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Edmonton Centre  April 2001
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**Please Note: New E-Mail Address Change**

Address for Stardust

Articles may be submitted prior to the deadline by e-mail to: stardust@edmontonrasc.com
or by mail to: 333 Southridge N.W.,
Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 4M9.
The phone number is: (780) 433-1516.

submit your articles for the May issue of Stardust by the due date of April 30, 2001.
Thank you.

On the Cover:

Our intrepid meteorologists, always ready to lend a hand in times of crisis. -ed
Have you ever thought about who joins the RASC, and why not? I find it a perplexing question, and a relevant one. Our membership has grown by leaps and bounds. What do we have in common? Not much really. We come from different laps of the track, and have different edukashional backyards. Some of us make tons of money, others a pitance. Our ages vary from just out of the crib to WAY up there. Between a quarter and a third of our members are women. You go, girl! Some of our best observers are women. Natch.

So far as I can tell we have only two things in common. The first is an interest in astrolog...astrooolg...astronomy, broadly defined. Some of our member are rabid observers, some are healthy. Others have not looked through an eyepiece in eons, if ever. Some members are quite content to sleep at meetings, see pretty pictures, and check out books forever from our library. Most of us who have been involved in the field for some time have developed calluses and a special interest in one, and only one, type of astronomical object whether it is the Sun, Moon, planets or, as a last resort, globular clusters. During the past year, we have seen an infiltration of observers interested in radio astronomy. One of these is better than the other. That is good.

The second thing we seem to have in common is a desire to do public education about astronomy, providing there are cookies in exchange. We enjoy telling others everything we know. We enjoy baffling them with statistics and numbers we made up about the wonders of the heavens. We are constantly amazed that we are invited back to show the wonders of the night sky. We want to share this confusion with others so that they too can enjoy it. As a result of this interest, we do many things: talk to schools and community groups, presentations in the cold, light-polluted parking lot of bookstores, talk to schools, sidewalk astronomy, talk to schools, and most notably, manning (and womanning) the observatory of the ESSC.

Periodically, we have “run” casinos and received rather large payoffs in return. That money must be laundered on public education. How should we spend it (and soon)? That is an issue which your Council has been arguing with for several, and I mean several, meetings. At its last meeting, it made “recommendations”. Those “recommendations” are now before you (well, they’re on page 15). Next month at our regular meeting you will have the opportunity to vote on them.

It is important for all members to remember that the Edmonton Centre of the RASC is a militant organisation. The Council handles matters. It makes “recommendations”, it does not dictate. (That would make us a dictatorship, and we’re not that.) The “recommendations” from Council relating to how we should spend our casino windfall are just that, “recommendations”. It is up to you, the members, to determine whether you agree, disagree, or abstain with Council.

Spending money can be fun! You betcha! It can also have the potential of creating winners, losers and spectators. The latter two are not mandatory. We plan to “run” another casino next year. That will mean mo’ money, more things we can buy, and do. Spending the money from casinos is an on-going process. For now, put on your touques and consider Council’s “recommendations”. How will you vote next month? The RASC is your organisation and we will be spending your money (the best kind there is...someone else’s). Give is some thought and vote!
Fast Moving Sunspots

By Campbell’s Chicken Noodle

After carefully looking at the Sun for several years now, I have discovered a whole new group of sunspots that have never been catalogued before. The most prominent feature of this type of sunspot is the rapid motion across the surface of the Sun as well as its almost instant formation and decay as these objects approach the limb of the Sun.

These events are very rare and therefore almost no information is available on these types of sunspots. The most fleeting of all can occur anytime of the year (see figure A). This type of sunspot travels across the disk of the Sun very rapidly indeed. Only the most fleeting glances can be obtained. Figure A represents my best drawing of this type of sunspot.

Figure B sunspots are best observed during spring and fall. Perhaps Earth’s equinoxes plays an important role in the formation of this type. These travel slower across the disk of the Sun but are still very fast.

Finally the slowest moving objects are shown in Figure C. These objects usually appear on warm clear days. I assume since it’s a warm clear day here on Earth it is also a warm clear day on the Sun. Perhaps the presence of high pressure areas on the Earth influence the formation of this type of sunspot.

All of these sunspot types have one thing in common and that is the rapid formation and decay of the sunspot. Almost inevitably these sunspots form on one limb of the Sun. The interesting feature is that they form fully developed and show little change. Just as interesting is the decay process. The decay time is very rapid and usually occurs on the other limb of the Sun. One moment it is there, fully formed, and the next instant it is gone. Very rapid decay indeed.

