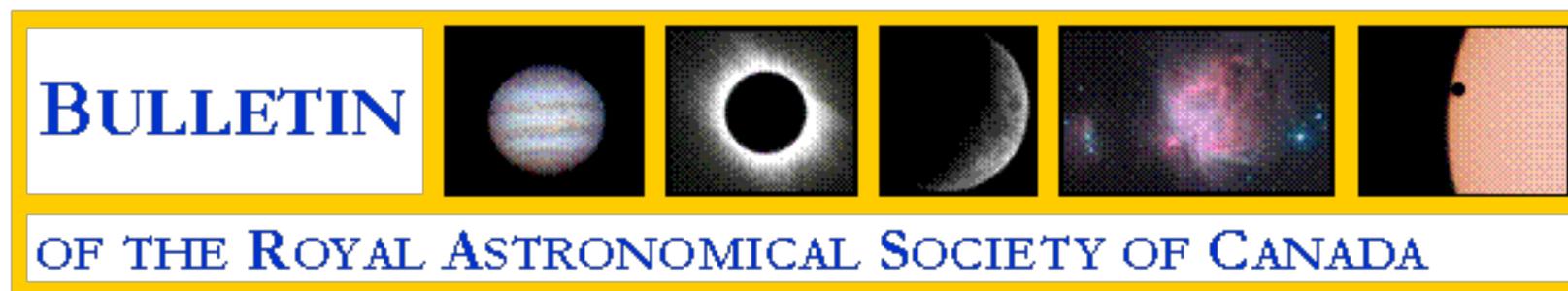


2006-12



December 2006 - Volume 1, Number 1

Andrew Oakes, Editor

► **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

BY SCOTT YOUNG

Welcome to the *Bulletin*!

On behalf of the Society I would like to welcome you to the inaugural issue of our newest publication. The RASC *Bulletin* is a monthly e-newsletter that is designed to share "what's up" with RASC members from across the country and around the world. Many of us get too much e-mail and not enough information. Editor Andrew Oakes will be helping us by distilling the important information about the life and times of our Society into an easy-to-read digest format that I hope you will enjoy in the months and years to come.

The *Bulletin* will feature highlights from the RASC's national Web site, eNews service as well as our flagship publication the *Journal*. The *Bulletin* will also feature events that are sponsored by RASC Centres such as star parties, banquets and exceptional speakers.

I invite you to help us improve this service to you by sending your comments to the Editor at bulletin@rasc.ca [1].

Clear skies,

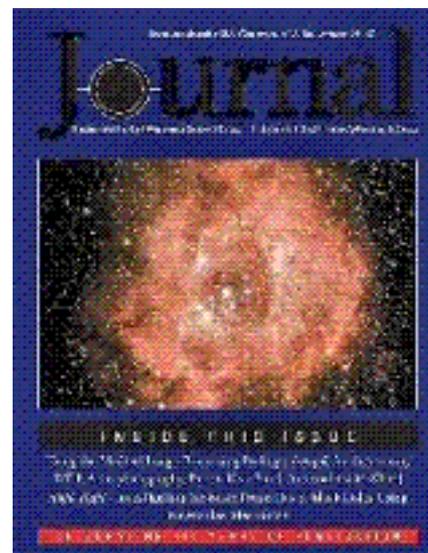
Scott Young
President

► The Journal of the RASC

This month's issue marks the 100th anniversary of the *Journal* and also marks the month where Editor Jay Anderson has achieved his goal of publishing the *Journal* on time!

Highlights include:

- *Using the Medical Image-Processing Package, ImageJ, for Astronomy* by Jennifer L. West and Ian D. Cameron
- *DSLR Astrophotography, Part 1* by Doug George
- *Near-Earth Asteroid (2004 XP14)* by Rick Stankiewicz
- *night-flight* by Sherrilyn Jahrig
- *Great Images: Celebrating 100 Years!*
- *Investigating The Basic Properties Of Black Holes Using Newtonian Mechanics* By William Dodd



To download this month's issue of the *Journal* go to www.rasc.ca/journal/currentissue.shtml [2]. The username is "jrasc" and the password is "pelican".

