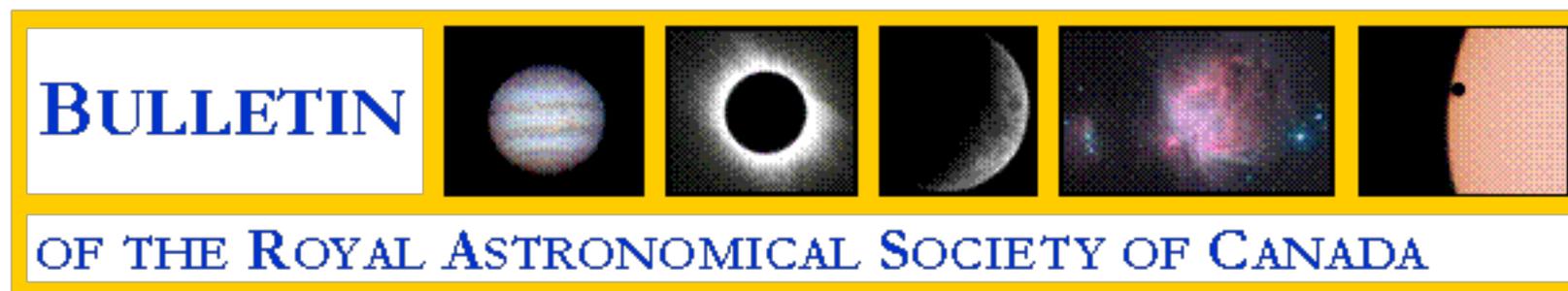


2010-12



December 2010 - Volume 5, Number 12

Ian Levstein, Editor

We welcome your comments on the *Bulletin*. Email them to the Editor at bulletin@rasc.ca [1].

A **PDF** version of the *Bulletin* is available at: [201012.pdf](#)

A **text-only** version of the *Bulletin* is available at: <http://www.rasc.ca/im/bulletin/201012.txt> [2]

[► News @ RASC.ca](#)

In Memoriam

Dr. Alan Sandage was an honorary member of the RASC. He died on November 13. **Kelly Beatty** of Sky & Telescope remembers Dr. Sandage in his [column](#) [3]. While **Dr. Brian G. Marsden** was not a member of RASC, he was well known to many RASC members. Dr. Marsden died on November 18. His obituary is on the IAU Minor Planet Center [Web site](#) [4].

Easy Outreach Event Reporting Online Now!

by **Ron Macnaughton**, Chair, RASC Education Committee Has your Centre been doing outreach events? We'd love to have your information for future fund raising efforts. Now you can go online and report your numbers quickly and easily. It only takes a minute. Go to the RASC [Web site](#) [5] and click the link on the lower left side of the page. Outreach event information is important not only for fund raising, it also helps us determine needs for new resource development, additional production runs, and resource distribution to members and Centres. If your outreach event had more than one component, such as a mall booth in the afternoon then an evening observing session with different volunteers, feel free to enter

them as separate events. Likewise, if you put on too many events to enter individually, feel free to enter a single summary event. To confirm that the entry has been received, you will receive a confirmation email containing your event data. Your Centre officials will receive a list of all recorded activities for your Centre on a regular basis.

Call for Nominations for RASC National Awards

by **Dave Lane**, Awards Committee Chair The RASC sponsors several annual [national awards](#) [6] that recognize achievement or service by our members. The awards include: the [Ken Chilton Prize](#) [7], the [Chant Medal](#) [8], the [Service Award](#) [9], and the [Simon Newcomb Award](#) [10]. The deadline for nominations is **2010 December 31**. Send the nominations or questions about the awards program to [Dave Lane](#) [11].

David Levy Profile of Tim Doucette

by **R.A. Rosenfeld**, RASC Archivist RASC member **Tim Doucette** is in the news again! Tim, a noted astrophotographer and visual observer, is legally blind. That, however, does not stop him from doing quality astronomy, and encouraging others to do the same through the RASC. Veteran comet discoverer and astronomy ambassador **David H. Levy** has done a very nice profile of Tim and his work in the January 2011 edition of Astronomy magazine, the largest circulation astronomy magazine in the world. David, who's known Tim for some years, writes: "**Tim Doucette** shows us how even considerable difficulties don't have to stop us from reaching the stars". Tim seems modest, but his effective enthusiasm and skills are engaging, as those who attended this year's General Assembly in New Brunswick can testify. For those of you who haven't yet seen Tim's work, I encourage you to visit his [Web site](#) [12]. And for several articles about Tim, see [here](#) [13] and [here](#) [14].

