

Star-B Q the night away

With the kids coming out of school and seeding tapering off, it's time for some R & R. Many in southern Alberta are not aware that from about late May to early August we actually do not experience the same true darkness we have in the winter time because of our 50-plus degree latitude. The debate as to whether longer days make us more active can be argued scientifically but I do remember when I visited Inuvik in the summer of 1997, the town literally bustled throughout the "bright night." Not only were builders constructing but kids played in the street while tourists like myself tried desperately to sleep with the sky lit background.

Of course, that is nowhere the case here, but the extended sunshine does in fact lengthen our social time, especially if you're outdoors. If you're preparing to wait until the sky gets dark, plan on at least 11 p.m. around the



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The Sky's the Limit

summer solstice. This is a great excuse to slip in a fourth meal better known as a Star B Q. Astronomy clubs around the world have used this as a gathering tool with much success and there's no reason why you can't either, no matter the occasion.

Sky watch for the next month

A partial lunar eclipse will occur early on the morning of June 26 before sunrise. The moon will set in the southwest horizon, and you can catch a glimpse of the partial eclipse before it disappears.

On June 15 at sunset, follow the moon in the

west. Venus is the bright spot directly to its right and Mars is 45 degrees up to the left and another 45 degrees up to the left is Saturn. You can see all these without any visual aids until the moon sets just after midnight.

Spot the Comet McNaught from June 10 until the end of the month. You can catch this after midnight treat with a good pair of binoculars until about 3 a.m. in the north and northeast.

The longest day of the year is June 21, and 11:28 a.m. is officially the summer solstice. We will have 16 hours and 18 minutes of actual daylight. Coincidentally it is after Father's Day, so it's a great time to get him out of bed and wish him "Happy First Day of Summer" while you cooking him a Star B Q. Surprise guaranteed!

Public events for the next month

Have you ever wanted

to be in a parade float? The Royal Astronomical Society of Calgary invites you to join us during the one-hour Spock Days parade ride through Vulcan. Lots of fun and all are welcome June 12, at 8:30 a.m. to about 10 a.m. Bring candy if you wish to throw out to the onlookers, but it's not necessary. Contact me for details.

Join the Rothney Observatory for an evening of Blackfoot stories and astronomy. The cost is \$20 per car at the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory located near Priddis, about 30 kilometres southwest of Calgary, on June 19 from 8-11 p.m. For further information contact Jennifer Howse, 403-931-2366, or go to <http://astronomycalgary.com/events/info/50>.

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