

# It's "Star B Q" Season

THE SKY'S  
THE LIMIT



NEEL ROBERTS

Are you looking for a great crowd gathering tool? Star B Q's are a fabulous social incentive. A star B Q is hosting a barbecue under a night sky preferable when it's clear and even better when it's warm. However the cool thing about it is you can add many twists and dimensions to it, so let your imagination take over to create the one custom tailored to your event. I remember I proposed the idea to our church committee two years ago and it has been an unqualified success!

With kids out of school soon, now our staying up late schedules can flex a bit and with Alberta's long day light, this coincidentally is necessary. On the flip side though, our community has a clear sky compared to the light pollution of the city. As a matter of fact, the Western part of Canada is considerably darker than our Eastern counterparts, due to lower population count. One of the most famous stories about the power outage in the summer of 2003 in Toronto was the incredible view the have of the Milky Way that they had no idea even

existed. It's so bright that many residents thought they were under nuclear missile attack by the enemy!

Remember how popular those drive-in movies were until real estate developers, cable TV and VCR/DVD players practically made them extinct 10 years ago? That's a great idea to perk up your Star B Q. For those who are old enough to remember the experience of watching a movie under the night sky, there's really nothing like it. I remember we went 4-5 cars at a time (of course a few hid in the truck) and spent the night at triple features! That really was the big hang out place then; much more popular than the contemporary modern IMAXes. Today, projectors with screens have come way down in price and with DVD/Blue ray technology in notebooks, it is well within the do ability of the average person.

Sky watch for the next month:

1. Jupiter — On Tuesday, June 9, from 2 a.m. to dawn, watch our solar system's largest planet for a double shadow transit. A telescope is required but you can catch shadows of two moons on the surface of Jupiter. The shadows appear as tiny black spots on Jupiter's clouds.

2. Mars and Venus — On June 19 and 20, just before the sun comes (around 5 a.m.) up in the east you

should be able to spot these two planets straight right to a thin crescent moon. Also, if you look hard enough lower left of the Moon is Mercury rising for the day. Shift over to the southeast a little higher to see Uranus and just before south at the same level is Jupiter and Neptune almost next to each other, so there's a nice planet feast to kiss off spring 2009!

3. Summer Solstice — June 21, just before the stroke of midnight (11:47 p.m. to be exact), is officially the longest day. We will have 16 hours and 18 minutes of actual daylight, but no twilight (or true darkness) due to our latitude. Also, it is coincidentally Father's Day, so it's a great time to get him out of bed and wish him "Happy First Day of Summer" which is guaranteed to surprise him!

4. Northern Cross — Did you know we have such an asterism within the summer triangle? If you look almost straight up from the south-southwest view, it's slanted 11 degrees left. The top is Deneb, middle Sadr, bottom Alberio and Gienah/5 Cyg at each end. So those southerners from below the equator have a counterpart for their Crux!

Also, check out [www.whatsuptonight.net](http://www.whatsuptonight.net), [www.astronomy.com](http://www.astronomy.com), [www.space.com](http://www.space.com) and [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov). They have much more

detailed information and great stuff for kids all for free!

Observatory events for the next month:

1. Regular meeting at the observatory takes place June 12 at 8:30 p.m. Remember to dress warm for all events as this is not Hawaii and all meetings always are pending weather.

2. Spock Days in Vulcan takes place June 13, and we will have a float in the parade. The same afternoon, we will have telescopes set up at the old Conoco office opposite NAPA in an attempt to find some sun spots. The public is most welcome to attend all events.

A special community presentation takes place June 27 at the Vulcan Evangelical Missionary Church at 8 a.m. to see the video production of "The Privileged Planet." Free breakfast provided and a discussion will follow about whether we are alone in the Universe or not. I will be the guest speaker, and all are most welcome.

Happy Star B Quing and keep reaching for the sky!

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