► News @ RASC.ca

Renewal of www.rasc.ca

The National Web team launched a new-look Web site www.rasc.ca [3] on Saturday, November 25, 2006. The new Web site features a clean, modern design and is easier to navigate. Acting Webmaster **Denis Grey** noted that "the new web-based software being used for updating the website means that everyone can easily contribute to the rasc.ca Web site, even if they don't know anything about HTML."

► Across the RASC

Construction Project

The Okanagan Centre of RASC is currently planning to build its own observatory. With the awarding of the 24-inch Spartan mirrors to the Centre earlier this year, its efforts have been focused and the Centre is getting ready for a formal announcement. To find out about the Okanagan Centre visit their website at www.ocrasc.ca/ [4].

Paris Observatory

The December 2006 [5] issue of *FOCUS*, a newsletter of the Okanagan Centre, reports that its Centre's November 2006 keynote speaker, James Kanester, finally got his chance to visit the Paris Observatory, France, at the end of July 2006. The oldest observatory in Europe (even older than the Royal Greenwich Observatory), it was founded in 1665 and still operates as a working research facility. Closed to the public, it limits visits to scientific and other groups who apply. After two failed attempts in the past ten years, James was finally able to visit the observatory. He attributes his luck to a combination of knowing French and being an RASC member.

General Assembly Website Live!

Next year's General Assembly *Astronomy Roundup 2007* [6] promises to be an exceptional event with participation from the American Association of Variable Star Observers [7] (AAVSO) and the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers [8] (ALPO) in Calgary. Three half-day oral paper-sessions are planned with two additional sessions an option, if more are needed. "Astronomy in Our Backyards" is the theme of the sessions. The Assembly Web site is now up and running and the Call for Papers [9] has been issued. Proposals for papers must be in by mid-March 2007.



[6]

Observer's Handbook 2007 Available

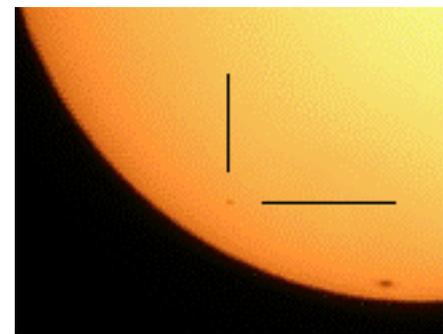
Many members have reported receiving their *Observer's Handbook 2007*. Published annually since 1907 – it is in its 99th Edition – the *Handbook* provides 292 pages of reference data on the sky and is regarded as "the standard" reference in North America. As Colin Haig wrote on the RASCals forum on November 22, 2006: "Excellent cover shots and good updates to the content..." and with somewhat tongue-in-cheek "... I'm getting a bit annoyed at the number of satellites around Jupiter and Saturn - this planet stuff used to fit on one page!" See www.rasc.ca/handbook/ [10] for more details.

► RASCals Highlights

Transits, Comets, or National Council Minutes anyone? Recent discussions on the RASCals e-mail list featured solid information and success stories.

Mercury's Transit

The November 8, 2006 Transit of Mercury is a relatively rare event occurring about a dozen times a century. For those cloud-bound, a RASCals forum subscriber recommended a link to Kitt Peak National Observatory to watch a live Web feed (or later to view the archived program) www.exploratorium.edu/transit/ [11].



© and Credit Dave McCarter
(London)

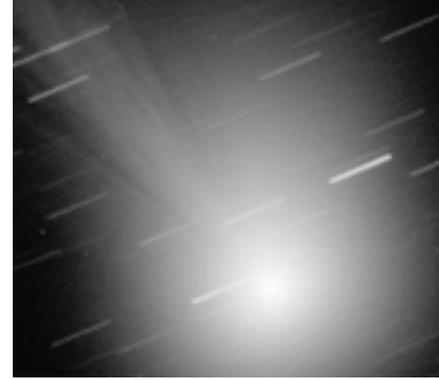
One of RASC's intrepid members, Dave McCarter, captured the Transit of Mercury and shared it with other RASCals on the list.

