

At 100 AU (astronomical units), Voyager 1 is in a strange realm called "the heliosheath."

As Stone explains, our entire solar system—planets and all—sits inside a giant bubble of gas called the heliosphere. The sun is responsible; it blows the bubble by means of the solar wind. Voyager 1 has traveled all the way from the bubble's heart to its outer edge, a gassy membrane dividing the solar system from interstellar space. This "membrane" is the heliosheath.

Before Voyager 1 reached its present location, researchers had calculated what the heliosheath might be like. "Many of our predictions were wrong," says Stone. In situ, Voyager 1 has encountered unexpected magnetic anomalies and a surprising increase in low-energy cosmic rays, among other things. It's all very strange—"and we're not even out of the Solar System yet."

To report new developments, Voyager radios Earth almost every day. At the speed of light, the messages take 14 hours to arrive. Says Stone, "it's worth the wait."

Keep up with the Voyager mission at [voyager.jpl.nasa.gov](http://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov). To learn the language of Voyager's messages, kids (of all ages) can check out [spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/vgr\\_fact1.shtml](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/vgr_fact1.shtml).

*This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.*

# Brief history of the SSSP

by VANCE PETRIEW

**T**HE SASKATCHEWAN SUMMER STAR PARTY (SSSP) is a wonderful weekend of stargazing under some of the darkest skies in North America. Every year over 250 amateur astronomers from all over Canada and the United States converge on the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park (CHIPP) to share their passion for astronomy with their fellow hobbyists. The SSSP is held during the new moon weekend in August which is why the dates are never consistent from year to year.

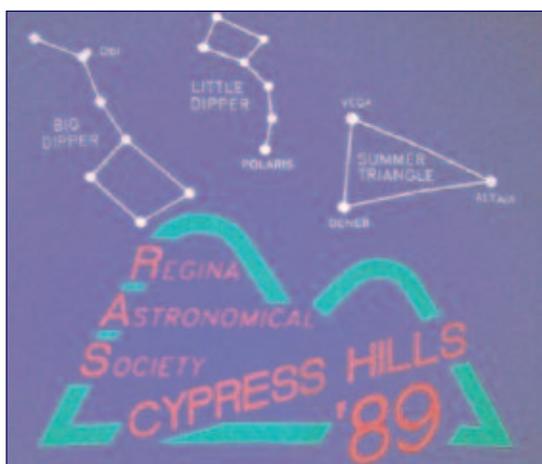
The beginnings of the star party go back to 1988 when a few friends from the Regina Astronomical Society spent at weekend camping in Cypress Hills. They thoroughly enjoyed the dark skies there and came back with nothing but great things to tell to their fellow club members. They suggested that they



A Hubble Space Telescope image of the Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 impact on Jupiter (1994).

all return the following year and do something to promote astronomy within the park. Ross Parker and Darcy Kozoriz were among the first promoters of the concept so in 1989, members of the Regina Astronomical Society took their telescopes to Cypress Hills and put on the first public astronomy night within the park. Between 30 and 40 park visitors drove out to Lookout Point to gaze at the stars through the club's telescopes. To celebrate the start of this event, a special logo was made and put onto t-shirts. Everyone had such a great time that they decided to make this an annual event much to the delight of Park Management.

In the years that followed, hundreds of park visitors came out to look through the telescopes during the public observing nights. A couple



The first logo created for the public nights in Cypress Hills (1989).  
Image by Ross Parker.



10 years of SSSP logos.  
Image by Vance Petriew.

more logos were created to put on t-shirts and the event started to become very popular with the park visitors and local residents. During the public nights in 1994, a special event was happening in the sky. Many attendees were able to glimpse the effects of the Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 impact with Jupiter through the club's telescopes. Most of the public didn't grasp the historical significance of the impact but the astronomers sure did!

