

## why use SkyTools?

What is the benefit to using a planner?

- ◆ checklists, targets, goals, an objective...
- ◆ certification?
- ◆ view only unseen objects
- ◆ view objects at best times
- ◆ consolidate paper lists, magazine suggestions, etc
- ◆ high accuracy
- ◆ lower magnitudes
- ◆ speed up planning, spend more time observing

## everybody & their dog

"Regular" planetarium applications do the following:

- ◆ show stars, DSOs, planets, etc.
- ◆ against a simulated night sky
- ◆ grid lines, constellations, ecliptic, etc.
- ◆ details on selected object
- ◆ simulate field of view
- ◆ searching
- ◆ printed charts
- ◆ red light mode

## planners / loggers

The main features of a planner are building lists and logging.

- ◆ event planning, making lists, best sequence
- ◆ dynamic and manual filtering
- ◆ integrated log book
- ◆ very accurate and very current
- ◆ accelerated star hopping
- ◆ predicts quality of visual view

## the players

There are a few options... SkyTools is best of breed.

| product           | demo       | Windows | Macintosh |
|-------------------|------------|---------|-----------|
| Calsky (web site) | n/a (free) | ✓       | ✓         |
| AstroPlanner      | ✓          | ✓       | ✓         |
| Deep-Sky Planner  | ✓          | ✓       |           |
| Deep Sky          | ✓          | ✓       |           |
| SkyTools          | ✓ *        | ✓       |           |

## the RASC Toronto Centre candy shop

- ◆ we coordinated group buy summer 2010
- ◆ able to access a deeply discounted price
- ◆ unboxed SkyTools 3 on Fri 27 Aug 2010
- ◆ delivered software to 22 members

## Standard Edition demonstration

Blake demonstrated key features.

- ◆ observing list content
- ◆ the dynamic Night Bar
- ◆ detailed Object Information
- ◆ making a list manually or with the automatic generator
- ◆ powerful searching
- ◆ the zoomable, customisable Interactive Chart
- ◆ the Context Viewer simulating eyepiece views
- ◆ high-speed unique star hopping chart
- ◆ chart printing

## 467 days later

- ◆ Blake doesn't leave home...
- ◆ builds observing lists for
  - personal observing sessions
  - RASC observing sessions
  - star parties & outreach events
  - imaging runs (with the Pro edition)
  - simply, quickly, what's up right now?!
- ◆ logs viewed objects
- ◆ configured for it for the Paramount ME
- ◆ still learning stuff!

## cool features not demonstrated

- ◆ sharing lists, downloading shared lists
- ◆ session logging, permanent logging
- ◆ Current Events, monthly calendar, daily report
- ◆ plotting solar system object paths

## pros

- ◆ if you love lists...
- ◆ logging, for career, certification, and filtering
- ◆ automatic generation tool is handy and fast
- ◆ accuracy and currency
- ◆ rich double star data
- ◆ everything in one spot, less paper
- ◆ shared lists
- ◆ observing more

## cons

- ◆ not cheap \*
- ◆ cannot try-before-you-buy \*
- ◆ intimidating \*
- ◆ 600 page manual (for the Pro edition) \*
- ◆ different interface
- ◆ Windows only (but runs in WineBottler)
- ◆ buy a new (big) monitor!?

## editions

- ◆ Starter (coming soon!) \*
  - planning, searching, list creation
  - telescope 3-panel chart
  - trial version available!
- ◆ Standard
  - + list sharing, rich filtering
  - Interactive Atlas, Context Viewer
  - events, month & day calendars
  - observing status, permanent logging
- ◆ Professional
  - + telescope control
  - imaging planning, calculations
  - expanded database with 522 million stars
  - enhanced searching

## how much?

- ◆ direct from Skyhound
  - Starter USD \$50 < ?! \* trial version available!
  - Standard \$100
  - Professional \$180
  - shipping \$12
- ◆ our group buy
  - Standard CDN \$66

## learnin'

- ◆ slightly steeper learning curve
- ◆ long learning curve!
- ◆ lots of support options
  - on-board tutorials, help screens, how-to guides
  - extensive manual
  - private Yahoo!Group, which the author monitors
  - video tutorials on web
- ◆ workshop by Blake?

