

# Event Horizon

Summer 2002

Volume 9 Issue 9

## Hey! Who put those Stars there?

Being a relatively new amateur astronomer ( or is that an amateur, amateur astronomer?), I am quickly learning, has some grief and frustrations. The payback for all of this is the joy of finding and seeing something for yourself, for the first time. A great example of this was May 3, 2002.

It was supposed to be relatively good for viewing, so I told my wife I was going to go to Binbrook to do the astronomy thing (that actually should read "Honey, but all the other people are going to get to go out and play with their telescopes, so can I, pleeeeeease go to?"). I called Stewart and he arranged for me to pick up the key and lock. I went out – others would show up – it was a beautiful night, a little crisp, but beautiful.

Jump ahead to me, standing alone in the Binbrook Conservation area, looking up at the sky and asking "Who put all those \*\*\*\*\* stars there?", "This doesn't look like the sky I am used to from my backyard!" Lesson 1: Dark(er) skies can be at first confusing when you are accustomed to seeing them from the city or suburbs.

I start with what I know (which may not be a great starting point but it is all I have). I find M51, but something isn't right; I see more detail than from my Dundas home, but where is all the intricate detail I see in the pictures from Hubble or in Sky and Telescope. Lesson 2: An 8" telescope will show you what an 8" telescope will show, even under the best conditions don't expect too much. But the view is much better than from home.

I happily navigate through my list of targets, then I decide to take a break and just look with my own eyes. Low and behold, again I am confused. What is that fuzzy patch I see with somewhat averted vision. I don't even know what constellation that is in! Well, that is Leo to the east, there is Gemini to the west, hmm. I consult my star maps and field guide – Cancer? That can't be right? Hmm, then that fuzzy patch is M44! The Pre, no the Pray, no it is pronounced the Pr ah, the heck with it – the Beehive. I view it through the telescope. I don't even try to draw it in my logbook. I simply write "beautiful, stunning, amazing"

I continue playing, but slowly notice that the views are suddenly very poor. Did the secondary mirror move? Do I have condensation on the mirrors? No and No. Lesson 3: Eyepieces left on the ground during a heavy dew is a bad thing.

Maybe next time, I won't be 24 hours early and I will get to see some of you!

(ps. Note to self: don't leave your observing stool in the driveway next time)

*Greg Emery is a new member of the HAA and has only been active as an amateur astronomer for about 1 year. Greg's interests in astronomy lean more towards deep sky objects as opposed to planetary observing. In addition to observing, interests also include optics design and amateur telescope making.*



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## Chair's Report

This has been some kind of year for observing! We have had clear skies during many of our Binbrook nights and it looks like StarFest weather is going to be nearly ideal. We were contacted by the Spectator over the summer and they have urged us to continue to use the auditorium, so we are going to do so and hope that this year's experience is better than last year's. Apparently we can now book three months at a time, so this will help us plan better for future meetings. (Last year we could only book two months in a row.)

It is time for us to start organizing a roster of speakers for the coming months. If you heard a particularly good talk at a star party this summer, please let me know. I am always looking for new talent! Don't

forget that your own observations and/or astroimages are important to communicate - even a few minutes describing your experiences at a meeting can greatly enhance it! Don't forget the HAA Silent Lake observing weekend (September 6/7/8). If the weather gods continue to smile on us, you may see some of the darkest skies you can imagine. The bugs should be gone and the nights should be clear and cool. Many of us already have our campsites reserved, but I am sure that there will be room for more. There will be some very big scopes present, so make the most of this opportunity!

Have a great August and see you in September.

Doug Welch

*Doug Welch is the current chair of the HAA and also a founding member. You can find out more about Doug at: [http://www.physics.mcmaster.ca/people/faculty/Welch\\_DL\\_h.html](http://www.physics.mcmaster.ca/people/faculty/Welch_DL_h.html)*



## HAMILTON AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Event Horizon is a publication of the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers (HAA).

The HAA is an amateur astronomy club dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of astronomy for people of all ages and experience levels.

The cost of the subscription is included in the \$25 individual or \$30 family membership fee for the year. Event Horizon is published a minimum of 10 times a year.

