

Fall 'n' Stars 2011

by Mark Coady

The threatening forecast did not discourage thirty amateur astronomers from taking in all, or a part of, the latest Fall 'n' Stars star party hosted by RASC Belleville and Kingston Centres on the weekend of September 23rd to the 25th.

With the cloudy skies and rain, Friday was spent setting up camp and renewing acquaintances in the Longhouse with much laughter being heard.

The Saturday morning swap table in the Longhouse had some excellent deals including a TeleVue Nagler 3 – 6 mm zoom eyepiece that I picked up.

The Longhouse was also used Saturday afternoon for some excellent presentations by Bob Bates, Doug Angle, Susan Gagnon, and Kevin Kell and Kim Hay. They were all well attended and well received.

A check of the Clear Sky Clock for Fall 'n' Stars on Saturday morning had showed a promising forecast...clear skies by 5 PM and, for once, it was bang on. By 4 PM the skies started to clear up and solar observing began. And there were a number of sunspots to be seen.



Belleville's Larry Hum looking at Sunspots

Following this abbreviated solar viewing session the traditional group photo was taken followed by the legendary roast beef and turkey banquet.

If you have never taken in Fall 'n' Stars then you have missed out on one of the best star party banquets anywhere. For \$20 (which is the cheapest price among Ontario star parties) you get a choice of Roast Beef or Turkey (or both), mashed potatoes, veggies, a

choice of salads, two choices of gravy, cranberry sauce, horseradish sauce, rolls, butter, and a choice of desserts. And where other star party banquets charge extra for seconds, you can keep going back for more at no charge.



Chowing down on a sumptuous banquet

Following the banquet there was the awarding of the astrophotography prize followed by the 50/50 draw won by Greg Lisk and a draw for a child's astronomy prize won by Hank Bartlett. Then there was the door prize draw. Everyone received at least two door prizes including a nice white light solar filter for yours truly.



More door prizes than you can shake a stick at

The evening observing session revealed a beautiful naked-eye sky but there was much moisture in the air. Refractors and Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes quickly dewed over leaving only Dobsonians functioning out in the field.

Sunday morning was quite cool until the sun came up over the trees. But that meant the final cleanup and closing of another successful Fall 'n' Stars. Hopefully more members from Belleville and Kingston Centres will take in this gem as it is easily the most intimate star party and is definitely the least expensive.

For the second year in a row I had the honour of being the chairperson of Fall 'n' Stars. By all reports, I and my team of volunteers did another bang up job. I'd like to thank Kevin Kell, Kim Hay, Susan Gagnon, and Hank Bartlett from Kingston Centre and Greg Liske, Joe Shields, Bob Mindenhall, Joanne Burns, and John Cairns from Belleville Centre for helping make this event run smoothly.