

YOU TOO CAN BE AN ASTRO-PHOTOGRAPHER



NEEL ROBERTS
Sky's the Limit

Have you ever tried to capture the night sky in pictures?

Ten of thousands around the world each evening do so in various ways. Whether you're a first-timer with a basic phone or own a high-end observatory loaded with the latest equipment, there's a variety of ways you can get in on the action.

With technology today, anybody can get started and with all types of free astronomy and photography apps, there's no reason why you can't. I'm no pro, but I've done this several times with telescopes, binoculars and even without visual aids. Though a 11-inch Celestron telescope with just a Samsung Galaxy Note 10, I was able to snap a "day" shot of Saturn and the rings came out amazingly clear.

In a November 2021, Skynews article, Kerry-Ann Lecky Hepburn of the Niagara Region, Ontario, owner of weatherandsky.com, outlines her lifelong passion of astro-

photography. Since the 1986 passing of Haley's comet, she's been building an impressive collection of night sky shots from around the world. There's too many to list but the ones from the hottest place on Earth, Death Valley, California, the mysterious "sailing stones" are poster material. Included is one from the Icefields Highway of Banff National Park featuring a starry rainbow. Check out her website or Instagram at [instagram.com/weatherandsky](https://www.instagram.com/weatherandsky) for the collection and contact information on her workshops and licensing info.

Wade Williams of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (calgary.rasc.ca/wp) recently took some rare shots with his iPhone 12 near Maycroft, Alta., in mid-October. With no visual aids, editing or complex settings, he was able to capture a unique "day" photo of the Big Dipper, Ursa Major. I was not able to find anything like it online, so it's a trophy!

The University of Calgary's Rothney Astrophysical Observatory is one of many observatories anybody can remote into for free to watch meteor showers. This opens the door to all the networking possibilities down the road.

For those who have their own

weather stations online with such services as ambientweather.net and wunderground.com, you know what I'm talking about.

It's on my "to do" list for 2022 to get my own sky cam but I think by the end of the decade, its popularity will be near par with the personal weather station networks. Yes, you too can be an astro-photographer.

SKY WATCH

Look southeast-east on Saturday, Feb. 12 at 5:25 a.m. to see Venus at its brightest.

Betelgeuse, the Valentine's star, is visible on Feb. 14, starting in the southeast from dusk until setting in the west after 2:30 a.m. on Feb. 15.

The Zodiacal Light, a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac, can be seen in the west for two weeks, beginning in the evenings, starting on Friday, Feb. 18 and for two weeks starting Sunday, March 20.

On Sunday, Feb. 27, look south-east before dawn for Venus, Mars and the moon.

Neel Roberts is a local astronomer in southern Alberta and welcomes your comments at Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com and 403-560-6574. Check out his work at www.ptccanada.com.