IMPORTANT

Although SCO is not equipped with a telephone, it is within an area of cell phone coverage. If it is likely that you will be alone at the observatory, please ensure that a responsible person is aware of your plans. If you have one, carry a cellular telephone with you. More than one observer has run his car battery down powering telescopes, cameras, computers and other electronics, or experienced mechanical problems with their vehicle. Murphy's Law states that this will occur when you are observing alone on the coldest night of the year. Please be prepared!

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada *Halifax Centre* owns and operates an observatory at a dark sky site north of Halifax Regional Municipality near the community of St. Croix, Hants County. The site is leased from *Minas Basin Pulp and Power* and consists of a roll-off roof observatory, a warm room and a toilet/storeroom facility.

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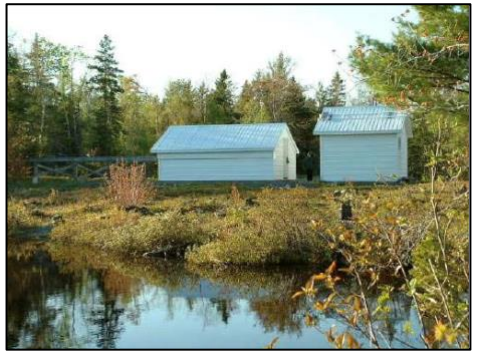
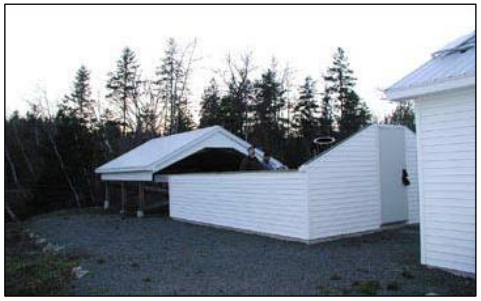
ST. CROIX OBSERVATORY (SCO)

INTRODUCTION & GUIDELINES FOR USE





Guidelines for Use

On any given night you may find members engaged in both visual and photographic work at St. Croix. The following guidelines are intended to help members become familiar with operating at SCO.

1. If you are interested in observing, post an email indicating such to the Halifax Centre discussion list. If you are a key holder, you should indicate the details associated with your planned observing session, such as the time you plan to arrive and the time you plan to leave. If you are not a key holder, your post should inquire if any key holders are interested in observing.

2. If at all practical, plan your observing session so that you arrive at SCO before sunset. This allows time to set up your equipment and have a chat as darkness falls.

3. If you are parking in the observatory parking lot, consider how you intend to exit without causing interference to observers. Some observers may be engaged in astrophotography and stray light from your car's headlamps and interior lighting can ruin their efforts. Before you leave, announce your intentions to all observers to see if any special precautions need to be taken.

4. If you arrive after dark, do your best to minimize any impact on the observers already at work. Full dark adaptation can take up to 30 minutes to achieve and less than a second to destroy. Do not allow light from your vehicle to ruin the dark adaption of others. You need to familiarize yourself with how your car's headlights operate, and if you can do so safely, switch to daylight running lights only as you approach the observatory. Since you are arriving after dark, do not pull into the observatory parking lot. Leave your car on the road.

5. Be familiar with car's interior lighting and how it operates. If possible, disable your interior lights before you open your doors. This will prevent the interior lights from coming on when the door opens. Some observers have refitted their vehicle's interior lights with red lamps or red filters.

6. Flashlights and headlamps must be equipped with red filters.

7. Laser pointers – It is recognized that the laser pointer is a great teaching aid, particularly when introducing people to the night sky. If you wish to use a laser pointer at SCO, you must be familiar with how to use the pointer safely and in accordance to Transport Canada's guidelines (http://rasc.ca/laser-pointer-usage) and receive permission from all observers present before operating the pointer.

8. If you brought it with you, take it away when you leave. If you are the last person to leave, take the garbage with you.

9. Mosquitoes and other bugs are common at the observatory during certain times of the year. Bug spray is highly recommended. Please do not apply bug spray while inside the observatory building or anywhere near telescopes, binoculars or eyepieces. You do not want overspray to land on optical surfaces.

10. Dress accordingly. The cold, clear nights of winter can be very cold. Warm boots are essential as is a good woolen hat. Mittens, while a little more awkward, are generally warmer than gloves.

11. Make an entry in the observatory log located in the Warm Room. The minimum entry includes date, time, and a brief description of activities carried out. Include the names of all attendees. Note anything that is amiss such as problems with RASC-owned equipment, lights left on, eyepieces not put away, etc.

12. The key holder who opened the observatory is responsible to secure it. Shut off all power with the switch in the Warm Room. Use the thermostat to turn heater off (move all the way to left until click heard). Ensure all buildings are locked. It is a responsibility of all key holders present to co-ordinate who shall be responsible for securing the site at the end of the session.