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## Dome to go

First light for us came on a chilly December night, followed moments later by the thought of what a good thing a dome would be. Problem was we already had a mortgage, and technically speaking VISA still owned the scope; but bonuses can work Christmas miracles and the solution happened to be a quick Internet trip to Kendrick's Astro Instruments. I was actually looking for a solar filter (sun = warmth - you get the picture) when the heading "Observatory Tents" caught my eye - and Gail's too.

"We need one of those!" she said, pointing over my shoulder at the square tent with the generous door, large window, and roof flaps.



As campers go, we understand tents. Some pegs, a few poles, and Voila! Good thing too, since the initial erecting took place at one in the morning, during a snowstorm (simple explanation, but don't ask). The shock-corded poles separate in the middle but the elasticized cord keeps them together. They are also connected at the roofline by a flexible joint. Any design that keeps the poles attached to the tent even when folded for storage works for me, and with Jim's simple instructions it was only unfamiliarity that stretched the set-up time to 15 minutes.

The stated dimensions are 10' x 7' x 6.5' high though the useable space is more like 8' x 6' x 6' high. Still, there is elbow room for 2 adults with a chair, small table and, dependant on configuration, up to a 12" scope. Fully unzipped, the door opens up all of one end, and the opposing window gives generous access to the other side. The two roof flaps are joined at the centreline by Velcro and unzip independently down to chest height.



By manipulating the sections, and some movement of the scope, you can see most of the viewable sky yet stay sheltered from the unwelcome winds and intrusive lights that often shorten a promising session. On the inside, the vinyl-covered fabric is black, however some cracking from wear and tear is almost guaranteed. While claims of being "light proof" may be unjustified, at a dark sky site it's the wind shielding that comes into play.



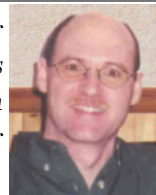
Anchored by 10 robust plastic pegs and 4 guy lines, the unit can withstand a stiff breeze but strong gusts will liberate the corners and a gale has flattened ours on one occasion. We've since moved it to a more sheltered part of the yard where we leave it up. While it's

comforting to know our scope is out of sight when left to cool, and a fitted fly to keep out rain can be had for \$152 (or a Canadian Tire tarp and a couple of bungee's for \$15), the fact that a strong wind can whip it to the ground precludes it from being a permanent home for expensive equipment.

Breakdown time is just as quick, if not quicker than the set-up; until you try and get it back into the carry bag. I've mentioned this, in passing, to Jim Kendrick who keeps assuring me it can be done but, personally,

I'd rather spend the hours on the Caramilk problem. In spite of that, at only \$515 CDN we feel it's been money well spent - and should the neighbours get to thinking we're into some kinky form of winter sex, we let 'em!

*After a thirty year hiatus, Glenn Muller is rediscovering astronomy. He and his wife, Gail, observe from their backyard in Grimsby. They invite you to view their webpage at: <http://home.interlynx.net/~mullers/>*



## WebWatch

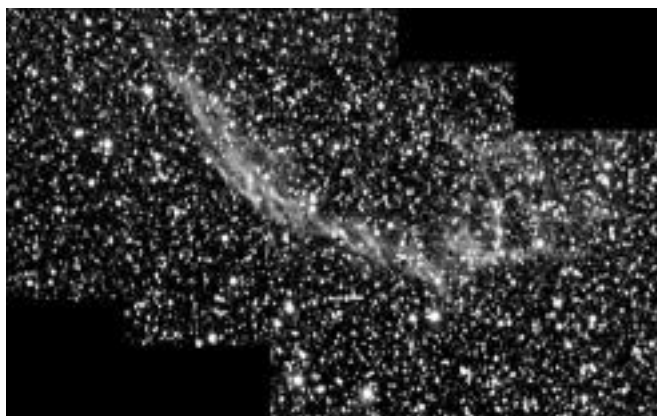
Submitted by Bob Christmas

<http://home.interlynx.net/~bxmas/rpccomet.htm>  
Have a look at my new comet gallery.

If you are contemplating traveling to see this eclipse we invite you to consider Sirius Travel. Please visit our website ([www.siriustravel.com](http://www.siriustravel.com)) for details about this tour or email us anytime at [eclipse2002@siriustravel.com](mailto:eclipse2002@siriustravel.com).