It should be noted that it seems not to matter what type of solar filter is used. The phenomenon is just as evident in H-Alpha as it is in white light. So far though these objects have evaded detection by radio astronomers.

It is my belief that only by spending large sums of money on scientific investigation will we be able to finally solve the riddle of these fast moving sunspots. Reports of the same phenomena occurring on the Moon should be discounted as whose ever heard of “Moonspots” anyway?

Address Changes

Any information regarding wanted fugitives...

...please direct this information to
Richard Kimble
Membership Secretary of the F.B.I.
1 (800) RUN-AWAY
### General Account

**February 2001**

#### Balance Forward:
- **As of January 31, 2001**
  - $14,258,264,125.01

#### Cash In:
- G.S.T. Credit: As If!
- Bank Account Interest: Not Likely

**Total Cash In:** $0.01

#### Cash Out:
- Cheques Written: Lots

**Total Cash Out:** Mostly All of It

#### Balance Ending:
- **As of January 31, 2001**

#### Total Account Summary
- **Term Deposit In Mel's Name**
- **Term Deposit Ditto**

**Total General Account Bank Balance as of February**
- $More Than I Make

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### Why did the astro-chicken cross the cosmic highway?

**Dr. Seuss:**
Did the chicken cross the road?
Did he cross it with a toad?
Yes! The chicken crossed the road, but why it crossed, I've not been told!

**Aristotle:**
It is the nature of chickens to cross the road.

**Einstein:**
Did the chicken really cross the road or did the road move beneath the chicken?

**Captain James T. Kirk:**
To boldly go where no chicken has gone before.

**Fox Mulder:**
You saw it cross the road with your own eyes. How many more chickens have to cross before you believe it?

**Colonel Sanders:**
I missed one?

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### STARDUST GIVEAWAY REPORT FOR FEBRUARY

**Stardust printed**
- 13,300,000

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NASA</th>
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<td>Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIR</td>
<td>1 (Undeliverable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Patrons</td>
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</table>

| Science Magic | 0.5 |

| Mailed Canadian | 4,587,356 |
| Mailed U.S. | 3 |
| **TOTAL** | More than I can count |

| Members and guests in attendance | Some of us |
| Members absent | The rest of us |

Compiled by Run, Forest, Run...
I have a dream that one night observers will rise up and live out the true meaning of their creed: “We see these skies to be clear, that all observations are of equal value.”

I have a dream that one night on the grassy hills of Cypress Inter-Provincial park the sons and daughters of Dobsonian builders and the sons and daughters of apochromat owners will be able to stand (or lean) together at the eyepiece of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one night even the province of Alberta, a province freezing with the chill of winter, wallowing in the perpetual twilight of summer, will be transformed into an oasis of warmth and darkness. I have a dream that my telescopes will one night perch under a sky where they will not be judged by the brand name on their tube, but by their power to expand an observer’s imagination.

I have a dream tonight.

I have a dream that one night down in Texas, with its 7th magnitude skies, with its “monster” scopes dripping with the drool from small scope owners - one night Celestron and Meade afficionados will be able to rejoice with refractor and Dobsonian fanatics as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream tonight.

I have a dream that one night every observatory shall be exalted, and every streetlight and security light shall be laid low, that the magnetic pole will travel from country to country, and the bright places will be made dark, and the glory of Eta Carinae shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to Alberta with. With this faith we will be able to dissipate the despair of overcast into a sky of clear. With this faith we will be able to collimate the interfering wavecrests of light into a beautiful symphony of diffraction-limited patterns. With this faith we will be able to observe the stars together, to watch the Sun together, to struggle with CCDs together, to go to the donut shop together, knowing that we will be aurora free one night.

This will be the night, this will be the night when all astronomers will be able to sing “We are all made of starstuff. My sky ’tis of thee, sweet vault of infinity, of thee I sing. Sky of clusters, sky of galaxies, sky of comets, from every mountainside ring out, let’s go observing!”

And if Alberta is to be big sky country, this must become true. And so let’s go observing from the prodigious hilltops of Elk Island and Buck Mountain. Let’s go observing from the mighty peaks of the Rockies. Let’s go observing from the K-T boundary of Dinosaur Provincial Park.