For the 1996 gathering, the Regina club invited some members of the RASC – Saskatoon Centre to join them in Cypress Hills to see what they thought of the place. It was at that time that the members of Saskatoon Centre made the decision to try to start a star party within the park. After favourable support from all 17 members in attendance, the Saskatoon and Regina Centres embarked on creating the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party. They did lots of planning and publicizing the star party to astronomy club's in Western Canada. They made special visits to many of the RASC Centre's giving presentations and inviting everyone to attend. Richard Huziak, Kim Mysyk, Darrell Chatfield, Sandy Ferguson and

Al Hartridge were some of the Saskatoon members that worked hard to start the SSSP during the first year.

The first official SSSP was started in 1997. Erich Keser, the Saskatoon Centre President at the time, had also visited the Winter Star Party in Florida so when it came to starting the SSSP, he basically said "We can do this!". So with the assistance of the RASC – Regina Centre, 198 amateur astronomers were in attendance for the first event. The guest speakers were Kim Mysyk, Murray Paulson and Fr. Lucian Kemble. The SSSP was a great success and the word spread very quickly. A T-shirt logo was created for the first SSSP and sold to attendees. The furthest attendees were from Ottawa, ON and Flagstaff, AZ.

So with the first SSSP under their belt, the SSSP committee started work on improving the event by making changes to the program and doing more advertising. The RASC – Regina Centre continued to put on the public nights within the park and handle the t-shirt logos and orders while the Saskatoon Centre



The SSSP/Starfest Teleconference.  
Image by Andreas Gada.



Setting up telescopes at the SSSP.  
Image by Vance Petriew.

organized the guest speakers and the policing of the Meadows campground for white lights. An evening barbecue was added to the agenda as well as a swap 'n shop and an informal presentation night to name a couple.

During the SSSP in 2001, a significant event happened which would make history. Vance Petriew from the Regina Centre discovered a previously unknown comet on the morning of August 18th, 2001. This discovery brought a lot of attention both to the SSSP and the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. The following year, the Saskatchewan Government erected a Comet Petriew marking at the entrance to the Meadows Campground where the comet was discovered.

After the star party in 2003, the Regina and Saskatoon Centres started thinking about preserving the dark skies found within the park. Less than a year later, another significant historical event happened at the SSSP in 2004. The Cypress Hills - Centre Block and the RASC signed a Dark-Sky Preserve declaration in front of all the star party attendees to preserve the dark skies within the park. A month later at

a larger ceremony in Cypress Hills – West Block, all three parks involved in the Cypress Hills Interprovincial park created Canada's largest Dark-Sky Preserve on September 28, 2004.

During the year following the Dark-Sky Preserve declaration, the parks started promoting proper lighting and started replacing lights within the park with full cut-off lights. The expansion of camping within the Centre Block saw the erection of street lights within the Meadows campground where the SSSP is held every year. Because of the park's long term commitment to the SSSP, they installed switches in all the street lights so they could be turned off for the duration of the star party. As a result of all the parks light pollution efforts, another significant historical event happened at the 2005 SSSP. The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada awarded their National Light Pollution Abatement Award to all three parks with the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park for their efforts.



Vance Petriew and the Honourable Buckley Belanger unveil the Comet Petriew marker at the SSSP in 2002.  
Image by Jennifer Petriew.



Four organizations signed the documents to create Canada's largest Dark-Sky Preserve in Cypress Hills (2004). Image by Vance Petriew.

This year's 2006 event was a special one since it was the SSSP's 10th anniversary. To celebrate the event, the two major star parties in Canada, SSSP and Starfest, connected to each other for a teleconference. Starfest was celebrating their 25th anniversary so it was a great reason to celebrate together our years of history promoting astronomy. The theme of the teleconference was "Fellowship Under the



The Awards Ceremony for the RASC's National Light Pollution Abatement Award. Image by Darcy Kozoriz.

Stars" and despite some technical challenges, it was great for each star party to celebrate their history.

All of these historical events coupled with the long history of supporting astronomy with Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park has lead to the SSSP becoming one of the major star parties in Canada. The future of the star party is very bright, or should I say DARK, since the park whole-heartedly supports the preservation of dark skies for future generations to come. If you haven't had a



The official Saskatchewan Summer Star Party logo. Created by Impressions in Thread.

chance to attend a star party and enjoy the night sky, then the SSSP is a great place to learn and share wonderful experiences during the "other" 12 hours of our Land of Living Skies.