

Observing Newsletter – Jan. 2011



Welcome

Welcome to The Sunshine Coast Astronomy Club's January 2011 Observing Newsletter. Through the newsletter we hope to raise interest in stargazing on The Sunshine Coast. I encourage you to forward the newsletter to friends and family who express an interest in stargazing.

The Astronomy Club meet every 3rd Friday of the Month at Pier 17, Davis Bay at 8.30pm for The Astro-Café. Club members and members of the public are invited to join us for tea/coffee and snacks, before setting up telescopes at the seawall for casual stargazing if skies are clear.

Right Ascension Explained

By James MacWilliam – Sunshine Coast Centre

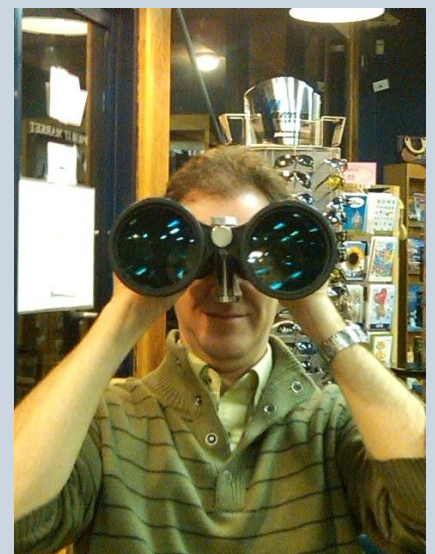
In order to find objects in the sky and note their position, a system of coordinates was created. These are similar to lines of Longitude and Latitude on a map. However, in place of Longitude we use Right Ascension and in place of Latitude we use Declination. Since Declination is measured in Degrees it's easy to understand how one position in the sky is for example 45 degrees away from another – 360 degrees describes an entire circle. But Hours of Right Ascension are not so obvious. Right Ascension is measured East from the point at which The Sun crosses the Celestial Equator on its journey North at The Spring Equinox. This is currently a point in Pisces, but is historically called 'The First Point of Aries' (which is nearby). RA is measured in hours (24 hours makes up an entire circle) and one advantage of this systems is this: if your telescope were fixed and could point only due South, each of the objects that paraded in front of you would have increasing values of RA. If an object due south has an RA of 22 hours, then one hour later the new object coming into view - due south - would have an RA of 23 hours.

The Sunshine Coast Astronomy Club

- CoastAstronomy.ca
- youtube.com/user/Coastastronomy
- Starchasers.ca

Next Events

- Astro-Café – January 21st,
8.30pm, Pier 17, Davis Bay
- Regular meeting – Feb. 11th,
7.30pm – Chatelech High
School, Room 119



Astro Café, 2010
(photo Robin Simpson)

Seven or half a dozen?



M45 – The Pleiades, also known as The Seven Sisters.

The Pleiades or Seven Sisters is the most famous star cluster in the sky. Subaru is the Japanese name for The Seven Sisters and Subaru Motors uses the star cluster as its emblem.

However the emblem shows only six stars. There's two reasons. Subaru was formed in 1950 from the merger of six existing car companies. Despite its name, only six stars in the cluster are readily seen by eye.

It is thought the seventh sister has faded over time since the cluster originally got its name.

The seven sisters are:

Maia, Electra, Alcyone, Taygete, Asterope, Celaeno and Merope.

Their Mother is Pleione

Their Father is Atlas

(the two bright lower left stars)

Astronomy Online

Sky News

New observers often ask what planets are in the sky tonight? Or, when can I see Orion? There are several ways to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the sky. Astronomy club members receive 'Sky News' magazine, a Canadian Astronomy magazine which includes a sky map for the coming month. The sky map shows an all-sky view of what constellations are prominent and where the planets are in the sky that month.

Stellarium

Another way to keep current is by using planetarium software. Planetarium software lets you run a simulation of the night sky on your computer. The software will show you what is in the sky at your current time and location and will let you plan ahead by entering a future time (a few hours, days, months or more) and date. There are many, but a favourite is Stellarium, free from Stellarium.org.

SkyAndTelescope.com

There are also online sky maps such as the ones at SkyAndTelescope.com - see the 'Observing' tab. There are also pages for Jupiter, its Moons, and Saturn.



Members of The Sunshine Coast Astronomy Club stargaze at Davis Bay, May, 2010.

Sir Isaac Newton: *"If I have seen further than other men, it is only because I have stood on the shoulders of giants".*

Astronomy Club Member: *"If I have seen further than other men, it is only because I have a bigger telescope"*