Let’s go observing from every hill and flat plain of Alberta. And when we are all observing - from every backyard, from every school, from every science centre, we will be
able to speed up that night when all telescope accessories - Huygens and Naglers, O III filters and spectroscopes, straight throughs and elbows, Cheshires and laser collimators, Barlows and Powermates - will be able to join together and rejoice in the words of Percy Bysshe Shelley:

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright.

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Radio Astronomy Committee Update

Mostly, things are progressing nicely. However, there has been some resistance from the University of Alberta when we suggested that we empty the Physics building and fill it entirely with concrete. This would provide the most stable platform available for the satellite dishes we have already mounted on top of the building. We are only taking into consideration the possibility that this area could someday become geologically unstable, and are attempting to take all necessary precautions.

The University doesn’t seem to see our point. We are willing to allow them time to evacuate the building, and graciously allowing them to remove their equipment before it becomes encased.

Any suggestions on how we can persuade the University to at least let us back on their property without “releasing the hounds” would be greatly appreciated.

D. Clearly

An average day for the R.A.S.C. Staff at the Edmonton Observation Deck
Perhaps you can’t own it here... but you can own it up there!

By Angela Squires and the Lunar Embassy
Reprinted from Nova, Vancouver Centre
May/June 2000

TV soundbyte had me diving for my computer. Nobody can do that, I cried. Yes, they can and have done, completely legal too! This way my introduction to the remarkable Lunar Embassy websites. http://www.lunarembassy.com is the brainchild of the charmingly cheeky and persistent Mr. Dennis Hope a.k.a. the Head Cheese. I thank him very much for permission to publish copyrighted text from his websites.

In 1980, a very bright, young and handsome Mr. Dennis Hope went to his local US Government Office for claim registries, the San Francisco County Seat, and made a claim for the entire lunar surface, as well as the surface of all the other eight planets of our solar system and their moons (except Earth and the Sun). Obviously, he was at first taken for a crackpot, until three supervisors, two floors and five hours later; the main supervisor accepted and registered his claim.

Contrary to popular belief, ownership by individuals of extraterrestrial properties is not forbidden. The 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty stipulates that no government can own extraterrestrial property, but it neglected to mention individuals or corporations. In 1984, the UN attempted to plug this loophole, which they were very aware of, by introducing the ill-fated Moon Treaty. That treaty forbids the exploitation of extraterrestrial resources, including ownership, for anyone, period. The vast majority of Member States refused to sign it because it did not make sense to prohibit in law all future use of the Moon’s resources. The loophole still exists today and “legal beagles” can read the Space Law page themselves. Therefore, one can become the legal owner of an extraterrestrial body, if you are the first to claim it, which Dennis Hope did. He was then obliged to inform others besides the US Government. The United Nations General Assembly and the Russian Government were duly informed in writing of his claim and the legal intent to sell extraterrestrial properties. The US Government had several years to contest such a claim. They never did. Neither did the United Nations nor the Russian Government. Do these bodies know something they are not telling us or Dennis? Anyway, he took the next step and copyrighted his work with the US Copyright registry office. So, with his claim and Copyright Registration Certificate from the US Government in hand, Mr. Hope became the largest registered land owner in the Solar System... as far as we know on Earth that is!

This is the legal basis on which the Lunar Embassy is selling extraterrestrial properties and the reason they have been able to conduct their business without any reproach from the US Government, or any other, for 20 years. The kindest reaction of the US Government was, actually, that two former Presidents became Moon property owners!

There are now over 63,000 extraterrestrial property owners with the Moon most popular at 52,050 followed by Mars with 11,200 owners. Each planetary body has its own “Shop” or webpage. Currently, you can also buy on Venus and, my favourite, Jupiter’s volcanic moon, Io. Each deed you buy contains 2000 acres of property, about 3.125 square miles, and costs just $19.99! Moon lots of 1,777 acres are $15.99. You receive a copy of a short story entitled “YOU OWN WHAT?” which includes a copy of the declaration of ownership that was filed with the US Government, a bargain in itself.
Other possible life forms are granted far more consideration than we have extended our fellow creatures on Earth. If such extraterrestrial life is found, and if such life is sentient enough to make a decision on any kind, in any form, language or gesture, as to whether it would like you on its property or not, then the opinion of the life form will take absolute priority and OVERRULE any rules we may have made. This is regardless of whether such extraterrestrial opinions make sense to humans or not. This means that if, when you get there, a little green thing is on your property, and it says “We don’t want you here”, well then, unfortunately your $20 was a bad investment and the Lunar Embassy’s too! Further, should any life form that is NOT sentient exist on your property, including microbes, it is your responsibility to ensure that it does not come to any harm due to your presence on the planet.

