



# NEWSLETTER

## PROBUS CLUB VANCOUVER

#252-2025 West 42nd Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6M 2B5 Phone and Fax (604)261-6818

Clubs for retired and semi-retired professional and business persons, former executives and others

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MARCH 2008

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**Next Meeting:** Tuesday March 11th, 2008

**Time:** 9:30 AM

**Location:** H.R MacMillan Planetarium and  
Space Centre - Lower Level

**Speaker:** Dr. Jaymie Matthews

**Topic:** The search for Terra Nova:  
Exploring alien worlds with Canada's  
space telescope

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**MARCH 31** - George C. Reifel Migratory  
Bird Sanctuary Tour

## Dr. Jaymie Matthews



Jaymie Matthews is an astro-paparazzo who unveils the hidden lifestyles of stars by eavesdropping on "the music of

the spheres." His version of an interstellar iPod is Canada's first space telescope, MOST (Microvariability & Oscillations of STars), which detects vibrations in the light of ringing stars too subtle to be seen even by the largest telescopes on Earth. Dr. Matthews is the Mission Scientist leading the Canadian Space Agency's MOST project, and an astrophysics professor at the University of British Columbia. He is trying to write a biography of our Sun – past and future – by studying its neighbours in our galactic city, the Milky Way. His research sounds more like astromedicine than

astrophysics: performing "ultrasound" on stellar embryos, checking on the hyperactivity of a pre-teen sun, and taking the pulses of stars in their twilight years. Dr. Matthews and his team are also using MOST to forecast the weather on planets beyond the Solar System, and they have begun the search for Terra Nova – alien Earths around other stars.

Dr. Matthews was awarded a 1999 Killam Prize for teaching excellence in the UBC Faculty of Science, as well as the 2002 Teaching Prize of the Canadian Association of Physicists. In 2006, he became an Officer of the Order of Canada. But he has yet to live down being quoted in Discover Magazine as saying "Exploding Star Contains Atoms from Elvis Presley's Brain - Scientists Confirm the King of Rock & Roll Lived in Another Galaxy 160,000 Years Ago!"

## Minutes of the February 12th Meeting

Attendance: 156 including guests

Vice President **George Adams**, standing in for vacationing President **Ted Daem**, greeted members at 10:00 am. **Nick Thornton** for Membership reported there are 347 paid up members and five new members to be introduced at the next meeting. **John Rawsthorne** gave highlights of the tour of the Reifel Bird Sanctuary on March 31st (details inside). **Chris Lee** announced a walking tour of the West End hosted by John Atkins on Thursday, May 22 (details in April Newsletter).

**John Hill** introduced the well-known automotive expert Zack Spencer, of the website motormouth.ca. Mr. Spencer addressed developments in the auto industry responding to requirements for increased energy efficiency. Thirty-five miles per gallon will be a North American mandate by the year 2020, calling for a huge improvement over current standards. Some developments to meet these demands have been most obviously hybrids, but diesels are also coming into prominence, and also Flex Fuel engines.

(1) The leading Hybrid is the Toyota Prius. Its sales have just passed one million, but the company's goal is one million vehicles per year. The vehicle is most efficient at low speeds, when the vehicle operates on an electric motor. At about thirty-five mph a small gas engine kicks in seamlessly. At high speed, the small gas engine is not so efficient as other small engines. The car is most efficient in stop and go city driving and under heavy use (as illustrated by the large number of hybrid taxis). But at a thirty thousand dollar price the car is more expensive than comparable alternatives and may take ten to twelve years to recover the initial cost differential.

(2) Diesel is the most exciting development,

as illustrated by the Audi. High pressure fuel injection can develop 500 horse power. The Audi V12 can go from 0-100 kmh in 4.2 seconds. Audi won the most recent Le Monde race with a diesel engine; second place Peugeot was also a diesel, as was the third. Over 60% of all Mercedes SUV's in Canada are diesels. Over 50% of new vehicles in Europe, in some countries as high as 75%, are diesels, which are 20 to 40% more efficient than gas engines. Toyota is committed to Prius but has also introduced a diesel for trucks. The pollution problem with diesels is to reduce nitrous oxide. A three-port catalytic converter scrubs out most of that. Diesel engines reduce CO2 emissions and some nitrous oxide and are therefore very promising. If one third of US vehicles were diesel that would eliminate the need for importing oil from Saudi Arabia. Diesel engines provide more torque than a V8 engine but the fuel efficiency of a four cylinder. New engines pollute less, are quiet, smooth running and odorless. Mercedes and Honda will produce a four cylinder turbo—although Honda has not identified which model—most probably the Accord, an excellent car.

(3) Flex Fuel. The Saab E-85 is an example; these engines use 15% ethanol fuel and reduce CO2 emissions by up to 90%. It is easy to convert conventional engines to the use of these fuels. A difficulty is that there are only three ethanol filling stations in Canada (in Ottawa!), but several hundred in the US. A big problem is that ethanol production competes with food. A GM partner, Coskata, is producing biofuel out of waste products, at a cost of \$1.00 per gallon.

(4) Other solutions are more efficient engines, like the Ford Eco Escort, Mazda four cylinder engines; or lighter cars, like the Ford Focus. Direct injection diesel engines gain greater power and efficiency; turbo engines give a faster payback and are 20% more efficient with less pollution.

(5) The Fisker Karma is a hybrid concept. Plugged in to an electric outlet, it runs for fifty kilometers on an electric charge; after that a small motor produces electricity. It accelerates from 0-100 kmh in six seconds. But there is only one car in San Francisco, at a cost of \$80,000. Running only on its battery, it has a range of 100 kms. A small engine supplies electricity as needed but its drawback is that it still uses a power source produced mainly by fossil fuels and existing battery technology limits its range.