And to relive an even rarer historical event for comparison purposes, you can visit the Web cast of the June 8, 2004 Transit of Venus, as viewed from Athens, Greece www.exploratorium.edu/venus/index.html [12]. Only six Venus transits have occurred since the invention of the telescope in the early 1600s.

Solar System Visitor

Comet Swan was another subject of discussion on the RASCals forum. RASC member, Dave Lane, took his best shot "between the hail/wind squalls" in late October 2006. Thirty exposures of 30 seconds in a row, unfiltered, with C11 + ST9 CCD; the field size, about 10 arc-minutes, with exposures combined into one with the centre of the comet used as the reference; and then histogram stretched.

www.davelane.ca/aro/images/swan-hist.jpg [13].



[13]

National Council

"Flash Minutes" reporting on the Saturday, November 4, 2006 National Council meeting (NC064) were posted on the RASCals list the very same day of the meeting at 9:04 p.m. by Society Recorder James Edgar. These quick draft Minutes appeared as short synopses, more like a FYI. Visit the password-protected members' section of the RASC Web site www.rasc.ca [14] for more details on the National Council's work. The "official" Minutes for November 4, 2006 are now up, you'll find the detailed discussions from that meeting.

© and Credit David Lane (Halifax)

[Click for full-size image.](#)

The RASCals e-mail list is the RASC's town hall where members from across the country gather to chat about astronomy in general. To subscribe to this member-focused forum, visit www.rasc.ca/discussion [15].

► Canadian Astronomy

Dark Skies

An International Dark Sky Association Symposium from September 20-21, 2007 will be held at ASTROLab, Mont Mégantic National Park, QC. The focus will be on "Creating a Dark Sky Reserve in an Inhabited Area". Registration information is available at www.astrolab-parc-national-mont-megantic.org/data/ida/ [16].

Year of Astronomy 2009

The International Astronomical Union is gearing up to coordinate the International Year of Astronomy planned for 2009. The objective is for people to gain a deeper insight into astronomy's role in enriching all human cultures. The year will also serve as a platform for informing the public about the latest astronomy discoveries while emphasizing the essential role of astronomy in science education. See www.iau.org/iau0606_IYA.408.0.html [17] or to view a spectacular brochure visit www.iau.org/INTERNATIONAL_YEAR_OF_ASTRONOM.403.0.html [18].

Comet C/2006 T1 (Levy)

David Levy (Kingston), a long-time RASC member, discovered another comet (Comet C/2006 T1) near Saturn in the pre-dawn sky on October 2, 2006. The Central Bureau of Astronomical Telegrams reported the find in Circular No. 8757 on October 3, 2006 (physics.open.ac.uk/~astrompa/iauc/iauc-circ-2006-10/msg00000.html [19]) and a more personal account is available on the [RASC eNews](#) [20].

David is also one of the co-discoverers of the famous Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 (1993e) first sighted on

24 March 1993. The other co-discoverers were Eugene and Carolyn Shoemaker. More than a year later, from July 16 through July 22, 1994, at least 21 discernable fragments with diameters estimated at up to two kilometers collided with Jupiter, the first collision of two Solar System bodies ever to be observed. Those were the most incredible seven days in July that captivated the world. See www2.jpl.nasa.gov/sl9/top20.html [21] and www.midnightkite.com/sl9.html [22].

60th Anniversary – Radio Astronomy

Society members who follow radio astronomy may recall a milestone event that took place 60 years ago on December 13, 1946 in Great Britain. On that day Sir Bernard Lovell, then not yet an astronomer but a physicist addressed the Royal Astronomical Society at Burlington House in Piccadilly, London. He spoke that afternoon of tracking the Giacobinid meteor shower of October 9-10, 1946 "an epic night ... unforgettable – a major turning point in our history".

