

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY'S ROTHNEY OBSERVATORY CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY



NEEL ROBERTS
Sky's the Limit

When it comes to astronomy, light is not a good thing.

University of Calgary's Rothney Astrophysical Observatory, located 10 minutes outside of the city limits near Priddis, is suffering from a loss of dark preserve skies.

Built in the early '70s, it just celebrated its 50th anniversary, opening to the public Jan. 7, 1972.

Back then, the city was built up to about Southland Drive on the south end and had a population of about 400,000. Outside of the little hamlet of Midnapore, there was practically no civilization. If you talk to the older people, they'll tell you people would travel that far to camp and make a weekend out of it. Many roads in the area were not paved.

Built 1.6 kilometres south of 22X on highway 22 (the Cowboy Trail) with land donated by

rancher Sandy Cross, it broke ground in 1970. Since the observatory opened, it has undergone many upgrades including an online sky cam, which can be found at science.ucalgary.ca/rothney-observatory/about/skywatch-and-multimedia.

You can check out the historic details at science.ucalgary.ca/rothney-observatory/about/history, but with the recent completion of the Calgary Ring Road of Stoney Trail, it's losing more of its natural dark skies each year.

SKY WATCH

Clocks move forward an hour on Sunday, March 13 for daylight saving time.

The Spring Equinox is Saturday, March 20 at 9:33 a.m. The days are getting noticeably longer.

The Zodiacal Light is a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac, and the best time to view it is from Sunday, March 20 for two weeks.

On Monday, March 28 before sunrise look southeast-east as Mars, Venus, Saturn and the moon rise.