RASC Digital Archive Update

by **Walter MacDonald**, Kingston Centre The RASC /Transactions/ for 1905 are now online [here](#) [15]. The digital archives have been extended back to 1900 with the addition of a page for [1900-29](#) [16].

► [Across the RASC](#)

Pen Henge

by **Dave Gamble**, President, Okanagan Centre It is 2009 December 21 and a group has climbed the slope to the top of a nearby hill called Munson Mountain, overlooking the city of Penticton and Okanagan Lake. Like observers at Stonehenge, interest and excitement mounts as the setting Sun touches the tree

line and beams directly from the winter solstice stone to the heel stone! 'Pen Henge' is an imaginative project launched during IYA, the International Year of Astronomy, by the Okanagan Astronomical Society of Penticton (now the Penticton Chapter of Okanagan RASC). The ongoing efforts of a group of OAS members led by **Chris Purton** were enthusiastically assisted by the City of Penticton and its Parks Supervisor, **Jeff Lynka**.



Left to right, **Dave Whalley**, **Chris Purton**, **Jim Shaver**, and **Jordy Bouillet** take a well earned break after installing the heel stone of 'Pen Henge' last summer. Three other stones now mark the sunset points for summer and winter solstice and the equinoxes, dramatically showing the large range in azimuth of the sunset point during the year.

In June of IYA, a solstice event was held on the mountain and a position for the heel stone was chosen. The direction of sunset was marked using marker spikes which were driven into the ground. Similar markers were placed at the time of equinox and winter solstice.

This summer and fall, a team led by **Chris Purton** including members **Dave Whalley**, **Wendell Shuster**, **Jordy Bouillet**, **Ken Barron**, **Al Fishler**, and **Ryan Ransom** installed the stones, which weigh on the order of half a ton, on rebar anchors, aligning them with holes drilled in the stones by Chris. It is hoped that skies will be clear on December 21 to give 'Pen Henge' a proper sendoff.

Jim Low on Andrew Elvins

submitted by **Eric Briggs**, Secretary, Toronto Centre **Jim Low**, Toronto Centre, reports: For those interested, I have prepared a genealogical paper on Andrew Elvins, the "Father" of the RASC, and placed it on my [Web site](#) [17].

Understanding and Observing Lunar Eclipses

submitted by **Roland Dechesne**, Calgary Centre A new brochure is available on the RASC Calgary Web site. It is well written and has great photos, and is perfect for helping folks understand lunar eclipses. It is available [here](#) [18].

► RASCals Highlights

Cluster Hunting

by **Chris Beckett**, Regina Centre November 3: **Shane Ludtke** and I observed tonight outside the community of Riceton ~40km SE of Regina - great spot, very dark sky, not local lights for several kilometres. Winds at 7pm arrival time were steady at 15kph but increased after 9pm so we packed up around 9:20. First up I observed Barnard's E, I've been using this dark nebula to help determine sky conditions. Using 18X in my 5-inch reveals the capital E feature nicely... if I only see a dark blob with pools than conditions are mediocre, but tonight revealed good definition. Next I gave a quick scan over M24, NGC6603, M17 and M16, all revealing nice detail before they ducked behind the tree. A quick scan with my 7X50 binoculars showed the Helix as a ghostly orb. The 5-inch shows our closest planetary nebula with a brighter section on the Eastern side, but only when I use ~40X and an OIII filter. Panning higher up, I ran over M11, the Wild Duck cluster. Admiral Smyth coined the duck phrase as he saw a grouping of ducks, but I enjoy observing the bright 8th magnitude non-cluster member and think of that as the "Wild Duck", kind of like the duck that broke loose from the flock and flew away for its own adventures. Now, although most people observe M11, they do not go after the faint neighbor mag. 9 Basel 1. This object is actually easy to locate. Take your binoculars and view the large dipper asterism West of M11, the bowl is at the top with handle pointed down south. Center your 4-inch or large scope in the bowl and use moderate powers, say 50X or more, and you'll see a faint comet like glow. Tonight was particularly clear and transparent and I could detect this open cluster with 18X on the 5-inch. Using higher powers and a 12-inch scope will reveal a circlet of stars expanding more in one direction and cut off by a foreground dark nebula in the other. We decided to hunt a few FNGC's. NGC6781 was first up. We each found it quickly and spent a lot of time using many eyepieces to pull out detail. With the 5-inch, I could see that the object had a brighter side while the faint side was molted and ill-defined. The 12-inch using 300X showed that there were 3 stars involved towards the nebula edge. NGC6819 was next. It showed best in the 12-inch using a 24mm Panoptic providing a 1-degree field. The 5-inch had trouble discerning the cluster from the Milky Way and it appeared as simply a bright congregation of stars that could be swept over without noticing they were a cluster. Vulpecula contains Broncchi's Cluster, Cr 399 - best known as the Coathanger. Although I've viewed this object many times over the years, I never noticed the faint cluster NGC6802 hanging off the most easterly star. This cluster appeared as a faint hazy mist with a few

