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Tip



### OPINION COLUMN

## Darkness-matter or supernatural?

Neel Roberts

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Neel Roberts

Darkness is a mysterious phenomenon that makes up about 85 per cent the universe. The question many scientists and astronomers ask is this: is it a substance with space and weight like the air, or beyond our understanding?

Depending on whom or what you believe, no one seems to be able to pin it down. It is only visible in the absence or contrast of light, and cannot be captured. Recent data results made with NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, ESA's XMM-Newton and Hitomi, a Japanese-led X-ray telescope, might hopefully bring knowledge in the near future.

If confirmed, this could represent a major step forward in understanding the nature of darkness.

**Sky watch**

Set your clock ahead on Sunday, March 11 for daylight saving time.

On Sunday, March 18, look west at dusk around 7:30 p.m. and watch a thin crescent moon set with Venus into the horizon with Mercury just above them.

The spring equinox is on Tuesday, March 20. The days are getting noticeably longer.

**Public events**

There will be an array of telescopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada on Sunday, March, for the monthly open House at the Rothney Observatory near Priddis. There will be an indoor presentation, and astronomers will be on hand to answer questions during the open house, which takes place from 8-11 p.m. The entrance fee is \$30 per car. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at [jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca](mailto:jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca) or 403-931-2366. Go to [www.ucalgary.ca/rao](http://www.ucalgary.ca/rao) for more information.

*Neel Roberts welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574 and [Neel\\_Roberts@ptccanada.com](mailto:Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com).*

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