## need info?

- ◆ Blake Nancarrow's e-mail—blaken AT computer-ease DOT com
- ◆ Blake's blog-- <http://blog.lumpydarkness.com>
- ◆ Skyhound-- web <http://skyhound.com>
- ◆ 'Unk' Rod Mollise-- <http://uncle-rods.blogspot.com>
- ◆ SkyTools Yahoo!Group
- ◆ our current users...

## see over

- ◆ for snapshots!

dynamic Night Bar showing darkness and when object is highest

list of evening targets, sorted for optimum viewing

Context Viewer simulating eyepiece view

logged entries

Interactive Atlas showing naked eye wide field, with nearby objects identified

Object Info box with lots of details on selection

| Primary ID | Alternate...    | Con         | RA (Ap)     | Dec (Ap)   | Mag   | Size        | Distance | Begin | Optimum | End   | D...    | Be...   | Flo... |
|------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------|-------------|----------|-------|---------|-------|---------|---------|--------|
| M 76       | Little Dumbbell | Per         | 01h43m08.3s | +51°38'23" | 10.1  | 2.7'        | 2400 ly  | 19:09 | 22:42   | 05:08 | easy    | easy    | Flo... |
| M 1039     |                 | Per         | 02h42m54.2s | +42°48'55" | 5.8   | 35.0'       | 1600 ly  | 19:11 | 23:42   | 05:30 | easy    | obvious | Flo... |
| NGC 1068   | Cat             | Cet         | 02h43m19.6s | +00°02'19" | 9.7   | 6.6"x5.8"   | 70.0 My  | 20:39 | 23:42   | 02:43 | easy    | easy    | Flo... |
| M 45       | Pleiades        | Tau         | 03h47m45.2s | +24°09'16" | 1.5   | 120.0'      | 490 ly   | 20:04 | 00:46   | 05:28 | obvious | obvious | Flo... |
| NGC 1904   | Lep             | 05h24m42.7s | +24°30'50"  | 7.7        | 9.6'  | 4900 ly     | 23:24    | 02:23 | 05:21   | easy  | easy    | Erlf    |        |
| NGC 1912   | Aur             | 05h29m30.9s | +35°51'24"  | 6.8        | 20.0' | 3500 ly     | 21:04    | 02:27 | 07:07   | easy  | obvious | Pano    |        |
| M 38       |                 | Orl         | 05h35m53.6s | -05°22'33" | 4.0   | 40.0"x20.0" |          | 00:05 | 02:34   | 05:03 | obvious | obvious | Flo... |
| M 36       |                 | Aur         | 05h37m08.2s | +34°16'46" | 6.5   | 10.0'       | 4300 ly  | 21:16 | 02:35   | 07:12 | obvious | obvious | Flo... |
| M 37       |                 | Aur         | 05h53m07.8s | +32°33'16" | 6.2   | 14.0'       | 4500 ly  | 21:39 | 02:51   | 07:09 | obvious | obvious | Erlf   |
| M 35       |                 | Gem         | 06h09m46.3s | +24°20'47" |       |             |          |       |         |       |         |         |        |
| M 41       |                 | CMa         | 06h46m33.7s | -20°46'09" |       |             |          |       |         |       |         |         |        |
| M 50       |                 | Mon         | 07h03m18.3s | -08°24'04" |       |             |          |       |         |       |         |         |        |
| M 47       |                 | Pup         | 07h37m09.7s | -14°30'36" |       |             |          |       |         |       |         |         |        |
| M 46       |                 | Pup         | 07h42m20.6s | -14°50'17" |       |             |          |       |         |       |         |         |        |

Telescope chart allows extremely rapid star hopping!

Zooming controls

step 1: aim your telescope in this general area

step 2: use the Finder panel to verify field stars

step 3: enjoy the view in the eyepiece

orientation or direction marker

Time controls

Path plotting tools

Change the eyepiece, Barlow, etc.

Rotate the eyepiece field if nec.

Screen snapshots prepared by Blake Nancarrow (blaken AT computer-ease DOT com) using SkyTools 3.