

RASC Calgary Breaks Ground at Bow Riverside Getaway by Carseland

By Neel Roberts



Have you ever wanted to escape from the crowded city, but lack the time and money? Check out the Bow Bench Retreat, about ½ hour South East of Calgary, next to Wyndham Provincial Park overlooking Johnson's Island. The Eastern view over the Bow River gives a natural panoramic view which gravitated the RASC Calgary to help out at monthly stargazing meetings every 3rd Friday of the month started last year by local rancher Keith Clayton. Opened a few years ago on her family farm, Nancy Strath's facility is very contemporary with a rustic feel to it. One view of her photo gallery and you can grasp the variety of activities ranging from quilting workshops, various kid's classes and even corporate meeting accommodations.

The Bow Bench is fully equipped to handle an assortment of events including catering (they have a complete kitchen), board meeting/retreat amenities (with big screen/sound system already set up) and RV parking for those desiring to stay overnight. In a nutshell, you can do almost everything but rent lodging services. Located miles downstream of McKinnon's flat just before the Carseland Weir, you can easily see the lights of Gleichen East and Strathmore North at night. The edge of the property is on the banks of the Bow River and while it's a bit of a climb, fisherman can take their fly rods and try for a trout during the day. During the summer floods, Nancy explained they were safe from any water and in fact got a bird's eye view of the action which wiped out Wyndham Provincial Park (it is still closed at time of writing with no expected time of reopening due to severe destruction).

About a dozen people of all ages and backgrounds, mostly local came for the meeting Friday, January 17th and were assisted by regular RASC Calgary members hosting the Vulcan meetings. Roland Dechesne, who lives 10 minutes across the river, gave a presentation on the Winter Sky for 2014. Roland is the keynote speaker for the Vulcan meetings and more. His presentations are well received by all for both originality and enlightening information. Also, telescope expert Karl Ivarson Jr. of



Karl Ivarson Jr. of Champion

Champion showed off Jupiter and more on his small 4" telescope. Karl lived in the Carseland area over 25 years ago, so it was an old stomping ground for him.

Patricia Marshall commented on the Facebook event that her husband David "had a great time" and that was the general impression of those whom attended. Given the first meeting was successful, Strath has opened up her retreat the 3rd Friday of every month for stargazing. Meetings will start at 19:30 with short indoor presentation followed by gazing overlooking the river. Be sure to watch the website www.bowbench.com, Bow Bench Facebook Page, RASC Calgary and RASC Calgary Facebook Page for details. Full facilities near small town amenities available for other occasions. All are welcome with refreshments served and there's no charge. For further information contact the Bow Bench Retreat at (403) 934-3491 or bowbenchretreat@gmail.com. They are 2 km south of the Carseland turn off (range Road 255) from highway 24 and the next meeting is Friday, February 21st, 2014 at 19:30 !

Neel Roberts has been a RASC Calgary member since 2009. He is the astronomy coordinator for the monthly meetings in Vulcan which take place the second Friday of the month at the Trek Center beginning at 19:30 and organizes the annual RASC Calgary float in the June Spock Days. He is also an astronomy columnist for the Vulcan Advocate and you can follow his articles called "Sky's the Limit" updated the first Wednesday of every month. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at (403)560-6574, Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.