Science fiction fans will be impressed by the policy regarding another fascinating moon of Jupiter.

Europa will not be for sale out of respect for the works of the visionary and author Arthur C. Clarke and the famous quote from his novel 2010: Odyssey Two, which was a message beamed back to Earth from an alien race:

‘ALL THESE WORLDS ARE YOURS – EXCEPT EUROPA. ATTEMPT NO LANDINGS THERE.”

I don’t think NASA will pay any attention to Clarke’s writings when they are able to send a probe down to Europa, which may have an ocean of liquid water under its ice. Hang on to your Y2K emergency kit just in case a Europa lander does better than the Mars Polar one and someone’s home!

If, like me, you once thought your mother and father came from another planet, you were right! After touring the planetary body shops, visit T.H.E.M. Shop, an acronym for “Truth Has Extraterrestrial Meaning”. If your forebears came from another planet, the question is, which one? The denizens of T.H.E.M. Shop claim to have six thousand-year-old information that enables anyone to test themselves and identify their planet of origin. For a mere $24,95, you can use the Alien Test Kit (ATK) to unearth your extraterrestrial kinship and trace your creation to a specific planet. More importantly, you can test others! Have you ever suspected that one of your co-workers may not be, shall we say, one of us? Are you sure your mate is an Earthling?

Apart from the fact that the Alien Test Kit comes with the Lunar Embassy’s full, no-quipble, 30-day money back guarantee, they also guarantee your entertainment. “If you do this in a group of people and you are not entertained by it, then you are either a) drunk of Pangalactic Gargle Blasters or b) braindead or c) an alien. We guarantee you this is more than just fun”. I believe T.H.E.M. because when I read the Embassy’s e-mail Gems, I fell off my computer chair laughing. The ATK comes with tons of neat-looking stuff and we should get one for RASC-VC. We have a number of potential aliens just on Council alone, but our members…I’ll ask the Head Cheese about a special bulk rate ATK! While my alien origin was never in doubt, I cannot always detect distant cousins, at least among astronomers.

E-Mail Gem #1: I’m worried about my neighbours. If they’re strange, what can I do?

Well, we get this question more often than you might think. We think there’s a neighbour paranoia out there somewhere. Well, let’s be honest. We have no answer to that, other than that you can move back to Earth if you don’t like the neighbours. It’s also unlikely you’ll ever see them, seeing as you own a piece of land the size of Manhattan. However, there is one good side. If your property is on the Moon, and your Lunar neighbour has a really loud stereo, what do you care? There is no atmosphere on the Moon, and therefore, you won’t hear a thing! You’ll get the best sleep there ever. We guarantee it.

E-Mail Gem #2: Am I allowed to move my Mobile Home to my property on the Moon, because the local campground is charging me a fortune?

After having verified that this was actually a serious question, the answer is yes, of course you can. It’s your

Continued next page
property after all. You can do on it whatever you like. (Except offend the Head Cheese of course.) We also asked the gentleman in question that, if he manages to do it, we would like to be the first to know.

E-Mail Gem #3: How do I declare the property on my Tax Form?

This one, we believe deserves a 10/10 for brilliance. We have NO IDEA. Yes, you are a property owner and you should not keep this from the taxman. We will not advise you to commit tax fraud, however we are also sure it will confuse him, big time. Seeing as the value of the property is very low, i.e. less than $20, it’s debatable whether this is actually a Corpus Delicti you can be taken to court for if you don’t declare it. The Lunar Embassy shall investigate this further! But don’t you think your life is complex enough as it is? Ours is.

Visitors, alien or not, are welcome at the Lunar Embassy, 6000 Airport Road, Rio Vista, CA 94571. Embassy telephone (707) 374-6445; fax (707) 374-6863. Rio Vista is roughly halfway between San Francisco and Sacramento, less than 30 miles from the Napa Valley.

How to tell if your scope is too big:

• You accidentally drop your mirror and all residents within a mile radius of you report a magnitude 6 earthquake.

• You hire the fire department's longest ladder truck to help you reach the eyepiece.

• It takes all of your lotto 649 winnings to pay Barry Arnold for the grinding and polishing of your mirror.