bright stars in the 12-inch while the 5-inch refractor made this look like a galaxy until powers over 75X were used. While observing in this area we kept our eyes peeled for any Hartley Meteors but neither of us observed any.

► International Year of Astronomy 2009

Tidbits From Beyond IYA

A [new blog](#) [19] on Astronomy Communication and Outreach attempts to provide practical advice and insights on different topics of astronomy public outreach.

A [24-page brochure](#) [20] called The International Year of Astronomy 2009, Final Report, Executive Summary, offers an overview of the many events that took place during the Year, as detailed in full in the 1450-page IYA2009 Final Report, which was released earlier this year.

[Cosmic Treasures](#) [21]: Online Observing Event with Virtual Telescope is an online event giving you a unique opportunity to experience the Universe through the virtual telescope at Bellatrix Observatory in Italy.

► The Sky this Month

What's New in the Sky

Members are encouraged to check out the [Northern Skies](#) [22] section of the RASC Web site. Thanks to **Gary Boyle** for keeping us all in the know.

► Dates to Remember

- - **2010 December 31** - deadline for nominations for RASC National Awards
 - **2011 January** - nothing reported
 - **2011 March 26** - National Council meeting (NC111), Toronto
 - **2011 April** - [Global Astronomy Month](#) [23]
 - **2011 July 1-4** - [Stargazing Manitoulin](#) [24], Gordon's Park Dark-Sky Preserve
 - **2011 August 5-8** - [Manitoulin Star Party](#) [24], Gordon's Park Dark-Sky Preserve



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- [2] <https://www.rasc.ca/sites/default/files/bulletin-201012.txt>
- [3] <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/astronomy-news/tribute-to-a-pioneering-cosmologist/>
- [4] <http://www.minorplanetcenter.org/mpec/K10/K10W10.html>
- [5] <http://www.rasc.ca>
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- [10] <https://www.rasc.ca/simon-newcomb-award>
- [11] [mailto:dave@davelane.ca?subject=RASC Awards](mailto:dave@davelane.ca?subject=RASC%20Awards)
- [12] <http://www.deepskyeye.com/>
- [13] <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/blind-astronomer-constructs-backyard-observatory-1.854775>
- [14] http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/c_est_ca_la_vie/2009-2010/Reportage.asp?idDoc=97114
- [15] <https://www.rasc.ca/earlysociety>
- [16] <https://www.rasc.ca/archives/1900-29>
- [17] <http://www.jimlow.com/home/astronomy/elvins/elvins.html>
- [18] http://calgary.rasc.ca/downloads/Observing_and_understanding_Lunar_Eclipses_2010.pdf
- [19] <http://astronomycommunication.com/>
- [20] http://www.astronomy2009.org/resources/brochures/detail/iya2009_summary/
- [21] <http://www.astronomy2009.org/news/updates/1102/>
- [22] <https://www.rasc.ca/news/northern-skies>
- [23] <http://www.astronomy2009.org/news/updates/1101/>
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