

BULLETIN



OF THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

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Ian Levstein, Editor

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

A PDF version of the *Bulletin* is available at: <http://www.rasc.ca/im/bulletin/201011.pdf>

A text-only version of the *Bulletin* is available at: <http://www.rasc.ca/im/bulletin/201011.txt>

► [News @ RASC.ca](#)

RASC Mission, Vision, and Values Statements

by **James Edgar**, RASC National Secretary

Our newly formed Mission, Vision, and Values statements flow out of the Executive Committee workshop held in Toronto on October 9 and 10, where we developed a strategic plan for the Society (which will be forthcoming as a presentation package to Centres). National Council voted (MOTION 10406) in favour of publishing these statements, with the condition that we review and modify them following suggestions from our Honorary President, **Dr. Jim Hesser**. That has been done to the satisfaction of the Executive Committee.

Mission

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) encourages improved understanding of astronomy for all, through education, outreach, research, publication, partnership, and community. Founded in 1868, the RASC is Canada's leading astronomy organization with local Centres throughout the country.

Vision

To inspire curiosity in all Canadians about the universe, to share scientific knowledge, and to foster collaboration in astronomical pursuits.

Values

The RASC has a proud heritage of excellence and integrity in its programmes and partnerships. As a vital part of Canada's science community, we support discovery through the scientific method. We inspire and encourage people of all ages to learn about and enjoy astronomy.

Call for Nominations for RASC National Awards

by **Dave Lane**, Awards Committee Chair

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

RASC Rejects IDA Lighting Ordinance

by **Robert Dick**, Light-Pollution Abatement Committee

During the October 23 RASC National Council Meeting, the Light-Pollution Abatement Committee presented the results of its review of the International Dark-Sky Association "Model Lighting Ordinance" (IDA-MLO). An ordinance is the American equivalent to a bylaw.

Due to the structure, content and lack of limits on light pollution, the RASC has decided to reject the IDA-MLO. The RASC will not promote it in Canada and will instead encourage municipalities to adopt LPA bylaws and lighting policies that currently exist in Canada.

The Committee prepared a statement identifying our concerns with the MLO and how it may adversely affect our LPA Program in Canada. This was also accepted by a vote of Council.

Those interested in reading the IDA-MLO, and the RASC LPAC critique of it, may download the documents [here](#).

New EPO Award

by **Peter Jedicke**, London Centre

As a byproduct of the cooperation that occurred during the International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009), Canada's three major astronomy organizations have established an award recognizing achievement in Communications, Outreach and Public Education (EPO). The Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA), Fédération Des Astronomes Amateurs Du Québec (FAAQ), and the RASC have all now voted in favour of the proposal that was developed over the summer. There will be three awards, one selected and presented by each organization, and each group will acknowledge and promote all of the winners, so that the awards will truly be national in scope. Only members or teams of members will be eligible to win, not organizations or other corporate entities, so the award will recognize those individuals who actually did the work themselves. The work that will be honoured can be part of a continuing project or a separate event or sequence of events, either on a local or a national scale, but not something that was done as part of regular job-related or professional work. Therefore, the award focuses on volunteers and amateurs instead of EPO professionals and educators.

A certificate with a common design will be presented by each organization. Prize money, a plaque, medal, pin or statue might be added later, if funding permits. The award doesn't even have a name yet, and suggestions are welcome. The name should reflect the national, multicultural and bilingual nature of the award. Individual RASC members or RASC Centres are encouraged to [submit the names](#) of worthy candidates.

Green Laser Pointers - SMART use

by **R.A. Rosenfeld**, RASC Archivist

The use of green laser pointers (GLPs) in astronomy education and public outreach (EPO) has recently become a hot topic (perhaps too hot) in amateur circles. The RASC Green Laser Pointer Committee (GLP Committee) has put together a smart Powerpoint presentation on GLPs for RASC Centres, and other astronomy groups. The presentation outlines the current situation in Canada, and makes recommendations for safe and effective GLP operation. The GLP Committee encourages you to view the presentation, use it at your Centre meetings, and share it with friends.

This is one of a series of new initiatives to further best practices in GLP use among amateur astronomers and the general public, and is part of a wider campaign advocating safe and lawful use of GLPs in astronomy EPO.

The presentation is available [here](#).

If you have any questions or require assistance with the presentation, please send [email](#).

► Across the RASC

Public Speaker Programme Update

by **James Edgar**, RASC National Secretary

I am pleased to announce that the final round of funding for 2010 under the Public Speaker Programme (PSP) is now available.

The goal of the programme is to encourage our Centres to organize and host public talks, by speakers from outside their local area, about astronomical and related topics. The Society recognizes the value of sharing the knowledge and experience of our members and others more widely than may be otherwise possible, by providing funding to pay for a speaker's travel and accommodation expenses. Applications (preferably by email) will be received [by me](#) until **23:59 EDT, Thursday, 2010 November 18**, for speakers' travel for the final period of 2010.

A new, single document with all pertinent details is posted on the RASC site. Details about the process and requirements can be found online [here](#). Application forms may be obtained [here](#). Coverage for eligible expenses is outlined in the current RASC Travel Policy, which can be found in the [private area](#) of the Society Web site. In essence, reasonable travel and accommodations are fully covered.

The decision of the PSP Trustees will be announced as soon as possible after the closing date, **no later than November 30**.

The next call for applications covering the first quarter of 2011 will be at the beginning of December 2010.

Astronomy Outreach Video by Jennifer West

by **James Edgar**, Regina Centre

Jennifer West, Winnipeg Centre, has created a YouTube video on light pollution, yours for the taking, viewing, and using in your education and outreach. You can check it out [here](#).