• You need a police escort and a huge semi trailer with a “wide load” sign on the rear to transport your scope to the observing site.

• The counterweight of your scope consists of the driving wheels of an old steam locomotive.

• You can’t transport your scope over the high level bridge due to size restrictions.

• You accidentally point your scope at the sun and set the adjacent forest on fire.

• You hire a team of Sumo wrestlers to help you lift your mirror into the cell.

• Your secondary mirror is larger than Bob Drew’s primary.

• Your old scope becomes the finder scope for your new one.

StarBust Page 10
Secret of Antigravity

By Marvin the (Where's the Earth shattering kaboom?) Martian

It is a proven fact that if you drop a buttered piece of bread, it will fall on the floor butter-side down. So is the fact that if a cat is dropped from a window or other high or towering place, it will land on its feet. But what if you attach a buttered piece of bread, butter side up to a cat’s back and toss them both out the window? Will the cat land on its feet? Or will the butter splat on the ground?

Now, we are not suggesting you spend your precious time doing the experiment. No, Sir. What we are saying is that with your scientific mind, you should be able to deduce the obvious result. The laws of butterology demand that the butter must hit the ground, and the equally strict laws of feline aerodynamics demand that the cat cannot smash its furry back. If the combined construct were to land, nature would have no way to resolve this paradox. Therefore it simply does not fall.

That’s right you clever mortal (well, as clever as a mortal can get), you have discovered the secret of antigravity! A buttered cat will, when released, quickly move to a height where the forces of cat-twisting and butter repulsion are in equilibrium. This equilibrium point can be modified by scraping off some of the butter, providing lift, or using a smaller cat, allowing descent.

Most of the civilized species of the Universe already use this principle to drive their ships while within a planetary system. The loud humming heard by most sighters of UFO’s is, in fact, the purring of several hundred tabbies. The one obvious danger is, of course, if the cats manage to eat the bread off their backs they will instantly plummet.

Of course, the cats will land on their feet, but this usually doesn’t do them much good, since right after they make their graceful landing, several tons of red-hot starship and ticked off aliens crash on top of them. And now a few words on solving the problem of creating a ship using the aforementioned anti-gravity device.

One could power a ship by means of cats held in suspended animation (say, about –190 degrees Celsius), with buttered bread strapped to their backs, thus avoiding the possibility of collisions due to temperamental felines. More importantly, how do you steer, once the cats are all held in stasis? I offer a modest proposal:

We all know that wearing a white shirt at an Italian restaurant is a guaranteed way to take a trip to the Laundromat. Plaster the outside of your ship with white shirts. Place four nozzles symmetrically around the ship, which is, of course, saucer shaped. Fire tomato sauce out in proportion to the directions you want to go. The ship, drawn by the shirts, will automatically follow the sauce. If you use T-shirts, you won’t go as fast as you would by using, say, expensive dress shirts. This does not work as well in deep gravity wells, since the tomato sauce (now falling down a black hole, perhaps) will drag the ship with it, despite the counter force of the anti-gravity cat/butter machine. Your only hope at that point is to jettison enormous quantities of Tide. This will create the well-known Gravitational Tidal Force.

No tomato sauce or cats were hurt during this thought experiment -ed

"Listen, bud. I’m gonna say this one more time: Yes, the problem is probably very minor. No, the scope is not worth repairing, and YES I AM from another planet!"
This month's planet report will be brief, as there really is only one planet you should be concentrating all you observing on, and that is Mars. But I will be going into greater detail during the meeting. Much greater detail. The planets this month provide many excellent views, and any information you may need on what the planets are doing is available in any astronomy software, or the Observer's Handbook. Mars, on the other hand, deserves special mention and a column of its own.

I can't stress enough on getting out there to observe Mars. Mars is brightening this month, which makes it even better. As if the planet could get even better. Ha! During the month of April, Mars will rise and then sometime later will set again. Mars also will be moving through the night sky in constellations. Which constellations, you ask? Well the ones that are visible when you look up, of course! Every night is another chance to view Mars.

There are other planets in our solar system, and I am sure they are doing something. None however, are as impressive as Mars. Mars offers the best view of all. It's round, red, changes in size and rotates. What more can anyone possible need?

For a different view, try adding filters to the eyepiece. Try them all. You never know just how much you can improve your view of Mars until you try. If the red colour of Mars is starting to wear thin, the filtered view can provide many more hours of enjoyment.

