

New ISS super cameras can now see you from space

Big brother got a boost this year when Vancouver-based Uthercast (www.urthecast.com) installed high-powered film recorders that can actually capture people in motion. While the images are not yet in real time, they are remarkably clear considering the International Space Station (ISS) is on average 400 kilometres from Earth's surface.

Online videos compare it very much like looking down from a low-rise apartment building. According to a recent CBC interview with CEO Scott Larson, potential customers like various federal government agencies and corporate giants like Google are already on the client radar. The new pictures can be used to identify detailed ground issues much faster than previous technology.

When California Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency on Jan. 17 for a prolonged



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The Sky's the Limit

drought, the ISS captured sobering images the next day that showed the snow pack on the Sierra Range Mountains was a staggering 80 per cent less than normal from only a year ago. While scientists embrace the ability to get data this quickly, citizen groups feel it's another loss to our privacy.

Undoubtedly, the new cameras offer an advantage to keep an eye on our planet, but many refute this as "it's 1984 all over again" in light of whistle blower Edward Snowden's exposure of the NSA spying on its own citizens, despite the American government's vehement denial any such snooping

existed.

Sky watch for the next month

As you set your clock ahead at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 9, look northwest-west as the moon pulls Jupiter down before sunrise. Spring officially starts Thursday, March 20 at 10:57 a.m.

Did you catch the Zodiacal Light last month? It's a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. The best time to see it is from Tuesday, March 18 for two weeks in the northwest after twilight.

On Sunday, March 30, look east after sunset as Spica follows Mars up, and they stay up all night until setting into the southwest dawn horizon.

Public events for the next month

Check out the monthly public stargazing at

the Trek Station event, courtesy of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Calgary), starting at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 14. A brief indoor presentation on "Spring in the Sky" is followed by observing through our 11-inch Celestron telescope. All are welcome. There is no charge, and refreshments are provided. Come early as space fills up by 7:30 p.m. Experts are on hand every second Friday of the month to explain the heavens, teach telescoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky. For further information, contact the Trek Station at 403-485-2994 or visit www.vulcantourism.com.

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