Addressing a packed room of establishment astronomers, young Lovell gave the first account of a revolutionary technique – the use of discarded bomber-tacking WWII radar equipment to study a meteor shower.

H.H. Plaskett, the distinguished Oxford Savilian Professor of Astronomy, who presided over the meeting as the president of the Society, wrote in *The Observatory's* first issue of 1947: "It is obvious that this beautiful new technique represents a major advance in this field of observation; indeed we are like the first possessors of the telescope, unexpectedly armed with new powers of observation." So on that December day 60 years ago a new field of astronomical research was introduced. The rest is history. To find out more about the RAS visit www.ras.org.uk/ [23] and www.amro-net.jp/giaco.htm [24] for background on the Giacobinids.

► Editor's Notebook

by Ian Levstein

A Great Time To Be

In preparing to assemble the first RASC *Bulletin*, the Society's new monthly e-newsletter, I reviewed my well-worn copy of *Looking Up – A History of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* (1994) with the objective of getting in touch again with the Society's venerable past. I am always amazed when scanning through the Society's history at who has made up this community of astronomers (both amateur and professional) and have called the Society their intellectual home (whether then or now). Some members have returned to stardust while others are still here, working away in a scientific field they cherish and, most of all, thoroughly enjoy.

As the Society evolves in the first decade of the 21st century, it is fortunate to be functioning in an advanced electronic age where access to instant communication is available at one's fingertips via keyboard, mouse and the inseparable computer. I hope this *Bulletin* will meet your unique informational needs. Enjoy **Volume 1 Issue 1!** Drop me a line with any suggestions or thoughts at bulletin@rasc.ca [1]. [My personal and sincere "Thank You" to Denis Grey for his technical assistance in launching the first edition of this *Bulletin*.]

► Dates to Remember

- **December 31, 2006** - Deadline for Major Awards (Chant, Newcomb, Chilton, Service)
- **January 15, 2007** - Deadline for 2007 Light Pollution Abatement Awards
- **March 10, 2007** - National Council Meeting (Toronto)
- **April 22, 2007** - International Astronomy Day
- **June 28 - July 1, 2007** - General Assembly (Calgary)
- **September 11, 2007** - Partial Solar Eclipse



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is a benefit of membership in the Society.

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Links:

[1] <mailto:bulletin@rasc.ca>

[2] <https://www.rasc.ca/jrasc/recent>

[3] <http://www.rasc.ca>

[4] <http://www.ocrasc.ca/>

[5] <https://www.rasc.ca/system/files/private/okanagan-200612.pdf>

[6] <http://www.calgary.rasc.ca/ar2007/>

[7] <http://www.aavso.org>

[8] <http://www.lpl.arizona.edu/alpo/>

[9] <http://calgary.rasc.ca/ar2007/b02.htm>

[10] <http://www.rasc.ca/observers-handbook/>

[11] <http://www.exploratorium.edu/transit/>

[12] <http://www.exploratorium.edu/venus/index.html>

[13] <http://www.davelane.ca/aro/images/swan-hist.jpg>

[14] <https://www.rasc.ca/council>

[15] <https://www.rasc.ca/on-line-communities>

[16] <https://web.archive.org/web/20070523124333/http://www.astrolab-parc-national-mont-megantic.org/data/ida/>

[17] <http://www.iau.org/news/pressreleases/detail/iau0606/>

- [18] http://www.iau.org/public_press/iya/
- [19] <http://physics.open.ac.uk/~astrompa/iauc/iauc-circ-2006-10/msg00000.html>
- [20] <https://www.rasc.ca/news/discovery-comet-c2006-t1-levy>
- [21] <http://www2.jpl.nasa.gov/sl9/top20.html>
- [22] <http://www.midnightkite.com/sl9.html>
- [23] <http://www.ras.org.uk/>
- [24] <http://www.amro-net.jp/giaco.htm>
- [25] <mailto:mempub@rasc.ca>