There are many words you can use to describe Mars in your drawings. Try to memorize a few of them, so your drawings show some variety. Examples include red, maroon, rust, magenta, scarlet, vermilion, crimson, ruby...well, you get the idea.

On April 15, Mars will be 1.3 degrees South of the Moon, but don't spend all your time looking at the Moon, have a look at Mars. The Moon will always be there. So will Mars, but that is beside the point.

Try to get some experience viewing Mars in this month, as next month you will be able to observe it again.
Unscrambling the Scarab

By Paulus Campbelopartphrumus
PhD Natural Philosophy
Cambridge Univ.

Some of you may have wondered how in the... I was converted to dwelling in my own solar system after living in deep space for so long. All those nights you spent at Blackfoot listening to me screaming from a million light years away, “Can you still hear me, I’m right on top of Maffei 2 and I think there’s something there, yup, there is something there, yup, you can see it, nope, you can’t it’s still my turn…” all those nights are being avenged by my new insight.

Well, wouldn’t you just know it would be something as serendipitous (how do you say that word?) as the dung beetle to convert me. Yes folks, the humble dung beetle. I put two and two and two together and got the Dung Beetle Theory of Dark Matter. I call it the Theory of Absolutely Everything, or Theory Number Two for short.

One night I got to thinking. all that unaccounted for mass out there, how does that parallel our home turf...and just then a toilet flushed in the distance and bingo! Okay, it’s a little early to start taking credit, but, well the Egyptians thought of it thousands of years ago when they got the Scarab Beetle to push the Sun (Ra) up the sky. This also began the ritual of cheering...eg. “Ra, ra ra!” or “Re re re” depending on whether or not you had your degree. Doubters mumbled, “Who’s Re?” (Hooray) and were sent immediately to wash dishes in the Great Beyond.

I have always been a firm believer in mythology — the ancieneter the betterer, that’s what I say.

In my solar observation sessions I would have to say that I’ve noticed our Sun has many faeces. Calcium line or hydrogen alpha will confirm its constant state of flux. This flux us up now, and it is prime time to look a little beyond the photosphere and probe the ethereal regions further from the Sun. I say, don’t just use averted vision to see the Sun, use a little imagination, is that spectacular prominence a result of inner magnetic activity or darker outside influence? Are Dark Matters alive and well in our own Solar System? Are planets really Brood Balls of the Scarabaeus? On what radio frequency band might we search for such individually faint but collectively viable activity?

Rather than totally overwhelming you with these new and thrilling avenues of inquiry, I will just leave you with this final image.

A star blazes in the heaven. Lurking behind it, always invisible to the naked-eye, always invisible to inhabitants of our nice planet (Earth), colorful scarabs (I haven’t decided which color yet), are busy pushing the Sun up, across and over the meridian. Meanwhile, in the distance, you can almost hear the sound of (but you can’t because it doesn’t work well in space) billions and billions and Billions of Dung Beetles rolling Dark Stuff into little balls with their hind legs. Impossible, you say?

That is what I thought about looking at stuff close up.

Well, that’s about it, solar flux is up folks, keep an eye on those coronal holes and always search the shadows. Thought I’d share my theory before it hits the fan.

Paulus can be found most Sunday afternoons at the observatory making his solar observations. He would love to have all of you, especially new members, come down and ask him questions about the Dung Beetle.
AN (ANYTHING BUT) TYPICAL NIGHT OF OBSERVING...

By Cloudbank

I pulled into the parking lot of Blackfoot, anticipating another fabulous night under the stars. Getting out of the car, I noticed Beaucoup and Woody were already set up. “Don’t you guys ever go home?” I asked.

“Hey, it’s Cloudbank! What happen to Three Phase?” asked Beaucoup. “Didn’t you hear?” I replied. “He was shipped out to Zeeland (pronounced Zedland in Canada).” “So, how is that spell checker working out for ya?” quipped Fuzzy Crossbearer, walking up to the group. “Fuzzy, what’s with the Bermuda shorts and shades?” asked Woody. It was then that we noticed Fuzzy carrying A Fish Called Wanda. “Forget your scope?” Laughing merrily, Fuzzy replied, “Thought I would do some swimming in the slough. Catch ya later!”

