



MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release: July 23, 2015

Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area to Become Canada's First Nocturnal Preserve

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) is pleased to designate Canada's first Nocturnal Preserve, the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCCA), which is located in Alberta. This designation is a key component of a comprehensive national strategy to preserve and protect the natural nocturnal environment.

There is a growing need to identify and protect areas from the effects of artificial light at night. One important goal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's (RASC) Light Pollution Abatement Program, which includes designated Nocturnal Preserves, Dark Sky Preserves and Urban Star Parks, is to reduce the amount of poorly-designed outdoor lighting and thereby improve the natural nocturnal environment for wildlife. By promoting the preservation of these protected areas after dark, these regions will be a haven for rare and endangered species.

The Park that Broke the Mold

The Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCCA) is not only the first Nocturnal Preserve designated in Canada, it has a special role in the creation of this class of RASC-recognised protected area. The ASCCA first approached the Calgary Centre of the RASC about being designated under one of the RASC's existing classifications of protected site, a Dark Sky Preserve. The RASC also has an Urban Star Park designation for areas with not darkly pristine, but still astronomically usable, skies. The catch with both of these designations is that they assume regular nighttime access for astronomers. As a site that is normally closed at night, the ASCCA didn't fit the mold. However, the idea of a park that protected the natural night for its own sake, and not as a valuable side benefit, as in the RASC's other protected area classifications, seemed like something the RASC should support. The project of creating a new class of protected area started with the RASC Calgary's Light Pollution Abatement Committee and the idea was then brought forward to the RASC's National Light Pollution Abatement Committee. The idea was subsequently adopted by the National Society as a whole. It is thus fitting that the ASCCA be the first designation under this program.

“The ASCCA is honoured to be the first Nocturnal Preserve designation as recognized by the RASC. Their program gives national recognition of the necessity to protect nocturnal wildlife and ecosystems. It is recognized by the scientific community that light pollution has negative effects on wildlife and it has always been our mission to maximize the effectiveness of our habitat for wildlife. By minimizing human impacts on the nocturnal environment we are maintaining the ASCCA’s ecological integrity for future generations.”
Greg Shyba- CEO, ASCCA.

“Congratulations to the ASCCA on becoming Canada’s first Nocturnal Preserve. The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada is pleased to designate this area as a preserve free from light pollution. And pleased, too, that we have been involved over the long term to see this concept come to fruition” said James Edgar, RASC National President. “Congratulations also to the people in the RASC Calgary Centre and the Society’s Light-Pollution Abatement Committee, who worked long and hard to develop this concept and to make it work”

The environment of the night is a critical resource for flora and fauna. The general public and decision makers must be made aware of the adverse effects of poorly-designed artificial nighttime lighting and how they may use light safely while minimizing its impact on the environment.

There will be a public celebration of the designation on Aug 8, 2015 at the ASCCA starting at 7:30pm.

About Us

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) is a national astronomy organization, established in 1903, devoted to the promotion of astronomy and allied sciences. In this capacity, the RASC encourages the protection of the quality of the nighttime sky by minimizing light pollution.

The Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCCA) is a 4,800 acre day use natural area. It is located just southwest of the city of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, in the Municipal District of Foothills. The lands for the conservation area were donated by the late Ann & Sandy Cross for the protection of wildlife habitat and conservation education in 1987; the ASCCA is open to hikers by registration. The ASCCA is a non-profit registered charity.

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