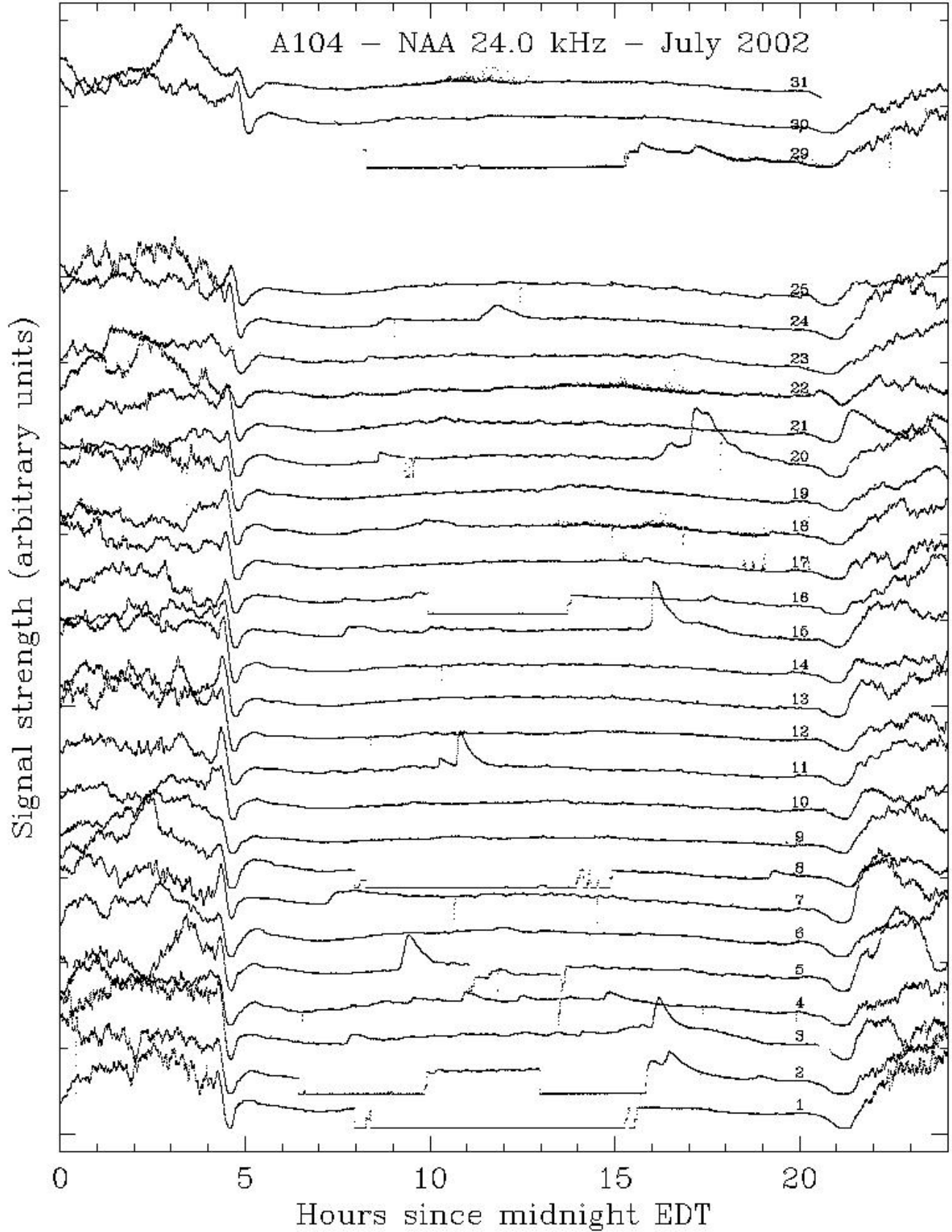
Future total solar eclipses (landfalls): November 23, 2003 - Antarctica (passes over Russian base of Mirny)  
March 29, 2006 - Africa, Turkey, Russia  
November 13, 2012 - Australia (rainforest region)  
March 20, 2015 - skims Iceland  
March 9, 2016 - Indonesia  
August 21, 2017 - USA!!!

## The Veil nebula taken by Bob Botts.



## Sudden Ionospheric Disturbances

The next page is a graph of Sudden Ionospheric Disturbances recorded during the month of July 2002 by Doug Welch using his home made SID recorder.



# August 2002

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