Just then, Soldering Iron showed up, dressed in her colourful pyjamas. “Seems we overdressed tonight,” I remarked. “Hi guys!” waved Soldering Iron. “What’s with all the clothes? This weather is mild!” Chuckling to ourselves, we went back to our scopes to do some observing, as other observers trickled into the parking lot.

“Hey, I’ve got a great view of the Eagle Nebula’s pillars!” boomed Woody. “Dat’s nothing, I’ve got Hubble’s Deep Field in my scope,” announced Beaucoup. “Oh, let me have a look,” said Woody. “Hmm, I think I can see another Universe...let me bump up the power on my scope. Where did you get the finder chart for this?” “Guide 7, of course,” replied Beaucoup. Woody and Beaucoup chuckled to themselves. “Right,” laughed Woody, “There’s no better program than Guide!”

“Cloudbank, who is that over there, muttering to himself?” asked Maybe, peering into the dark. “Oh, Hi Maybe.” I answered. “You know, I’m not sure. Let’s go see.” Cautiously, we wandered over, to find Pall Mall pacing back and forth. “Pall Mall, you okay?” I asked tentatively. Whirling towards me, he replied “I have three scopes on Mars. I need more, but don’t have any. You can see the quandary I’m in!” Taking a few steps back, Maybe muttered to me, “You know, I think he needs a scope that will not under any circumstances find Mars, to show him there is something else up there.” “They make those?” I asked incredulously. “Oh yeah,” Maybe replied. “It’s called the ‘Never Go-To’ scope. I better get my chequebook.” With that, she darted off back to her car.

Walking back to my scope, I startled Chicken Noodle, who was looking over his shoulder fearfully. “Noodle! Haven’t seen you for a while,” I greeted. “Shhh! If they find me here...” he trailed off. Frowning, I was about to ask who he was referring to when he spoke in a whisper. “As far as you are concerned, you don’t know anyone from NGC 4565, and I was never here. Got it?” “Sure, whatever you say, Noodle,” I replied, edging away from him. I needn’t have bothered, he had already forgotten I was there and continued his vigil for, well, who knew?

I rejoined the group in time to hear a fierce whistle and metallic clanging. “Not to worry,” Finally reassured us. “That’s just the nocturnal CN Locomotive.” Nodding, I looked down to notice a red flashlight “fire” had been started. I bent down to add my flashlight, when I heard Pall Mall growl, “My flashlights were never meant for this use. Although, it does give off a nice red glow...like Mars.” Fearing an imminent spiel about Mars, we wisely ignored this comment.
Behind us, Noodle's departure was punctuated by screeching tires. Before he left the parking lot, he yelled out the window, "They found me! Remember, you don't know me!" Beaucoup snorted, "You got dat right."
"So, Beaucoup, I hear you're making poncets again?" asked Soldering Iron. "Yeah, I can do one up in two, three hour now. I made six this morning. It was nothing," replied Beaucoup. "Sounds like you need to sell them," mused Maybe. "I'll get my chequebook."

"Where's Linger tonight?" asked Pall Mall. "When I phone him to ask if he come out tonight, he just laugh," said Beaucoup, with a puzzled look on his face. "What does he know that we don't?" asked Woody. As if on cue we all looked to the North, and noticed the dreaded Aurora flaring again. We all groaned and muttered our displeasure. "Aha! That muttering is the Aurora Lament!"
Finally commented. "Heard every New Moon weekend."

Realising the evening was a lost cause, we packed up our scopes and prepared to head out. "Where are you going?" cried Woody. "It'll clear in 10 minutes!"

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**And now, for something completely different...**

Hi Folks,

I know I said everything in this issue is a joke and not to be taken seriously, but these money motions are indeed serious and true and are posted for your consideration. These motions will be discussed and voted on at the May meeting. -ed

**MONEY MOTIONS**

(TO BE VOTED ON AT THE MAY GENERAL MEETING)

The purchase of a 31mm Televue Type 5 Nagler for $1,100 Canadian provided it will focus on the 18.5" Club telescope.

The purchase of a ASI-90 Calcium K-Line solar filter for the 7" Starfire refractor, valued at $7450 US.

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To:

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Next Meeting:
Monday, May 14, 2001  7:30 p.m.
Edmonton Space and Science Centre
Guest Speaker: Paul Campbell
Solar Observing
Next Observing Sessions:
April 20-21, 2001
Blackfoot Staging Area
Next Council Meeting:
Monday, May 28, 2001  7:00 p.m.
Edmonton Space and Science Centre

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