70th Anniversary of the HCMO

by **Peter Jedicke**, London Centre

On an unseasonably warm and pleasant Friday afternoon in October, 1940, an elite group of astronomers, benefactors and academics spent a few minutes on the lawn in front of a quaint stone building called the Hume Cronyn Memorial Observatory. RASC stalwart **C.A. Chant** was among them.

Their purpose was to declare open the Observatory, named after a prominent lawyer, business leader and politician in London, Ontario (whose fourth son and namesake later became a renowned stage and cinema actor). The auspicious words spoken that afternoon not only marked the dedication, but committed two organizations to the fruitful use of the telescopes for research and outreach: the University of Western Ontario and the RASC London Centre.

To acknowledge the milestone of having reached the 70th anniversary of its opening, a small celebration was held there on 2010 October 25. It was organized by **Amanda Papadimos**, coordinator of UWO's Centre for Planetary Science and Exploration. Amanda invited the University community, retired faculty, and members of the RASC, to join the party and 28 guests attended. Amanda began by encouraging participants to share their reminiscences, which led to some great stories being told. Then Amanda gave a slide show describing some details of the Observatory's origin and history. **Dr. Shantanu Basu**, Chair of UWO's Physics & Astronomy Department, followed with some remarks and read a congratulatory letter from **Dr. James Hesser**, Director of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, B.C., and Honorary President of the RASC. **Peter Jedicke** concluded by presenting greetings from RASC President, **Mary Lou Whitehorne**. After that, Amanda arranged for cake to be shared and the Observatory to be open for visitors, just as it was on that happy day 70 years ago.

The intrepid telescopes, which comprise the original 25-cm refractor and its companion 25-cm Schmidt camera, as well as a 30-cm Cassegrain installed in the 1950s, are still there. Although scientific research at the Observatory has pretty much run its course, the Observatory has served students and the public without interruption. Outside, other than landscaping, the Observatory is still original. Sadly, where once it stood alone on this high area of the UWO campus, it is now surrounded by slightly taller buildings and many, many light fixtures. Apart from the installation of an accessibility elevator, the marble bedecked vestibule hasn't changed much. The foyer and offices on the main floor were taken out about 20 years ago and turned into a meeting space. In the basement, the original classroom was broken down into workshops in the early 1960s.

With a renewed spirit of cooperation that was fostered by the 2009 International Year of Astronomy, UWO and RASC London Centre are looking forward to more activities at the Cronyn Observatory in the future.

A [Web page](#) describing the anniversary, including a picture gallery.
UWO's [brief page](#) about the history of the Cronyn Observatory.
The JRASC [article](#) about the opening ceremony in 1940.
Homepage of the [Centre for Planetary Science and Exploration](#).

► RASCals Highlights

Comet 103P Hartley

by **Ken Kingdon**, Kingston Centre

On the evening of Sunday, 2010 October 3, I observed Comet 103P Hartley with my 12.5-inch reflector from my backyard (just within the light-pollution dome of the City of Kingston). My LTM was only 12.5-magnitude. With a wide-field eyepiece, Comet Hartley required no star-hopping, just move slowly in the vicinity and sweep it up. That said, Hartley does have low surface brightness, and it is currently not binocular-visible from an urban site. Comet Hartley is now a fairly large "puffball" in Cassiopeia (my estimate ~4' diameter), and is not likely to be missed with a scope from a city, although it is diffuse.

I previously saw Hartley on September 11 from a dark-sky site. Then at distance of 0.18 AU from Earth, of course it looked better compared to Sunday evening (October 3) from my backyard in the city. It now has closed its distance from Earth to 0.167 AU, but this small change of distance is not yet enough to brighten it to, say, an urban binocular level. Nonetheless, its distance will quickly decrease about 27% further in the next two weeks... so perhaps it will become more evident.

Hartley should be observed with a scope before October 15, because after the 15th, you can see Hartley only if you wait until after midnight for Moonset. Delaying further until its closest approach (0.121 AU) on October 20, requires observing it after 5am EDT Moonset (9-hr UT). I doubt that its record-setting close approach to Earth will improve it much (claimed to be the closest comet to Earth in hundreds of years).

Sweeping at 254x for an ion tail with a Swan Band Comet Filter, I could detect a very faint ion tail pointing southward. With SB Comet Filter at 180x, it again showed just a hint of a tail. So, yes, it has an optically visible tail, but from a city, currently this tail is only visible with a Swan Band Comet Filter.

Next, a search for a dust tail with a Wratten #12 yellow filter revealed no enhancement. Finally, during a search at high power (381x) for more contrast details, the only visual improvement was a very tiny nucleus... quite expected with such a diffuse and transparent coma.

Since I got almost no responses to my tests, I have concluded that this comet is feeble! Hartley is not likely to surpass my dark-sky observation of last June's 5.7-magnitude Comet 2009 R1 McNaught, which even low on the horizon was so brilliant white opaque I could not see through its obvious tail, let alone its coma. I hope to re-observe Comet Hartley from a magnificent dark-sky site west of Kingston later this week.

► Bulletin Photo of the Month

Double Rainbow



by **Hank Bartlett**,
Kingston Centre

This beautiful double rainbow was taken by **Hank Bartlett**, from his home in Newburgh, Ontario - and was featured on The Weather Network.

A detail from the same photo clearly shows multiple bands.



► The Sky this Month

What's New in the Sky

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

► Dates to Remember

- **2010 November 18** - deadline for submitting applications to the Public Speaker Programme
- **2010 December 31** - deadline for nominations for RASC National Awards



The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

203 – 4920 Dundas St W, Toronto ON M9A 1B7 CANADA

Tel: (416) 924-7973, Fax: (416) 924-2911

Member Service: nationaloffice@rasc.ca

Visit Us at: www.rasc.ca

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