(6) Hydrogen Fuel Cell, illustrated by the Ford Edge. This power source is used today in buses, at a cost of about one million dollars each. For automobiles, as dramatically illustrated by Ballard, this technology is years from production. There are space, weight, and cost constraints. Hydrogen takes energy to produce. At present it is mainly used in commercial applications (forklifts, for example) and lack of fuel delivery network requires in situ production.

(7) Actions to take today. Buy the most efficient (smallest) car that meets requirements; use newer vehicles which are much cleaner; plan trips ahead to use vehicles less; keep vehicles well maintained; use carsharing, like the local car co-op (CAN), much cheaper than ownership; take the bus.

In response to questions: Mr. Spencer acknowledged that E85 is very expensive to produce and requires great quantities of another scarce resource, water. Waste production is therefore needed for ethanol to work. General motors cannot keep losing thirty six billion dollars annually, and in the last quarter has demonstrated that it has turned around, showing a thirty million dollar profit. GM is second only to Toyota in going green, but moving into recession its timing is terrible. Canadian dealers can

compete with the US with the dollar at par but only at the lower end. Turbo engines will be more expensive to run if they require premium gas, but some are adapting to regular gas. Before seeking to bring in cheaper luxury cars from the US check whether the importation is allowed (Registrar of Imported Vehicles)—the manufacturers control this possibility. There is a general trade-off between safety and size of the vehicle. Honda Civic has a great safety rating, however, so do research. For assessment of owner satisfaction the best resource is JD Powers and Associates (jdpower.com); they have the broadest polling base. Jaguar is much better than its reputation; VW is near the bottom; the Audi is improving.

John Tennant thanked the speaker, and the meeting adjourned.

Lindsay Mann, Secretary



## NOTICES

### APRIL PROBUS MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT



Our regular meeting on April 8th will feature the internationally acclaimed Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, **Bramwell Tovey**. Mr. Tovey will be entertaining us both verbally and musically at the **Academy of Music (Opposite the Planetarium & Space Centre)**. For this special meeting **spouses** are cordially invited to attend. You will not want to miss this exciting event.

**Member Services Desk:** Tremayne Perry  
**Cash Desk:** Jim McWilliams, Hank Levelt, Paul McCrea  
**Greeters:** Bob Paul, Leon Pond, Mason Ramsay

**It is with regret we announce the passing of Jock Blacklock on January 26, 2008. Our condolences to his family. A donation will be made in his name by Probus.**



### **VALENTINE'S DAY LUNCHEON**

The 2008 Valentine's Day Luncheon at the beautiful Royal Vancouver Yacht Club proved to be a roaring success with 99 members and guests in attendance.

### **PRESIDENTS' LUNCHEON - JAN. 8TH,2008**

Pictured below are the current President and 10 Past Presidents



From left to right:

Fred Cotton, Ted Daem, Jack Farley, Tom McCusker, Pidge McBride, Denis Creighton, Norm Weitzel, Roy Williams and John Hopkins.

Inserts: Gordon Thom and Don Farquhar

# George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary Tour

**Date:** Monday – 31st March 2008

**Time:** Commencing at 10.00 a.m. at the Sanctuary

**Number of participants:** The number of participants will be limited to 36 members and partners/spouses.

**Programme:** After a short talk about the Sanctuary by John Ireland (the Manager) we will split into groups of six, each with an experienced birder as a leader, to tour the sanctuary to see what birds and other wildlife we can find. Depending on the weather and peoples interest this could take from 1 to 2 hours. This ends the formal part of the tour. We will then take a lunch break.



After lunch participants are free to spend more time at the sanctuary or to head home. Some of the leaders will be available in the afternoon.

**Getting there:** A bus is not being provided so participants will need to use their own vehicles. Although there is plenty of parking at the sanctuary it is suggested that participants car pool.

The sanctuary is on Westham Island at the mouth of the Fraser River.

For those participants who know the way there, plan to be there by 9.50 a.m.

For those wishing instructions on how to get there phone John Rawsthorne at 604-922- 3585 or e-mail at [john\\_rawsthorne@telus.net](mailto:john_rawsthorne@telus.net) and he will send you detailed directions.

There is one final option:- head out of Vancouver on Highway 99 (the highway to Blaine), go through the Deas Island Tunnel and immediately after the tunnel take the first turn off to the right. This is River Road. 100 meters along this road, rendezvous with John Rawsthorne in a silver Mazda 3 and proceed in convoy from there. The convoy will depart promptly at 09.35 a.m.

**Clothing:** It can be cold and windy (believe it!) out at Reifel so dress warmly, including hat and gloves, and wear comfortable shoes. It is better to be too warm than spoil the day by getting cold. It could also rain so bring wet-gear and/or umbrella. Boots or gumboots are not necessary. We have put in a requisition for a warm sunny day but cannot guarantee this!!!

**Lunch:** Bring your own including a thermos of hot drinks. There is a warming hut which will be very cozy if we all pack in, but hopefully it will be warm enough to eat outside. If you do not wish to brown bag it there are restaurants and coffee shops in Ladner about ten minutes drive away.

**Cost:** Including entry to the Sanctuary \$10/person.

**Questions:** contact John Rawsthorne at the phone or e-mail shown above.

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## Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary Tour Registration Form

Monday March 31st, 2008

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete & return this form along with a cheque made out to Probus Club Vancouver for \$10.00/person (for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_). Mail to: Probus Club Vancouver, #252 – 2025 West 42nd Avenue, Vancouver. V6M 2B5, or hand it in at the Member Services Desk at the March meeting. No refunds after March 27th.